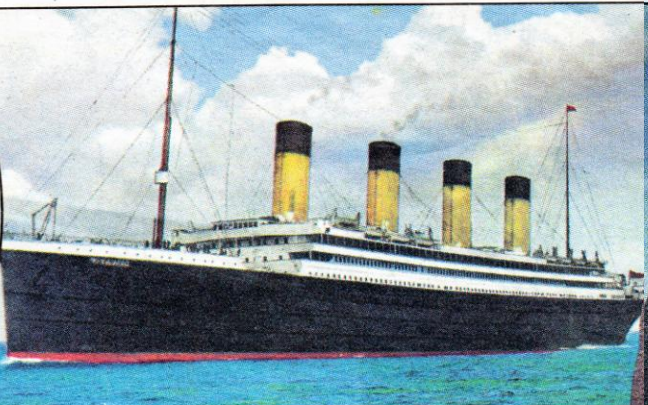


## A tragic love story emerges from the depths of time



Doomed: The Titanic and, inset, the £13 second-class passenger John Gill

# The young bride struck dumb by her Titanic loss

By Lech Mintowt-Czyz

IT is a tragedy to rival that of Rose and Jack in the epic film. Except that this one is true.

Winnie Gill, bride of just two months, waves off her husband as the Titanic leaves Southampton in 1912, safe in the belief that she will be joining him in the U.S. within weeks.

John Gill, 24, a second-class passenger with a £13 ticket, stands little chance of survival when the liner hits an iceberg and sinks, killing 1,523.

Winnie, on learning of his death, falls into a state of shock which robs her of her ability to speak. Her father gives her a bosun's whistle to help her communicate, but the handicap persists for 20 years.

The amazing story of love cut short is told in a series of mementoes being offered for sale by a family member. Lots include a silk insert from a Christmas card given to John by his wife in 1911 bearing the words: 'To the one I love, accept my heart, its truthful love, from thee will never range, 'tis constant as the sun above, like that will never change.'

There is a photograph taken after the couple were married on Valentine's Day, 1912.

A 142-year-old bottle of cognac, 50 years old at the time, given to the Gills by Winnie's father as a wedding present and a pocket penknife are also being sold.

But perhaps the most poignant piece is the bosun's whistle itself. A



Symbol of grief: The bosun's whistle

photograph of Winnie in her mourning clothes shows her wearing the whistle around her neck along with a locket containing a photo of her husband and an enamel memorial Titanic badge pinned to her chest.

Andrew Aldridge, of Titanic specialist auctioneers Henry Aldridge and Son, said: 'This is a remarkable and very moving collection.'

'The silk insert shows just how much they felt for each other while the wedding photo shows them with their lives ahead of them. The whistle is a

### 'An incredible phenomenon'

sign of the depth of grief his wife was experiencing. And the photograph of Mrs Gill in her mourning wear also speaks volumes about how she was feeling at the time.'

John and Winnie were childhood sweethearts in their home town of Clevedon, Somerset.

After marrying they planned to start a new life in Wisconsin, along with Winnie's father, a hotelier.

Mr Gill bought three tickets for the Titanic but the sale of the family hotel fell through at the last minute and

Winnie and her father were forced to stay behind until they found another buyer. When news of the sinking reached the UK, Mrs Gill sank into her grief-stricken silence.

Mr Gill's pocket watch was recovered after the disaster. It had stopped at 3.21am, one minute after the stern of the ship slipped under the ocean.

'Almost immediately after being informed of her husband's death Mrs Gill went into a state of shock and she was so badly traumatised that she lost her voice completely,' said Mr Aldridge.

'It is an incredible phenomenon. Her father gave her the high-pitched bosun's whistle so she could attract people's attention.'

'She was aged in her early 20s when she married and it wasn't until about 20 years or so later that her voice came back to her all of a sudden.'

'She fell down a flight of stairs and screamed as she did. That was when her voice returned. She kept the whistle which has remained in the family ever since.'

The items, expected to fetch £17,000, will be sold at the annual British Titanic Society Convention in Southampton on April 2.





