

Basic Detail Report

00023077

Title

EVERETT G GRIGGS in Sydney

Date

c 1910

Primary Maker

Samuel J Hood Studio

Medium

Emulsion on nitrate film.

Name

Nitrate negative

History

The six-masted barquentine E R STERLING was initially named LORD WOLSELEY and built as a four-masted vessel in Belfast, Ireland in 1883. In 1904, it was renamed EVERETT G GRIGGS and modified to a six-masted barquentine. It was then sold to the American shipowner

and sea captain, Edward Robert Sterling, in around 1910 before being renamed E R STERLING. The barquentine became the pride of the Sterling Line. It became famous for its state-of-the-art saloon which, according to the 'Cairns Post', moved beyond 'cramped quarters' and 'hurricane lamps' to a player piano and a gramophone, which Sterling had concealed in the room's centre table, an 'ingenious combination' of music and dining table. On 16 April 1927, the ship left Port Adelaide for London with a cargo of between 40,000 and 50,000 bags of wheat. All was going well until it rounded Cape Horn and encountered icebergs stretching for 500 miles (800 km). After navigating through those, the crew faced a heavy gale north of the Falkland Islands on 4 July and the barquentine was partially dismasted. With only four masts remaining, Captain E R Sterling made the fateful decision to sail on and forgo refuge at the port of Montevideo. After crossing the equator at 4 am on 4 September near the Cape Verde Islands, E R STERLING was hit by a hurricane. Four gruelling hours later, the foremast was lost and Chief Officer Roderick Mackenzie was fatally injured as he attempted to rescue the rigging. There was no doctor on board and Captain Sterling tended to the wounded man in his quarters. Two hours later, the captain read the committal sentences as the chief officer's body was lowered over the ship into his watery grave. SS Norman Monarch eventually answered their SOS calls, offering to tow the vessel into port; however, Captain Sterling declined the offer. Instead, he and the crew made their way to Saint Thomas in the US Virgin Islands, in the West Indies. According to the captain's report, they sailed 2,212 miles (3,560 km) in poor weather and vessel conditions before arriving in port on 15 October. The cargo was transferred to a steamer, then on 15

December E R STERLING was towed 4,000 miles (6,430 km) to London, arriving in the Thames in a shambles on 28 January 1928. It had been a horror voyage that took a total of nine months. On 24 March 1928, E R STERLING made its last voyage to Sunderland, where it met its end at the hands of shipbreakers.