



LAMP

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Cover photo – Galley Head, the presidential palace



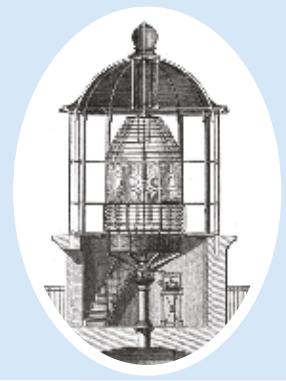
Photo by Richard Cummins

Galley Head lighthouse, located in county Cork, Ireland, has a rich history dating back to its construction in 1878. Originally built to be one of the most powerful lights in the world, the 69ft (21m) tower sits on top of Galley Head, giving it a focal height of 174ft (53m). The original revolving optic powered by coal gas burners was so powerful that it could be seen for 18 miles (30km) in clear weather. Since it was automated in 1978, its five white flashes every 20 seconds can be seen from an even greater range of 26 miles (42km). The two keepers' cottages can be rented out for short- or long-term lets by the Landmark Trust. One of these is managed by our new ALK president, Gerald Butler, who is also the attendant at the light. You can read more about his association with Galley Head elsewhere in this issue.

This atmospheric cover image was taken by ALK member and author of *Scottish and Manx Lighthouses*, Ian Cowe. Back in 2015, I travelled to the south of Ireland and stayed in the town of Kinsale, he explains. Early one morning, whilst the rest of the family were sleeping, I drove to Galley Head to take some pictures of the lighthouse. It has a fine-looking tower set on a beautiful and rugged headland. I had the place to myself and took photos from a number of different viewpoints. This shot was a last-minute decision. After I got in the car and started my journey back, the small boat in the creek caught my eye. On that trip I only managed to see a small part of Ireland's world famous Wild Atlantic Way and a few of the lighthouses on it. I very much hope to return one day and visit more of the Irish lights.



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Making waves

Neil Hargreaves, Founder/Chairman

On 15 May, I attended the Museum & Heritage Show at Olympia in London. I have been going to this show for the past three years now, and have always found it a worthwhile experience. This year was no exception, especially when, the following week, I received an email from the company CEO of one of the stands which I had visited, informing me that the draw they held at the end of the two-day show had resulted in the Association of Lighthouse Keepers winning the draw. The prize was £1000.00 to put towards digitising our archives. The company in question is Automated Document Services Ltd which is based in Scotland. Our archive team have been put in touch with them, and they will decide which items to prioritise. It will most likely be some of our larger items like vessel plan drawings and the larger lighthouse journals as the company have the larger specialist equipment to handle these items.

I also chatted to the people on the Towergate/Ecclesiastical stand, one of whom I had met at a previous show, and they became our ALK insurers. The show also gave a number of free talks on various subjects, so again I came away with a wealth of information.



It was very pleasing to hear that our first Anglesey trip for this year went down very well with everyone who attended. Even the weather was kind to them. I am reliably informed that the second trip to Anglesey was another success. A big thank you to our organisers, Sarah Kerr and Nerys Lamerick, and the rest of the events team for all the work that they do.

I also had a chat with Ken Trethewey who organised the Southwest trip in June. Ken informed me that, in spite of the windy weather, everyone enjoyed themselves and made the most of it, so well done, Ken, and all of the events team. Ken gave a glowing report on the invaluable help he had received from this team.

It is with great pleasure for me to give a warm welcome to our new ALK President Gerald Butler who, from the number of emails I have received, has proved to be a very popular choice. I should point out that, just as with any other new officer post, this position will have to be ratified at our next AGM in Folkestone.

I feel very grateful to all of our ALK officers who perform their various tasks voluntarily with outstanding results for the benefit of all of us. Thank you.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM in Folkestone in September.

From an NT display board at South Foreland

William Knott and his wife, Elizabeth, first came to South Foreland in about 1737. At this time, there was simply a coal fire on the roof, which required constant attention. The glazing round the fire had just been removed as it was proving difficult to see the light, so the keeper was working in the open all night.

William's 7th child, Henry, became assistant to his father. Henry had been apprenticed to a shipwright, and helped build *HMS Victory*. When *Victory* finally set sail, Henry, on duty, dipped the Union flag to the ship as she passed the lighthouse. William died in 1780, and Henry became Keeper. In 1793, the tower was rebuilt at a cost of £1,804 2s 3¹/₄d. Instead of a coal fire, they used the latest technology, an Argand oil lamp, fitted with reflectors to make the light brighter. The oil came from sperm whales. Henry's son, also Henry, became assistant to his father and took over in 1818 when Henry senior retired.

Henry (II) still had to do a lot of hard work, cleaning and polishing the reflectors for the oil lamp, and refilling the reservoir with oil, but at least he was inside. All his sons became lighthouse keepers. The eldest, Henry (III), worked at Flamborough Head, while John and George both served at South Foreland. These two brothers married two sisters from St. Margaret's village, Matilda and Catherine Goldsack. Sadly, John died aged only 31, but George and Catherine had 13 children! It wasn't just the Knott men who were involved. In 1840, Mary Knott is named as being in charge of the lower lighthouse at South Foreland.

George started work at South Foreland in 1849 and remained there for 13 years. During this time, he saw the first ever electric light in a lighthouse, as Michael Faraday conducted his experiments at South Foreland in 1858-60. George's eldest son, Henry (IV) Thomas, trained as a shipwright, but later was keeper at many lighthouses in Britain and abroad. George's 7th son, Edmund Horton, born at Bideford Lighthouse in 1872, was also a lightkeeper, and in 1899, was stationed at South Foreland.

When not tending the light, the keepers used their free time constructively. Some might fish for their dinner, others painted or drew, or carved items from driftwood. George was a real craftsman – he made a model of each lighthouse he was stationed at, and also pieces of furniture, including a spice chest, and a beautiful corner cupboard, made from pieces of mahogany, sycamore and oak selected from wreckage washed up on the beaches.

For a wonderful and more detailed description of the lighthouse and the Knott family, we recommend Ken and Clifford Trethewey's definitive 2022 book, 'Light on the Forelands,' published by Jazz-Fusion Books

The Executive Committee in action

Jill Murphy, Constitutional Secretary

This has been a fairly quiet quarter for the executive committee. Most of the focus has been on sending out the invitations and programme for this year's Annual General Meeting to be held in Folkstone. Following the closing date for applications on 11 July, approximately 120 people had signed up for the weekend. The hard work by the events team and the local organisers will now begin, coordinating the visits to the various lighthouses.

At the end of April, two members of executive committee, Bridget Box and I, joined John Best at Hurst Castle museum. As well as enjoying a day at the castle, the purpose of the exercise was to review the items in storage at Hurst with a view to rationalising the holding in the event that ALK have to suddenly vacate the premises. Our proposals for the way forward, possibly in conjunction with Bexhill Maritime, who now have the Royal Sovereign light, are the subject of an ongoing discussion in the executive committee. Just a reminder that anyone interested in assisting John Best and Dinah le May at Hurst will always be made most welcome.

I took part in the trip to Anglesey in mid-May run by Nerys Lamerick and Sarah Kerr. We were blessed with exceptional, sunny weather and, although the boat trip to the Skerries was deferred twice during the long weekend, we finally made it for a 'sunset cruise' late on the Sunday afternoon following the descent and ascent



of the 400 steps to and from South Stack. Our thanks go to the South Stack team, Stena Ferries and the boat company, Seacoast Safaris, for making it a very enjoyable experience and also to Nerys and the events team for all their hard work in putting the trip together.

Due to the ever-increasing and exorbitant cost of postage and printing, at the last executive committee meeting in June it was agreed that we will cease to issue annual membership cards. Instead, all members, when they renew their membership, will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of their subscription and any other information pertinent to them e.g. underpayments, gift aid etc. For those members without e-mail addresses, you will receive the same information in a letter which will continue to be posted to you.

One piece of good news on which to end this note is that our chairman, Neil Hargreaves, attended the Museums and Heritage Show at Olympia in May. He entered a prize draw on behalf of the ALK simply by visiting a stand at the show and won the first prize. The prize offered by Automated Document Services Limited is for £1000 towards digitisation services. Stephen Pickles and the archive team have decided which items in the archive would be most suited to use this service for which we would otherwise have had to pay and those items are now in Livingstone being processed. It just proves that 'if you aren't in it, you can't win it.'

Questions and answers

Occasionally the *Lamp* or Social Media team are asked a question that we just can't answer, so what better way to remedy than ask our membership? If you know the answer to any of the questions below, please drop us an email to: lamp@alk.org.uk and we'll share selected responses in future editions of *Lamp*.



From John Best (ALK Trustee)

On a recent visit to Cromwell Point lighthouse in county Kerry, Ireland, I saw these prisms on the lantern window frames. I've never seen them before. Is any Lamp reader able to share the reasons why they exist? Cromwell Point is a fixed optic.



And while he was in Ireland, John also spotted this: 'I've seen what seems to be a moat around certain Irish lighthouses I've visited, such as Inisheer and St John's Point, county Down. Does any member know why some Irish lighthouses feature these?'



From Chris Hobbs:

I came across this marking on a recent visit to Buchan Ness lighthouse in Scotland. Does anyone know what it means?

Fisgard lighthouse, the first beacon on the west coast of Canada

Richard Cummins



The historic Fisgard light

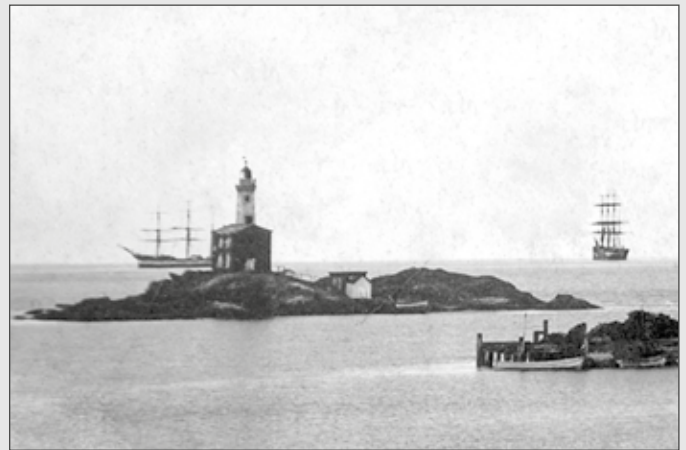
On the southern tip of Vancouver Island, where the temperate rainforest meets the surging tides of the Inside Passage, stands a sentinel of history, Fisgard lighthouse. The light station is situated on a small island (more of a large rock really) at the entrance to Esquimalt Harbour in Colwood. Before its light pierced the dark skies of the Pacific coast, the entrance to Esquimalt Harbour was the site of numerous shipwrecks, especially in winter when fierce storms battered the coast. Mariners feared this rugged shore, where jagged rocks lurked beneath deceptively calm water.

The Royal Navy had a base located here since colonial times, and the establishment of the lighthouse allowed the navy to operate its ships at night, getting vessels in and out without running aground on the dangerous low-lying rocks. Today, the Canadian Navy operates a base in the same harbour, and ships still use the light to navigate the channel entrance.

Fisgard lighthouse and its sister station, Race Rocks lighthouse, were constructed in 1859–60 to facilitate the movement of naval ships into Esquimalt Harbour and merchant ships into Victoria Harbour. These beacons were also seen as a significant political commitment on the part of the British government to the colony of Vancouver Island, partly in response to American gold miners flooding into the region: some 25,000 arrived in 1858, attracted by the Fraser Gold Rush.



Location of Fisgard lighthouse



Early photo of Fisgard Island. Photo Library and Archives Canada

Given that, as recently as 1844, American politicians were campaigning to extend their territorial control as far north as the 54th parallel, which included most of British Columbia, this influx was alarming, as it threatened to upset Britain's dominance of the region. Putting an imperial lighthouse here underlined the fact that this was British territory, and they were not going to permit it to be annexed by the United States of America. In addition, the Royal Navy's Pacific Squadron was based in Esquimalt and needed reliable aids to navigation for the increasing number of vessels traversing the treacherous waters of the Inside Passage, which separates Vancouver Island and the British Columbia mainland.

So, for both political and commercial reasons, Colonial Governor James Douglas, supported by surveyor Captain George Richards, petitioned the British government to build the lighthouse. Architects John Wright and Hermann Otto Tiedemann were selected to design the lighthouse, and it was constructed by a local engineer on Fisgard Island, named after the British Navy survey vessel HMS *Fisgard*. First lit on the evening of 16 November 1860, it is the oldest lighthouse on Canada's west coast and a silent witness to centuries of shipwrecks, storms, warships, and maritime stories.

The lighthouse has a 14.6m (48ft) tapered, cylindrical tower, built from brick on a granite foundation. It features a lantern with a balcony, which is topped with a distinctive



Replica boathouse adjacent to the station

red dome. The tower was designed to house a 4th-order Fresnel lens that was handcrafted and made by Chance Brothers of Birmingham in England. The cast-iron spiral staircase, which is still in use today, was made in sections in San Francisco and shipped up the west coast to Fisgard Island.

On the low hills just behind Fisgard Island, Fort Rodd Hill was built in the 1890s to defend the Royal Navy base at Esquimalt from potential American and later Japanese threats. When the concussion from firing the 6-inch guns from the newly built Fort Rodd Hill caused cracks to appear in the lantern glass, it was decided to place steel shutters on the landward side of the lantern room. This work was completed in 1897.

A fog signal became an essential feature, sounding mournfully across the strait to warn captains who were navigating blind in pea-soup fog, which is very common in this region of Vancouver Island.

Fisgard's light was originally fuelled by whale oil and later by kerosene. In 1929, after automation, it was electrified and radio beacons located on lighthouses along the coast were aiding navigation along British Columbia's coastline, leading to Alaska. In the early 1940s the acetylene lamp in Fisgard's tower was replaced by a battery-powered electric light.

In 1951-52 a causeway, initially designed as a defensive obstacle for Esquimalt's naval base, was built by the Canadian Armed Forces, linking the lighthouse and Fort Rodd Hill to the mainland. The causeway served as a torpedo barrier and now provides easy access to the lighthouse for visitors.

In 1956, the adjacent Fort Rodd military fortification was decommissioned and, although a caretaker was hired to protect the grounds, that job ended in 1957 as a cost-cutting measure. This allowed vandals to access the site and damage the buildings and steal objects that remained on site.



Fort Rodd Hill battery



The original spiral staircase



Interesting exhibits in the museum

In 1957, a fire, probably caused by vandals, gutted the interior of the building. It was spotted by the Rear Admiral from his house across the water in the naval base at CFB Esquimalt. The brick exterior acted as a chimney for the fire; only the flooring plus the iron staircase survived. The lighthouse was restored by Parks Canada.

The tower and the keepers' dwellings were designated a National Historic Site in 1958 and classified as Federal Heritage Buildings. The house has been converted into a museum featuring interactive displays that recount shipwrecks, storms, rescues and wartime maritime history; the spiral staircase and tower remain off-limits except for Coast Guard personnel, as the light is still an active navigation aid. The character of the light is isophase two seconds on/off, it has a red sector to mark dangerous submerged rocks, and the white light marks safe passage.

In June 2009, the federal government appropriated \$1.56 million to restore the lighthouse and open up the previously closed interior to visitors. At this time, the exterior of the station was also floodlit, which makes the station look visually impressive at night. Work was completed in time for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the lighthouse in 2010. Two related buildings on the site contribute to the heritage character of the lighthouse: a replica boathouse

built in 1978 and a replica storehouse built in the 1960s. Today, the station is kept in pristine condition and is a favourite destination among locals and tourists alike.

The station is now managed by the Canadian Coast Guard, which oversees hundreds of navigational aids along the coast of British Columbia and, unlike many other countries, maintains its lighthouses in good condition. Sailing up the Inside Passage to Alaska, mariners see many lighthouses which are painted white with red roofs and trim, and fresh Canadian flags fly proudly on all the manned stations. Together, the fort and lighthouse form a unique pairing of military and maritime heritage. Visitors can explore gun batteries, command posts, and underground magazines, all within walking distance of the lighthouse.

Though ships now use GPS and radar, the light still shines forth as a timeless symbol of guidance and hope. And as climate change and rising sea levels alter coastlines and challenge maritime infrastructure, Fisgard's future is being carefully planned. Preservation efforts are in place to ensure it will continue to tell its story for generations to come.

All photos by the author except where stated.

In our next issue, Richard will detail the rocky lives of the lightkeepers at the historic Fisgard station

The Lord Blayney disaster

Pete Goulding

Nearly 200 years ago, a ship ran aground near the Dee estuary with the loss of 47 lives and a cargo of assorted items. The melancholy accident — by law, all 19th century fatalities at sea were obliged to be described as 'melancholy' — was not particularly remarkable for the times but it raised several questions in the rumour-filled aftermath.

The *Lord Blayney*, a Liverpool-built, wooden paddle-steamer had been built in 1825 for service between Liverpool and Dublin. She was steam-driven with double marine engines and could carry 300 tons of cargo.

On the morning of Wednesday 12 December 1833, she left Warrenpoint in Carlingford Lough carrying 565.5 casks of butter, 106 bags of flour, 26 bags of oatmeal, 37 bags of oats, 8 bags of wheat, 2 bales of linen, 20 crocks of butter, 6 boxes of eggs, 4 bags of potatoes, 11 hampers and bags of fowl, 2 hogsheads of oysters, 13 boxes and bags of quills, 603 pigs and a valuable racehorse called Mount Eagle. Oh, and 47 passengers and crew, mainly 'pig-jobbers'.

One observer idly wondered why so much food was being transported out of a country wherein millions of people were facing starvation, pointing to the greed of absentee landlords as the probable reason.

The ship was due to arrive in Liverpool at 2am on the Thursday morning but she never made it. In fact, her whereabouts to date are still unknown. One eyewitness claims he saw a mast sticking out of the water near Prestatyn but later searches proved fruitless.

Since the start of December, violent storms on the Irish Sea had dominated the weather and the gale, or hurricane as some papers termed it, that blew up on 12 December was the latest in a long string of storms that had raged with precious little respite between. The *Lord Blayney* was lost around the Point of Ayr on Wednesday night. All throughout Thursday morning, the carcasses of hundreds of pigs were washed up. One man, ashore, said he had fifty pigs onboard. 'I paid for them all that I was worth in the world,' he said, 'and am a beggar now.'



The PSS Lord Blayney. It was said that the ship was later seen just prior to the Carlingford Lough disaster of 1916

The only living creature that survived was a pig washed up on a beach, and it is doubtful he or she survived very long thereafter.

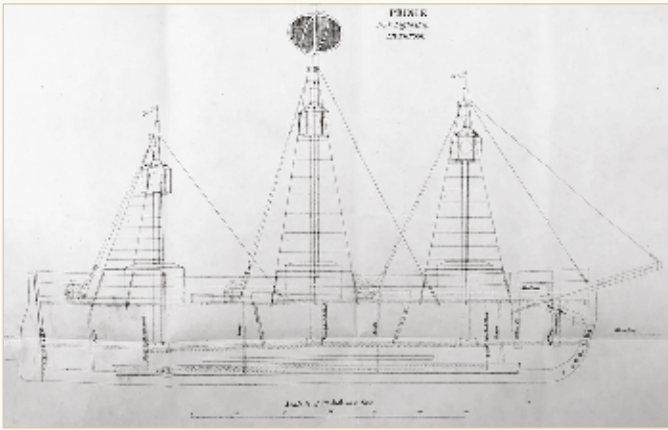
It very quickly became known in Liverpool that, at the time of the accident, the North West lightvessel, or 'floating light' as they were then known, had not been at her customary position and the crew were tucked up nice and warm in their beds.

The lightship was probably the *Comet*, built in 1820 by Humble and Hurry, a 'large three-masted vessel, moored in Liverpool Bay about 15½ miles (25km) from port', which showed three lights and sounded a gong in foggy weather, according to *Smith's Strangers Guide to Liverpool* (1840). It had a black ball on the centre mast and was situated 'off the Horse and Helbre Channels' in between the Mersey and Dee entrances, to guide ships to the former.

The floating light had in fact been one of the earliest victims of the 12 December storm. At 2am, nine hours before the *Lord Blayney* left Warrenpoint, one of her two chains had snapped. The captain had been ashore at the time but, said the *Liverpool Mercury*, the vessel was in the care of somebody considered quite competent.



The position of the North West lightship in 1878



Drawing of the Prince lightship which served on the North West station for many years from 1842. Liverpool claims it as the world's first iron lightship

However, it appeared that the vessel was starting to drift in the violent storm, a fact corroborated by the captain of the *Dolphin*, a government steamer that was arriving from Dublin. Knowing full well that being adrift on a lightship in the middle of such weather would almost certainly spell their doom, the crew members took the captain of the *Dolphin*'s advice, unshackled the remaining chain and accepted a gratuitous tow into Liverpool.

Messages were immediately sent to all pilot boats to warn incoming ships of the absence of the floating light, either by burning blue lights or by other signals. This had limited success as the pilot boats were far from equipped for dealing with hurricanes. Some ships were warned but others got in to port without any prior warning of the lightship's absence.

There were many attempts made to tow the lightship back to its station when it got light on the Wednesday morning but the ferocity of the gale prevented it. There was no relenting of the weather on Thursday and it was not until Friday morning that the crew were towed back in position. But by then the damage had already been done.

It was surmised that the *Lord Blayney*, nearing its destination, had looked for the lightvessel and, in its absence, had mistaken the single light of Point of Ayr for the three lights of the lightship and had foundered on the intervening sands. It was mentioned that the



Detail of an 1885 Admiralty chart by which time the lightvessel had been reduced to one mast

regular captain of the *Lord Blayney* had arranged to temporarily exchange ships with another captain bound for Portugal and the latter may not have been familiar with the route.

The press, however, was not to be denied its pound of pork viz: the lightship should have stayed in her position: the men in charge were known to be incompetent and no action was taken to warn other incoming vessels of the lightship's absence. Additionally, the *Lord Blayney* could have been towed back to its position by other ships leaving port on Wednesday.

Unsurprisingly, all the accusations were utterly repudiated by the Liverpool harbourmaster, the City of Dublin Steam Packet Office, the Captain of the *Dolphin* and the local lifeboat officers and the tragedy gradually slipped from the public gaze.

Roughly five years later, on the Night of the Big Wind on 6 January 1839, the North West floating light again drifted from its moorings. After two days of storms, with vessels stuck in Liverpool, the weather had suddenly abated to a dead calm and 50 ships hurriedly set out. But it was just the eye of the hurricane. As the weather deteriorated, ships tried to turn back but were blown onto sandbanks.

The North West floating light, which by now had morphed from a *Comet* to a *Meteor*, succeeded in making the river under her own sail. Again, it was unable to be replaced on its station and at least 115 people perished that night. And again, the press went overboard, citing the 'infamous conduct of the person in charge of the lightship for slipping his moorings and running for cover.'

One can only sympathise with those aboard the lightship, some of whom must have been around for the *Lord Blayney* disaster. Not only had they found themselves in danger of imminent perdition in the most violent storm in British history but they survived it only to be assailed by nameless vitriolic commentators who obviously had never been near a lightship in their lives.

Maybe, as one critic commented, there was a deficiency in the lightship itself, rather than in those who manned it.



Unnamed traditional lightship c.1800

Angles highlights of Harwich – Part one

Joy Tubby

In May, we took a break from our normal ALK East Anglia Angles lunch to venture a little further afield. The lunch is usually held at the Lighthouse Inn at Walcott, followed by a visit to Happisburgh lighthouse. Whilst this event is primarily aimed at members in the East Anglia region, we are often joined by members just outside our region, and they are very welcome.

This year, however, on learning that the Harwich Society had joined the ALK as corporate members, it seemed an opportune time to visit them and the day out turned into a weekend away.

Harwich has thrived as a seaport since the 1660s and forms a natural harbour between the Rivers Orwell and Stour. It is the only large sheltered anchorage between the Humber and Thames and therefore became a substantial naval base. Samuel Pepys, the famous diarist and former Master of Trinity House, served as MP for Harwich between 1679 and 1685, while notable adventurers such as Plymouth pilgrim Christopher Jones, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, and Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson all sailed from the port.

A lesser-known fact is that the 1980s TV show *Hi-de-Hi* was filmed at a holiday camp near Harwich, and there is a *Hi-de-Hi* exhibition at the Harwich Museum next to the High (de-High?) lighthouse.

So, on a beautiful sunny Friday morning in early May, a small group of ALK members gathered at the door of Trinity House to meet with Neil Jones, communications manager. This had been a last-minute tour offered to those planning to arrive on Friday, and numbers were strictly limited. Trinity House is located on the quay at Harwich and is a magnificent building, replacing two earlier buildings alongside.

Across the road is the impressive buoy yard to which we walked in our hi-viz jackets. Here, Craig, the manager, explained the different types of buoys. Some pristine buoys waited for their first mission, whilst another, over a hundred years old, awaited refurbishment for its next task. Whilst topped with solar panels and LED lights, some of these buoys still use the old cast iron bells, so they really



Buoys will be buoys



The ALK storms the High light

do reuse as much equipment as possible. Alongside the buoys were massive lengths of chains used to hold the buoys in place.

Afterwards, we visited the magnificent operations centre, with its unstaffed reception desk. In fact, the whole building was very quiet in general due, Neil explained, to widespread hybrid working. We were escorted to the operations control room and were warmly welcomed by David Hayes, who explained the purpose of the bank of screens on the wall. David's grandfather, Jack Hayes, had been a lighthouse keeper, so he is a third-generation Trinity staff member.

Trinity House not only monitors its own lights constantly, but also those of the Northern Lighthouse Board and Irish lights overnight. In addition, it keeps tabs on local aids to navigation, including buoys. It no longer monitors Happisburgh lighthouse but, if we experience a lamp failure, we can report it directly online to Trinity House, enabling a Notice to Mariners to be issued. We also have our own local monitoring system in the form of a high-tech mirror strategically placed in the attendant's garden, and are quickly alerted to any anomalies by volunteers via social media.



The very Tudoresque Low lighthouse

We also discussed the recent incident off the Humberside coast involving the MV *Stena Immaculate*, which was struck by the MV *Solong* while at anchor. Ironically, THV *Patricia* was in dry dock in Hull so NLV *Pharos* was tasked with assisting. David explained that this is the first time virtual buoys have been used to mark a hazard. Depending on the nature of the water, either physical or virtual buoys will now be used.

Following our Trinity House tour, we passed THV *Alert*, the Trinity House rapid intervention vessel, which was moored alongside the quay, and the two former Trinity House buildings, the former buoy yard, and *Miranda*, which has now been sold off privately.

After refreshments on the pier we dispersed to reconvene in the evening at the local Mayflower restaurant. A few more ALK members joined us for the evening, so with good food and great company, it was the perfect close to our day.

Another bright and sunny morning greeted us as more ALK members gathered at Harwich High lighthouse on Saturday morning. Conveniently located just opposite Harwich Town railway station, it was an easy journey for those arriving by train, a route several members took full advantage of.

Andy Taylor from the Harwich Society warmly greeted us and we split into two groups to visit the High and Low lights in turn. Our group began at the High light, where Andy gave us a thorough tour, working our way up the tower and into the various rooms. We learned about various families and occupants of the tower, including Lighthouse Lil, who was well known in the area. Andy entertained us with his passion and knowledge and showed us the gallery of photos of the various lighthouse-related families.

At the top, in the lantern room, a spectacular view greeted us from the large window, which looked across the green towards the Low lighthouse on the seafront.

The High and Low lights were built in 1818 to replace two previous towers erected in 1665. The High light on



The High from the Low



Chairman of the board



Light conversation at the Low light museum



The High light of the weekend



The current Harwich lighthouse!

West Street worked with the Low light on the promenade to guide ships into a safe channel. However, the two lights proved ineffective, and in 1816, General Francis Slater was granted funds to improve them under the supervision of Trinity House. He also had to contribute over half of his profits towards the upkeep of the local street lighting and the church.

The two new towers were built on the original sites, though slightly realigned to the southwest and both lighthouses were converted from coal to Argand oil lamps. The High lighthouse is a 70ft (21m), nine-sided brick tower with a brick chimney extending from its roof. A white light powered by nine oil burners was initially displayed in a window 40ft (12m) below the top.

In 1822, the lower light was moved 25 feet closer to the top, and an additional burner was added, increasing its range. The High light was restored in 1974. The National Vintage and Television Trust leased the lighthouse in 1991, opening it up as a museum. After being closed for some time, the lighthouse has recently been reopened to the public.



The famous treadwheel crane

After an unexpected and fascinating detour to the nearby Treadwheel Crane, we swapped places with the Low lighthouse group. This light has a distinctive octagonal tower with a pagoda. Its light, which displayed three oil burners with reflectors, was later changed from white to red in 1819 to distinguish it from the High lighthouse.

Trinity House took over the operation of both lighthouses in 1837, until they were decommissioned in 1863, due to the build-up of the Landguard Spit, which had changed the channel's course.

The two lighthouses were sold to Harwich Town Council in 1909. Trinity House reclaimed the Low light in the 1970s and used it as a pilot station. Since 1980, the

Harwich Society has used it as a maritime museum and the volunteers gave us a very thorough tour. The lantern room contained the lighthouse exhibition which featured an interpretation board prepared with the help of Neil Hargreaves, former lightkeeper and Harwich resident, who happened to be present in our group!

All photos courtesy of Joy and Patrick Tubby

ALK AGM Weekend 2025

Ed Peppitt, South East Representative

With registration now closed, preparations are in full swing for this year's ALK AGM weekend in Kent, taking place from 26-29 September 2025.

We're thrilled to announce that 120 members are expected to attend, making this our largest AGM gathering to date. Our packed programme of lighthouse-related visits and activities includes three exceptionally rare lighthouse access opportunities:

- North Foreland – For the first time in a generation, members will be able to step inside the lighthouse and climb the tower, rewarded with rarely seen views across the Channel.
- South Foreland Low light – Thanks to the generosity of the new owners of the manor house at South Foreland, we've been granted special access to the exterior of the former low light, which lies within their private grounds. Other than a single ALK visit in 2021, it has been off limits for over a century.
- Dungeness (New lighthouse) – In addition to the iconic Old lighthouse, Trinity House has kindly agreed to open the current operational lighthouse at Dungeness, another first for ALK members.

These rare visits are in addition to tours of the main South Foreland lighthouse, the Ramsgate harbour light, and a wide range of optional excursions. Highlights include the wartime tunnels beneath Ramsgate, the newly uncovered gun emplacements at South Foreland, the Fan Bay tunnels, the Roman lighthouse at Dover Castle and a ride on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway.

Welcome packs and further details will be sent out shortly. We can't wait to share this unforgettable weekend with you.



South Foreland low light



South Foreland lighthouse



Dungeness New lighthouse

Events update

Sarah Kerr

The events team, in partnership with a number of regional representatives, have been working on several forthcoming ALK trips both this year and next.

ALK AGM 2025

We are just a matter of weeks away from this year's AGM weekend. With around 120 people registered to attend, the logistics have been a challenge, but there has been a great team working behind the scenes to make it happen.

We were delighted to gain approval from the new owner of the Low light at South Foreland who has offered visits to the lighthouse. Unfortunately, we will not be able to get inside the tower, but it is a great opportunity for members to see it close up. The weekend will also be an amazing opportunity to get inside North Foreland lighthouses and the new lighthouse at Dungeness. We look forward to seeing many members at this exciting AGM weekend.

At a recent ALK Executive Committee meeting, Whitehaven/St Bees was approved as the location for the 2026 AGM weekend. More details will be shared ahead of the AGM in Folkestone.

Anglesey

With a waiting list of members still wishing to take part in the stunning Anglesey event, we plan to organise at least one further event in 2026. Those on the waiting list will be informed once a date has been set.



Buddon Ness. Photo Lighthouse Accommodation

Contact the team

If you are interested in attending any of the above events please let us know by emailing events@alk.org.uk or calling Sarah Kerr on 07961 076918



Solent

We hope to have been in touch with members in the South Central and South East regions with an update on the Solent event very soon if information has not already been shared. This event is currently expected to be specifically targeted at members in the aforementioned regions but, if it goes well, we may well be offering a rerun to the wider membership in 2026.

County Cork

Planning ahead, the events team has been working with the ALK's Ireland regional rep, Rosie Drysdale, to organise an event in county Cork for spring 2026. We are hoping to have contacted ALK members about this event prior to this copy of *Lamp* arriving with you. The three-day event is likely to feature Galley Head lighthouse (with our new president, Gerald Butler, on hand as a tour guide), Mizen Head lighthouse and, weather permitting, the glorious Fastnet lighthouse. Further lighthouses may also feature.

Souter and St Mary's

In addition, members of the events team are also in the very early stages of planning events in northeast England (including Souter and St Mary's lighthouses) and Angus (featuring Buddon Ness and Bell Rock lighthouses). More details will follow once plans are in place.



Mizen Head. Photo by Pete Goulding

Lin Richards' fans, expecting his account of NSW's minor lights, will doubtless be gutted that it has been held over to Lamp 146. However, good things come to those who wait.

A baptism of water at Longships

Anthony Mills

My love of lighthouses came from annual holiday visits to my aunt who lived in Mevagissey. From the Cornish coastline, you could see both the Eddystone lighthouse and the Wolf Rock. After finishing school in 1973, I saw the recruitment adverts posted by Trinity House and offered myself for the lighthouse service. My training was completed at Blackwall, after which I was posted to the Lizard as an SAK.

But my real love was for tower rock stations and my opportunity came when I was sent to Longships in 1974. Staying at a local public house in Penzance, four successive attempts were made from there to relieve the keepers, but to no avail, the sea being just too rough. It was in fact the only time I have ever been sea-sick.

However, there was a certain doggedness when, a day or two later, the stormy weather seemed to abate slightly. We set sail again determined that 'this was it'. When we approached the lighthouse, we transferred to a small boat with an outboard motor to get us in close. As soon as the waves were right, the boat edged as near as possible to the landing to allow the relief keeper to jump onto the station and an exchange to be made.

Needless to say, I was the last to be transferred. By this time, the front of the boat was very wet and slippery, and the sea conditions were starting to deteriorate. At the command, I attempted to leap off the boat but promptly slipped and fell headlong into the sea. Thankfully I was immediately hauled out onto the landing, soaked to the skin. I should add that Trinity House uniforms, when wet, are very heavy. That near miss convinced the coxswain that it was getting too dangerous to continue. The rest of our bags and food containers were dragged from the fishing boat through the water by rope onto the station. It was an interesting introduction to life on a tower rock.

Those who have served on these stations will be very aware of the interesting sequence of events that takes place when big waves hit the base of the tower. To begin with, there is that dull thud and slight movement which can make ripples on the top of your cup of tea. The air pressure changes as the wave travels up the side, so your ears pop; the room darkens as the water passes the window; and then the television goes off as the spray hits the aerial.

It was in such a storm that the PK (whom I think was called Geordie Peacock) realised that the copious amount of spray engulfing the tower was getting into the drinking water because the valve in the lantern that



*The author as a young SAK.
Photo courtesy Anthony Mills*



*My Longships.
Photo courtesy Anthony Mills*

caught rainwater from the roof was still open. Being the youngest and probably the most agile, it was voted that I should be the one to go out and close it. With a rope tied round my waist, the door in the bottom half of the lantern was opened and I inched myself round. Of course, the position of the valve had to be directly opposite the access to the gallery.

The roar of the waves, the spray and the sound of the wind is something I haven't forgotten. I'm not sure such action would be endorsed by Health and Safety, but needs must on a tower rock. Interestingly, although we had arrived by boat, we were taken off by helicopter. There was no landing pad atop the lantern in those days, so the Wessex helicopter had to hover above the lighthouse, and we were winched up from the landing. It was an exciting first visit and I was hoping to return to Longships to experience the station in calmer conditions but instead found myself being asked to go to Round Island.



Water, water everywhere.

Sea Lights (from The Ballad of the Royal Ann)

Crosbie Garstin

Flashed Lizard to Bishop
They're rounding my fish up
Close under my cliffs
where the cormorants nest,
The lugger lamps glitter
In hundreds, and litter
The sea-flows like spangles.
What news from the West?

Flashed he of the mitre
The night's growing brighter
There's mist over Annet,
but all's clear at sea.
Lit up like a city,
Her band playing pretty,
A big liner's passing.
Aye, all's well with me.

Flashed Wolf to Round Island,
Oh you, upon dry land,
With wild rabbits cropping
the pinks at your base,
You lubber, you oughta
Stand watch in salt water,
With tides tearing at you
and spray in your face.

The gun of the Longships,
Boomed out like a gong - Ships
Are bleating around me
like sheep gone astray.
There's fog in my channel
As thick as grey flannel-
Boom- rumble- I'm busy,
excuse me, I pray.

They winked at each other,
As brother to brother,
Those red lights and white lights,
the summer night through;
And steered the stray tramps out,
Till dawn snuffed their lamps out,
And stained the sea meadows
all purple and blue



Crosbie Garstin in
military uniform

Crosbie Garstin was born in Penzance in 1887 and during his life authored poetry and novels, including contributions to the famous Punch magazine. He was also briefly a cowboy before serving in King Edward's horse regiment in the first world war. Crosbie's novels, the Penhale trilogy, are thought to be the inspiration for the famous Poldark series. In 1930, Crosbie disappeared at Salcombe when his rowing boat capsized. His two friends made it back to the shore but Crosbie, the strong man and the best swimmer, was never seen again.

Letters to the editors

From Nick Ward

The stories about errant fog signals on Longships and Dundalk (Issue 144) reminded me of an incident on Sark some years ago. The accommodation had just been refurbished for holiday lets and I stayed there for a week with my family as a trial run. It was an enjoyable stay, apart from the fog signal sounding frequently for no apparent reason. Apparently, people living nearby had been complaining and, as a Trinity House engineer, I took it upon myself to investigate. I found that a local spider had spun a web in front of the sensor on the fog detector. Once this was removed, silence reigned!

Otherwise, our stay was very pleasant, although there were complaints from family members about the steps - those of you familiar with the station will know that it is situated halfway down a cliff (see photo)!



Top: Sark lighthouse. Photo courtesy of Nick Ward
Below: Sutton East lighthouse. Photo courtesy of Wisbech Standard

From Doug Hilton

Many thanks for publishing the article about our Sir Peter Scott lighthouse in the summer edition of Lamp.

Both lighthouses have been illuminated since 1985 when ours was restored from a ruin. Originally, they were intended to be identification marks showing where the channel was on an otherwise flat coastline and also as leading lights to navigate the sandbars. In recent years they have assumed a different additional function.

Some years ago, ships used to come in forwards and turn by the dock but one miscalculated, got stuck across the river on a falling tide and broke into three parts, blocking the navigation for about three months. Now ships turn at the very entrance of the river at a place called Cribbs Hole and come in backwards for three miles. The lights from the lighthouse are a significant navigation aid for keeping them in the middle of the channel in reverse and in the dark. The harbourmaster is quickly onto it if there is ever a bulb failure!



Welcome to our new president, Gerald Butler

Ian Hogarth

Following the untimely passing of Ian Duff last year, we are delighted to announce Gerald Butler as the new president of our association.

As an Irish lightkeeper, Gerald's name is very familiar to many ALK members. He joined the Commissioners of Irish Lights in 1969 and, after completing his training, served a 21-year career as an assistant keeper at multiple lighthouses including Bull Rock, Old Head of Kinsale, Wicklow Head, Tuskar Rock, Ballycotton, Skellig Michael, Inishtearaght and Eagle Island. Lightkeeping is a long tradition in Gerald's family history, and Gerald is the third generation (on both sides of his family) to serve. Lighthouses and lightkeeping are in his blood!

Gerald served extensively at the famous Fastnet lighthouse off the south-west coast of Ireland, being on duty there during the 1979 yacht race disaster of which he has many memories from his unique position. His full-time career as a lightkeeper ended in 1990 as the Irish lighthouse automation programme

reached its conclusion and keepers were made redundant. However, Gerald's father and, later, his mother were attendant keepers at Galley Head lighthouse in County Cork and, in time, Gerald took on the role from his mother, a position he still holds. Galley Head lighthouse is an important part of their family history, and very much Gerald's spiritual home!

As well as being attendant keeper at Galley Head, Gerald studied and obtained an MA in Lighthouse History from University College Cork. He continues to actively promote lighthouse heritage and local history, lecturing extensively on lighthouses as well as making regular appearances on radio, TV and podcasts, describing his life as a lightkeeper and the rich history of lighthouses. His memoir, *The Lightkeeper*, was published in 2012 by Liffey Press. He is a long-time supporter of the ALK and lives close to Galley Head lighthouse with his wife, Meria. Together they are housekeepers for one of the remaining lightkeeper houses at Galley Head, available for self-catering holidays by the Irish Landmark Trust. The house they're responsible for is the same property that was Gerald's home when growing up!

Gerald commented that he was honoured and delighted to be nominated for the position of president by the ALK trustees and paid tribute to Ian Duff for his service and contribution in the president role.

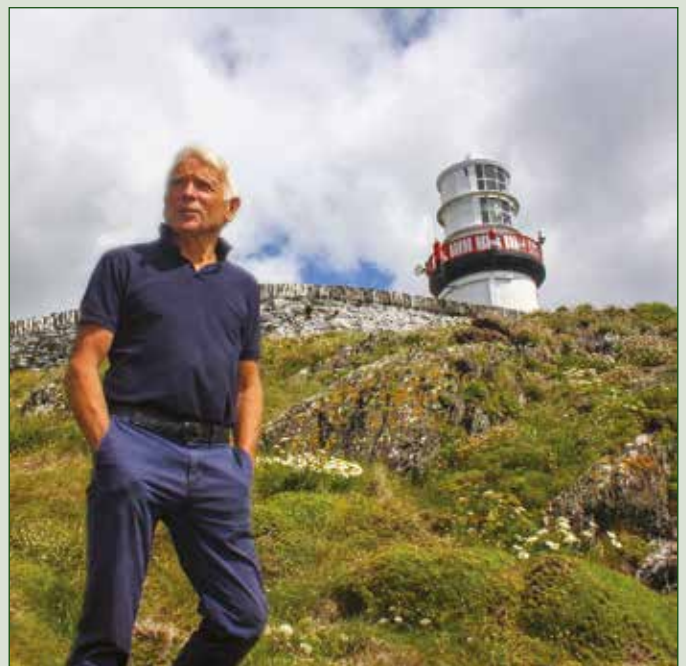
Gerald's appointment is effective immediately and will be ratified by members at the AGM later this year.



Gerald's parents, Pauline and Larry, at Galley Head.



Still keeping watch



At home in the garden. Photo by Ian Hogarth

Keeping Watch: have you discovered the ALK's podcast?

With Season 3 drawing to a close, it's a great time to reflect on recent episodes of *Keeping Watch*, the ALK's own podcast dedicated to lighthouses and the people who kept them. It was the first full season co-hosted by Ed and Mel and, while having two hosts didn't quite speed up production (as hoped!), it brought new energy and an extra layer of personality to each episode. It's also been enormous fun to produce.

Season 3 has featured more voices, more memories, and more reminders of the deep connection so many of us feel to lighthouses. We kicked off with a lively conversation with Chris Foulds, packed with tales of shipwrecks, ghostly encounters, singing and companionship. In Episode 2, we shared TV presenter and historian Paul Murton's AGM talk, reflecting on his short-lived but eventful time as a lightkeeper.

Paul was followed by Gerald Butler in Episode 3, who offered a deeply personal look at his move from lighthouse keeper to fisherman, and the impact that automation had on his livelihood. In Episode 4, Mel interviewed Robert Fong, curator of the Museum of the Gulf Coast, about the history, quirks, and challenges of three Texan lighthouses.

Episode 5 was the one we never wanted to make: a heartfelt tribute to Ian Duff, with memories and stories from friends, colleagues, and fellow ALK members.

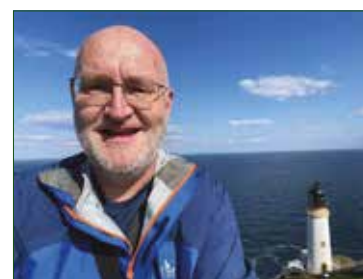
Episodes 6 and 7 were a real pleasure to record. We spoke first with Gordon Medicott about his career in the service, and then turned the tables, as Mel interviewed his wife, Lou, about the life of a lighthouse keeper's wife. Episode 8 explored the paranormal. ALK education officer, Mark Lewis, shared stories of ghostly sightings, folklore, and his search for scientific explanations behind hauntings in lighthouses around the world.

In Episode 9, Ed spoke with engineer and TV presenter Rob Bell about the future of lighthouse heritage and the challenges behind filming his superb TV series *Lighthouses: Building the Impossible*. Episode 10 featured Jeremy D'Entremont, the US Lighthouse Society's historian and host of the *Light Hearted* podcast. Jeremy discussed his favourite New England lighthouses and previewed his forthcoming European lighthouse tour.

And in Episode 11, Mel chatted with Scottish photographer Conor Gault, who is on a mission to capture every living Scottish lighthouse keeper, and the lighthouses where they served, on large-format film. He spoke movingly about the people, places, and process behind the project.

We hope you've enjoyed listening as much as we've enjoyed recording. And if you've yet to tune in, now's the perfect time to catch up, before Season 4 launches this autumn.

Keeping Watch is available on all major podcast platforms, and you can listen to all 36 episodes from Seasons 1 to 3 on the ALK website: www.alk.org.uk



Ed Peppit



Mel Charles



Jeremy D'Entremont

The Red Pier light at Douglas



1897 harbour scene.

Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

This ornate Georgian lighthouse was a major landmark of Douglas, Isle of Man for over 130 years. It replaced a brick tower which, along with the pier it adorned, was destroyed in a terrible storm in 1786. The new pier, constructed in the last few years of the century of Runcorn sandstone and thus named the Red Pier, became the centre of maritime life in Douglas and a stroll down to the lighthouse to observe the boats, pilots, ferries, buskers and entertainers, was a great attraction for locals and tourists alike. Designed and built by George Steuart, the 35ft (10.5m) lighthouse originally housed four Argand burners with parabolic reflectors.

By the twentieth century, however, Douglas was finding it difficult to cope with the increase in shipping, despite the additions of the Victoria and Battery piers and so, after decades of procrastination, the Red Pier was finally extended in 1936. Unfortunately, this necessitated the removal of the beloved lighthouse on its 50ft (15m) wide raised platform.

The art of lighthouse bagging in Maine

Graham Watson



Cape Neddick light

Lying in the northeast corner of the US, the state of Maine is a region known for maple syrup, lobsters, moose, whoopie pie, Moxie and some of the world's most breathtaking lighthouses. The coastline, 3500 miles (4800km) long (5000 miles, or 8000km, if you include the islands), is ragged and dangerous, with a history of shipwrecks, changeable weather, sea fog and icy winters. Along the coast, there are 65 lighthouses, many on islands, ledges or on spits of rocky land jutting out into the sea. This makes a journey to see many of them a daunting task.

In 2014, we, as a family of four adults from the UK and two adults and two pre-teenage boys living in New Jersey, decided to meet up en route to Camden, Maine, where we had rented a house in the harbour area. As an artist and lighthouse lover, I was aware that it was important to make it a holiday rather than just a lighthouse pilgrimage.

Following on from two days in Boston, where we visited various historical sites, the art gallery and the department of Gesticular Engineering at the MIT, the UK members of our party set off up the coastal route towards southern Maine. Our first overnight stop was in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where we visited the Strawberry Banke Museum and our son-in-law went on a rare records hunt.



The lighthouse at Pemaquid Point



Portland Head with Ram Island Ledge in the background



The Portland Breakwater light



Curtis Island light and dwellings

Our first lighthouse encounter was the Cape Neddick light situated on an island known as the Nubble, only 50ft (15m) from the rocky shore. The lighthouse, built in 1879, has a 41ft (12.5m) cast-iron tower and originally had a fog bell that could be heard six miles (10km) away at the light on Boon Island. The proximity to the shore meant the keeper, via an attached line and bucket system, could bring provisions over and transport his kids to attend the local school! No health and safety then! The nearby seafood shack did an excellent clam chowder/lobster roll, and an artist was churning out lighthouse paintings at \$500 a time!

Travelling further up the coast to Cape Elizabeth, we met the rest of our party in the Two Lights State Park. The lights consist of two identical cast-iron towers built 900 feet (274m) apart in 1874. The west tower, once owned by actress Betty Grable's ex-husband, had long since been deactivated, but the east tower could be viewed in the grounds of a private house. The famous American artist, Edward Hopper, of *Nighthawks* fame, who spent a good part of his life in Maine, produced a *Two Lights* oil painting.

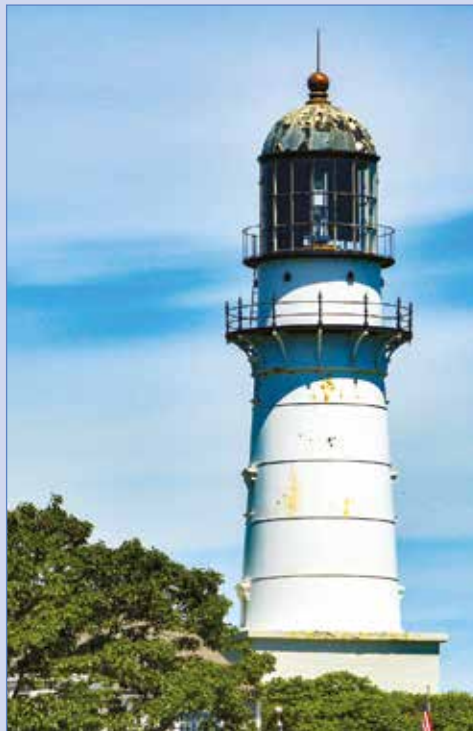
Arrival in Camden showed us what a great choice we had made for the following week, a lovely house right on the harbour with everything within walking distance, including great views, small shops, nice places to eat, coastal cruises, etc.

Portland, Maine, is a major seaport in Casco Bay and the harbour entrance is protected by four lights. We visited the most photographed and oldest lighthouse in Maine, the Portland Head light, an 80ft (24m) tower built in 1798 in a beautiful setting, with the Ram Island Ledge light constructed in 1904 a mile offshore. On this coast partly submerged rocks are hazardous to shipping so numerous ledge lights have been built as warnings. It was possible to climb the lighthouse, visit the seafood shack and shop, which we did.

In South Portland, we visited the 28ft (8.5m) Portland Breakwater light in Bug Light Park, and also managed to take in the Spring Point Ledge lighthouse, a spark plug light with a 54ft (16.5m) tower built on four levels.

The Portland Historical Society lies close to the park and houses artefacts relating to shipwrecks and lighthouses. During a visit to the Farnsworth Art Museum, which houses some minor paintings by Andrew Wyeth, possibly one of America's greatest artists, we noted that also located here is the Lighthouse Museum of Maine, containing the largest collection of lighthouse lenses in the US.

A two-hour excursion from Camden one day took us to the Pemaquid Point light, built in 1826. Although it was never too difficult to reach by land, there was no landing place by sea, meaning tenders with provisions had to anchor off the rocks, a very hazardous process. It



Cape Elizabeth lighthouse east



Owls Head



Spring Point Ledge spark-plug lighthouse

is a great location and remains my favourite lighthouse. It was possible to climb the tower, eat in the excellent café and buy all sorts in the shop. I still have the sweatshirt! There was a small art gallery here with excellent paintings of the local area. My grandsons wanted to know where the beach was at this point, not so easy to find in this part of Maine, but we managed to find one so they could spend the afternoon there.

We also journeyed up to Rockland and got to visit the Owls Head lighthouse, where the size of the lantern room

meant we could only visit four at a time. Situated on the western arm of Penobscot Bay, the 30ft (9m) brick tower was constructed in response to the increased lime trade into Rockport.

In most harbours, it was possible to take boat trips by schooner, windjammer or ferry along the coast or to the islands. One day we sailed along the coast from Camden and took in the Curtis Island light. The current 25ft (7.6m) tower was built in 1896, replacing the original brick tower built in 1835. In the two weeks we had available, it was not possible to go further north to Bar Harbour and the Acadia National Park, but on the return leg we managed to visit Marblehead and Newburyport and their lights. We also spent time in Salem, with a witch on every street corner, and the grandsons had two days surfboarding in York Beach, so everyone got something out of the trip.

All photos by the author



The ultimate chart of 100 United States lighthouses was produced by Staten Island Yachts (www.siyachts.com) and shows the most interesting lighthouses in America. They had about 1,500 to choose from since the first appeared in 1716, but there were never more than 850 in operation at the same time - the peak being in 1910. Even for those of us with little or no knowledge of American lights, it's interesting to see



So we were wondering – is there anybody in Britain or Ireland, with a penchant for graphic design and a love for lighthouses, who could produce a similar poster for this part of the world? Just a thought!



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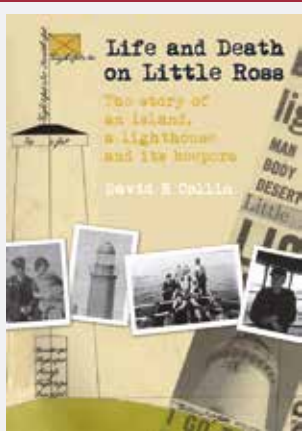
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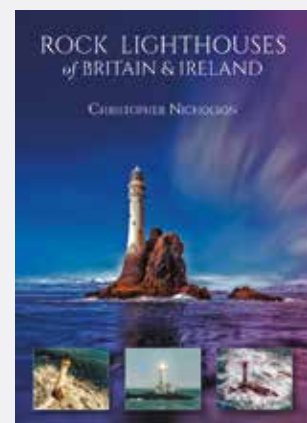
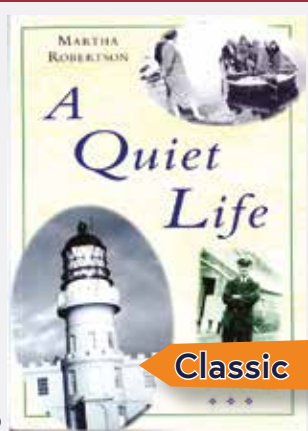


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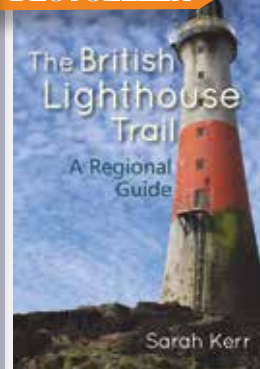
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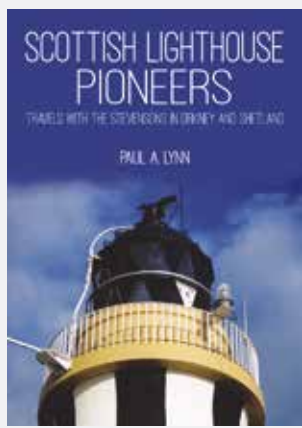
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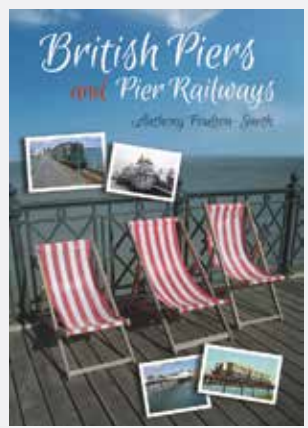


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Book Review

From the Lighthouse by Robert W. E. Farrah

Reviewed by David Taylor

Whenever I meet someone who doesn't know me, and they find out that I'm a member of the Association of Lighthouse Keepers, the first question they always ask is "What was it like to be a lighthouse keeper?" (I never was one!)

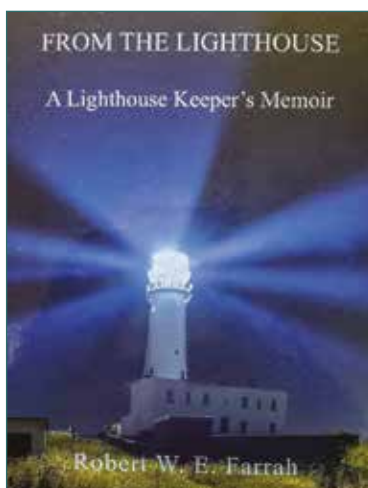
Clearly something a lot of people are very curious about. And for anyone who has that curiosity, this book by Robert Farrah is a gold mine of information and will answer the question big time. For people who are former keepers, it will bring back lots of memories, fond and otherwise!

Robert was a Trinity House keeper for 27 years. He decided to keep a record of what his work life was like, as he could, like all of his colleagues, see automation making relentless progress and redundancy looming. He felt that he wanted to capture something for future generations who would never have the chance to know what being a lighthouse keeper was like.

So, in 1995, he began writing up his experiences in terms of watches, and the book starts with his time at Nash Point in South Wales. By the end of 1995 he was based at Trevoze Head in Cornwall before what was to be his final posting at Alderney in the Channel Islands from January 1996 until his last day of service in September 1997.

This book is designed to be, and is, so much more than just a log of duties carried out by a keeper. In his watch diaries, he shares his experiences of the weather and the sense of exposure to its extremities at remote lighthouses. But he also enjoys bright, sunny spring and summer days.

He tells us about the world of nature surrounding his workplaces, what's growing and the animals and birds that he sees. And, yes, we get to learn of the daily duties



required of him in terms of the kinds of challenges and technical problems that had to be confronted on a regular basis. System failures, machinery not working properly and so on.

He describes his interactions with colleagues, with Trinity House, with the local community, with contractors, with tourists (who increasingly around that time had learned that lighthouse keepers were going to be a thing of the past and were visiting lighthouses while they still could).

But we also gain insight into how his work was so special to him. It impacted on his personal life in ways many of us would find it difficult to imagine. Some were good ways, others more testing. But keeping the maritime community safe was clearly worth it.

The key thing I picked up was how superb he is at telling the story of automation, which was being prepared for and taking place during his final years of service. Postings of personnel clearly caused Trinity House some big issues as some keepers opted to take voluntary redundancy before their due date.

The book ends with the final closure of Alderney lighthouse to resident keepers, which meant so much more emotionally than just locking the door one final time.

This book is beautiful to look at and has some lovely images in it. Many ALK members get a mention too, Dave Wilkinson, Chris Foulds and David Appleby, to name but three. Buy the book to find out who else is in there whom you might know. Or maybe win it as the prize for this year's crossword competition in the December issue!

Overall, a huge contribution to Keeping Lighthouse Heritage Alive.



Alderney lighthouse
Photo by The Beacon Bike



The author in the Nash Point lantern. Photo by Western Mail



Nash Point lighthouse
Photo by Wikimedia Commons

A week with Zulu Juliet – Part two

Christopher Nicholson resumes the journey he made 40 years ago that could never be repeated today.

The flight from Cape Wrath to Edinburgh Airport in readiness for the following day's reliefs meant I was able to photograph the lights at Rattray Head, Buchan Ness, Girdle Ness, Tod Head and Scurdie Ness. At the airport I had the pleasure of talking to an Englishman who was a keeper with the NLB, reminding me of another recent encounter I'd had with a Scotsman who was a Trinity House PK at Longstone lighthouse in Northumberland! We took one keeper out to Inchkeith with a trayful of tomato plants on his knee, and brought another back from the Isle of May with a coffee table. Dave assured me that these were nothing compared to some of the previous keepers' luggage they'd seen in years gone by.

Bass Rock was a notable visit, mainly because our approach from Barns Ness was hazarded by vast numbers of gannets in flight. The gannet is a particularly stupid (but attractive) bird that clearly doesn't like helicopters, but always seems to fly straight towards them when trying to make its escape! Some expert banking and weaving from Dave made sure we arrived at, and left, Bass Rock without incident.

The highlight of the following day was undoubtedly the relief of Bell Rock by helicopter. Dropping onto the bright orange, raised helipad alongside the remnants of one of the cast-iron tramway sections that Robert Stevenson used when he built Bell Rock was one of those moments you never forget, walking in the footsteps of the man who built a world-famous lighthouse. I was invited to climb the ladder to the door where I was greeted by one of the keepers with 'Welcome to Alcatraz!' But I got no further. Within three minutes, the keepers had been changed and we were lifting off, exchanging waves with those left behind. In a little over 35 minutes, we were back in Edinburgh. A far cry from boat reliefs and a clear demonstration of what an indispensable role the helicopter played in the lighthouse service.



Bass Rock sans gannets

The cloud and mist closed in for our positioning flight from Edinburgh to Oban. Thanks to Dave's skill, we managed to grope our way through the Trossachs and around Loch Lomond to arrive in a very wet Oban, where I was warmly greeted by Sandy Pirie at the depot. The torrential rain continued all through the night and into every seam of my anorak, so I consoled myself by saying that the next day would be special, if it would ever stop raining! By the morning it had, although it was still grey.

Two reliefs were planned. We sped along the Sound of Mull and over both Rubha nan Gall light outside Tobermory harbour and Ardnamurchan light, the architecturally elegant tower that *doesn't* stand on the westernmost point of the British mainland (see *Lamp* 125 for an explanation). When we reached

Hyskeir (Oigh Sgeir) the sun was out and Berneray (the island with Barra Head light on its summit) and the Cuillins of Skye were clearly visible. So too was Hyskeir's one-hole golf course. In 1997, Hyskeir became one of the last NLB rock lights to be automated.

The high point of the day was, of course, the relief of Skerryvore. This was on the same helipad that, six years earlier in 1978, another Bolkow helicopter was swamped by a rogue wave in the middle of a relief, and where Ian Duff helped rescue the aircraft and its occupants (see *Lamp* 143). Dave said that all the NLB pilots were wary of this helipad and examined it carefully before landing. That day, the pad was damp, but still safe enough to land on. A couple of basking seals on the reef seemed remarkably untroubled by our noisy arrival. I think that one of them briefly opened an eye out of curiosity and then returned to sleep.

Skerryvore was the first rock lighthouse I had ever seen as a schoolboy, not this close, but from a beach 12 miles away. I thought it looked magnificent then and from close quarters I wasn't disappointed. No wonder Robert Louis



Flying visit to Bell Rock



Time for a quick round of golf at Hyskeir?



Rubha nan Gall



Sanda lighthouse



Skerryvore, the noblest of all



Made it at last! 15 years after my first sight of Skerryvore



Disrupting the golf at Turnberry



Sid and Eddie at Pladda



Portrait of the author as a young man (at Oban)

Stevenson called it *The noblest of all extant deep-sea lights*. Close up, the granite has a distinctly pleasing pink hue.

My final day saw us flying low level down the east side of the Mull of Kintyre as low cloud and mist prevented a direct route. The recently automated Davaar light rising out of the mist indicated the approach to Campbeltown where we landed on the green. Our arrival caused the curtains of surrounding houses to be thrown back, revealing their pyjama-clad inhabitants. The few minutes of a helicopter on the green were obviously of greater

interest than breakfast television! A quick trip over the hills to Sanda with its enclosed stairways, and we were soon flying east again heading for Turnberry and passing Pladda on the way, with its 'little and large' towers.

The ruins of Robert the Bruce's castle adjacent to the light at Turnberry were pointed out to me by Dave. Landing here reminded me of the time I was watching *Pro-Celebrity Golf* on BBC2 a couple of years previously. The recording was obviously done on a Friday as, on several occasions, play was interrupted by the rather spectacular

arrival of Zulu Juliet in such a manner that the NLB crest on its side was prominently displayed causing comment by Peter Alliss!

Back across the Firth of Clyde, the summit of Ailsa Craig was cloaked in a clinging mist, giving the impression of a snow-cap. Landing here in high winds could be particularly difficult, Dave explained, but that day it was a simple matter to set down by the station on what must have been the only flat piece of ground on the island. Back at Turnberry, it was time to say my goodbyes to Dave and Dougie before they left to do the Pladda reliefs and then back to Oban.

I was driven to Kilmarnock to start my six-hour train journey south. This gave me plenty of time to reflect on my week with Zulu Juliet, a week that I shall never forget, and one that can never be repeated. Such a memorable experience is due almost entirely to the patience, friendliness and good humour of Dave Allen and Douglas Forbes for whom no request was ever too much trouble and whose hospitality was freely given.



Ailsa Craig and its flat H

I never saw the step ladder in use. I presume it was more likely to be used for examining the engines or the main and tail rotors rather than making it easier for Dougie to load the Bolkow's roof rack!

All photos by the author

Robbie Goldsmith Ken Trethewey, South West Representative

At the beginning of July, a group of ALK members visited former Trinity House principal keeper, Robbie Goldsmith, at his home on Guernsey. Now in his eighties, Robbie has the distinction of being the longest-serving keeper in the Channel Islands.

After serving in the Army as a young man, Robbie joined Trinity House in 1970 and, after the usual training at Harwich and Blackwall, the early part of his lighthouse career saw him spending time mostly in the south of England at stations such as the Needles, Portland Bill, Anvil Point, and Beachy Head, as well as the unusual Royal Sovereign and Nab Tower lights. But it was his love for the Channel Islands and the Hanois lighthouse that persuaded him to make his home there.

Along with Casquets (two years), Sark and Alderney (two years), where he was finally made principal keeper in 1995-6, he also spent a total of fourteen years on Les Hanois lighthouse. He retired from service in October 1997. Stories from his time on the lights can be found in the book, *Guernsey Sentinel* by Ray Dafter.

Robbie was on duty at the Hanois on Christmas morning in 1973 when an American bulk carrier called the *Elwood Mead* ran aground on nearby rocks on her maiden voyage. Apparently, the skipper had mistaken the Hanois for the Casquets. Naturally it was Robbie's responsibility to report it, but he ran into trouble with disbelieving colleagues



Robbie presents the Hanois telescope to Dave Wilkinson. Photo by Ken Trethewey



A 50th birthday to remember. Photo courtesy of Robbie Goldsmith

who thought he was pulling a Christmas prank. The ship was badly holed and salvaged weeks later in February 1974.

During his time offshore, one of Robbie's favourite past-times was to put messages in bottles and cast them off to see how far they would travel. Over the years, he received hundreds of letters from all over the world from people who had found the bottles. Another hobby was as an amateur CB radio enthusiast, in which his alias was Barnacle Bill. So, ironically, from the isolation of a rock lighthouse, Robbie spent much of his off-duty time in contact with people all around the world. So much for the lonely life!

Robbie has fond memories of his 50th birthday at Hanois when, to his great surprise, his wife was brought out in a boat, and a large sheet bearing the big red number '50' was set out on the rocks. The taste of champagne and chocolate never felt so good. With his colleagues Barry Bloy and Clive Harry, a wonderful cake was enjoyed in the Hanois kitchen.

Since retiring, Robbie has visited schools on a regular basis to give talks to the students about life in the service and

has lately become popular amongst the Women's Institute community as an entertaining speaker.

Finally, in a very kind and gracious gesture to the ALK, Robbie donated the Hanois lighthouse telescope to our archives where he knows it will be curated for future generations.

The leaning tower of Gjögurtá

Pete Goulding



The leaning lighthouse before any secure measures were in place



Workers trying to access the light

News filtered through at the end of June that the Gjögurtá lighthouse in the very north of Iceland was standing more than a bit on the Kildare side.

The lighthouse, which sits on a rocky outcrop on the northeastern point of the entrance to the Eyja Fjord, was discovered to be leaning heavily to the side when the Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration (Vegagerðin) visited as part of their annual inspection, although local mariners had indicated as much a short time previously. The light is so remote that these visits can only be made by sea and so the assistance of the coastguard is often sought in these situations. Extensive precautions are needed, as it is extremely difficult to gain secure footing on the crumbling cliff face.

There is no danger to mariners at this time, other than the possibility of a hazard if the lighthouse falls into the sea, the agency said in a statement. The soil has been shifting for years due to seismic activity and frequent crustal movements.

The light is still working, although there are concerns that its tilt may have rendered maritime charts inaccurate. The situation, however, is not urgent as the light is normally only active between 1 August and 15 May. During June and July, there is evidently enough daylight to dispense with its services.



Gjögurtá standing erect in 2001

Gjögurtá lighthouse, which was erected in 1970, stands 3.2m (10½ft) tall at a height of 28m (92ft) above sea level below Gjögurfjall mountain. Made of fiberglass, and standing on a concrete evergreen foundation, the lighthouse has vertical panes, a conical roof and a large air vent at the top, where the lighthouse's light was previously powered by gas. Today, it is equipped with batteries charged with solar energy that power the light.

The Gjögurtá lighthouse marks the northeastern entrance to Eyjafjörður and provides a visual aid to navigation for vessels approaching from the north via

Flatey, passing the headland of Gjögurtá and continuing into or out of the fjord. It forms a vital part of Iceland's coastal light network and works with the nearby lights, such as Flatey lighthouse to ensure safe passage along the coastline.

The lighthouse itself is in decent condition, but the foundations and the site it stands on aren't. It may need to be placed further down the slope to avoid the foundations being undermined again. All possible solutions are currently being assessed.

The previous lighthouse on the site was a Norwegian fiberglass lighthouse, 3.2m high, with 50cm high windows and stood on a 0.7m high cylindrical base. Built in 1965, the lighthouse was destroyed in an explosion on 2 August 1969 during a routine annual gas refilling operation conducted by staff from the Lighthouse Department. The workers had completed their work when the explosion occurred. Engineer Jóhann Einarsson was seriously injured in the incident, suffering burns to his face and arms.

I honestly don't know what happened, he told the newspaper Morgunblaðið. All I remember is suddenly feeling flames hitting the back of my neck and sweeping in front of me. I clearly saw the flash. I didn't immediately realise I was burnt. There were two of us and the man who was inside fared better than I did! I was standing outside, facing away from the door.

Sincere thanks to Greipur Gísli Sigurðsson of Vegagerðin for his help in unearthing and translating records of the two lighthouses. *Photos courtesy of Vegagerðin*



The listing light

Happisburgh lighthouse – a third century of operation

Ian Hogarth talks to Patrick Tubby

Built in 1790, Happisburgh lighthouse on the Norfolk coast is probably the only lighthouse to face decommissioning by Trinity House and then be saved and adopted by the local community as a working light. Patrick Tubby, chairman of the Happisburgh Lighthouse Trust (and ALK East Anglia officer) reflects on the last 35 years of independent operation.

Why Happisburgh in particular?

My family have links with Happisburgh going back to before I was born. My father built one of the cliff-top bungalows for his then boss in the late 1950s. Sadly it was lost to cliff erosion around 1997. In the 1970s we often holidayed in a caravan perched on the cliff top at Happisburgh, and we children would spend most of our time on the beach, in the sea, or exploring along the cliffs in either direction. It was just a constant backdrop to our childhood holidays. So, when it was threatened with closure in 1988, and with my interest in lighthouses having started a few years before, it was natural for me to take an interest in plans for its future.

What's its appeal?

With its red and white bands, Happisburgh is your classic lighthouse. Having been converted to 'unwatched' status in 1929, it led an almost anonymous existence for the next 60 years; that changed when it was threatened with closure, and, as the original campaign group tried to raise its profile, it was rarely out of the news. If you were to show Norfolk residents images of 50 historic buildings in the county, Happisburgh lighthouse would always come out in the top five.



*The distinctive red and white bands of Happisburgh.
Photo Patrick Tubby*

How was the lighthouse saved as a working light?

A NavAid review in 1987 recommended wholesale cutbacks in the lighthouse service and Happisburgh lighthouse, and the Haisbro lightvessel were among the doomed lights. The lighthouse was scheduled for closure in June 1988 and, early that year, a campaign group was formed to lobby for retention of the working light. Trinity House looked at their figures again but ultimately said that, with their proposed improvements



Patrick within the optic. Photo by Jason Bye



Patrick and ALK co-founder, the late Graham Fearn, with HRH the Princess Royal in 2010. Graham, who died in 2018, would have celebrated his 100th birthday this August. Photo by Jim Whiteside

to Cromer Lighthouse, Happisburgh was now surplus to requirements. If Trinity House weren't prepared to operate the light, could we do it ourselves? Trinity came back and said they could only dispose of a working light to an established local lighthouse authority. In response, we asked them how we could become a local lighthouse authority. Trinity House was supportive of our efforts and kept the light operational in the interim; it took around two years, about £20,000 and a Private Members Bill in Parliament but on 1 August 1990 the Happisburgh Lighthouse Trust took over operation and maintenance of the lighthouse, and we've been looking after it ever since!

Has it been a learning curve for the team to maintain and operate a lighthouse for over a third of a century?

The lighthouse is cared for by two groups; the 'Friends' were the original campaign group formed to save the lighthouse, and are now the fundraising arm, and also staff the lighthouse on open days; the 'Trust' were formed in 1990 to manage and operate the lighthouse. Some of us have a foot in both camps! In the early years, Trinity House was supportive with advice and guidance, but over the years we've formed our own contacts with local suppliers and contractors.

What have been the challenges you faced that were least expected?

Probably the ongoing maintenance. Most winters there is usually something that needs attention. In the last couple of years, we've needed to work on the entrance porch roof, the main door has been replaced, the electrics have been upgraded and the lightning protection enhanced. A bigger project a few years ago was on the cantilever stairway, which required a separate fundraising campaign to finance, largely covered by the 2015 Lighthouse Zipwire Challenge.

What level of maintenance does the lighthouse need?

We employ a local attendant who carries out husbandry tasks and tests the lighting system etc. Other elements (fire and lightning protection and electrics) are inspected periodically. Our biggest maintenance project is the regular repainting of the tower. In the 1990s repainting was every four to five years, but with advances in paint technology, this has now been extended to around every ten years.

Is the operation of the lighthouse remotely monitored, as with other GLAs? If so, what happens in the event of a fault?

I was at the Trinity House Planning Centre in Harwich earlier in the year and was explaining to the monitoring team our unique approach at Happisburgh. Our attendant has a strategically placed mirror in his garden, so he can sit in his living room chair in the evening and check the lighthouse is working. If the main lamp should fail, or we lose the mains electricity into the lighthouse, we do have a battery back-up system. We are also signed up with LARS (Local Aids Reporting System) a service managed by Trinity House, so if the light should fail completely, we can get a message out to shipping as quickly as possible.

Is the lighthouse subject to any statutory inspections as an Aid to Navigation?

Yes, as an independently operated beacon, it has to be inspected by the Inspector of Seamarks annually. At Happisburgh, this generally consists of checking the red and white bands are conspicuous, and that the light is flashing the correct character.



The earliest known photo of the light c.1880 before the bands were added



The 1868 Chance Brothers first-order fixed optic. Photo Patrick Tubby

Gaining statutory approval to continue to operate the lighthouse 35 years ago was an amazing achievement. If the challenge was faced today, do you think the outcome would be the same?

It would be more difficult if a local group wanted to reactivate a light that has been dormant for a number of years. We have been contacted a couple of times by operators of discontinued lighthouses which now run as visitor centres to see what might be required to recommission them, though nothing came of either proposal.

How many people does it take to sustain the lighthouse?

We have always had a good pool of volunteers at Happisburgh. Initially, these were normally people living in the village, but now we have volunteers from a larger catchment area. There are around six people actively involved in running the lighthouse, but we are supported by a further pool of about 25 volunteers who help out on open days.

Do your tours of Happisburgh generate enough revenue to meet the requirements and demands of operating a lighthouse?

Each year, we usually raise a bit of surplus to our annual running costs, and over the years we have built up a contingency fund to give us a bit of a safeguard. However, a repaint isn't part of our annual costs and these additional funds will ultimately be used to pay for the next repaint.

Are there any plans to change the Happisburgh light to LED, like so many others?

Happisburgh has operated with filament lamps since conversion to electricity in 1947. The lighting system was last upgraded in 1990, and today the main light is an L9 500Watt lamp, with a globe of around 150mm (6in) diameter. In 1990 this would have been a small lighthouse lamp but today it is one of the larger ones! We have a fixed Chance Brothers first-order optic (dating from 1868), and this coupled with the L9 lamp adds to the visitor experience. When people come into the lighthouse, they want to see a reasonably large lamp!

For you personally, what's the most enjoyable element of your involvement with Happisburgh?

The lighthouse has been a big part of my life for 37 years now. I was at the first public meeting to discuss the future of the lighthouse in July 1988, while still a teenager; in 1991 I was elected on to the Friends committee, and the following year began guiding visitors to the top of the lighthouse. In 1999 I started editing the Friends' twice-yearly newsletter, which has now developed into a full colour journal, a role I still undertake, assisted by my very capable assistant (thanks Joy!). In recognition of my long-time support for the lighthouse, I was invited on to the board of Trustees in 2004, and since 2007 have been chairman. I take great pride in the fact that I have helped ensure Happisburgh lighthouse continues to shine well into its third century and we believe it is the third oldest lighthouse tower still showing a navigation light in the UK (behind Lizard and Casquets). But most enjoyable, is being able to share my passion and enthusiasm with visitors on open days.

How can readers find out more about and support the lighthouse?

www.happisburgh.org.uk/lighthouse Please consider joining the Friends! We have members all over the UK



Another group of visitors ascends the stairway. Photo Joy Tubby (and further afield) who know that their contribution is helping to keep Happisburgh lighthouse shining for the benefit of all those who go to sea. Also, check out details of open days, which are held over the summer months, and private visits are available at other times. Finally, if you live reasonably close, why don't you consider joining our pool of volunteers helping to tell the Happisburgh story to the wider public?

Membership Matters Rodney Jagelman

Thank you everybody who rejoined or renewed in the year to 30 June 2025 and especially those who paid the correct amount! The good news is that the membership fees remain unchanged for the coming year and are set out below as a reminder.

Membership fees

Membership type	Annual membership fee
Single membership	£25
Joint membership	£30
Junior membership	£10

Standing Order Membership Fees

Membership type	Annual membership fee
Single membership	£24
Joint membership	£29
Junior membership	£9

New digital membership cards

The trustees have decided the time has come to issue digital membership certificates in place of our traditional cards, to ease administration and save a considerable sum in ever-increasing postage costs. For members that we hold email addresses, the digital membership certificates will be sent to the email address on file. For members where we don't hold email addresses, you will be sent a printed copy of the digital membership certificate by post. If you're continuing to receive membership confirmations by post, it means we don't have an email address for you on file. Help us to save postage costs and keep up to date with information on ALK events by sending us your email address! Please email datasec@alk.org.uk and we'll update your records. We have strict rules around Data Protection and will only use your email address to communicate with you about ALK matters, events or news. For membership-only matters, continue to email membership@alk.org.uk

Standing Order payers

For those members who continue to underpay because they have not amended their standing order (and there were a few last year) we will acknowledge the payment received but advise that delivery of *Lamp* will be held up pending the receipt of the shortfall.

Should you have any queries, the membership secretary at membership@alk.org.uk would be delighted to help; alternatively, post to: ALK Membership Secretary PO Box 426 Lymington Hampshire SO41 1DZ, United Kingdom.

Raising the Pharos

One of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the lighthouse, or Pharos as it is sometimes known, of Alexandria was constructed on the orders of Ptolemy after his predecessor, Alexander the Great, had founded the city that bears his name on the Nile delta. From its erection in the 3rd century BC to its eventual and final destruction after a succession of earthquakes in 1303, it was the tallest building in the western world.

Depictions of this ancient skyscraper vary greatly. The most common show three different sections – a large rectangular base, a tapering circular tower and a circular room on top. A fire was lit from its top at night, while mirrors reflected the sunlight during the day. It must have been some logistical operation to light that fire every night for 1500 years, never mind polishing all the brass.

Truth is, we don't really know what the lighthouse looked like. The remaining stone was used to build a fort shortly after its destruction and from then on, medieval and later Victorian imaginings have probably brought us a distance from the truth.

However, recent archaeological developments in and around the old harbour of Alexandria have fostered hope that we may soon get a clearer view of the actual size, shape and dimensions of the most famous lighthouse in the world.

While the sunken ruins had been visible as early as 1968, systematic archaeological work began in 1994 when Frenchman, Jean-Yves Empereur, led a full-scale exploration. His team documented over 3,300 objects including sphinxes, obelisks, columns and granite blocks. More than 100 of these fragments have been digitally scanned on the seabed over the last decade.

Now, a new project, entitled Pharos, funded by the French Dassault Systèmes Foundation and led by the wonderfully-named Isabelle Hairy within the Center for Alexandrian Studies, has brought together a multidisciplinary team of historians, numismatists, archaeologists and architects to collect figurations and descriptions of the lighthouse throughout its history.

Giant stone blocks, weighing up to 80 tons, have been lifted from the seabed off the island of Pharos and these, in addition to the blocks already scanned and catalogued still lying where they fell, will hopefully enable the team to build a much more complete virtual image of the edifice than has previously been possible.

The latest news we have is that blocks forming the entrance to the lighthouse enclosure have been discovered, together with a hitherto unknown 'pylon', whose door appears to be in the Egyptian style but built in the Greek way.

Our thanks to ALK member Charles Franklyn for drawing our attention to this story.



Giant stone blocks being raised from the seabed in Alexandria. Photo courtesy GEDEON Programmes / CEAlex



Virtual reconstruction of the monumental gate of the lighthouse. Photo courtesy Isabelle Hairy - Centre d'Études Alexandrines



Possibly fanciful depiction of the old lighthouse. Photo courtesy Britannica

Shaken not stirred

Pete Goulding

Living and working at the extremes of human habitation has naturally generated lurid weather-related stories of conditions at lighthouses during terrible storms and huge seas. Tales of waves completely engulfing rockbound towers and derricks being swept into the boiling surf are far from uncommon and they entrance non-keepers like myself who desperately try to imagine the maelstrom of sea and storm battering furiously against the stone walls of an exposed tower.

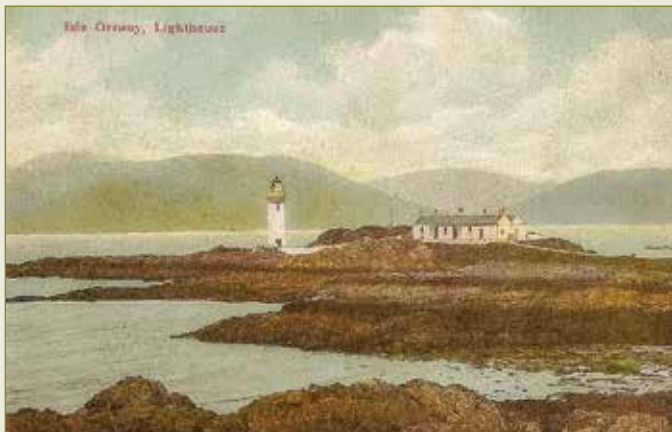
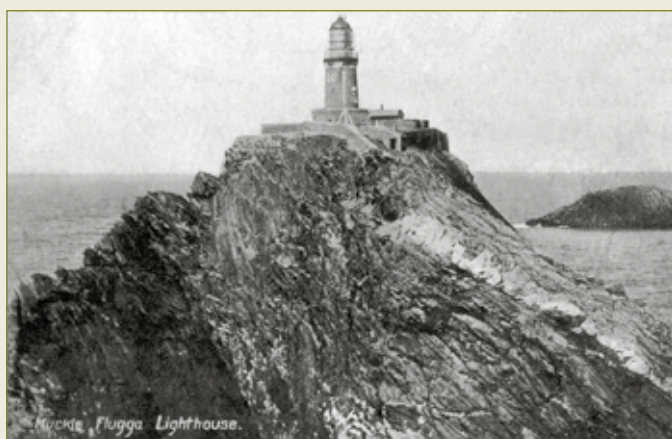
But the walls of lighthouses are generally thick and built to withstand whatever fury the weather may throw at them when it's in a foul mood. I suspect that few keepers ever genuinely feared for their lives during a bad storm.

An earthquake, however, must have been another acetylene tank of limpets altogether. There's really no imagining going around your business and suddenly, inexplicably, you're gyrating around the lantern room like a fan at a Chubby Checker concert. Thankfully, in most cases, by the time you realise what is happening, it is all over and it's another tale to tell the grandchildren.

Of course, a quick trawl through the newspaper archives shows that there have been a significant number of cases where the consequences of an earthquake on a lighthouse were far more serious. All that differed from case to case was the adjectives and verbs used to describe the carnage. The stone First Point lighthouse in Java was *thrown down* in 1880 due to a violent earthquake; the Ford light in Sicily was *destroyed* in 1894; Mitylen lighthouse in Turkey was *completely wrecked* in 1889; in 1901, Cape Kaliakra lighthouse on the Black Sea was also *destroyed*; in Kingston, Jamaica in 1907, the Plumb Point lighthouse was *demolished*; in the same year, Valparaiso light *tumbled like toy bricks*; Cape Ducato lighthouse (Greece) *collapsed* in 1915; Prasonisi Point in Rhodes *toppled* over in 1926. Even as recently as 1993, the Okushiri Island lighthouse in Japan was *wrecked*. As most of these incidents happened far away, the fate of the keepers and their families was hardly ever mentioned.



*The Ribeirinha light after the 1998 Azores earthquake.
Photo from Wikiwand*



Of course, many of those stations sat on or near fault lines where seismic movement was not unknown. Keepers should have been aware that an earthquake was possible and should have been trained as to what to do in such circumstances. Run, I expect.

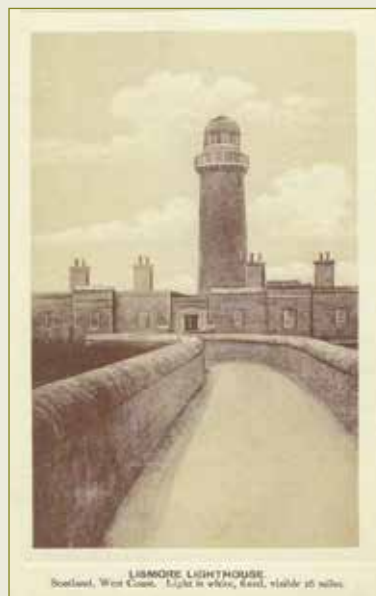
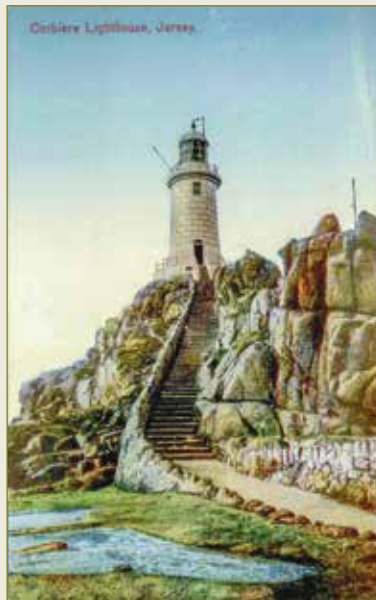
Thankfully, in Ireland and Britain, lightkeepers may have suffered the ravages of hurricane force winds and mountainous seas but at least they were spared the bother of adding earthquakes to their list of things they didn't want to endure in a lighthouse tower (bombardment by enemy aircraft, floating mines, fellow keeper picking his feet at the dinner table).

Or were they? There have, in fact, been a number of earthquakes that have caught keepers unawares on these islands. On 25 March 1843, for example, the *Westmorland Gazette* reported that two earthquakes

had struck Fleetwood on the Lancashire coast in the middle of the night. Before the second one, 'the watchmen at the lower lighthouse heard a rumbling noise from the east, which soon appeared to approach the spot, and was immediately succeeded by a considerable vibration from below... The upper lighthouse in particular, a highly isolated column, was felt to rock quite sufficiently to alarm the lightkeeper.'

The head lightkeeper at Muckle Flugga in the Shetland Isles was reported in the *Ballyshannon Herald* of 21 April 1866 as saying that 'on the 9th ult., when I was on watch in the lightroom at 1.20pm, the tower began to shake terribly and Crow and Sutherland (the assistant light-keepers) called up to me from the bedroom to see what was the matter, as the tower was shaking. I had not the power to answer them for the red shades commenced to rattle and were likely to be shaken out of their frames; the shaking lasted ninety seconds. There was no wind nor sea to cause the tower to shake.' Earthquakes were to strike the station twice more in the next 35 years.

On 26 May 1877, the *St Andrew's Gazette* carried a notice from David Stevenson of the Northern Lighthouse Board, that four stations had been visited by two separate earthquake events recently. At 11.30am on 11 March, the first shock had been recorded at the Hynish light on the island of Tiree and again 'at the Sound of Mull near Tobermory' (presumably Rubha nan Gall), 34 miles (55km) away. At the latter station, the keeper had said that 'it began by a rumbling noise like distant thunder. When the noise was at its height, the houses and everything about them, shook, and the slates on the roof rattled. The shaking was not of long duration, but the noise was heard a considerable time before and after the trembling of the earth.'



The second quake occurred at 3.40pm on 23 April and was felt at Fladda Island and also at Lismore, 73 miles (117kms) away. At Lismore, the keeper said that he 'felt a strong shock in the tower, with a strange rumbling sound that lasted some seconds and made everything in the lighthouse shake at an alarming rate.'

On 7 February 1888, the *Glasgow Evening Post* quoted one of the keepers at Ornsay lighthouse as saying that he had felt the smart shock of an earthquake at 4.41 that morning. 'It lasted ten seconds,' he said. 'At the same time, a pretty loud booming sound was heard during the vibration and for some seconds after... Others at this station who were in bed but awake experienced the sensation as of some power shaking the bed underneath them.'

There was an earthquake on the Clyde in 1904 and fortunately Archibald McNeilage, keeper of the Cloch lighthouse, gave an interview to the *Southern Reporter* on 22 November. He had gone out to the balcony around 4pm and had been surprised by the stillness of the air. There were three distinct rumblings and then, after the third, 'a tremor ran through the earth, shaking the tower of the lighthouse to its base and actually swinging the pendulum of a clock violently from side to side. I felt the tower tremble and almost sway.'

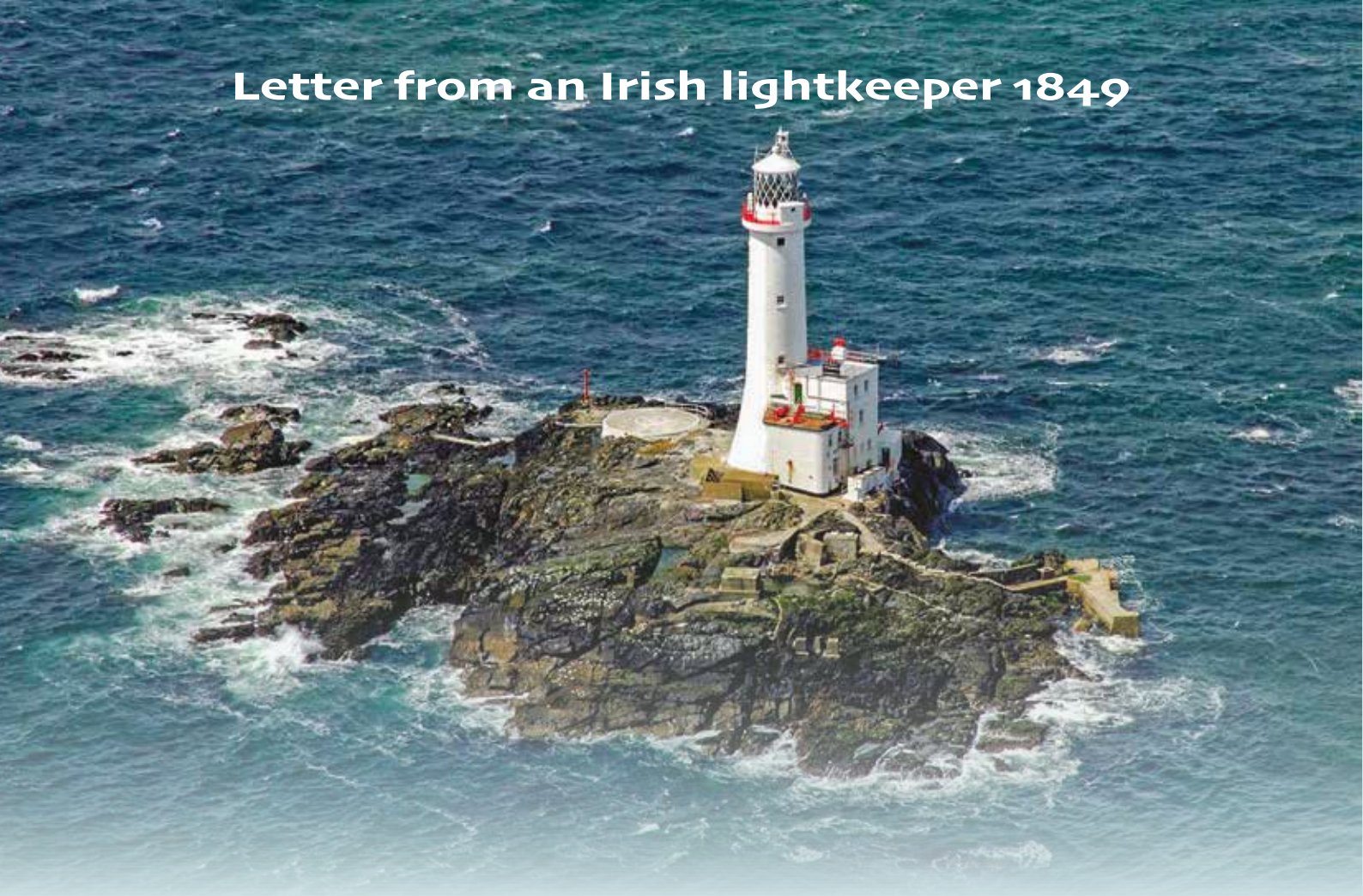
Lest anyone thinks that it is only the Scots who have enjoyed seismic phenomena at their lighthouses, there was an earthquake at Ilfracombe in Devon on 3 September 1920 and the bay light of the 'Morte lighthouse' (presumably the Bull Point light) was extinguished for a few minutes through the mechanism being damaged by the first of three shocks.

On Battle of the Flowers Day (30 July) in 1959, a ten-second earthquake hit Jersey. Keepers at La Corbière lighthouse reported that the tower 'heaved momentarily' and they had 'thought that the whole place was going to shake to pieces,' according to the *Belfast Newsletter*.

And to come almost up to date, Blacksod lighthouse in co. Mayo was hit by a tremor on 6 June 2012. Attendant Vincent Sweeney was interviewed about it on RTE and told of how the whole front door shook as he went to open it.

Of course, lighthouses and earthquakes have gone hand in hand for centuries. Sure, wasn't the most famous lighthouse of them all, the Pharos of Alexandria, finally toppled by a succession of earthquakes between 791 and 1303?

Letter from an Irish lightkeeper 1849



This is a transcript of a letter in the Royal Museums Greenwich from Thomas McKenna, lighthouse keeper at Tuskar Rock, to The Hon. Captain Hall, RN, dated 17 May 1849. A bit of punctuation and grammar has been added but otherwise it is as written.

Sir, as you requested, I write an abridged list of fishes, birds &c that are caught here. Also, I shall let you know how long I have been in this situation. In 1827, at the age of seven years, I went to live with my father at the South Maidens Rock lighthouse and in 1836, I was appointed lightkeeper and remained at South Maidens until July 1839, when I was removed to Tuskar lighthouse, where I am at this instant in 1849 and not the least sign of getting a remove off it.

After being twenty years on two of the smallest rocks habitable on the coast of Ireland, I flatter myself I am entitled to a land station. I have been three years on this rock without ever putting my foot on shore and, during that long twenty years, I have never been twelve days ashore at one time.

Sir, I consider it is unjust that men on rocks have not one farthing more wages than men that are in good land stations who have some land and many advantages and comfort above their less fortunate neighbours who have to submit to every inconvenience, many hardships and dangers. I was washed twenty feet last winter along this rock, while in the act of lashing a ladder, and would have been swept into the sea had I not caught an iron bar that by chance lay in my course. I just mention this trivial accident, Sir, to show you that, had I been drowned, my family would have only got six pounds, and perhaps nothing.



A sketch of The Maidens taken from Picturesque Ireland (1884)



The Maidens today. The South Maidens, on the right, is still an aid to navigation but the North Maidens is long disused.

Photo by The Antrim Rambler

Top of the page: The Tuskar today. Photographer unknown

submit to every inconvenience, many hardships and dangers. I was washed twenty feet last winter along this rock, while in the act of lashing a ladder - and would have been swept into the sea had I not caught an iron bar that by chance lay in my course. I just mention this trivial accident to show you that had I been drowned my family would have only got six pounds and perhaps nothing - however I have no objection to a rock if I got a land station in my turn. Sir you are a gentleman and it is useless to enumerate

Snip from Tom McKenna's letter

However, I have no objections to a rock if I got a land station in my turn. Sir, you are a gentleman and it is useless to enumerate the hardships that a woman and children have suffered here these ten years. I have got a wife and three children and I trust there is something softer laid out for them than be reared on hard rocks as I have been. Sir, my wages are too small to send them ashore to give them education.

Sir, I humbly suggest that rocks ought to be supplied with provisions by the board, as lightkeepers on rocks are extorted on for every item they get from shore. And, in the event of storms &c, it is impossible for people with families to have a stock of provisions in to meet such emergencies on such small wages. Also, Sir, they ought to be allowed bed and bedding.

Sir, the fish that are caught here are white and black pollock, cod, bass, brame (sea-bream?), conger eel and occasionally dogfish. On several occasions I have caught, with one fly in a few hours, one hundred pollock. The bait I use is a piece of an eel skin, made in the shape of a small herring or sprat. Some crabs, seldom any lobsters.

The birds I have caught here are snipe, curlew, wild duck, water hens, blackbirds, thrushes, starlings, larks and robin redbreasts. All those strike the lantern on certain nights when it is very dark and a little rain. Thrushes, blackbirds and starlings come frequently; the rest but seldom. One night in particular, I caught 370 starlings on the balcony and I am confident as many more fell into the sea, as they generally kill themselves against the glass.

The seafowl are very numerous in February and March (they do not strike the glass) such as gannets, seagulls, four species of puffin, cormorants, red shanks and sand larks. If I had a good gun, I could kill numbers of them.

Sir, the only shipwreck that happened here since I came was the 'Finn McCoull' steamer, trading between Liverpool and Youghal. She was lost on 29th June last year on a sunken rock half a mile south of this. She became a total wreck, crew all saved.

And on 28th January this year, the brig 'Trio' of Wexford struck a sunken rock a mile distant from shore and distant from this rock five miles bearing NW and foundered in half an hour after. Crew saved. Those two are the only wrecks that occurred near this place since I came here.

There are ships lost every year on the Blackwater Bank, but they are too distant from me to give you an accurate account of them. There are very little of their remains pulled close here as the tides generally set them in shore or out in the channel.

I remain, Sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,
Thomas McKenna, lightkeeper

The letter speaks for itself and requires no comment.

Captain Hall does not appear to have been a member of the Ballast Board. A famous naval captain, he may have landed on the Tuskar and requested that Tom forward him the information requested. It appears that Tom believed the captain had some pull with the Ballast Board!

For those unfamiliar with the geography of Ireland, the Maidens, North and South, are two tiny islands off the Antrim coast, that each had a lighthouse. Probably the most famous lighthouse story in Ireland concerns our Tom McKenna of the South Maidens who fell in love with Mary Anne Redmond, daughter of the keeper on the North Maidens. Tom's father was none too pleased with this liaison and tried to end it but one night, Tom rowed over to the other lighthouse, collected Mary Anne and rowed to shore, where they were married. They were henceforth known as the Maidens Lovers.

Tuskar Rock is an equally small rock off Rosslare in county Wexford. Tom and Mary Anne were somewhat unlucky as, up until 1836, the station had been relieving, with the families living at St. Helen's on the coast. However, the houses were sold as a punishment for the keepers for living in a state of great dissension to the annoyance of the neighbourhood and the disgrace of the establishment, occasionally bringing persons from the shore and leaving them, though unfit, in discharge of the Light House duty while the Keepers were on shore, thus endangering the many valuable lives and immense property depending on the maintenance of the Light at this important station.

Tom and Mary Anne's next posting was to Loop Head, an onshore station.



The Tuskar in 1938. Photo courtesy NLI

Lighting the past

200 years ago

The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses hereby give Notice that a Lighthouse has been erected at the Rhins Point of the Isle of Islay, in the county of Argyll, which will be lighted on Tuesday the 15th day of November 1825...

This Light will be known to Mariners as a Distinguishing Light, exhibiting from the same Lantern the effects of a Stationary and a Revolving Light. To a distant observer, it will appear like a star of the first magnitude, producing a bright flash of light at every 12 seconds of time without those intervals of total darkness which characterise other Revolving Lights upon the coast...

C. Cunningham (Secy.) Edinburgh – *Notice to Mariners* 10 Oct 1825

(Robert Stevenson designed and built this lighthouse, which is located on the island of Orsay off the south coast of Islay. John Gibb of Aberdeen was contracted to build the 29m (95ft) tower. Today, its light flashes white every five seconds. Happy bicentenary to the Rhinns of Islay!)



150 years ago

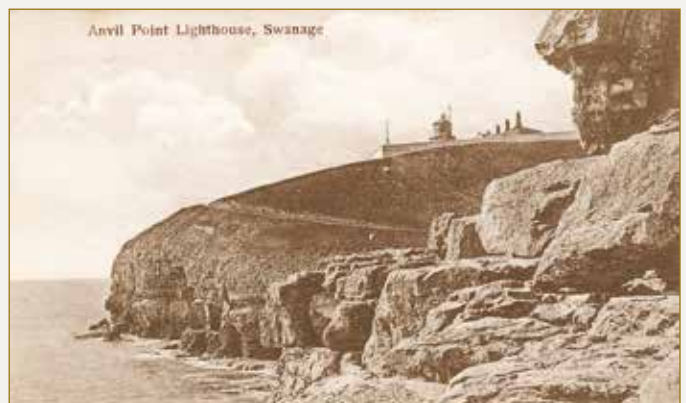
On 17 September 1875, a large hurricane struck the coast of Texas, destroying the West Shoal and East Shoal lighthouses that marked the channel leading into Matagorda Bay at Decros Point. These two screw-pile lights had been built simultaneously in March 1872, half a mile apart, and had exhibited a white and a red light respectively. Five keepers and their families were swept away with the buildings and drowned. Their names were Thomas H. Mayne and John S. Hicks (Head keepers) and Jacob Hall, Edward Finck and Thomas Mayne's wife, Eliza (1st assistant keepers). Strangely, the nearby Halfmoon Reef pile lighthouse, which is still standing, suffered very little damage.

It was decided not to rebuild the lighthouses but instead to replace them with two small range lights on Decros Point itself. All that remains of the two shoal lights today are the submerged stumps – various sources



100 years ago

PK Alfred Ernest Withers retired from Anvil Point lighthouse, Swanage on 31 October 1925 after serving 40 years as a lightkeeper. Born in 1865 at East Cowes, Isle of Wight, where his father, Joseph, had worked on the lightvessels, he had joined the lighthouse service on 7 July 1885. His first station had been Coquet Island on the Northumberland coast, where he first met Elizabeth Ann Evans, the principal keeper's daughter who would later become his wife. They had two sons, Alfred and Arthur, the youngest of whom (Arthur) would be killed in France when Alfred (snr) was serving as an AK on the Wolf Rock. He had also served on the Eddystone and the Longstone lights and at the North and South Foreland, Hurst Castle and Portland Bill lighthouses, among others. The couple planned to retire to Weymouth, where Alfred's father was living – *The Swanage Times* 31 October 1925



The Dungeness lightning strike of 1821

On 23 December 1821, shortly after 10am, the lighthouse tower at Dungeness on the Kent coast was struck by lightning on its northwest side. The strike opened up a fearsome zigzagged gap from the top of the 116ft (35m) tower right down to the first floor and it was generally felt that the 31-year-old lighthouse would have to be replaced.

In the first floor of the tower at the time the lightning struck, were gathered the head lightkeeper, 45-year-old Edward Adams, his wife, Elizabeth and their four children, AK James Smith and Elizabeth Walk, a servant. It being the Sunday before Christmas, they were at their devotions.

The sashes and frames of the windows were ripped out, as were the doors and doorposts in the room where they were gathered. A mirror shattered into miniscule pieces and the furniture was thrown in all directions. It must have seemed as if the Devil himself was trying to intrude on their worship but, by the grace of God, nobody was injured.

As the shock subsided, it was remembered that one of the Adams' infants had been asleep in the bedroom of the floor above. The party dashed upstairs and flung open the door. The room was littered with bricks and mortar and wood and, in the midst of the debris, the baby, safe and unharmed.



Sketch of the 1790 light published by 'The Million' on 4 March 1893



Shortly after the 4th lighthouse at Dungeness was completed in 1910, the 3rd lighthouse (right) was demolished, leaving just the 1843 Round House base.

Photo The Old Lighthouse, Dungeness

The lightning had exited the tower on the first floor and entered the roof of an adjacent wash house, where it split a stone sink, before expending itself in the ground, tearing up a pavement in the process.

An officer of the Coast Blockade, a section of the Royal Navy charged with wiping out smuggling along the Kentish coastline, visited the lighthouse shortly afterwards and gave a statement to the *Morning Post*, declaring that the lightning 'has opened a space of two feet wide from top to bottom in a zigzag direction, strewing every room through which it passed with the rubbish of the brick and mortar with which it is built. The glass of the windows shivered to atoms; the tin cooking utensils, candlesticks, old reflectors, some melted and others rolled up like a scroll of paper. The roof of the little additional dwelling below smashed to atoms, and the whole fabric exhibits the ruinous state of buildings after the shock of a most violent earthquake, being cracked from top to bottom ... It is supposed the Light House must be taken down and rebuilt, as in its present state, it is unfit to ascend to light the lamps.'

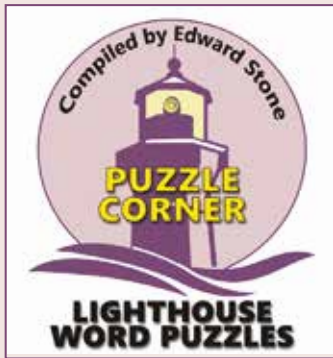
However, Stephen Terry of nearby Lydd, the lighthouse inspector, had other ideas and a temporary light was exhibited that same evening. On Christmas Day, a letter was sent to Lloyds saying that 'reliance cannot be placed in the light' at Dungeness, due to the difficulty and uncertainty of exhibiting the light and also the possible effect of a gale on the badly damaged building. It was later said that a keeper got an eye full of molten lead when he entered the lantern room

In the end, rebuilding was unnecessary. Strong metal bands were placed encircling the tower and the cracks 'soon healed,' apparently.

One sincerely hopes that members of the ALK visiting Dungeness this autumn are not visited by a similar meteorological phenomenon.

Shortly after the fourth lighthouse at Dungeness was completed in 1910, the third lighthouse (right) was demolished, leaving just the 1843 round house base.
Photo from 'The Old Lighthouse, Dungeness'



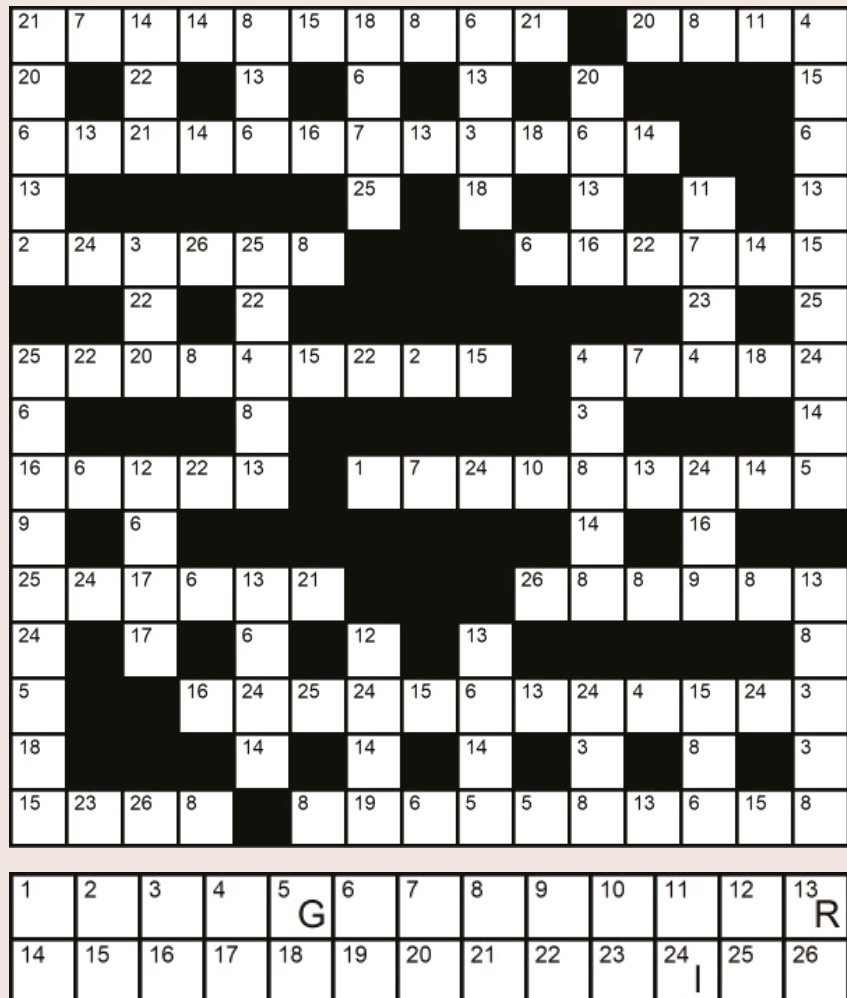


Codeword

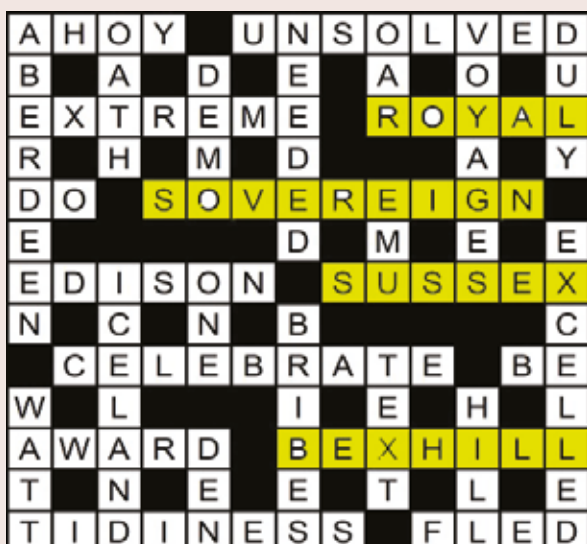
Compiled by Edward Stone

Fill in the letters in their respective numbered squares, starting with the three given ones in the grid. Each letter of the alphabet appears at least once. All but one of the answers consist of one word. The exception is two words.

Four lighthouse locations will be revealed. What links them is that they are at the most northerly, easterly, southerly and westerly extremities of the UK mainland



Lamp 144 simple crossword solution



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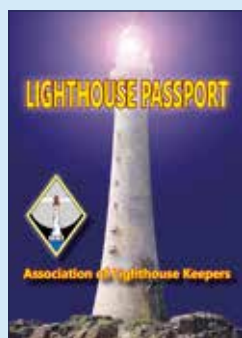
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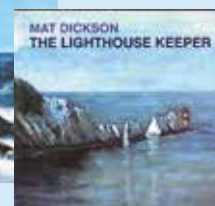
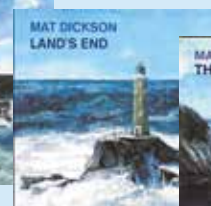
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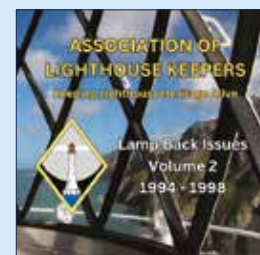
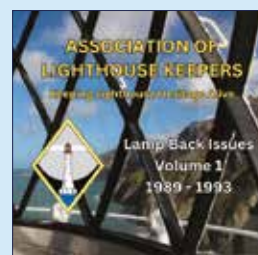
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Ugly lighthouses?

Did you hear it? Just now, when you started reading this? It was the sound of a can of worms being opened. What else would make such a loud noise than an article called Ugly lighthouses?

In general, we believe that lighthouses are the perfect combination of function and beauty. And for the majority of them this would be true. But occasionally you could come across one that might not fit your definition of 'beauty'.

Here are a few lighthouses I've found from around the world that I wouldn't immediately describe as beautiful. How many of them cross into ugly territory, in your opinion?

Christopher Nicholson



Queens Gate, Long Beach, California 1949
— an obvious 'ugly' contender?



Kobe harbour, Japan 1921. Half stone, half metal, half finished?



Dagu light, China (1978). No room for everything inside?
Just bolt it to the outside.



Ban Tha Thewawong, Thailand — 2012 lighthouse or revolving Chinese restaurant with a view?



Sullivan's Island, South Carolina 1962
— a triangular aluminium eyesore?



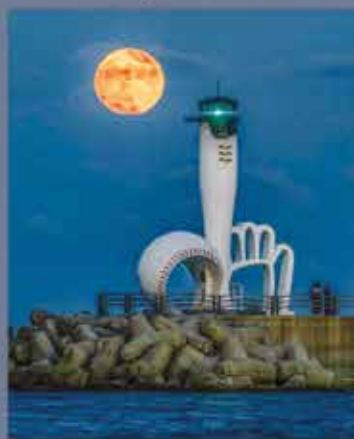
Being paired with a beautiful old fort does Culmore light, co. Derry, no favours



☹ Baishamen light (2000) is the 2nd tallest in China. Its 236ft (72m) tower of triangular white concrete has had various bits and pieces added which do little to improve its 'tower block' looks. Or is it just me?



Little Roe, Shetland
— functional, but ...



The 2010 Chilam Harbour 'baseball light' in South Korea is promoted as a tourist attraction!



Aniva — a Russian nuclear powered light, built by Japan in 1939, abandoned 2006, has since lost any original beauty it had. But its isolation has made it a popular destination for 'adventure' tourists. ☹



The ugliest of all? And it's British! Platte Fougère, Guernsey 1910