

Basic Detail Report



00053717

Title

Lighthouse keeper journal from Booby Island and Goode Island

Date

1893 - 1929

Primary Maker

William Benjamin Norgate

Medium

Handwriting and printing inks on a range of papers, silver gelatin photo

Dimensions

Overall: 380 x 265 x 175 mm

Name

Journal

History

"Booby Island lighthouse was built in 1890 to light the western entrance to Torres Strait. Following a common Queensland design, the lighthouse tower is wood framed, with galvanised iron plating. Standing at 18 metres tall, the lighthouse was originally fitted with a Chance Brothers lantern and Second Order lens. Upgrades to the light have included the kerosene wick burner being switched to incandescent kerosene in 1917; the installation of a mercury float pedestal in 1928 and the conversion to diesel electric operation in 1958. In 1991 solar electric operation was introduced and the original Second Order lens was replaced by sealed beam array. Booby Island itself has a significant history, from ancient Torres Strait Islander creation legends, to Captain Cook's landing in 1770, and the landing of the mutinied Captain Bligh in 1789. Booby Island is sometimes also known as Post Office Island for the practice started in 1820 of passing ships leaving messages in a cave. This practice continued until 1874 when Thursday Island became the major port in the Torres Strait. In 1995, the sealed beam array was removed from the lighthouse and a Vega VRB-25 beacon was installed. In the same year, Booby Island lighthouse, which had been the most northerly manned lighthouse in Australia, was de-manned. The original Booby Island lighthouse lens and mechanism can be seen at the Green Hill Fort Museum on Thursday Island." [www.asma.gov.au} This journal by William Norgate is extraordinarily detailed and meticulously kept. In addition to the day to day events of life which generally revolved around maintenance of the lighthouse and associated fixtures, life on the island is recorded through transcribed letters to and from Norgate. In one letter Norgate talks of the trials of sharing the island with the other keepers; "Our principal work is of course to watch the light and keep it burning bright. During the day it is cleaning everything, there is very

little else to do. It is very lonely here for Lizzie, for though we live close to one another, she scarcely ever sees or speaks to anyone but myself. Of course there is no fear of quarrelling being like this, but I think she carries it too far. The Boss' people seem very nice but, much like herself, like to keep at home. " (5th February 1892). On Thursday 3 July 2008 Ron Coleman the former Curator of Maritime History and Archaeology at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane and the former State Maritime Archaeologist for Queensland died. Besides being the first State appointed maritime archaeologist he was also instrumental in the establishment of the Maritime Archaeological Association of Queensland in July 1982. Ron Coleman was a very well known, well published and highly respected archaeologist who worked on and had a serious professional interest in early colonial maritime history, maritime archaeology, Pacific exploration and ship technology. He was especially noted for his work on Jean François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse, HMAV BOUNTY, HMS PANDORA and the British Royal Navy. He oversaw several seasons' excavation work on the wreck site of HMS Pandora, led the first of two Australian expeditions to Vanikoro to exam the sites of La Pérouse and carried out extensive survey and excavation work on the Great Barrier Reef and in the Coral Sea. Ron Coleman left behind an archive of more than 150 books, photographs, field notes and 150 manila document folders which provide a snapshot of one of the pioneers of maritime archaeology in Australia.