

Emigration 1911

George Angus

One of my father's older sisters, Lily Angus (b. 1885) emigrated to New Zealand in late 1911. She maintained a diary of the voyage in a small notebook with numbered pages, and she eventually tore these out and sent some 50 sheets home to her mother, brothers and sisters, as a letter describing her journey. She was unmarried and had been a member of Holy Trinity Church Choir. I suspect that the "G.T.S." which she mentions was some sort of sponsored emigration society. At any rate she soon married a Jack Hildyard, and settled down at Brightwater near Nelson to found a dynasty. Unfortunately I never met her, as she never re-visited her native land (which is hardly surprising when you read how she was a martyr to sea-sickness!).

Lily Angus
S.S. "Tainui", (1)
7th Dec 1911

This ship is very grand to look at, but has many drawbacks which we must all put up with. It is as long as from our gate to the loan (*Bullet Loan, a distance of 300 feet*), but it is very narrow, hardly the width of the road. (*some 35 feet*) Amidships are the first and second class passengers' quarters, aft belongs to the third class, & the forecastle for the crew. Third class passengers may walk all round the lower deck and part of the upper so there is plenty of room. (*After this first page, my Aunt proceeded to record a day-by-day diary of the journey*).

(*Wednesday*) Dec. 6th 1911.

Left Haddington at 6.45 p.m. Arrived Edinburgh, & left again for London (Kings Cross) at 10.20 p.m. Before leaving got an introduction to Mrs McPherson and family, also a Miss Fraser, going out to Wellington N.Z. Had a corner seat reserved, but fortunately got two nice young girls as travelling companions, which made a difference. Passed through Dunbar, Newcastle-on-Tyne, York & Grantham, stopping at each of these stations, and arrived in London at 7.45 a.m., rather late owing to fog. Everything wet and miserable. Met at Kings Cross by G.T.S. official (also by Jessie Nisbet) who conducted us to Liverpool Street Station, taking tickets for the party & getting us all there in good time, in fact we had about an hour to wait, so Jessie Nesbit and I went for breakfast & enjoyed a talk over it, getting back to Liverpool Street Station in good time for the boat train, which left for the Royal Albert Dock about 9.20 a.m. Such an exciting time; all rushing here and there, looking for children, luggage, etc. & everyone so excited. The G.T.S. party all kept together & got safely into the carriages reserved for them, together with their belongings. Then the train started for the Royal Albert Dock & we had the pleasure of looking through the rain at part of London. The stopping of the train was the signal for a general rush for the shed, where all the passengers were told to leave their friends meantime, give up their ticket to the official, pass through with hand parcels, be examined by the doctor, and go up the gangway into

the ship. After all the passengers were aboard and had found their cabins, the friends were allowed to follow, but the signal sounded all too soon, & "All friends ashore" was shouted on every side. Partings were made, and then came a long period of waiting, with just a short way between, so near and yet so far. Everyone stood about, wishing to get away, and yet longing to see the last of a known face.

We sailed away about one o'clock and went slowly out of the Thames, into the sea. No one seemed to know just what to do. I went down to the cabin, which four of the G.T.S. girls were to share, & tried to reduce it to order. My cabin trunk had been put in, so I got into it, to get out some things. On opening it I found the box of sugar, which I'd put in, had got shaken open & had managed to get amongst everything else in the (*trunk*). Got something to keep me lively, cleaning up the mess, which brought the day near teatime. Had tea. Walked about getting acquainted with the ship, till bed-time.

Friday, 8th Dec. Woke up early, got up and dressed partly but was so sick, owing to the rocking of the ship, that I had just to go back to bed, where I remained till the ship stopped at Plymouth, which was about six o'clock. Had a short walk & saw the lights of the town, then went to bed.

Saturday 9th Dec. Felt all right, got up and dressed, tidied up my bunk, & went on deck, where everyone seemed to be, like myself, looking around. More passengers came on at Plymouth, which made more confusion. We sailed away from Plymouth about four o'clock, & had a very rough passage. The vessel pitched and rolled, making everyone more or less sick. Almost every person aboard passed Sunday 10th in bed, & not a few remained there till Wed. 13th, I among the rest. Even old seamen were sick, as the passage through the Bay of Biscay was very bad. Sorry to say I don't know anything about that part of the voyage, as I had the happy distinction of having the doctor in attendance.

On Friday 15th Dec. we landed at Teneriffe, early in the morning, & on going up on deck, had a beautiful scene spread before us. The sky was a perfect blue, with hardly a cloud, such a difference to our own cold grey sky. We were lying in a bay, with green hills on one side, and the town, as much as we could see of it, nestling under their shadow. There seemed to be no sign of life at all, no smoke or bustle, but on walking round the ship to the other side, one found enough of confusion & activity. Crowds of dirty-looking Spanish men, in all sorts of boats, swarmed around, shouting "Oranges forty a bob" or "Bananas, Postcards, etc". Everyone wanted to buy, and it just meant looking after your own interests, as although lots of the foreigners could hardly talk, they all knew how to cheat. I didn't buy much. Had a few oranges, as we required something to quench our thirst, but didn't trouble much else. Spent a lively forenoon watching the rest of the passengers, buying real lace for large sums of money, which they might have bought in any town in England, for half of the sum. Lots of parties went ashore, but we heard that they had smallpox in town, so didn't venture. The ship was being coaled, which meant a delay, but eventually all was ready, & away we sailed.

After leaving Teneriffe, we began to feel rather warm. Saturday 16th Dec. was quite lovely. Nothing of importance was going on. As there are over four hundred third class passengers aboard, there are plenty of different sets, and always any amount of amusement going on & one has just to take a walk around to have quite a variety, but the life is too lazy for anything, and already, the passengers look bored.

Sunday 17th Dec. another lovely day. Church services held in the first class saloon, which was crowded. There are three clergymen aboard, the Bishop of Dunedin who conducted the service, & two other ministers, the Rev.s Colville & Williamson. It was a strange experience, being to church at sea, & I longed for home so very much. We had the hymn "Eternal Father Strong to Save" & one can never believe how true it is, until it is sung on the deep waters. The Bishop didn't preach a sermon, only spoke a few words, & announced that there was to be a service in the evening. It was also very nice. The other clergymen conducted it, & the elder gentleman preached taking as his text, "In my father's house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." There were few dry eyes as he proceeded. Nothing else of any note happened.

Monday 18th Dec. was very warm, & we all left off as much as possible of extra clothing. Some of the girls were like butterflies, in gay light dresses. There were sports held on the deck, some of which were very amusing, but I didn't go to many of them, as the heat was so great that even sitting still seemed to be a trouble, and the slightest movement caused the perspiration to drop off, like water. This heat continued all through the week.

On Wednesday 20th Dec. we crossed the Equator, but of course it made no difference just at the time.

Friday 22nd Dec. there was a big open-air concert, and on Saturday 23rd Dec. the first & second class passengers had a fancy dress ball on the upper deck, which the third class passengers were allowed to attend, as spectators. It was all very grand, everything lit up with electric globes of different colours, & draped with flags. Some of the costumes were good. One big fat man was dressed up as "Millin's " baby. (2) He had a white muslin dress, all done up with lace & blue ribbons and a cap to match, while he carried a doll. It looked so comical, to see such a big man dressed up like that. Another lady had on a really pretty dress of white silk, rimmed with hearts of red silk, with head-dress of hearts large & small. She was "Queen of Hearts". They were the two best characters.

Sunday 24 Dec., Christmas Eve. The sun shone brightly. Everyone had on light dresses and suits and just sat about trying to keep cool. There were lots of little tea parties going on, & all the children were excited over an invitation they all got, to go & meet Father Christmas, in the first class saloon, on Xmas day at three o'clock.

Xmas Day (1911) was one of general bustle & noise, and the poor stewards & cooks had a lot of extra work, getting the Xmas dinner ready. we had a

menu each, and quite a grand feed for those who liked it. Have saved the menu, and will send it home with this. Spent a quiet day, & thought a great deal of home, contrasting former Xmas days with this one. No doubt you would all be trying to keep warm, while we are making a study of the Art of keeping cool. Rather! There are quite a lot of musical people aboard, & the piano in the third class dining saloon is seldom without a performer of some sort, but I have only had one turn at it: as I don't feel qualified to take a place among the rest.

Thursday, 26 Dec. was another busy day among some of the third class passengers as there was to be a fancy dress ball, on the first class upper deck, & no one could go, unless in character. I didn't go, except as a spectator, & only for a short time, as it made me so envious to see them all dancing around. Of course I could have been with them, but didn't feel equal to it. The rule on this ship is that all the ladies must go down to their cabins at ten o'clock, which is late enough for anyone to be about, but, on the night of the ball, the time was eleven o'clock, & it meant twelve, before some of them thought of going to bed. In the cabins we can hear quite plainly what our next-door neighbours are taking about, so even if one does go to bed early, it makes very little difference.

The rest of the week was quite uneventful; most of the passengers were writing letters & getting ready for Capetown, where we were expected to land on Friday 29th. As it was, we didn't reach there till about ten o'clock (*p.m.*) & had to lie outside till sunrise, when we got into the dock. Before breakfast they had begun to coal the ship. It is all done by Negroes, who make a great fuss and mess over it, & take such a time into the bargain. I didn't intend to go ashore, but the coaldust was over everything, the din was awful, & one had only to walk down the gangway to be on land once more, so I went with the rest of our party. It is a long dirty walk from the dock to the town, so we hired an open cab (save the mark), with a nice clean native driver and got to town that way. It was a lovely morning & we did enjoy ourselves. We landed at the G.P.O. in Adderley Street, which is the principal town in Capetown. After posting our letters we had a stroll around, visiting the flower market, also the weekly market, held principally by Jews, every Saturday on the Parade, where they had a collection of articles, too numerous to mention, from toys to beds and bedding. There again the noise & confusion was great & amusing, but we had a good look round. Such a variety of colours both in dress & faces. The native women were better & cleaner looking than the men, but even they were sometimes disgustingly dirty. Most of them had children one, two or three, and generally carried large parcels, with perfect ease, on their heads. We bought, among the party, sixty lovely apricots for one shilling. Does that make your teeth water? It did mine, when I first saw them, but one can have too much of a good thing, Eh! We all had & were sorry for it. After leaving the fruit market, where I also bought eleven lovely peaches for sixpence, to take back to the boat, we proceeded to a newsagents shop, where I bought the good old Weekly Scotsman for 2d. It seemed a link with home to see it, especially after being so long without a paper. Everything seemed quite like home from the shop windows, but, on going inside, the difference could be seen at once, as in most cases, the shopkeepers were black, brown, or

yellow, & spoke broken English. Of course, I didn't go into any of the large shops, as I didn't require anything, and can't say what the shopkeepers were like there. The principal draper's establishment, Slattaforde, was just like P.T.s or Rentons, & the hats were just like home fashions, I felt quite out of it. We had some lunch, & then made our way up Government Avenue, past Parliament House, to the Museum where they had a large collection of birds. Ostrich, vultures, eagles, any amount I can't remember, but I knew most of them through seeing that book of Tom Paterson's, so he needn't worry about it not being correct. There was a room in the Museum, filled with models of different castes of natives. If Helen (*her younger sister*) had seen them she'd have had a fit, or a nightmare. Some of them were more ugly than monkeys, & very little bigger. They were horrid, but in the next room there was a fine collection of butterflies, some of which were gorgeous, & that took away the remembrance of the others. We left there & visited the Art Galleries, which were just behind the museum, then we had a walk in the Botanical gardens, & felt ready for tea. I had an invitation to go to the theatre, but thought I'd rather not go, although I might as well have gone, as we went back to the boat far too early, 8.30 p.m., and just had to stand about, as they hadn't finished coaling, & the mess was simply horrid. However, we saw a good deal of the town, & didn't waste our time while we were there, so we can always look back on that. Then we enjoyed watching the different parties getting back to the ship all laden with parcels, but very few the worse for liquor. Possibly we were in bed when that class arrived. They finished coaling about six o'clock, & we sailed away just after breakfast, about nine o'clock on the 31st December 1911. After leaving the town behind, the sea became very rough, and a great many of the passengers were sick, myself included, of course.

Monday, January 1st 1912. Happy New Year to you all. We have left the lovely weather behind & are back to rather cold winds again. The sea is very rough, & the sailors are preparing for rough weather. The passengers are getting on their heavy coats again, & hoping that we won't have a storm. New Year's Day passed very quietly. Some of the Scotch folks had teaparties etc., but I kept quiet, perforce, owing to the curious sensation, which I always have in a heavy sea. About six o'clock, another girl and I went round the ship for a walk, & were caught by a huge wave which came up over the side & drenched us to the skin, after which I went to bed & had a rest till the next day after breakfast. Some of the passengers are getting up a whist drive, but I can't play, so will just be out of it, not that I care much.

Wednesday 3rd January 1912. We had a big concert in the dining saloon. It was very good.

Thursday 4th Jan. (Helen's birthday. Many Happy returns old girl.) All the passengers have been forced to stay below, owing to the weather. Rain coming down in torrents, & everything wet & miserable. To add to the general discomfort, the sea has come in to some of the cabins, through the port-holes being left open, and the stewards are all rushing with buckets full of seawater, to put it back where it came from. Luckily it is not in our section, but we feel sorry for the others. Have learnt to play whist but don't much care for cards, so won't do much at it.

Friday 5th Jan. Still wet & miserable & very cold. We have had our share of changes in the weather lately, & on a voyage like this one must prepare for both hot and cold extremes.

Saturday 6th Jan. Slight improvement in the weather, but still bitterly cold. saw a whale spouting, but at some distance from us, so that we didn't get a proper look at it. The usual sports are being held. Races for men, etc. but we are too cold to stand watching, & prefer to walk around the town. (*deck?*)

Sunday 7th Jan. Still cold. Divine service at 10.30 a.m., 6.30 p.m., & 9 p.m. Attended two times & thought I'd done plenty. Read a little, walked some, & went to bed. Am feeling much better now.

Monday 8th Jan. Nothing much going on. Busy making collars to send home sometime, when we reach Wellington. Quite an uneventful week, so will pass to Saturday 13th Jan. We are having a grand concert tonight at 8.15 p.m. Some of the Stewards are to play. Yesterday, one of them sat down & gave a selection on the piano, & I don't know when I enjoyed anything so much. It was lovely. We are having printed programmes tonight costing 2d each, & the proceeds of the sale of them goes towards the Royal Alfred Aged Seamen's Fund, so there ought to be a rush for them. The men are having a tug-of-war today, so I must go & see it. Have just seen the tug-of-war & Scotland beat England. The concert was a great success, and the programmes drew nearly £2.

Sunday 14th Jan. Weather still cold & wet. Went to Divine Service & spent the day somehow.

Monday 15th Jan. More sports for the men, which are rather amusing. Had a dance on board, but didn't think much of it.

Tuesday 16th Jan. Another big concert in prospect, at which the prizes for all the sports, held on board, are to be presented. Concert was very good.

Wednesday 17th Jan. Sailors very busy getting the ship cleaned up, ready for landing at Hobart. Nothing extra going on.

Thursday 18th Jan. Heavy seas & rain. Storm brewing again. Sighted land about 5pm, but didn't expect to reach Hobart till tomorrow.

Friday 19th Jan. Inspection by Dr. from town, six o'clock a.m. Passengers had to pass along the Alleyway where the ship's Dr. & the Dr. from Hobart stood, but, beyond walking past, there was nothing, & that business was soon over. Then we had breakfast, but before going down I waited to see the ship tied up in dock. Hobart is really a lovely place. Such a difference to Capetown. Everything fresh & green, & all white people, instead of the black folks everywhere. We went ashore about ten o'clock, & went to the G.P.O., a fine building in the main street, Elizabeth Street. Then we had a walk and a look round, & had some lunch. we had a seat in Franklin Square, where there

was a fine statue of Sir John Franklin, who was Governor of Tasmania. The square is all laid out, just like West Princes St. Gardens, with a fine pond & fountain in the centre, but of course it is very small. After dinner we had a tram ride, all through orchards, to Sandy Bay, a beautiful place some four miles out of town. All the way along the route we saw the typical Hobart houses, mostly of wood with the veranda in front, & smothered in flowers, the chief of which seemed to be ivy geranium, which made a fine show. You will hardly credit it, but some of these geraniums had climbed up over the house-tops, & the amount of blooms was such, that hardly any green leaves were visible. We got a fine bunch of flowers, honeysuckle, fuschias, roses, & balm of gilead to take back to the ship. There was another lovely tram ride after tea to the Cascade tea gardens, where you can have light refreshment, & a walk in the real Australian bush (maybe). Hobart is a health resort for Australian folks, who flock there just at this time, so that the place was very lively, and fashionable too. Drapery goods, & in fact almost anything, was just about the same price as at home, some things were cheaper, so that isn't the drawback here. (Gooseberries were dear - 10d per basket!!)

We left Hobart early on Saturday 20th January. Everyone had two lazy days, then Monday was very stormy; the waves dashed right over the ship, & one or two were hurt. Fortunately the sea settled and we made good progress towards New Zealand, which we are on the eve of reaching, only one day behind our time, thank goodness we have had a safe voyage, and one which might have been very much worse in many ways.

(Arrived Wellington on Wednesday 24th January, 1912, about six p.m.)

Notes

- (1) *The Times* carried this advertisement on 17 November 1911:

NEW ZEALAND, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA, CAPE TOWN,
TENERIFFE - SHAW, SAVILL and ALBION COMPANY Limited
despatch their Magnificent ROYAL MAIL STEAMERS from London
(Royal Albert Dock) every four weeks calling at Plymouth.

Next departures:-

Dec 7 TAINUI (t.s.) 9957

Jan 4 IONIC (t.s.) 12232

Cheap fares, single and return.

CAPE TOWN REDUCED FARES from £9 9s.

- (2) Possibly 'Mellin's Baby'. If so, the passenger was dressed as the infant Humphrey Bogart. Bogart's mother, a commercial artist, sold a painting of her son to Mellin's Baby Foods in 1900. Like the Pear's Girl, it became their trademark and featured in advertisements both sides of the Atlantic in the early 1900s. EHG