

## Titanic – stamped with history

The story of the *Titanic* is well known, especially after numerous commemorations of the disaster's centenary, full of facts and figures. However, we would like to look at its history from a completely different perspective, namely to answer if it is easy and feasible to collect all stamps ever released regarding the famous and, at the same time, disgraceful liner?

By the summer of 2011 at least 34 post offices and philatelic bureaux had issued stamps to mark *Titanic's* sinking treated as an important historic event or the sunken ship itself as a significant piece of naval architecture. The list of them (in alphabetical order) is somewhat exotic and, for that reason, immensely interesting: Angola, Ascension Island, Bahamas, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo-Kinshasa, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Ireland, Isle of Man, Liberia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Niger, Palau, Romania, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somali, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Kingdom and the former Yugoslavia.

The Royal Mail Ship *Titanic* appeared in single stamps memorializing anniversaries of the disaster (e.g. 80<sup>th</sup> in Yugoslavia) and jubilees of maritime institutions dealing with safety at sea (tercentenary of Lloyd's of London in the case of Barbados, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Maritime Organisation – Bhutan). It was used as a significant mark of any time or period, for example in the Ascension Island's series 'The Queen Mother's Century' or by the Marshall Islands 'The 20th Century – 1910-1919; Decade of Revolution and Great War'.

The *Titanic* also appeared in a series named the 'Famous Ships' (Comoros), as well in the 'Famous Ocean Liners of the World' (Grenada), the 'Shipwrecks and Ship Mysteries of the World' (Maldives) and 'The 20th Century by Sea and Air' (Liberia). Its presence in the 'Cruise Ships and Lighthouses' (Congo-Kinshasa) seems unjustified as well as the liner and its captain Edward Smith don't quite suit to the company of 'Naval Pioneers' (Guinea Bissau) which includes such engineers as Robert Fulton and Isambard Brunel. But you know how it is – *Titanic* is eye-catching, even if it is chalk and cheese.

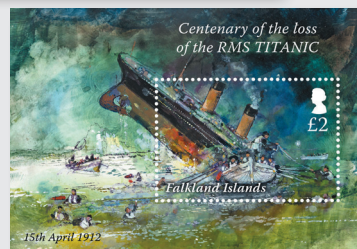
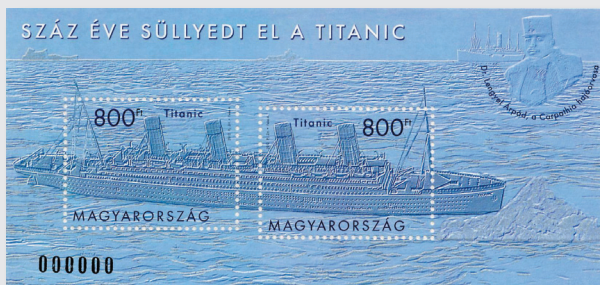
Talking about blazing ideas... Certain pictures of the liner are embellished with portraits of famous artists connected with James Cameron's movie – Céline Dion

(Guinea) and Leonardo DiCaprio (Madagascar). The Senegal stamp which mistakenly joins Marilyn Monroe with the film "A Night to Remember" could be treated as a curiosity. But most stamps, usually issued in series, commemorative sheets, blocks, etc., show the history of the ship, the disaster, and evacuation - often in the form of a comic strip.

In the second half of 2011 a 'Titanic basket' exploded. By May of 2012 at least 46 philatelic institutions released designs commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking, out of which 28 issued *Titanic* theme

winning block was released in memory of – besides the *Titanic* – a Hungarian physician, Dr. Árpád Lengyel (1886-1940). The man presented in the upper right corner was a ship doctor on the RMS *Carpathia* which rescued survivors from the *Titanic* lifeboats. The official description explains the block's out-of-line appearance: "the unusual feature of this release is that, in addition to offset printing and embossing, iridescent spot-varnish screen printing, usually a security device, has been used and the particles scattered across the surface sparkle icily." We think that the Hungarian issue lies

far above the popular clichés both in its form and content. We appreciate not only the lack of common colours (it is a mourning celebration after all!) but also a bit of harmless nationalism... The block was designed by the artist Arnold Feke and 40 thousand copies were printed by the banknote



stamps for the first time: Åland Islands, Alderney, Antigua and Barbuda (plus stamps edited by separate offices of Canouan, Mayreau and Mustique Island), Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Hungary, Isle of Man, Israel, Jersey, Lesotho, Micronesia, Mozambique, Nevis, Solomon Islands, Togo, Tonga, Tristan da Cunha, Tuvalu and Uganda. It means that the number of independent postal offices and bureaux which issued *Titanic* stamps grew to 62 and the number of editions reached 80.

The Hungarian Post has won our 'beauty contest' of all 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary issues. The

maker Pénzjegynyomda (Hungarian Banknote Printing Shareholding Company). The silver medal went to two domestic stamps from Canada – we present the postage-paid postcard repeating the same motif like in one of them (the three propellers).

The legend of *Titanic* keeps going and has many faces. For instance, collectors of ship coins can put their two penn'orth in. But this is a story for another issue of the corner...

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