

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Australian Munitions Workers, SS MEDINA, 24th June 1916

Date

1916

Primary Maker

Exchange Studios

Medium

Black and white photographic print on paper, wooden frame

Dimensions

Overall (frame): 372 x 502 x 20 mm Other (sight): 208 x 335 mm Other (image): 117 x 247 mm

Name

Photograph

History

The SS MEDINA was built by Caird and Company, Greenock, Scotland, in 1911 as one of ten M class Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P & O) ocean liners. Numbered 317 and registered in London, the MEDINA was 12,350 Tons, 550 Feet in length and 62 in breadth. Classified as a passenger-cargo ship for the UK-Australia run, the MEDINA was the last of ten ships in P&O's M-Class, delivered from Caird and Company. During construction it was decided the MEDINA would carry King George V and Queen Mary to India for the Delhi Durbar to commemorate their coronation as Emperor and Empress of India in 1911. MEDINA was thus initially commissioned into the Royal Navy as a Royal Yacht. It was provided with an extra mast, necessary to maintain Royal flag etiquette and furnished with a white hull with bands of royal blue and gold and buff funnels. Various large rooms intended for public use were redecorated as Royal apartments. MEDINA left Portsmouth for India in November 1911, returning in February 1912 to Caird and Company for refitting. The vessel was then delivered to P&O in June 1912. After only two years of peacetime service, the MEDINA served the navy during World War One, though remaining with P&O. The ship was armed in 1914 and carried general cargo. While en-route from India to London the MEDINA was torpedoed off Start point, Devon just off the English coast on February 1, 1917 by the German submarine UB-31. Six engine-room crew were killed and 411 passengers and crew saved. Five other M Class P&O ships were also sunk during the war - MALOJA, MARMORA, MOLDAVIA, MONGOLIA and MOOLTAN. Today the MEDINA lies reasonably intact despite salvage of copper and passengers' baggage from the forward holds. The stern is most damaged and the wreck is slowly sinking into the seabed. This photograph of the MEDINA was owned by Australian Jack Richardson who was an engineer on the ship when it was torpedoed in 1917. Jack survived the attack after taking to a life raft in only his pyjamas and a coat. He later wrote a

letter to his mother beginning, 'Well the Germans took a fancy to us after all, they torpedoed and sunk our ship at 10.30pm on the 4th of April... it was terrible hard luck after getting so close to our destination and coming from so far.'