

Basic Detail Report

ANMS1307

Title

Collection of 88 postcards relating to William Leeder

Date

1917-1960s

Medium

Ink on paper

Name

Archive series

History

William Palmer Leeder was born in Fremantle, Western Australia on 10 January 1901 and was orphaned at an early age. He went to sea as a deck boy on SS KATOOMBA on the interstate trade in 1917, when he was 16. He served on steamships until 1918 when he signed on an American sailing ship in Sydney, the schooner W H TALBOT. He spent six months in the ship as an Ordinary Seaman, sailing across the Pacific to the United States, and signing off the ship in Manila in the Philippines. For the next three years he served as an Able Seaman (AB) mostly in sail, travelling as far afield as England, the east coast of the USA, Japan, Peru, New Zealand and back to Australia. In 1919-20 he served one five month period as an AB on USS LYDONIA, employed on the US Coast and Geodetic Survey. In March 1921 he joined the LYDONIA again and served on the survey for two years, becoming Bosun's Mate 2/cl. During this time he travelled from Oregon to Panama, to Mexico and Jamaica. During the 1920s he returned to Australia and worked as a painter in Sydney. He was a member of the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union of Australia from 1931 to 1937. He went back to sea on the coastal ship BERMAGUI as an AB for one month in 1926, and he may have worked on other ships during the 20s and 30s. At the end of 1941, he joined the interstate cargo ship SS ARKABA, owned by Adelaide Steam Ship Company. He served in the ship until January 1947, for the first year as an AB, and the rest of the time as Bosun. He was a member of the Seamen's Union of Australia from 1942 to 1947. The ARKABA was not commissioned into war service but continued vital work of a cargo carrying around the coasts, subject to the perils of mines, shells and submarines. It was the target of a mock raid in 1943 by the Z Special Unit operatives in Townsville, who were training for operation Jaywick, using the KRAIT. William Leeder was too old in 1940 to be called up for military service. He apparently chose to go back to sea in the dangerous situation prevailing, to contribute to the war effort. SS ARKABA had an unusual end and was said to be refusing its fate. In February 1952 it was grounded on a reef near Port Lincoln. It was considered too badly damaged to be worth repairing and was auctioned. The purchaser William Charlick Ltd intended to have it towed to Hong Kong for repair. The tow began in bad weather and the towline snapped in a storm in the Great Australian Bight. The ARKABA drifted out of sight and was found three weeks near Port Lincoln. The ship was towed to Sydney and was held up by a dispute

over salvage claims, but eventually reached Hong Kong, was refitted and returned to sea as WILLIAM CHARLICK IV. It was broken up in 1959. William Leeder saved newspaper cuttings about the ship's misadventures, marking one of them 'This was my ship'. From 1953 to 1966 William Leeder worked as a painter at Garden Island Dockyard, and was compulsorily retired on his 65th birthday. In 1963 he bought a yacht named TAMMIE NORIE, and lived on board for some years, at Lavender Bay. He then moved to a cottage at Woy Woy and died there in 1993, aged 92. Leeder's discharges show that he worked on the following ships. SS KATOOMBA Interstate 21/7/1917 - 13/8/ 1917 Boy. Engaged and discharged at Sydney SS WYREEMA Foreign-going 22/10/1917 - 13/11/1917 Brass boy. Engaged and discharged at Sydney SS WALLARAH Coasting 13/11/1917 - 26/2/1918 Ordinary seaman. Discharged at Sydney Schooner W H TALBOT 28/2/1918 - 23/8/1918 Ordinary seaman. Engaged at Sydney. From the port of Raymond, Washington USA to Sydney, Australia, via Pacific Ports and Manila P I. Discharged at Manila. Auxiliary schooner MALAHAT 1/2/1919 - 8/5/1919 Auxiliary schooner SUZANNE 30/5/1919 - 18/9/1919 USS LYDONIA 25/10/1919 - 26/3/1920 Seaman AB Schooner NORTHERN CHIEF 26/3/1920 - 10/5/1920 Discharged Auckland, re-engaged on an American vessel Auxiliary schooner ADMIRAL MAYO 9/7/1920 - 9/12/1920 AB. Engaged at Sydney, discharged at Callao, Peru Schooner CAMANO 6/1/1921 - 27/2/1921 Able Seaman. Discharged at Seattle USS LYDONIA 26/3/1921 - 6/9/1921 Seaman AB. Engaged at Seattle USS LYDONIA 7 /11/1921 - 22/10/1922 Bosun's mate 2/cl. Engaged at San Francisco USS LYDONIA 22/10/1922 - 31/3/1923 Bosun's mate 2/cl. Engaged at San Diego. SS BERMAGUI 26/3/1926 - 24/4/1926 AB SS ARKABA December 1941 - January 1947