

Basic Detail Report

00029331

Title

Imprisoned in the ice

Date

1910

Primary Maker

Herbert Ponting

Medium

Black and white silver gelatin print on board

Dimensions

Sheet: 506 x 410 mm Overall: 506 x 410 mm, 1 mm, 0.3 kg Image: 406 x 310 mm

Name

Photograph

History

Herbert George Ponting was born in Salisbury, Wiltshire, England in 1870. After spending his twenties in Western America working in mining and operating a fruit ranch, Ponting took up free-lance photography in 1900 at the age of 30. Initially Ponting became a war correspondent, photographing and reporting on the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05. Afterwards he travelled through Asia, taking numerous photographs and writing articles which he sold to four London magazines - the Strand Magazine, Pearson's, the Graphic and the Illustrated London News. In 1910 Ponting produced a book on his photographs of Japan, entitled 'In Lotus-land Japan'. During 1909 Ponting met with Captain Robert Falcon Scott who offered to sign him as the expedition photographer for Scott's upcoming Terra Nova expedition, making him the first professional photographer to be taken on any Antarctic expedition. Ponting became a member of the Terra Nova's "shore party", and in early 1911 helped to set up the expedition's winter camp at Cape Evans, Ross Island, which included a small photographic darkroom. Ponting took black and white and colour photographic stills, and using a cinematograph, recorded short videos, becoming one of the first to use a movie camera and to take colour photographs in Antarctica. Ponting spent 14 months at Cape Evans taking over 1,700 photographs, many of which were photographs of Scott and the other members of the expedition. In addition he recorded the behaviour of various Antarctic animals, and narrowly escaped death in early 1911 when a pod of orcas almost knocked him and his camera into the McMurdo Sound. In February 1912 Ponting and eight other men returned to London on the TERRA NOVA while the remaining members of the shore party made the push for the South Pole. It was intended that Ponting would use his photographs to shape a narrative for the expedition, and these would be used by Captain Scott on his return, for fundraising and lectures in 1913. The expedition however ended in tragedy when Scott and his party

consisting of Lieutenant Henry Bowers, Captain Lawrence Oates, Petty Officer Edgar Evans and Doctor Edward Evans reached the pole in November 1912, but died on the return journey to their base camp. The tragic end to the expedition also affected Ponting's work. His photographs and video which were meant to play an integral role in Scott's post-expedition fundraising tour, were rendered obsolete when letters written by Scott in his final hours were discovered. These letters were written as appeals to the British public to look after the welfare of the expedition's widows and survivors (EDIT). These appeals resulting in large donations from the public covered the cost of the expedition, provided annuities for the widows and survivors and were used to form the Scott Polar Research Institute. The cancellation of a post-expedition tour meant Ponting's Antarctic work had become redundant. Shortly afterwards World War I began. Post World War I, Ponting published 'The Great White South' in 1921, a photographic narrative of the expedition. He also produced a short film in 1933 based on his videos of the expedition, entitled 'Ninety Degrees South' and gave regular lectures on Antarctica. However these ventures brought him little financial reward. Ponting died in London in 1935.