

Basic Detail Report

00016805

Title

Steamship passing North Head into Sydney Harbour

Date

1910 - 1920

Medium

Gouache, watercolour paint, cardboard, wood, pulp paper

Dimensions

Overall: 715 x 915 mm, 3.3 kg

Name

Painting

History

This painting is one of two donated by Mrs Beth Jackson. The other is registered as 00016804. Mrs Jackson's father Philip James Vivian bought the two paintings in about 1914 (when he married) from the Commonwealth Photographic Studios near Central at 335 and 337 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. They were displayed in the studio window and are typical of the large number of works - ship and harbour scenes - done in a simple style for a popular market. Mrs Jackson's father Philip Vivian always told his daughter that one of the paintings represented the SS SUFFOLK. Mrs Jackson's great uncle Philip Davies commanded the SS SUFFOLK from July 1909 to late 1916. Whenever the ship came to Sydney Captain Davies invited his nephew (Mrs Jackson's father) on board. Philip Davies, then a teenager, would catch the tug out to the SUFFOLK when it entered the Heads. His uncle would allow him to take the helm and 'sail the ship down the harbour'. Captain Davies always visited the family, bringing souvenirs from ports of call. Further research needs to be done on the identification of the ships. Lloyd's Register (1907/08-1920/21) lists the Suffolk with four masts. The ships in the paintings are depicted with two masts. From comparison with a coloured postcard of SS SUFFOLK by Dufty, the SUFFOLK had one funnel. The ship with one funnel coming around North Head has only two masts. Either the artist did not have an eye for accuracy or neither of these two paintings represents the SUFFOLK. The former could be the case as the ships are quite roughly drawn. However one would imagine that Philip Vivian, although not a sailing man, would have chosen an accurate depiction.