

# Basic Detail Report

---

00049530

**Title**

Notebook belonging to Basil Helm

**Date**

c 1951

**Medium**

Ink on paper

**Dimensions**

Overall: 260 x 200 x 15 mm, 608 g

**Name**

Note

**History**

After the war, Helm continued in the Torres Strait Pilot Service until he resigned in 1954 to make a new life as a grazier, at a property named 'Jillamatong' near Braidwood in New South Wales. The Queensland Coast and Torres Strait Pilot Service originated in the 1890s as an association of pilots licensed by the Queensland Marine Board to pilot ships through the dangerous passages of the Queensland coast and the Torres Strait. Before 1884 individual pilots had offered their services, and shipping companies which regularly used the routes employed their own pilots. Licensing began in 1884 along with regulations as to how pilots should conduct their business. In 1893 a family firm of marine insurance brokers, Banks Bros of Sydney, became the secretariat of the pilots. The pilots themselves were self-employed, operating as a type of co-operative in which all the work and expenses were shared using a turn-by-turn system. At the end of WW1 there were 12 licensed pilots, at the beginning of WWII there were 15, by 1957 there were 31, by 1980 there were 40. In 1993 the Australian Maritime Safety Authority took over administration of the QCTSPS. The name was changed to Torres Pilots. With the diminishing number of ships on the Australian register, Australian mariners with the required expertise in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait became harder to find. In 2006 there were 30 pilots in the service, and pilots from other countries were being sought and trained. Pilotage extends from the Queensland border at Danger Point to Booby Island, a distance of 1372 nautical miles, making it the longest single pilotage in the world. Pilots also extend their pilotage to New Guinea and Bougainville, or as far as Western Australia. Since 1991, pilotage has been compulsory for all ships longer than 100 m, all oil and chemical tankers and liquid gas carriers, to employ a pilot. Membership of the Torres Strait Pilots has always carried prestige. Licensed pilots have to be master mariners, and until recent years had to have extensive experience in the passages of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. Applicants to join the service were always well known to the pilots, because they

had necessarily sailed through the region with them for many years. New pilots had to be acceptable to the existing ones. Licenses to join the pilot service were keenly sought after. Only two were accepted in 1942, the year Basil Helm joined.