

Basic Detail Report



00046905

Title

Autograph album of John Anderson, featuring various autographs, messages of friendship and good luck, verses and illustrations from John Anderson's friends in England, fellow passengers onboard MEDIC and new acquaintances in Melbourne

Date

1909-1912

Medium

Paper, leather

Dimensions

Overall: 28 x 137 x 161 mm, 271.28 g

Name

Autograph book

History

The first page of the autograph album is dedicated 'In remembrance of happy days to John Anderson from well wishing friends,' and was presumably a going away present given to John before he departed England for Australia on the White Star liner SS MEDIC in 1909. MEDIC was built by Harland & Wolff, Belfast in 1899. The second of five Jubilee Class liners, MEDIC had accommodation for 320 passengers and 100,000 refrigerated carcasses. On 3 August 1899 it embarked on its maiden voyage from Liverpool to Sydney via Cape Town. On its return trip MEDIC carried the first Victorian contingent of troops and horses to South Africa for the Boer War. During World War I MEDIC remained in commercial service under the Liner Requisition Scheme, due to its large frozen meat capacity. It returned to regular service in 1919, operating on the Australian run until 1927. In 1928 MEDIC was sold to Norwegian whaling company N Bugge, renamed HEKTORIA and converted into a whale factory ship. It was requisitioned by the Ministry of War Transport as an oil tanker during World War II, and was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sunk in the North Atlantic on 11 September 1942. A MEDIC passenger list in the National Archives in London shows 24-year-old John Anderson embarked from Liverpool on 16 January 1909. John travelled to Melbourne on ticket number 10017 and his occupation was listed as draper. The personal messages in John's autograph album reinforce the distance between Australia and the motherland ("We have no dearer word for our heart's friend, for him who journeys to the world's far end") while also hinting at John's reasons for travelling. On 15 January 1909 - the day before departure - John's friend W Capstick writes, "Dear Jock I wish you every success that Australia can afford to give you in your youth hoping you will find a gold nugget ... don't be long before you come back with best wishes." Subsequent pre-departure and onboard messages continue

the theme of good wishes to a young man seeking fortune and adventure in the Antipodes: Adieu dear amiable youth Your heart can ne'er be wanting May prudence, fortitude and truth Greet your brow undaunting. - Price, 15 January 1909 Look not mournfully on the past Enjoy the present - it is thine Go forth to meet the shadowy future With a manly heart and without fear. M Capstick, 15 January 1909 I will not wish thee grandeur I will not wish thee wealth Only a contented mind, Peace happiness and health. George Baldwin, Victoria Road, Diss, Norfolk, 2 February 1909 As the voyage nears its end, the passengers' messages take on a reflective tone, imploring John to remember them and their pleasant sojourn on MEDIC: Remember me is all I ask, But if remembrance prove a task Forget me. 28 February 1909 May your life always be as sunny as it has been on board the MEDIC. S B Hess, 28 February 1909 On 4 March 1909 an autograph from Mabel G Connell of the People's Home in Swanston Street, Melbourne gives an indication of where John spent his first weeks in Australia. A series of messages from 1910-1912 speak of deeper friendships formed with the Hill family of The Hermitage in Braybrook, northwest of Melbourne. On 23 June 1912, Mary Hill writes: Whatever you are, be that; Whatever you say, speak true; Straightforwardly act; Be honest in fact, Be nobody else - but you. On 1 May 1912 Winnie Hill - one of Mary's six sisters - writes, "Whether the weather is wet or fine, I shall always regard you as a friend of mine." The message is framed by a drawing of red poppies - later designated as a symbol of remembrance after World War I. Winnie must have had a talent for drawing, having completed a rather intriguing illustration of an Aboriginal hunter aiming a spear at two kangaroos in 1911. Mary and Winnie's brother Oscar A Hill also contributed a drawing to John Anderson's autograph album - a horse captioned 'The Captain's Last Charger.' A death notice for Mary, Winnie and Oscar's mother Catherine Hill in Melbourne's Argus (3 December 1932, page 17) indicates Oscar had predeceased her.