

LIGHTHOUSES OF FOVEAUX STRAIT — A HISTORY

Angela Bain

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Lighthouses of Foveaux Strait — A History

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Preamble

The topic of Southland lighthouses was not one I had ever thought about before being approached by the Department of Conservation to write a history of the Foveaux Strait lights. As I delved into the available primary and secondary sources during the course of my research, I discovered that the world of lighthouses was a fascinating one, peopled with colourful characters, littered with complaints of hardship and privation (some justified, others not), and stories of a unique lifestyle, now consigned to former keepers' memories and the history books.

The aim of the project is to produce a history of the lighthouses located within the boundaries of the Southland Conservancy. It is to cover the history of the lights themselves as well as the life experiences of the keepers and their families who operated them. The purpose of the project is to give some context to the sites managed by Department of Conservation staff, to help enhance their understanding of individual sites, and to show each site's relative significance to the history of New Zealand lighthouses as a whole. It is also hoped that the information will be able to be used to assist Department of Conservation staff in putting together interpretative displays such as panels, pamphlets, visitor centre displays, slide talks, exhibitions and information sheets for the public.

This study refers only to Southland's coastal lights (i.e. not harbour lights, which are another story entirely) and focuses on the previously-manned lighthouses at Centre Island, Dog Island, Puysegur Point and Waipapa Point, with other coastal lights mentioned briefly. As many aspects as possible of lighthouses and lighthouse life are intended to be covered, although obviously not every single angle can be included.

This project was undertaken with the knowledge that the availability of time and money would place some limits on what could be achieved. Eight weeks were set aside for research purposes. Financial resources meant that research had to be based in Southland and Otago. While the Dunedin branch of Archives New Zealand has extensive records pertaining to Southland lighthouses, there are more held in Wellington which, unfortunately, could not be utilised in this study. Archives New Zealand in Dunedin does not generally hold records for the relevant lights after about 1945, and nearly all the lighthouse archives they hold are written by the keepers themselves. This means that there is a bias towards the history of the lights before about WWII and towards the experience of the keepers, to the detriment of the Marine Department's side of the story, in most of the primary sources used in the study. While I have tried to balance this with information from other sources where possible, the bias should be borne in mind when reading the project. Time constraints also meant that only a small amount of oral history work could be undertaken for the project; there are many more people who could be interviewed on this topic.

The project is constructed in such a way that each chapter is virtually a stand-alone unit which can be read independently of the other chapters, as and when information on a certain aspect of lighthouse life is required. Inevitably, this leads to some repetition of information within different chapters when it is read as a whole. The topics covered are wide-ranging and include chapters on the technical side of lighthouse operation, family life on light stations, the vessels which serviced the stations, the lighthouse environment, and summaries of the history of each lighthouse.

Angela Bain
September 1999

CHAPTER ONE: Context

INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND

John Ross defines a 'lighthouse' as 'a visual navigational aid, visible both by day and by night'.¹ Based on this definition, lighthouses, in varying forms, can be found in historical records dating back over two thousand years. For example, the Alexandria lighthouse consisted of a fire burning at the top of a 120 metre tall white marble tower during the night, and a mirror used to reflect the sun during the day. Built by Ptolemy II in circa 280 BC, it was one of the 'seven wonders of the ancient world'. As trade and colonisation contributed to an increasing amount of sea traffic, lighthouses like the one at Alexandria harbour (known as Pharos) were erected throughout Europe and the Mediterranean.²

Many of the early lights were unreliable or not sited in the most useful positions. There were even cases of false lights being deliberately displayed by wreckers to 'guide' ships onto rocks to be 'relieved' of their cargo.³ Formal organisation of lighthouses began in the sixteenth century. In Great Britain, the Corporation of Trinity House was appointed in 1566 to try to regulate the disorder on the coasts of England and Wales. An Act of Parliament instructed Trinity House to —

*...make erecte and set up such and so many Beakons Markes and Signes of the Sea ... as to them shall seeme most meete needeful and requisyte, whereby the Daungers maye be avoyded and escaped, and shippes the better coome into their Portes without Peryll.*⁴

The Commission of Northern Lights was established in 1736 to administer the Scottish Light Service.⁵ Scotland's Light Service later became the basic model for those running the early New Zealand Light Service.

As technology advanced, so too did navigational aids. Fires on beaches and cliff tops were replaced first with large candles mounted in candelabra, then with oil wick lanterns fuelled by sperm whale or colza oil. During the eighteenth century, reflectors began to be used to enhance the lights and, eventually, the first revolving light was invented.⁶ Lighthouse technology continued to develop and gradually lighthouses came to be automated and required little human intervention. New Zealand relied upon overseas technological innovation and basically followed international trends in lighthouse development.⁷

¹ J.O.C. Ross, *The Lighthouses of New Zealand*, Palmerston North, 1975, p.12.

² Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: a brief history', p.1.

³ Ross, p.15.

⁴ C. Nicholson, *Rock Lighthouses of Britain*, Cambridge, 1983, pp.12-13.

⁵ Ross, p.15.

⁶ Ibid, p.16.

⁷ For more detailed information about the development of lighthouse technology, see chapter on Technologies.

New Zealand's role in the international system of lights came about through its obligation to provide lights on its coasts for the safe navigation of its waters, not only for its own vessels, but for ships belonging to other nations as well. New Zealand relied on other countries to make their waters navigable for its trading ships travelling to and from Britain. Likewise, other countries required a safe route past New Zealand's coastline.

Thus, the world's seafarers came to be aided in their travels by a system of lights and beacons. This system had gradually evolved from a crude, relatively disorganised series of fires dotting the coast to eventually become a comprehensive, centrally regulated service of lights and keepers.

NATIONAL BACKGROUND

As an island nation, New Zealand has always depended upon the sea for trade and, particularly in the nineteenth century, communication purposes. The safe navigation of New Zealand waters was a concern from early on in the country's colonial history. This was particularly so as New Zealand's road and rail network was limited at the time, which meant that internal trade, as well as trans-Tasman and international trade, relied heavily on shipping.

According to Rear Admiral Ross's research, New Zealand's first recorded navigational light was a lighted beacon erected in 1831-32 to mark the entrance to the port of Maketu in the Bay of Plenty. Other coastal settlements also established navigational aids on an informal basis, some consisting of lights, others simply day-mark beacons which were not visible at night.⁸ Governor Hobson's Legislative Council passed the Municipal Corporation Ordinance in December 1841 which officially gave local bodies the power to erect their own beacons and lighthouses.⁹ However, the Ordinance was almost immediately disallowed by Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who wrote from London that "the power of establishing beacons and lighthouses ... is reserved by the Constitution to the Governor as a prerogative which cannot properly be transferred to any other authority."¹⁰

Meanwhile, over 100 total ship losses in New Zealand waters before 1845 highlighted the need for an organised system of lights and marks. Although responsibility to provide adequate coastal lighting had been put squarely onto central government by British authorities, there was still nothing being done about it. Some improvement to the situation came in 1852 when the Constitution Act allowed provincial councils some say in port administration, while the central government retained control over lights and beacons. Although this did not empower local governments to erect lights, they had gained some influence with which to lobby the central administration for lighthouses. Finally, in 1854, a Select Committee was

⁸ Ross, p.16.

⁹ Ibid, p.17.

¹⁰ Quoted in *ibid*, p.18.

appointed to look into the issue of where best to site New Zealand's first lighthouses. The Committee recommended that lights be established at Pencarrow Head, Manukau Heads and Stephens Island. The Committee's most significant recommendation was that apart from Stephens Island, all lighthouses should be built and maintained by the appropriate provincial council. The responsibility for providing lights being handed to them, provincial councils now began putting money aside for this purpose.¹¹ Wellington's Provincial Council was the first local government to use its new power, and New Zealand's first lighthouse was built on Pencarrow Head in 1859.¹² New Zealand's second lighthouse was first exhibited on the Boulder Bank, Nelson, on 4 August 1862.¹³ By this time, the provincial governments of Auckland, Otago and Southland were also planning to erect lights at sites within their jurisdiction. The third lighthouse to be built in New Zealand was at Tiritiri Matangi Island in 1865 and was the first to be paid for entirely by the central government.¹⁴

While New Zealand's early lighthouses were funded and built by local governments, by the 1860s it became apparent that some sort of national policy on lighthouse construction was required. To coordinate construction and control what type of lights were to be erected, the Marine Board Act was passed in 1862, establishing a Chief Marine Board for New Zealand. It soon became apparent that the Board was experiencing many administrative difficulties. It was abolished in late 1863 when a new Act replaced it with a Marine Board of New Zealand, which had considerably more power than its predecessor.¹⁵ From 1862 onwards, the siting and construction of lighthouses again became the responsibility of central government. Those provincial councils which had already imported lights were reimbursed for the costs incurred.¹⁶ It was found in 1865 that the Board's independent position was not the most efficient way to administer the country's lights. It was recommended that the Board be attached to, and subject to the control of, one of the government departments.¹⁷ At the end of 1866, the Marine Board was abolished and became a government department under the control of the Postmaster-General. Thus, the Marine Department was born.¹⁸ By the turn of the century, 27 manned lighthouses had been built around New Zealand at a cost of £171,488 to the Marine Department.¹⁹ Eleven of these lights were erected during the 1870s, the busiest decade of construction in the Marine Department's history.²⁰

¹¹ Ibid, pp.19-20.

¹² P. Taylor, *As Darker Grows the Night*, Auckland, 1975, p.5.

¹³ Ross, p.24.

¹⁴ E.R. Martin, *Marine Department Centennial History, 1866-1966*, Wellington, 1969, p.55.

¹⁵ Ross, pp.26, 28.

¹⁶ Martin, p.55.

¹⁷ *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1865, D-1c, p.2. [Hereafter to be referred to as AJHR]

¹⁸ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.1.

¹⁹ Martin, p.61.

²⁰ Ross, p.81.

In 1865 it was proposed that an engineer be appointed to oversee the construction and maintenance of New Zealand's lighthouses, and James M. Balfour was appointed Colonial Marine Engineer and Superintendent of Lighthouses.²¹ John Mill was later appointed New Zealand's first Lighthouse Artificer and arrived from London in 1875. He was responsible for supervising lighthouse construction and maintenance until 1878, when David Scott took over. Scott was succeeded by W.A. Fraser in around 1910 who continued as Lighthouse Artificer until his retirement in 1938. At this stage, the Public Works Department took over the maintenance duties previously performed by the Artificers.²² This continued until the Marine Department established its own maintenance gangs. Lighthouse construction had been undertaken by the Public Works Department under the direction of the Marine Engineer since 1894.²³

It can be seen that the development of lighthouse administration in New Zealand roughly followed the development of international administration, with close reference to the Light Services of Great Britain. The navigational aids started out as fairly crude beacons and lamp lights installed on an ad hoc basis under local authority, and eventually became more sophisticated with every aspect of lighthouse construction and administration coming under central government control. The administrative framework was refined over time and marine safety in New Zealand was achieved as far as possible.²⁴

BRIEF HISTORY OF FOVEAUX STRAIT

Foveaux Strait and its environs were important early in New Zealand's European history. In pre-European times, Southland experienced intensive Maori settlement.²⁵ The first Europeans to set eyes upon the area were Captain James Cook and his crew on board the *Endeavour* in March 1770. Cook sailed around the Southern extremity of Stewart Island, and on to Fiordland sketching Stewart Island in on his map as part of the mainland. Cook's error was not officially corrected until 1804 when American sealer Captain Owen Folger Smith arrived in the region. Smith discovered that a strait between the South Island and Stewart Island did indeed exist, and named it 'Smith's Straits'.²⁶ The first sealing gang had been landed at Dusky Sound in 1792 and sealing soon became big business in the southernmost parts of New Zealand.²⁷ In 1806 an American vessel, the *Favorite*, collected 60,000 seal skins from the area before continuing on to Sydney via 'Smith's Strait', becoming the first ship to pass through it. This is how Foveaux Strait came to be called 'Favourite's Strait' by some.

²¹ *AJHR*, 1865, D-1c, p.2. See later section on Marine Department personalities for more detail.

²² Martin, pp.69-70.

²³ *AJHR*, 1894, H-18, p.1.

²⁴ See 'Marine Department' chapter for further discussion of the Department.

²⁵ *Illustrated Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, Auckland, 1989, p.1150.

²⁶ J. Hall-Jones, *The South Explored*, Invercargill, 1998, pp.10-13.

²⁷ *Illustrated Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, p.1103.

Captain John Grono is credited with giving Foveaux Strait its current name. Grono, a sealer, returned to Australia from the area in 1809 and referred to the channel as 'Foveaux Strait', named after his friend J.J. Foveaux, Governor of Australia. Grono also recognised the potential treacherousness of the newly-discovered stretch of water, saying "The strait is ... very dangerous navigation from the numerous shoals, rocks and little islands with which it is crowded."²⁸

Sealers (up until the 1820s), whalers (after around 1830), and traders were virtually the only non-Maori inhabitants of Foveaux Strait and its surrounds until the mid-nineteenth century when the government purchased the Murihiku block, thus opening Southland up for European settlement. Invercargill was founded by Scottish settlers in 1856 and in 1871 became a municipality with a population of almost 2,000. Southland became an independent province in 1861 but within nine years, a combination of heavy expenditure and migration losses to the northern goldfields resulted in bankruptcy and Southland rejoined Otago.²⁹ In spite of this Bluff grew as one of the most important ports in New Zealand. This importance grew with the advent of refrigerated shipping of meat from the province.



Dog Island lighthouse and stairs. DOC

²⁸ Hall-Jones, p.15.

²⁹ *Illustrated Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, pp.1149-1150.

Against this background, then, the waters of Foveaux Strait came to be used by seafarers and vessels of all descriptions to an extensive degree. The lighthouses of the Strait were erected to fulfil their needs in the nineteenth century and remain in use today.

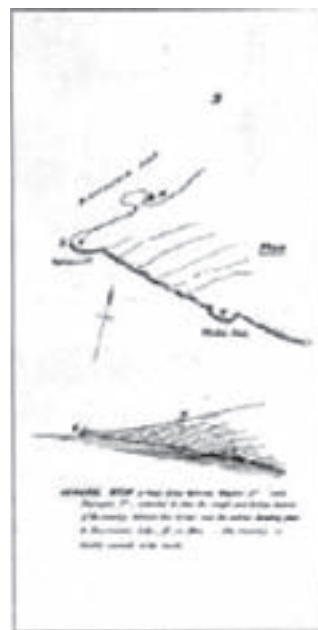
CHAPTER TWO:

Lighthouse history summaries

DOG ISLAND

Dog Island is a low-lying rocky island about three miles south east of the entrance to Bluff Harbour. The 28-acre island's highest point is only 50 feet above sea level.³⁰ This is the site of New Zealand's tallest and possibly most distinctive lighthouse. It was also often referred to as the most important lighthouse in the country.³¹

It was obvious to seafarers at an early stage that a light was required somewhere in Foveaux Strait. There was much debate in the early 1860s over the best position for this light. A number of shipmasters experienced in navigating vessels through the Strait were asked for their opinions. They suggested possible sites on Centre Island, Ruapuke Island, Stewart Island and Solander Island, as well as Dog Island. Invercargill Harbour Master Morris recommended to James Menzies, the Superintendent of Southland, that the light be erected on Dog Island which was hazardous as 'it is very low and not seen till close upon it'.³²



Dog Island and Waipapa Point maps.

³⁰ T. Reid, 'Last of the lighthouse keepers', *New Zealand Geographic*, April-June 1989, p.31.

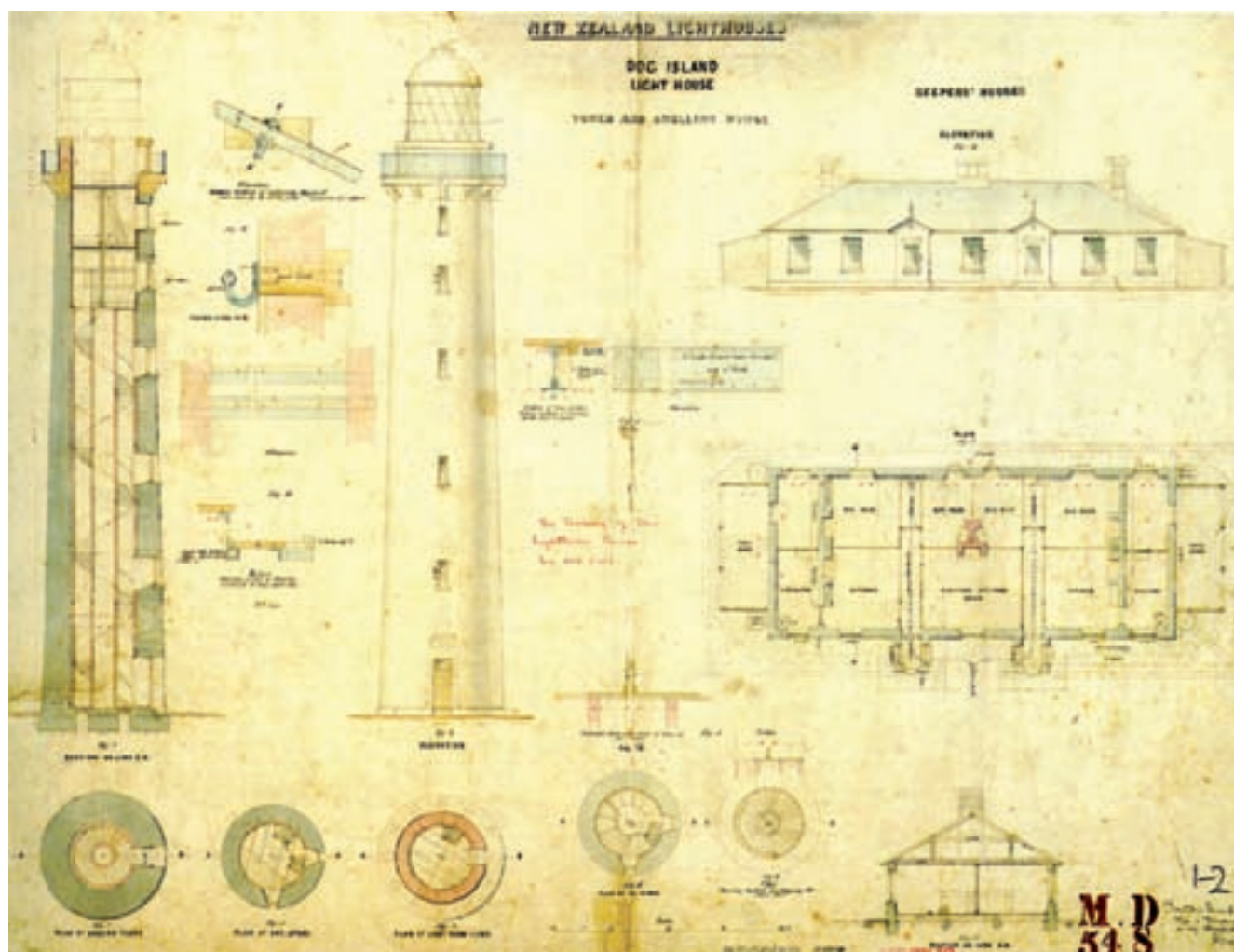
³¹ For example, M. Gordon, *Vintage: People and Things in Old New Zealand*, Christchurch, 1948, p.126.

³² 'Lights, Harbours and Lighthouses', Southland Provincial Government Records 1858-1872, 28 August 1861, 5 October 1861, 16 June 1862. Hocken Library, Micro 413/30.

Eventually, Dog Island was chosen as the location for Southland's first lighthouse. The light would be very important as it was to be situated in the narrowest part of Foveaux Strait. This stretch of water was used constantly by shipping and was subject to uncertain currents and frequent stormy weather.³³ The actual site on the island was another topic of debate. In November 1862, the Chief Surveyors of Otago and Southland had planned to visit Dog Island together and decide on the exact site. The trip did not eventuate and in February 1863 the Superintendent of Otago instructed the Southland Provincial Council to choose the site by itself.³⁴ Misunderstandings between the Otago and Southland Provincial Councils continued, with confusion over who was to supervise the erection of the light and who was to pay for it.³⁵ In the end, the central government took over construction of all New Zealand lighthouses, including the one on Dog Island.³⁶

March 1864 drawing for the Dog Island lighthouse and keepers dwelling by James M Balfour, Otago Marine Engineer. ANZ (WGTN): M 27 MD 548.

During 1863, James Balfour (Marine Engineer for Otago) was commissioned to design the Dog Island lighthouse.³⁷ The light apparatus itself was



³³ AJHR, 1865, D-1c, p.2.

³⁴ 'Lights, Harbours and Lighthouses', 7 November 1862, 17 February 1863.

³⁵ Ibid, 17 February 1863, 24 March 1863.

³⁶ Ibid, 31 January 1865.

³⁷ Ross, p.39.

ordered from Allan Stevenson, the well-known Edinburgh Lighthouse Engineer and arrived in New Zealand in mid-1864.³⁸ Meanwhile, the Marine Board invited tenders from contractors for the erection of the lighthouse tower and dwellings on Dog Island.³⁹ The successful tenderer was a Mr Garside.⁴⁰

One of the reasons why Dog Island was felt to be a suitable lighthouse site was that the island was mainly made up of stone which could be quarried to construct the buildings. Captain Thomas Robertson, Warden Chief of the Marine Board, visited the island in early 1863 and noted that there was a good boat harbour at its North East end. He also spoke to Topi, a local Maori chief, who assured him that there was a good fresh water supply on the island.⁴¹ Mr T. Heale, who undertook a thorough examination of the island in April 1863, backed up these findings. He concluded that the island's summit had plenty of space for a lighthouse and its buildings. He was confident that, should a well be sunk, a constant and abundant water supply would be found. Heale worked out that the lighthouse would need to be around 110 feet tall for its light to be effective. Because of this, he felt that it would be too expensive and difficult to land enough iron to build the tower. Instead, Heale recommended that the stone on the island would be the best building material if it proved to be suitable. He described Dog Island's stone as 'trap rock of a blue gray colour and generally fine grained but varying a little in texture and colour'. He said the stone's durability was 'beyond doubt', but it needed further testing to ensure it was safe for building with.⁴² In response to this, a party of men was sent to Dog Island in June 1863 to conduct tests on the stone. They returned with the news that it seemed suitable to be used for 'rubble masonry of the best description'.⁴³

Construction of the Dog Island light turned out to be the most expensive venture undertaken by the nineteenth century Marine Department. As the island was so low-lying, Balfour designed a 118-foot light tower to give the light sufficient range. The size of the tower, combined with the difficulties experienced in quarrying enough stone, and the great depth of the foundations required for the houses, made the whole enterprise very costly. There were also numerous delays in the construction work due to the 'remarkable inclemency of the winter in the Strait'. The tower was 21.5 feet in diameter at the base, narrowing to 16.5 feet in diameter below the balcony. The lantern was installed 100 feet up the tower. Due to the expense of the construction, the stone tower was relatively plain 'but its simple massiveness renders it a not displeasing object'. The cost of freight, buildings, road etc. was £6,992-18s. The

³⁸ AJHR, 1864, D-1, p.3.

³⁹ Quoted in C.D. Kerr, 'Dog Island Lighthouse 1865', research notes, 1989, no page numbers.

⁴⁰ AJHR, 1865, D-1c, p.2.

⁴¹ 'Lights, Harbours and Lighthouses', 5 March 1863.

⁴² Ibid, 2 May 1863.

⁴³ Ibid, June 1863.

lantern and apparatus cost £2,483-6s-1d.⁴⁴ The final total cost came to £10,480-12s-8d.⁴⁵ In comparison, the range of costs for other lights at this time was between £4,000 and £6,000.⁴⁶

The apparatus itself was of the First Order catadioptric and produced a revolving white light. Other lights had only a single burner. The Dog Island light was the first of its kind in New Zealand. It consisted of sixteen smaller apparatus (or holophotes), each with a separate argand lamp and reflector behind it. The lamps were mounted on a four-sided frame of malleable iron with four lamps on each side. The frame itself made a complete revolution every two minutes, making the light flash once every 30 seconds. A massive clockwork machine drove this. This kind of light was regarded as appropriate for a location as inaccessible as Dog Island as the argand lamps were durable and could be easily repaired. Even if one of the sixteen lamps was disabled, the light would continue to flash, although with a weaker beam, while with the central burner system usually used, the light would temporarily go out.⁴⁷



This photograph shows the 1863 building identified in the modern photograph. Dog Island Lighthouse. [190-?].

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY
(ATL): PAColl-0176-01

The construction of Dog Island lighthouse was carried out under the superintendence of James Balfour.⁴⁸ Mr Rotton of the Marine Department

⁴⁴ AJHR, 1865, D-1c, p.2.

⁴⁵ AJHR, 1871, G-6, p.10.

⁴⁶ Ross, p.39.

⁴⁷ AJHR, 1865, D-1c, p.2.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.9.

supervised the installation of the lantern and optical apparatus.⁴⁹ Dog Island light was exhibited for the first time on 5 August 1865.⁵⁰

Although the tower was built between 1864 and 1865, construction and repair work was ongoing at the site for many years to come. Less than a year after the light was first used, it was noted that ‘the lofty tower sensibly vibrated’ in high winds, although no damage was reported this time.⁵¹ The tower continued to ‘oscillate more than such a tower usually does’ during severe gales. It oscillated to such an extent and leaked so much during storms that there were concerns that the mortar holding the tower up would disintegrate. Lightning strikes also weakened the mortar. In 1867, the bad mortar was scraped out from between the joints of the stones and replaced with Portland cement. To help make the tower more waterproof, and also more visible to mariners during daylight hours, the building was painted. The middle third of the tower was painted white and the top and bottom thirds black.⁵² The distinctive pattern remains on the Dog Island light tower today.



View of Dog Island and the lighthouse.1924.
ATL: PA1-0-261-09-1

The ripping and pointing of the tower was only successful for a couple of years. In the early 1870s, a crack appeared in the masonry at the base of the tower. Marine Engineer Blackett inspected the crack in 1871 and concluded that the tower required immediate strengthening. The Marine Department authorised him to prepare drawings and do the repairs without delay.⁵³ Blackett designed ‘a strong framework of durable hard wood, encircled by stout wrought-iron bands’ to stabilise the base of the tower. The work was hindered by inclement weather and cost £978-4s-3d, under the supervision of a Mr Whiting.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.2.

⁵⁰ AJHR, 1866, E-3, p.4.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.5.

⁵² AJHR, 1867, E-6, p.3.

⁵³ AJHR, 1871, G-6, p.4.

⁵⁴ AJHR, 1872, G-30, p.3.



Dog Island lighthouse and cottages. Below the original cottage, 2008. R. EGERTON, DOC



By 1916, the problem was recurring, with the perishing mortar coming out of the masonry. An inspection by the Marine Engineer confirmed that extensive repairs were required.⁵⁵ At first it was proposed that an entirely new tower be constructed. The Marine Department then decided to try to save the original tower. A new ferro-concrete tower was erected around the existing structure to strengthen it.⁵⁶ The plans, drawn up by N.J.M. McLeod in May 1916 and amended in 1918, called for a virtual concrete skin, two feet thick, to cover the stone tower from the ground floor to just below the balcony.⁵⁷ The interior of the tower was also strengthened with a six inch thick coating of reinforced concrete from the ground floor to the fourth floor landing.⁵⁸ The tower was repainted in black and white stripes and remained much the same in appearance as before, only greater in circumference. Between 1961 and 1963, the Ministry of Works repainted the whole tower and made repairs to the steel work and balustrading of the cat walk.⁵⁹

The unique sixteen-burner light remained in use for sixty years after its installation in 1865. It was adapted to burn paraffin oil rather than colza oil in 1876.⁶⁰ New burners for the argand lamps were ordered from Britain and fitted in 1884.⁶¹ Because of the rare nature of the light, finding spare parts was difficult. In 1886, for example, the centre of one of the sixteen holophotes was accidentally broken and the Marine Department had to send to Paris for a new one.⁶² In 1925, the Department examined the light's optical and illuminating apparatus and decided to update it to a second order dioptric lens with an incandescent oil burner.⁶³ This was because the light had apparently become inefficient and dangerous.⁶⁴ The installation of the new apparatus changed the light's pattern from one flash every thirty seconds to three flashes in quick succession every thirty seconds.⁶⁵ In line with Marine Department policy, the Ministry of Works installed a diesel electric generating plant on Dog Island in 1954 and the light was switched over to electrical operation in October 1954.⁶⁶ The diesel electric plant was replaced with a new one in 1970.⁶⁷

The two original stone keepers' cottages, like the tower, were designed by James Balfour.⁶⁸ A third keeper's cottage was built on the island in

⁵⁵ AJHR, 1916, H-15, p.4.

⁵⁶ AJHR, 1918, H-15, p.5.

⁵⁷ 'Repairs to Dog Island Lighthouse, 1916', Maps of Ministry of Works, Archives New Zealand, Dunedin Regional office (ANZ, Dunedin), DADE/D206/203a

⁵⁸ Kerr, p.1.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ AJHR, 1877, H-29, p.1.

⁶¹ AJHR, 1884, H-6, p.1.

⁶² AJHR, 1886, H-24, p.1.

⁶³ AJHR, 1925, H-15, p.17.

⁶⁴ AJHR, 1926, H-15, p.6.

⁶⁵ G.H.A. Tanner, '*Some Otago-Southland Lighthouses - Dog Island*'. Hocken Library, Misc MS 77, 1932, p.1.

⁶⁶ Kerr, p.1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ AJHR, 1865, D-1c, No.2, p.2.

1884.⁶⁹ By the 1920s, the three dwellings had become run down and were leaking badly. In 1927, two new six-roomed houses were constructed for the keepers and the two original cottages were relegated to storage space.⁷⁰ A new house was built for the sole keeper in 1979, at a cost of over \$60,000.⁷¹

There were originally three keepers in charge of the Dog Island light. In 1977, the number of keepers was reduced from two to one as a result of 'operational improvements made over the past two decades'.⁷² A 1981 Committee of Inquiry into lighthouse automation identified Dog Island lighthouse as one of nine lights that should remain staffed. This was mainly because of Dog Island's role in coastal surveillance and search and rescue operations. However, less than a decade later (in August 1989), Dog Island light was automated and the last permanent light keeper in the country was withdrawn from service.⁷³

⁶⁹ AJHR, 1884, H-6, p.1.

⁷⁰ AJHR, 1928, H-15, p.7.

⁷¹ *Otago Daily Times*, 23 August 1980, in 'Lighthouses', Vertical File, Dunedin Public Library.

⁷² AJHR, 1978, F-5, p.18.

⁷³ G. Sheehan & A. Gibbons, *Leading Lights: lighthouses of New Zealand*, Christchurch, 1991, p.108. Warren Russell was Dog Island's last keeper and was also the last permanent keeper in New Zealand. The last lighthouse in the country to be demanned was Centre Island, which was staffed by a temporary keeper until 1989.

CENTRE ISLAND

It was recognised early in the history of New Zealand's light service that some form of light was required to mark the western approaches to Foveaux Strait. While it was a more direct route for trans-Tasman shipping to travel to and from Otago via the Strait, vessels often travelled further south, around Stewart Island, rather than brave the dangerous stretch of water.⁷⁴

Centre Island, about eight kilometres offshore, was considered a possible site for a light as early as 1861 when Marine Master William Henry suggested to the Superintendent of Southland that two lights were needed in Foveaux Strait. He offered two possible positions: on Ruapuke and on Centre Island. If they could afford only one lighthouse, Henry recommended that the Centre Island site would be of most benefit.⁷⁵ One year later, though, Bluff Harbour Master Morris also wrote to Southland's Superintendent and said he felt that the 'North End of Stewarts Island would be a preferable site to Centre Island'.⁷⁶

The question of a lighthouse somewhere in the western approach to Foveaux Strait was not properly addressed until 1873. The Marine Department requested Captains R. Johnson and R.A. Edwin —

...to take into consideration the whole question of Lights on the Coast, and to prepare a comprehensive Plan and Report, showing where they would recommend the erection of additional lights.

The department suggested, among other things, that they consider placing a light 'somewhere in Favorite or Foveaux Strait, western entrance'.⁷⁷ Johnson and Edwin noted that vessels from Australia bound for Otago and Canterbury passed through Foveaux Strait where 'the weather ... is often thick and winter nights are long'. They therefore recommended that a light be erected on either Rugged or Centre Island. The two captains suggested that this light be of the first order and that Dog Island light become a subsidiary, third order light.⁷⁸

In 1874, the Legislature voted to provide £35,000 for the erection of seven new lights, including one at the western entrance to Foveaux Strait.⁷⁹ Captain Johnson was sent on a trip around New Zealand's coast to examine suitable sites for the new lighthouses. When he arrived in Southland, Johnson met with the Bluff Harbour Master and the masters of some of the vessels trading through the Strait. They discussed where they thought would be the best site. Again it was determined that the most suitable

⁷⁴ G. Sheehan & A. Gibbons, p.109.

⁷⁵ 'Lights, Harbours and Lighthouses, 26 August 1861-5 October 1869', Southland Provincial Government Records 1858-1872, Microfilm 413/30, Hocken Library, 28 August 1861.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 16 June 1862.

⁷⁷ *AJHR*, 1873, H-19, p.1.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.1-2.

⁷⁹ *AJHR*, 1874, H-22, p.2.

location would be on either Centre or Rugged Island. Johnson landed on both islands and examined possible lighthouse construction sites.⁸⁰

Johnson reported that the cost of construction and maintenance would be lower if Centre Island was chosen as there was a good supply of granite to be quarried on the site. Moreover, the soil was fertile which



Rarotoka Lighthouse tower.
OTAGO UNIVERSITY 3RD YR TEACHERS
2008

meant keepers would be able to grow their own produce. However, Johnson favoured Rugged Island, believing it to have a safer landing bay than Centre Island. He also argued that a light on Rugged Island would illuminate a clear passage, while one on Centre Island would only indicate a dangerous area which vessels would almost be upon before they saw the light. He therefore recommended that the lighthouse be sited on the western shoulder of Rugged Island, with his second choice being a point on Centre Island.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.3.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.4.

After Captain Johnson's report was submitted, Marine Engineer John Blackett was sent to Foveaux Strait to examine the possible sites Johnson had identified.⁸² Blackett disagreed with Johnson's view. He rejected the Rugged Island site saying that access from the landing site to the lighthouse would be too difficult, making construction and maintenance very costly and labour-intensive. Blackett preferred Centre Island as the location of the new lighthouse. He identified the following positive features on the island —

*...a good landing on a sandy beach; easy rising ground over which to form a road; a prominent site ... of a convenient elevation, viz. 247 feet; abundance of stone (granite) for building, if required; and a commanding position in the Straits.*⁸³



The 1939 houses, used today by Ngai Tahu.
ORAKA-ĀPARIMA RUNAKA DURING
ISLAND RE-VEGETATION WORK,
DOC

Finally, the decision to go ahead with the lighthouse on Centre Island was made, and an order was sent to England in February 1875 for the necessary lamp and apparatus.⁸⁴ This arrived the following year. The lantern was made by James Milne & Son of Edinburgh and was shipped from Glasgow on the *Pomona* and stored at the New Zealand Loan & Mercantile Co.'s Dunedin warehouse until it was time for its installation. On 16 February 1876, the apparatus was shipped to Dunedin on the

⁸² Ibid, p.3.

⁸³ *AJHR*, 1875, H-12A, p.18.

⁸⁴ Ibid, H-12, p.1.

Horsa to join the lantern.⁸⁵ The total cost of the lighthouse machinery added up to £2,738-0s-3d, with the lantern costing £988-9s-3d, and the apparatus £1,250.⁸⁶

The contract for constructing the lighthouse, three dwellings, and three stores was let on 6 January 1877 to Mr William Boyd of Invercargill for £2,087-1s-9d. The contract was due to be completed by 6 November 1877.⁸⁷ During March, the government steamer *Stella* landed the materials for the lighthouse buildings on Centre Island. The landing was difficult as there was often a heavy surf on the beach which could easily swamp a boat.⁸⁸ Once the buildings were nearing completion, the *Stella* transported both the lantern and apparatus to the island on 9 July 1877.⁸⁹

Marine Engineer Blackett reported in 1878 that the construction of the lighthouse was satisfactorily completed and the lantern and apparatus were ready for installation. Everything was expected to be ready for lighting up around the end of August 1878.⁹⁰ In the end, the Centre Island light was first exhibited on 16 September 1878 three years after the light had been ordered. It was a first order dioptric, fixed white light with red arcs showing over the inshore dangers.⁹¹ The red arcs were created by ruby glass screens specially made by Messrs Chance Bros & Co. of Birmingham. They were installed inside the lantern on the side from which the red light needed to be shown.⁹² The local island stone not being required, the tower was built of kauri and was 40 feet (12 metres) tall. It was erected 81 metres above sea level.⁹³ The total cost of the lighthouse was £5,785-19s-0d.⁹⁴

The delay in lighting up was caused by a dispute over the ownership of the land. Centre Island, known to the Maori as 'Rarotonga' or 'Rarotoka', had been supposedly purchased from its Maori owners by the government in 1853.⁹⁵ The whole island was declared a lighthouse reserve by an Order in Council dated 6 November 1875.⁹⁶ In March 1878, Lighthouse Artificer John Mill arrived in Southland to install the lighting apparatus on Centre Island. However, his work was delayed while a group of local Maori was removed from the island. They contended that they had not, in fact, sold the island to the government and opposed the use of what they

⁸⁵ G.H.A. Tanner, 'Some Otago-Southland Lighthouses: Centre Island', unpublished manuscript, Hocken Library, Misc. MS 77, 1932, p.1.

⁸⁶ *AJHR*, 1876, H-26, p.1.

⁸⁷ *AJHR*, 1877, H-29, p.4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.2.

⁸⁹ Tanner, p.1.

⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1878, H-12, p.3.

⁹¹ *AJHR*, 1879, H-10, p.1, p.18.

⁹² Tanner, p.1.

⁹³ Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Centre Island', p.3.

⁹⁴ *AJHR*, 1883, H-15, p.12.

⁹⁵ Tanner, p.1.

⁹⁶ *AJHR*, 1876, H-26, p.1.

perceived as their land.⁹⁷ They squatted in one of the newly completed keepers' houses and 'considerable difficulty was experienced in effecting their peaceful removal from the Island'.⁹⁸ Accounts of this incident differ, but it appears that the threat of force may have been used to 'persuade' the protesters to leave.⁹⁹ There had been disputes over the ownership of land other lighthouses had been built on, but it appears that the most resistance was shown at Centre Island and Cape Egmont.¹⁰⁰ Seemingly as some form of compromise, William Cameron, whose Maori wife was one of those claiming the island, was employed as an Assistant Keeper at the light. This situation did not work very well and, for a number of reasons, Cameron was eventually asked to leave the Light Service.¹⁰¹

The local Maori were also permitted to continue to run sheep on Centre Island. This, too, caused problems. In 1890, Cameron claimed that he did not have enough sheep on the island to stock the keepers with mutton. Principal Keeper C.E. Johnston complained to the Marine Department that Cameron had, in fact, over 150 sheep and would not allow the keepers to run enough of their own stock to provide meat for themselves. There were also complaints that Cameron's geese ate 'every sweet bit of grass so close and also mess all over the place that no animal will feed after them'.¹⁰² His horse also gave cause for complaint by cutting up the road 'galloping to and fro when we are sledging', and generally annoying the light station horse.¹⁰³

The 'Maori sheep', as they were referred to in keepers' letters, were still on the island in 1911 and were then owned by a Mrs Tupai of Colac Bay. Principal Keeper Cox noted that the sheep had been left to run wild and had not been shorn in nearly two years. He reported in January 1912 that the sheep had been purchased and removed by a Mr Roderique. Cox said that the 'Maori cows' were still on the island and he recommended that 'it would be advisable to notify [the Maori owners] to remove them so that they will have no claim in future on the Island'.¹⁰⁴

The light on Centre Island was originally powered by colza oil. This was changed to paraffin as it burned brighter.¹⁰⁵ In May 1909, Lighthouse Artificer David Scott arrived on the island to install 'Chance's patent light'.¹⁰⁶ These new incandescent lights were gradually being installed in most of the country's lighthouses. They provided a better light and were less expensive to run as they consumed less fuel and used kerosene, which was cheaper than paraffin.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁷ Their claims were vindicated by the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, which returned the island to Ngai Tahu ownership, Section 327.

⁹⁸ Tanner, p.1.

⁹⁹ Ross, p.76.

¹⁰⁰ Sheehan & Gibbons, p.109.

¹⁰¹ Ross, p.76.

¹⁰² 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 3 June 1890, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 1 July 1895.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 14 July 1911, 2 January 1912.

¹⁰⁵ 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Centre Island', p.1.

¹⁰⁶ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 June 1909.

¹⁰⁷ *AJHR*, 1909, H-15, p.4.

In November 1933, a quantity of ruby glass was purchased by the Marine Department to replace the old ruby screens inside the lantern. The glass was transported to the island and stored there until the Department expert visited to install it.¹⁰⁸

Electric bells for calling keepers to assist in the light tower were fitted in 1886.¹⁰⁹ These were struck by lightning on 19 September 1889 and lighthouse communication with the houses was cut. It was not until 5 January 1890 that someone was sent to repair the bells.¹¹⁰ They were again temporarily out of use after another lightning strike in November that year.¹¹¹ This was an ongoing problem and the bells were struck once more in August 1891.¹¹² In April 1894, the bells were 'completely shattered by lightning'.¹¹³

Centre Island was connected to Riverton by telegraph cable on 21 March 1908.¹¹⁴ The cables had been laid by the government vessel *Tutanekai* primarily to enable the arrival of inwards bound mail steamers from Melbourne to be reported to Bluff and Dunedin. This system was later abandoned when wireless telegraphy on ships was introduced.¹¹⁵

The first major repairs were made to the dwellings on Centre Island in late 1896. The Lighthouse Artificer carried out some of the repairs and the remainder were made by Principal Keeper Colley, who was a carpenter by trade.¹¹⁶ An Invercargill carpenter spent two weeks on the island, assisting Colley with the repairs.¹¹⁷ Four men were sent to the island in October 1908 to make further repairs to the houses and to erect a flagstaff at the station.¹¹⁸

By the mid-1930s, it was becoming obvious that new houses were required on Centre Island.¹¹⁹ Plans and specifications for three new keepers' cottages were drawn up in 1938 and the contract was let.¹²⁰ The materials for the new buildings were brought to the island by the *Matai* and unloaded and stacked by four Public Works Department men in December 1938. It was not until May 1939, however, that the builder, a Mr Turner, arrived and started work on the new houses.¹²¹ The houses were completed on 29 October 1939, when the keepers were able to

¹⁰⁸ *AJHR*, 1935, H-15, p.4.

¹⁰⁹ *AJHR*, 1886, H-24, p.1.

¹¹⁰ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 30 September 1889, 31 January 1890.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 1 December 1890.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 31 August 1891.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 30 April 1894.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 1 April 1908.

¹¹⁵ Tanner, p.2.

¹¹⁶ *AJHR*, 1897, H-15, p.1.

¹¹⁷ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 31 December 1896.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1 November 1908.

¹¹⁹ *AJHR*, 1937-38, H-15, p.6.

¹²⁰ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.5.

¹²¹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 4 January 1939, 22 May 1939, ANZ, Dunedin DAAL, Acc D28, 3/3.

shift into their new quarters.¹²² The Marine Department report for 1940 described the dwellings as 'comfortable' and 'modern'.¹²³

By 1947, it was felt that the fixed light on Centre Island had become outdated and consideration was given to replacing it with a more modern revolving lens of the fourth order.¹²⁴ This work was not carried out.

In 1951, preliminary steps to the electrification of the Centre Island light were made.¹²⁵ In 1953, the delivery of the electric plant from overseas was delayed and it was not until 1955 that the light was eventually electrified by means of a diesel generator. The light was also changed from fixed to flashing at this time.¹²⁶ A new powerhouse with three new diesel generators was completed for the station in 1972.¹²⁷

Centre Island lighthouse was home to three keepers from its establishment up until the mid-1950s when the number of keepers was reduced to two.¹²⁸ As a result of 'operational improvements' made over the previous two decades, Centre Island's staff numbers were reduced again in 1977, leaving only one resident keeper on the island.¹²⁹ In line with Marine Department policy, the lighthouse on Centre Island was automated in 1982 and finally demanned in 1989.¹³⁰

¹²² Ibid, 2 November 1939.

¹²³ *AJHR*, 1940, H-15, p.4.

¹²⁴ *AJHR*, 1947, H-15, p.4.

¹²⁵ *AJHR*, 1951, H-15, p.4.

¹²⁶ *AJHR*, 1953, H-15, p.4 and *AJHR*, 1956, H-15, pp.15-16.

¹²⁷ *AJHR*, 1972, H-15, p.14.

¹²⁸ 'Lighthouses of New Zealand - Centre Island', p.1.

¹²⁹ *AJHR*, 1978, F-5, p.18.

¹³⁰ G.B. Churchman, *New Zealand Lighthouses*, Wellington, 1989, p.59.

PUYSEGUR POINT

Puysegur Point lighthouse was notorious within the Light Service as an extremely difficult station to work on. Located on the eastern headland of Preservation Inlet in southwest Fiordland, Puysegur Point was one of the most inaccessible and isolated lighthouses in New Zealand, despite being a land-based station. This lends the lighthouse a definite air of mystique and Puysegur Point has perhaps one of the more interesting histories in the whole Light Service.

Dog Island and Centre Island lights began operation in 1865 and 1878 respectively and effectively lit the middle section of Foveaux Strait. However, they did not service the western entrance to the Strait. Vessels travelling to Southland and Otago from Australia used this route and, as sea traffic from this direction increased, so too did the need for some form of light. In February 1874, the Marine Department ordered Captain Robert Johnson to make a survey of the south west coast of Fiordland and recommend possible lighthouse sites.¹³¹ Sailing on the government steamer *Luna*, bad weather prevented Johnson landing at Green Island and Windsor Point, two of the possible sites. Instead, he had to examine the coast from the ship. The *Luna* was detained for three days at Preservation Inlet because of the rough conditions. During this time, Johnson landed and made a trip round to Puysegur Point by land. He believed that it would be 'a good position for a light' as there was a 135-foot high plateau which, although covered in dense bush, would be ideal for a light station. Johnson commented that 'a good road could easily be made passing first along the beach and then on the plateau'. He also noted that there was a relatively safe anchorage for vessels about one-and-a-quarter miles from the proposed lighthouse site.¹³²

After assessing Puysegur Point, Johnson journeyed six miles overland to Windsor Point. He found that while there was a suitable site for a light tower, the only possible landing inlet would not be sheltered enough for lighthouse tenders. Johnson went on to also reject Green Island as a lighthouse location. Again, there was no suitable landing site and Johnson felt that the island was too far east to be of use lighting the entrance to Foveaux Strait. Finally, Johnson recommended that the light be erected at Puysegur Point.¹³³ Marine Engineer John Blackett concurred with Johnson over the position of the new Foveaux Strait light, after examining the possible sites for himself on a trip around the South Island between December 1874 and January 1875. Blackett also provided an estimate for constructing a revolving light at Puysegur Point. He estimated that a Second Order light would cost £8,500 and a First Order light would cost £9,500.¹³⁴

¹³¹ A.C. & N.C. Begg, *Port Preservation*, Christchurch, 1973, p.268.

¹³² *AJHR*, 1874, H-23, p.4.

¹³³ For detailed reasons why Puysegur Point was chosen over Windsor Point and Green Island, see *ibid.*, pp.4-5.

¹³⁴ *AJHR*, 1875, H-12A, p.19.

Once the site for the light had been formally chosen, an order was sent to England for the necessary apparatus. Meanwhile, a road gang was put to work forming a road from Puysegur Point to Otago Retreat where service vessels would land at the entrance to Preservation Inlet.¹³⁵ The workmen arrived at Puysegur Point in February 1875 in the SS *Maori* and did not leave the site until November. As well as forming the one-and-three-quarter mile long road, the men cleared the dense bush and prepared the lighthouse site and built a small wooden store.¹³⁶ During this time one party of workmen attempted to walk the 70 miles to Riverton but lost their way and were missing for eighteen days before they were found, starving and near to death.¹³⁷ Three years later, during construction of the light, two workmen drowned after their boat capsized in Otago Retreat.¹³⁸ The lantern and apparatus arrived in the country in 1876.



Puysegur Point Historic
Landing Shed Preservation Inlet
- July 2003 - DOC

The landing shed or oil store,
built in the 1930s and extended
in the 1960s, at Otago Retreat
to house stores landed for the
lighthouse settlement. DOC.



¹³⁵ *AJHR*, 1875, H-12, p.1.

¹³⁶ *AJHR*, 1876, H-26, p.21.

¹³⁷ Ross, p.77.

¹³⁸ *AJHR*, 1878, H-12, p.2.

The total cost of the First Order revolving light itself, including lantern, apparatus, machinery and lamps, was £3,504-7s-2d. The Puysegur Point site was officially reserved for lighthouse use by an Order in Council dated 15 September 1875.¹³⁹

After the road was constructed, materials for the lighthouse and its associated buildings were transported to Puysegur Point in several trips by government vessels such as the new lighthouse steamer, *Stella*.¹⁴⁰ In 1876, the government invited tenders for the construction work. On 6 January 1877, William Birss' tender of £2,984-2s was accepted. The contract stated that the work was to be completed within one year and included the erection of the tower, three timber keepers' cottages, and three stores. By mid-1877, the building progress had not been 'altogether satisfactory' but it was still hoped that the contract would be fulfilled.¹⁴¹ The contract was completed in early 1878 and installation of the lantern and apparatus began.¹⁴² The site's isolated location and harsh weather contributed to the slow progress made on the light. Finally, more than four years after preparations began, Puysegur Point light was exhibited for the first time on 1 March 1879. The white light was of the First Order dioptric and flashed once every thirty seconds.¹⁴³ The tower itself was 60 ft (12 metres) tall and was built of ironbark timber imported from Australia.¹⁴⁴ The total cost of erecting the light was £9,958-19s-5d.¹⁴⁵

By the 1880s, the light tower was showing signs of weakness and swayed in the often-violent Puysegur Point wind. In 1886, the tower was stabilised with four wire rope stays, which were attached to the tower at one end and embedded in the ground at the other.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, John Blackett, who designed the Puysegur Point tower, had also designed the Portland Island light tower (near Gisborne). This tower, built in 1878, also required bracing when it began to move in strong winds.¹⁴⁷

Also in 1886, the exterior of the tower was re-covered. The ordinary weatherboards with which the tower was covered were not effective in keeping the 'very wet and boisterous' weather out, and the building was found to leak constantly. To weatherproof the tower, it was covered with diagonal boarding, overlaid with tarred felt and an outer covering of 1½ inch totara boards, with a slip-tongue of galvanised hoop-iron.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁹ *AJHR*, 1876, H-26, pp.1-2.

¹⁴⁰ *AJHR*, 1877, H-29, p.2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.4.

¹⁴² *AJHR*, 1878, H-12, p.3

¹⁴³ *AJHR*, 1879, H-10, pp.1, 18.

¹⁴⁴ *AJHR*, 1876, H-26, p.21 and Ministry of Transport, Marine Division, *About Lighthouses*, Wellington, 1974, p.33.

¹⁴⁵ *AJHR*, 1916, H-15, p.19.

¹⁴⁶ *AJHR*, 1887, H-4, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ T. Smith, *Man the Light! The life story of Thomas Smith, his family and their service in New Zealand lighthouses*, Auckland, 1996, p.29.

¹⁴⁸ *AJHR*, 1886, H-24, p.1.

An incandescent light was installed at Puysegur Point in 1909. These lanterns provided a better light than those used before and were also more economical to run as they used less fuel than the ordinary lights.¹⁴⁹

In the early 1940s, Puysegur Point station was upgraded and modernised. A hard-surface access road was under construction at the light in 1940, replacing the cleared track used until then. Puysegur Point's road from the landing to the lighthouse was one of the most difficult to maintain in the Light Service and required constant work from the keepers to keep it in a reasonable state.¹⁵⁰ The new gravel road was one-and-three-quarters miles long and extended from the landing to the lighthouse.¹⁵¹ The Marine Department planned to electrify the light at Puysegur in the early 1940s and the powerhouse necessary for such a move was built at the station in 1941. Meanwhile, the equipment needed for electrification was being assembled in Invercargill.¹⁵²

Before the light could be electrified, however, one of the most dramatic episodes in Puysegur Point's history occurred. On 8 February 1942, the following distressing telegram was sent from Puysegur Point to the Invercargill police:

*Lance Thomas believed insane attacked lighthouse station burned lighthouse and smashed most of radio stop has now disappeared with stolen rifle. Please send help. Unable to receive messages. Lightkeepers.*¹⁵³

The saga had begun some hours earlier. Two days before, Principal Keeper George Brown and his wife had left the station on annual leave, leaving First Assistant Keeper Thomas Smith in charge. It is Smith's account of the day's proceedings which is used here. Lance Thomas, a prospector who had been living on Coal Island for the past six months, signalled Tim Smith (the relieving keeper) to row his boat to the island. Upon his arrival, Thomas asked if he could use the boat to go fishing. Smith agreed on the proviso that Thomas row him and his companion, Bess Smith, to Totara Beach and pick them up again in the afternoon. After dropping them off, Thomas rowed to the lighthouse, apparently believing the station to be unmanned. Acting Principal Keeper Thomas Smith and Assistant Keeper Norm Miller were still there, however. After receiving a telephone call from Miller telling him that Thomas was on the station, Smith went to investigate. Here, Smith takes up the story:

I walked along the road from our houses, expecting to intercept him ... However, halfway there, I became alarmed at the clatter and noise emanating from the [radio] but! I broke into a run and threw open the door to find the man in the act of thrusting the butt of our shotgun through the glass case of the Barograph!

¹⁴⁹ AJHR, 1909, H-15, p.4.

¹⁵⁰ T.A. Clark, *The Sea is My Neighbour: A Lighthouse Keeper's Story*, Christchurch, 1963, p.118.

¹⁵¹ AJHR, 1940, H-15, p.4.

¹⁵² AJHR, 1941, H-15, p.3.

¹⁵³ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 8 February 1942. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D2810e.

... I reached out a restraining hand, and demanded he stop, but he just stepped back, swung the barrel of the shotgun at my waist and shouted "You get the hell out of here, this is the finish of this place."

Shocked and afraid, Smith backed off and ran back to the houses to warn his wife and the other keeper's family to stay indoors. Smith and Miller armed themselves with the only other guns they had and set off to find Thomas. They saw him heading along the road to the landing still clutching the station .303 rifle he had found in the radio hut. While Miller attempted to fix the badly damaged radio transmitter, Smith kept a lookout in case the obviously deranged prospector returned. Smith then noticed smoke coming from the ventilator on the dome of the light tower. Upon investigation, he found the tower well alight and knew he had no chance of saving the wooden building. Meanwhile, Miller had been able to send the above telegram to the police and had received a return telegram saying help would leave from Bluff as soon as possible. Smoke could now be seen pouring from the Principal Keeper's house. The two keepers were able to put this fire out without too much damage being caused. At around 6 p.m., Tim and Bess Smith returned to the station with Jules Berg, a local man who had rowed them back to the station after Thomas failed to pick them up. On their return journey they noticed Smith's boat beached on Coal Island. Unaware of the day's events, they towed the boat back to the lighthouse landing, unwittingly leaving Thomas marooned on the island. The next morning, six armed police arrived on the fishing vessel *Toiler*. Sergeant Coutts ordered his men to spend the rest of the day relaxing at the landing or fishing in Preservation Inlet. This was to give Thomas (who could be seen watching them from his island) the impression that no one was looking for him. Before daylight on the morning of 10 February, the police, guided by Tim Smith, surrounded Thomas' hut on Coal Island, then entered the hut and surprised him in his bed, quickly overpowering him. After Thomas' arrest, the two keepers spoke to him and he acted as if nothing unusual had happened. It transpired that Thomas was already known to have psychological problems and he was committed to a mental institution. For their trouble, the Marine Department later paid Keepers Smith and Miller a £25 bonus.¹⁵⁴

The light tower was reduced completely to ashes by the attack and required replacing. Fortunately, it seems that plans were already being made for replacing the old tower and materials were being assembled at Bluff before the incident occurred. These plans were now sped up as the need for a new light became urgent.¹⁵⁵ The Government Fire Insurance Fund paid the Marine Department £2,942 towards the cost of replacing the tower and apparatus.¹⁵⁶ A new concrete tower was erected at Puysegur Point and fitted with a disused lantern from Godley Head lighthouse and lenses from Cape Foulwind lighthouse which had been converted into an automatic

¹⁵⁴ Smith, pp.127-135.

¹⁵⁵ Ross, p.78.

¹⁵⁶ Martin, p.59.

light.¹⁵⁷ At 18 ft (5.5 metres), the tower was substantially smaller than the old wooden tower.¹⁵⁸ Thus, Puysegur Point light became the shortest manned lighthouse in New Zealand.¹⁵⁹ The new light was electrified, powered by a Lister diesel-electric plant. The houses at Puysegur Point were also provided with 110 volt D.C. power by the diesel generator at this time.¹⁶⁰ The iron sections of the tower were constructed by Melbourn Marine Engineering in Lyttelton. Mr Melbourn and his men, who also installed the lantern panes and dome, erected the building. The automatic diesel-electric lighthouse system installed at Puysegur Point was known as the 'Austonlight' system and was designed in Britain.¹⁶¹ In 1945, a standby generator was installed at Puysegur Point in case the first power source failed.¹⁶² The new light was first exhibited on 14 October 1942, nine months after the original light was plunged into darkness.¹⁶³



The automatic 'Austonlight' diesel-electric lighthouse system installed at Puysegur Point. DOC

The three original keepers' dwellings at Puysegur Point were repaired and weatherproofed in the early 1890s.¹⁶⁴ The timber houses continued to decay in the wet weather, however, and in 1917, the *Hinemoa* transported timber for three new houses to the lighthouse.¹⁶⁵ After some difficulty in construction 'owing to the inaccessibility of the place', the new houses were completed the following year.¹⁶⁶ In 1938 an examination

¹⁵⁷ Ross, p.78.

¹⁵⁸ New Zealand Lighthouse Division, *Brief outline history of New Zealand lighthouses*, Wellington, 1966, no page numbers.

¹⁵⁹ Churchman, p.111.

¹⁶⁰ Smith, p.139.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.141.

¹⁶² Begg, p.287.

¹⁶³ *AJHR*, 1945, H-15, p.2.

¹⁶⁴ *AJHR*, 1891, H-30, p.1.

¹⁶⁵ *AJHR*, 1917, H-15, p.5.

¹⁶⁶ *AJHR*, 1918, H-15, p.4.

was made of the condition of the keepers' accommodation at Puysegur. Consequently, more renovation work was undertaken.¹⁶⁷

No further major construction work was done at the station until 1966 when new relieving keeper quarters were erected, as was accommodation for Ministry of Works and other maintenance personnel, and a recreation room for keepers and their families.¹⁶⁸

The Puysegur Point light was decommissioned in August 1980, in favour of automatic lights at nearby Cape Providence and Windsor Point.¹⁶⁹ The keepers, however, remained for a time to provide regular weather



Original lens removed.
DAVE TURNBULL FLICKR.

reports. Relieving Keeper Kevin Pennell was there at the time and reflects that the men became 'more "light out keepers" than "lighthouse keepers"' as there was no longer a light to tend. The keepers had been told a couple of years earlier that the station was to be wound down and no further maintenance work was to be carried out.¹⁷⁰ Puysegur Point was not ready yet to fade into history, however. The light at the station was re-established in 1987 after the Windsor Point light was shut down.¹⁷¹ However, Puysegur Point's resurrection as a manned light station was short-

lived. The light was automated and solarised in 1989 and the keepers were flown out for the final time.¹⁷² Thus ended the human history of Puysegur Point lighthouse.

While Puysegur Point lighthouse is regarded as extremely isolated, the first keepers at the station probably were not quite as lonely as their twentieth century counterparts, simply because there were considerably more people living in and around Preservation Inlet at the time. Over three-quarters of a century before the lighthouse was built, sealers were hard at work in Preservation Inlet.¹⁷³ In the 1830s, once the seal population had been plundered, whaling took the place of sealing in the region.

Southern New Zealand's first whaling station was established at Cuttle Cove, Preservation Inlet, in about 1829. A settlement of up to 60 men

¹⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.5.

¹⁶⁸ *AJHR*, 1966, H-15, p.10.

¹⁶⁹ *AJHR*, 1981, F-5, p.20.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999. Tape one, side two, tape counter: 294.

¹⁷¹ *AJHR*, 1987-1988, F-5, p.48.

¹⁷² Maritime Safety Authority, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Puysegur Point', p.2.

¹⁷³ Begg, p.112.

sprang up in the area until the Cuttle Cove whaling operation ceased in 1838.¹⁷⁴

Coal deposits in the Preservation Inlet area lured a number of miners to the region in the 1860s. After an expeditionary party examined the area, the Otago Provincial Council passed a Bill in 1869 authorising the establishment of settlements at Martins Bay and Preservation Inlet. The Council surveyed a township at Preservation Inlet and named it Cromarty, although the sections were not yet put up for sale. Coal mining continued intermittently in the region during the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁷⁵ Coal prospectors, then, were the first neighbours of the Puysegur Point light keepers.

Gold prospectors were the next set of people to descend on Preservation Inlet. While it is hard to say exactly who first discovered gold in the region, and when, it is likely that one of Preservation Inlet's first successful gold miners was one of the light keepers from Puysegur Point. There seems to be some dispute over when Phillip Payn actually arrived in Fiordland as the dates vary in different books. The Puysegur Point Letter Book records Assistant Keeper P. Payn arriving on the station on 10 February 1887, although it does not mention if he had been in the area prior to this.¹⁷⁶ Phillip D.G. Payn had spent two and a half weeks as a Probationary Keeper at Waipapa Point in September 1885 before he 'went away in the *Stella*', so it is possible that he travelled to Preservation Inlet then.¹⁷⁷ Tom Clark says that Payn 'stepped ashore from the *Stella* on November 1, 1885'.¹⁷⁸ Whenever he arrived, it is clear that Payn was not cut out to be a good light keeper. In October 1887, Payn's Principal Keeper complained about his conduct, saying 'I got nothing but abuse and this kind of conduct is becoming daily worse. Tonight he refused to keep the first watch'.¹⁷⁹ Payn was 'Discharged from the Service' in late 1887.¹⁸⁰ Payn's mind and energy had been focused on something other than light keeping: the search for gold. He became a full-time miner on Coal Island and his success, along with that of a handful of others, sparked a rush to the island.

By August 1890 there were 70 men trying their luck on Coal Island.¹⁸¹ Gold was soon found in other locations around Preservation Inlet as well, and the township of Cromarty eventually flourished, more than twenty years after it had first been surveyed. Cromarty is believed to have swelled to 800 inhabitants at the height of the goldrush in the early 1890s. The town included butchers and bakers, a doctor, a post office and the famous Kisbees Hotel, and according to Tom Clark was a

¹⁷⁴ J.O.P. Watt, *Preservation Inlet*, Invercargill, 1971, pp.1-2.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp.6-19.

¹⁷⁶ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 1 March 1887. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10b.

¹⁷⁷ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 19 September 1885, 6 October 1885. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13H 3/1.

¹⁷⁸ Clark, p.120.

¹⁷⁹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 1 October 1887.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 11 January 1888.

¹⁸¹ Begg, pp.236-237.



Puysegur Point Lighthouse, July 2004.
DONNA SHEPARD DOC

‘popular holiday resort for lightkeepers on leave’.¹⁸² The township of Te Oneroa (or Longbeach as it was also known) was also established around this time, built around the most successful mine at Preservation Inlet, the *Morning Star*.¹⁸³ Miners continued to prospect in the area well into the twentieth century and the keepers seem to have had quite a lot to do with them, particularly those working on Coal Island. Slowly, though, the mining population dwindled as gold returns declined, and the keepers at Puysegur Point lighthouse were left to live their lives in solitude once more.

¹⁸² Clark, pp.122-123.

¹⁸³ Watt, p.98.

WAIPAPA POINT

In the early hours of the morning of 29 April 1881, one of the worst maritime disasters in New Zealand's history occurred. In poor visibility conditions, the steamer *Tararua* foundered on Otara reef, about one kilometre from the beach at the eastern entrance to Foveaux Strait. Sea conditions were calm at the time of the accident but worsened throughout the day and made it impossible to get the passengers ashore.¹⁸⁴ Nine hours after she ran aground, the *Tararua* began to break up. Throughout the day people were swept overboard and drowned as the ship slowly sank. By dusk those surviving had climbed into the rigging to stay out of the water and could be heard by people watching helplessly on the beach. The tragedy was complete by daybreak on 30 April when the steamer had sunk almost completely out of sight and the bodies were being washed ashore. Of the 131 on board 151 perished within a horrific 24-hour period.¹⁸⁵



Wreck of the *Tararua*
destroyed on Waipapa reef 29-
30 April 1881.
ATL PUBL-00047-1881-0003

The wreck of the *Tararua* was investigated by a Court of Inquiry held at Dunedin ten days later.¹⁸⁶ The Inquiry made a number of recommendations about maritime safety. It was recommended that a lighthouse be erected on Waipapa Point to help prevent such a tragedy happening again. It was also recommended that lifebelts be provided for every person on board a ship and that the crew was to practice lifeboat evacuation on a regular basis.¹⁸⁷

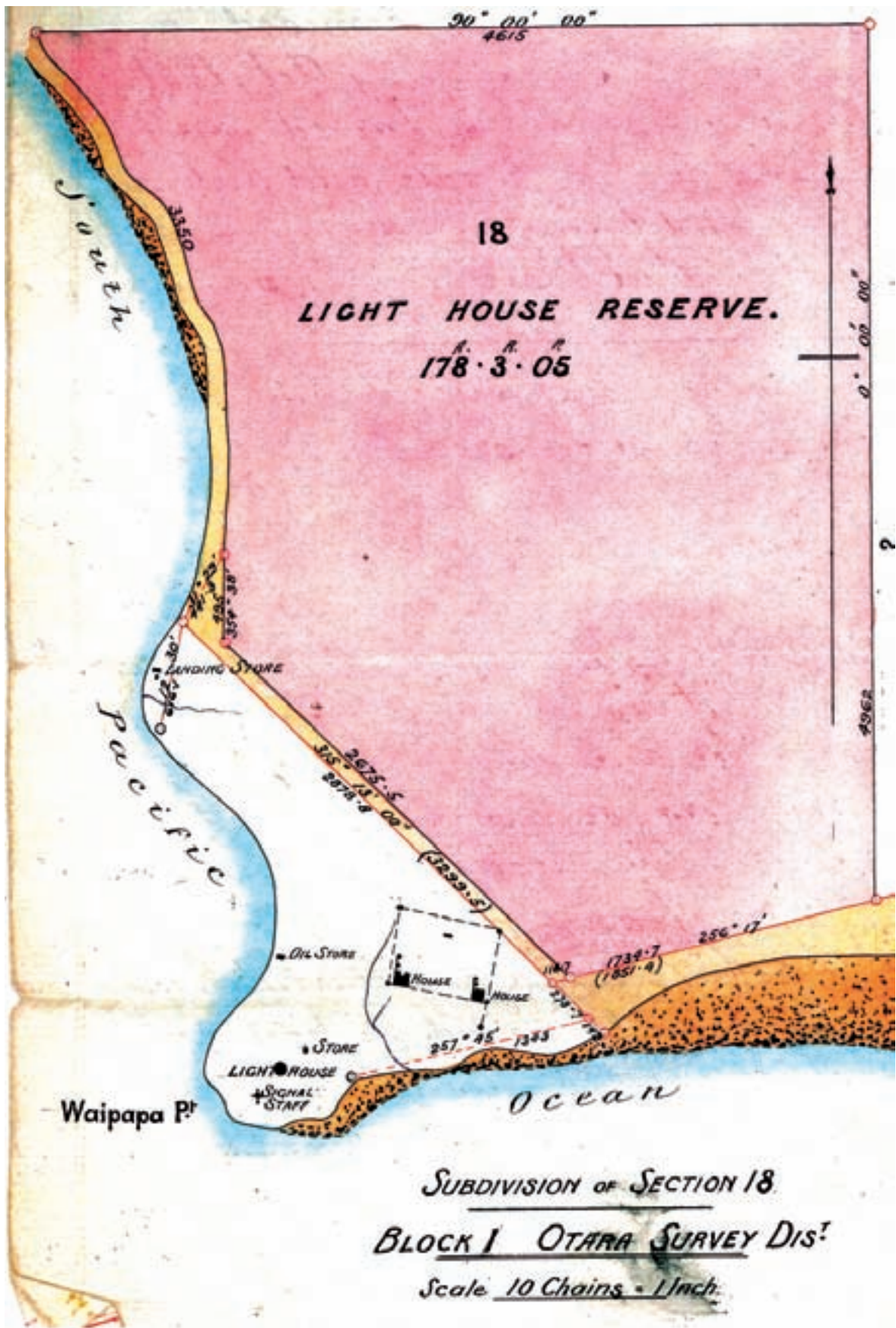
In the wake of disaster, then, the idea of a lighthouse on Waipapa Point came into being. The exact location for the light was selected in December 1881 and an order was sent to England by the Marine

¹⁸⁴ Clark, p.109.

¹⁸⁵ G. Sheehan & A. Gibbons, pp.101-102.

¹⁸⁶ C.D. Kerr, 'Waipapa Point Lighthouse 1884', research notes, 1989, p.1.

¹⁸⁷ Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Waipapa Point', p.2.



Waipapa Deed Plan, 18 December, 1889.
 ANZ, DUNEDIN DAFU/197681/D311/127e.

Department for the light apparatus and lantern.¹⁸⁸ Work began on the light at Waipapa Point in December 1882, and by March 1883 over £1,000 had already been spent on the project. The site was proclaimed a reserve and it was expected that the light would be completed within a year. By then the lantern had arrived in Wellington and the apparatus was aboard the ship *Timaru*. The Government Steamer *Stella* conveyed the materials for the erection of the tower and other buildings to Waipapa Point.¹⁸⁹ The wooden tower was completed and the light apparatus and lantern

installed by the end of 1883. The Second Order dioptric light, which flashed once every ten seconds, was first exhibited on 1 January 1884. Right from the start, mariners reported that the light was of great use.¹⁹⁰ The total cost of erecting the Waipapa Point Lighthouse was £5,969-18-11.¹⁹¹

The 44 foot tall (13.4 metres) tower was double skinned and built of kauri and totara with wall sections filled with rock ballast.¹⁹² The original light apparatus was fuelled by oil. The lenses were rotated by weights which hung on chains and dropped down a shaft through the centre of the tower.¹⁹³ When the light was lit, the keeper would wind the weights up to the top and they would slowly descend thus turning the lenses. After two months in operation, the machinery running the Waipapa light was found to keep good time but was very noisy.¹⁹⁴

The apparatus needed to be wound regularly or, as Probationary Keeper Fisher discovered at Waipapa Point

in July 1885, the lenses would stop rotating. He omitted to wind the machine at 2 am and it stopped 40 minutes later. Fisher hurriedly tried



Waipapa freshly painted,
2009.
R. EGERTON, DOC

¹⁸⁸ *AJHR*, 1882, H-12, p.18.

¹⁸⁹ *AJHR*, 1883, H-15, pp.1, 2, 20.

¹⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1884, H-6, pp.1, 8.

¹⁹¹ *AJHR*, 1885, H-13, p.8.

¹⁹² Kerr, p.1.

¹⁹³ Quoted in *ibid*, no page number.

¹⁹⁴ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 2 April 1884. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h. Waipapa Point seems to have been known as 'Waipapapa Point' (by both the keepers, the Marine Department and others) during the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, although it was sometimes called 'Waipapa' then as well.

to wind the apparatus but the rope slipped off the barrel and became wedged next to the winding frame. Fisher rang the bell for the Principal Keeper, uncoupled the apparatus and turned it by hand until assistance arrived.¹⁹⁵

Waipapa & generator shed.
COURTESY OF JANET RICHARDS



Waipapa House &
assist keeper's quarters.
COURTESY OF JANET RICHARDS

at the station in case of power failure. The cost of converting a light from kerosene to electrical operation was between about £3,000 and £5,000.²⁰⁰

Waipapa Point originally had two keepers. It appears that Waipapa's staff level was reduced to one sole keeper in the 1940s or 1950s.²⁰¹ By the 1970s, the Lighthouse Service had embarked upon a policy of automation and demanning of certain manned lights. Waipapa Point was one of the

The apparatus for a new incandescent light arrived from England in 1911 and was installed at Waipapa Point in 1912. It was similar to the lights which were already being used at Centre Island and Puysegur Point. The incandescent lights gave out a better light than that given by the Doty paraffin burners formerly in use. Maintenance was also cheaper as they used less fuel and kerosene could be used, which was cheaper than paraffin.¹⁹⁶

The manual winding method of operation continued until 1943 when the light was connected to the mains electricity supply.¹⁹⁷ The power was switched on on the night of 25 June 1943.¹⁹⁸ This did not put an end to all problems with the light, however. For example, on the night of 9 September 1943, the power went off in the lighthouse and the light was extinguished for about 25 minutes while the keepers re-lit the old kerosene light.¹⁹⁹ Eventually, a standby generator was installed

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 29 July 1885.

¹⁹⁶ *AJHR*, 1912, H-15, p.5.

¹⁹⁷ NZ Lighthouse Division, *Brief outline history of New Zealand lighthouses*, Wellington, 1966, no page numbers.

¹⁹⁸ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1935-1943', 1 July 1943, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14e.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 28 September 1943.

²⁰⁰ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.18.

²⁰¹ There were still two keepers on the station during WWII, but it was a sole charge position by the time Ernie McArthur was transferred there in about 1960.



Bryan, Janet, Ceri & Gwenyth Richards.
COURTESY OF JANET RICHARDS

stations nominated for automation and by 1975 preparations were well underway.²⁰² During 1976, Waipapa Point Lighthouse was converted to full automatic operation and the station was de-manned.²⁰³

Waipapa Point seems to have been the least difficult to live on of the four Southland light stations. It was less isolated than the other three stations as the keepers and their families could travel to the nearby townships of Fortrose and Otarā relatively easily. Mabel Pollock referred to Waipapa Point as 'a kindly station once you were inside the reef'. Despite this, the subjects of her book (the Jamieson family) were pleased to receive notice of their transfer to East Cape lighthouse after almost five years at Waipapa Point. Mr and Mrs Jamieson were happy that their children would be able to attend school on the station at East Cape (rather than have to travel to Otarā daily) and looked forward immensely to enjoying better weather at their northern posting.²⁰⁴

²⁰² *AJHR*, 1976, F-5, p.23.

²⁰³ *AJHR*, 1977, F-5, p.22.

²⁰⁴ M. Pollock, *The Children From the Lighthouse*, Dargaville, 1993, pp.5, 27-28.

CHAPTER THREE: Technologies

Lighthouse technology changed drastically in New Zealand between the construction of the first lighthouse in 1859 and the present day. The lights were originally powered by oil and operated by light keepers; they are now run by electricity or solar power and are controlled by computer from Wellington, being visited only for maintenance purposes.

The international development of lighthouse technology is an interesting story and is relevant as it shows how the lights used in New Zealand came into being and evolved as improvements were made around the world. Lighthouse illuminants, originally wood or coal fires, large candles, or simple flat wick oil lamps, were refined over the years. Oil lights were immensely improved in the 1770s when William Hutchinson of Liverpool, England, developed a parabolic reflector to intensify the light's beam two or three hundred times.²⁰⁵ The reflector was made from thin copper sheets that were moulded into a curved parabolic shape and silvered on the inside to optimise the light reflecting from the lamp mounted in front of the reflector.²⁰⁶ The early oil lamps were now much more powerful but were still unreliable, particularly as soot and smoke built up on the lantern panes and dimmed the light. This occurred because the flame did not receive sufficient air to burn up all of the carbon. In 1782, French scientist Aimé Argand solved this problem by inventing what came to be known as the argand lamp.²⁰⁷ The lamp had a hollow, circular wick that allowed oxygen to travel up the inside and outside surfaces and made the flame burn much more brightly.²⁰⁸ Following their invention, argand lamps were commonly used in lighthouses throughout the world, later including New Zealand lights. The first revolving light was installed in a Swedish lighthouse in 1781. Jonas Norberg, the system's inventor, adapted the principle of the grandfather clock and used a heavy weight on a chain which was wound up and gradually sank down the centre of the tower, causing wheels to revolve the light.²⁰⁹ A French pioneer in the study of optics, Augustin Jean Fresnel, made the next significant advance in lighthouse technology. In 1822 he developed a lens for lighthouse use which was much superior to anything that had been used before. Fresnel's lens consisted of an oval cage made of rings of glass arranged one above the other. The cage enclosed a lamp and magnified the light passing through the central band of glass and refracted (or bent) the light passing through the top and bottom bands, thus sending out one concentrated beam of light.²¹⁰ The lamp itself remained stationary as the glass cage revolved round it on rollers.²¹¹ Eventually there were

²⁰⁵ L. Chadwick, *Lighthouses & Lightships*, London, 1971, p.56.

²⁰⁶ F. Ross Holland, *Lighthouses*, Leicester, 1995, p.18.

²⁰⁷ Chadwick, p.58.

²⁰⁸ Holland, p.18.

²⁰⁹ Chadwick, p.59.

²¹⁰ Holland, p.57.

²¹¹ Chadwick, p.61.

seven sizes of the Fresnel lens. The size of the lens, or 'order' as it was known, was determined by the distance of the flame from the lens (the focal distance) and the diameter of the lens. A First Order lens had the greatest focal distance and the largest diameter, and a Second Order lens had the second greatest focal distance and diameter, and so on.²¹² Lights focused solely by refraction were called 'dioptric' lights. A 'catadioptric' light used both reflective and refractive prisms to focus the light.²¹³

Colza oil, derived from rapeseed, was first used on a large scale to illuminate a coastline in France after the Revolution.²¹⁴ New Zealand lighthouses burned colza oil until the mid-1870s.²¹⁵ In 1868, Marine Engineer James Balfour conducted experiments to investigate the possibility of burning kerosene in the lighthouse lamps. Balfour reported that —

*The introduction of kerosine [sic] would not only enable us to procure the necessary supplies in New Zealand, but would, I am satisfied, effect a considerable saving in the cost of maintenance of all the lights in which it could be used, and would also, I believe, make the light more powerful.*²¹⁶

In 1872, the Marine Department reported that it was still making enquiries into the possibility of using mineral oils like kerosene rather than colza oil.²¹⁷ Also in 1872, the government began ordering its oil through the Trinity Board in England (the organisation which administered England's lighthouses). The Trinity Board purchased New Zealand's oil along with its own annual supplies meaning New Zealand could receive the best quality oil at a lower price than they had previously paid.²¹⁸ The Manukau Heads lighthouse was the first New Zealand light to burn paraffin oil, from its erection in 1874. Colza oil had cost the government 2s. 5½d. per gallon in Britain and the paraffin was quoted at 1s. 7d. a gallon, so although freight rates for paraffin to New Zealand were slightly higher than for colza, considerable savings were made.²¹⁹ In the mid-1870s, burners adapted for paraffin oil were procured from England for Farewell Spit, Cape Campbell, Taiaroa Head, Nugget Point and Dog Island lights.²²⁰ By 1881, all of the country's lighthouses were burning paraffin.²²¹

Arthur Kitson developed the incandescent oil vapour lamp in around 1900. The lamps used up until this point turned the oil into vapour at the wick and burnt it in an open flame. Kitson's lamp first vaporised the oil by heating it under pressure in a coiled copper tube then mixed it with air to form a jet of gas. A mantle (like those used in propane lanterns) was placed over the jet of gas and glowed brightly when the

²¹² Holland, p.57.

²¹³ O. Wilkes, 'Cuvier Island', unpublished manuscript, section 5.4.

²¹⁴ Chadwick, pp.54-55.

²¹⁵ Martin, pp.57-58.

²¹⁶ *AJHR*, 1868, E-6, p.2.

²¹⁷ *AJHR*, 1872, G-30, p.4.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Martin, pp.57-58.

²²⁰ *AJHR*, 1876, H-26, p.1.

²²¹ *AJHR*, 1881, H-27, p.1.



Dog Island lense, Plimmers
Ark Gallery City and Sea.
TE ARA BY MELANIE
LOVELL-SMITH

gas was lit. Each square inch of the mantle glowed with the power of over 150 candles, producing a powerful, concentrated light.²²² The New Zealand Marine Department began installing incandescent lights in its lighthouses soon after Kitson's invention became available. In 1909 incandescent lights were installed at the Brothers, Cuvier Island, Cape Maria van Diemen, Nugget Point, Centre Island and Puysegur Point.²²³ An incandescent light was installed at Waipapa Point in 1912.²²⁴ Dog Island did not receive its incandescent lamp until the mid-1920s, instead continuing to use its original sixteen-burner light.²²⁵ The Marine Department found that these kinds of lights produced a superior beam and consumed less oil so were cheaper to operate than the oil burners used before.²²⁶ Kerosene, finally, became the most commonly used fuel for New Zealand lighthouses with the introduction of incandescent lights.

Each lighthouse had a distinguishing characteristic which set it apart from the other lights on the coast. Possible light characteristics included fixed (unbroken beam of light), alternating (showing two or more colours successively), flashing (a series of brief flashes, with more darkness than light), occulting (the opposite of flashing, a fixed beam broken by brief periods of darkness), and fixed and flashing (a steady beam but with flashes of greater brightness). Certain lights, such as the one on Centre Island, also showed a special warning light, usually coloured red, over a particularly dangerous sector where a reef or other danger existed.²²⁷ Flashing lights each had a unique pattern of flashes which enabled seafarers to identify which lighthouse they were looking at. For example, Dog Island's light flashes once every ten seconds while Centre Island's flashes once every fifteen seconds.²²⁸

The Dog Island light was first shown on 1 August 1865. It was a First Order catadioptric light and was unique in New Zealand. It was the first revolving light in the country and was unusual in that it was made up of sixteen smaller argand lamps, rather than the usual single larger lamp. The light's revolving action was driven by a large clockwork mechanism

²²² Chadwick, p.63.

²²³ *AJHR*, 1909, H-15, p.4.

²²⁴ *AJHR*, 1912, H-15, p.5.

²²⁵ *AJHR*, 1925, H-15, p.7, p.17.

²²⁶ *AJHR*, 1909, H-15, p.5.

²²⁷ Ross, pp.13-14.

²²⁸ Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand 'Lighthouses of New Zealand - Dog Island', p.3 and 'Lighthouses of New Zealand - Centre Island', p.3.



Bulbs inside Puysegur.
FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK SLIDE
COLLECTION, DOC

which was manually wound up and gradually dropped down the shaft in the centre of the tall tower.²²⁹ The Waipapa Point lighthouse (lit in 1884) was of similar design to Dog Island, although it had only one lamp. It was also operated by a weight which slowly dropped down the tower's shaft, turning the lenses and causing the Second Order dioptric light to flash.²³⁰ The light on Centre Island was first exhibited on 16 September 1878 and showed a First Order dioptric fixed light.²³¹ The original Puysegur Point light was lit on 1 March 1879 and was of the First Order dioptric, flashing every thirty seconds.²³²

Electrification was the next significant development in lighthouse technology. It ended the traditional watch-keeping system and changed the face of light keeping forever. Keepers were no longer required to maintain a constant watch over the lights during the night as they were now operated by electricity and keepers only had to attend to the light if a fault triggered the alarm system. Puysegur Point was the first of the Southland light stations to be electrified. When the original tower was

destroyed by fire in 1942, the Marine Department took the opportunity to install a Lister diesel-electric generator to run the new light, which was first exhibited on 14 October 1942.²³³ Waipapa Point lighthouse was electrified on 25 June 1943.²³⁴ The lights on Dog and Centre Islands were not converted to electrical operation until the 1950s: Dog Island was electrified in October 1954 and Centre Island in 1955.²³⁵ Foveaux Strait's lights were among the last in the country to be electrified, showing how the importance of this stretch of water had declined during the twentieth century (Foveaux Strait had been one of the first waterways to be lighted during the nineteenth century). The lights which were connected to mains electricity were fitted with 1000-watt bulbs, which gave out a light equivalent to that of 2,500,000 candles.²³⁶

²²⁹ *AJHR*, 1865, D-1c, p.2.

²³⁰ *AJHR*, 1884, H-6, p.1, p.8 and C.D. Kerr, 'Waipapa Point Lighthouse 1884', research notes, 1989, no page numbers.

²³¹ *AJHR*, 1879, H-10, p.1, p.18.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ Smith, p.139.

²³⁴ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1935-1943', 1 July 1943. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14e.

²³⁵ C.D. Kerr, 'Dog Island Lighthouse 1865', research notes, 1989, p.1 and *AJHR*, 1956, Vol. III, H-15, pp.15-16.

²³⁶ 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: a Brief History', p.4.

Following electrification, the Marine Department turned its attention towards automation and demanning of New Zealand's light stations. As early as the 1920s, in fact, the Department had begun to make all



Dog Island lens.
DOC

newly established lights automatic, although they were not always entirely unwatched.²³⁷ Progressive demanning of some light stations was made possible with the cessation of watch keeping. Some stations, such as those which provided three-hourly weather reports, still required keepers to live on the station.²³⁸ During the 1960s, the Marine Department investigated the possibility of converting some manned lights to fully automatic operation, but said that 'no action will be taken without full consultation with shipping interests'.²³⁹ A number of light stations were automated and demanned during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1959, there were 27 manned lights and by 1982 there were only sixteen manned lights throughout the country.²⁴⁰ Waipapa Point light station was fully automated and demanned in 1976.²⁴¹ In 1981 a Marine Advisory Committee was set up to inquire into the possibility of automating and demanning the remaining manned lights. The Committee reported that it believed seven of the sixteen lights should gradually be automated and demanned and the other nine, including all three remaining manned Southland lights, should remain manned.²⁴² The following year, the Committee's recommendations were adopted by the government.²⁴³

²³⁷ *AJHR*, 1923, H-15, p.5.

²³⁸ *AJHR*, 1957, H-15, p.13.

²³⁹ *AJHR*, 1961, H-15, p.10.

²⁴⁰ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16 and *AJHR*, 1982, F-5, p.28.

²⁴¹ *AJHR*, 1977, F-5, p.22.

²⁴² *AJHR*, 1982, F-5, p.28.

²⁴³ *AJHR*, 1983, F-5, p.25.

In the late 1980s, the contentious issue of demanning the remaining manned lighthouses was raised. According to the Ministry of Transport's Superintendent of Lights and Vessels, Brian Rees, the main reason for demanning the lighthouses was economic. Besides paying keepers' wages, transporting stores and materials and maintaining keepers' houses was very expensive for the Department. Rees also argued that lighthouse equipment had become so sophisticated that the keepers often could not repair it themselves as they used to, and a technician would have to be flown out to the site anyway. According to the Ministry of Transport, there was no longer any advantage in having keepers on the station except to keep the place clean and to change the light's bulbs.²⁴⁴ It was estimated that de-staffing the country's remaining manned lights would save the government \$2.3 million over ten years.²⁴⁵ Supporters of retaining manned lighthouses argued that light keepers played a vital role in search and rescue operations and, on some stations, in guarding wildlife and scientific equipment.²⁴⁶ Despite these and other protests, the keepers on Southland's three remaining manned light stations were permanently removed between 1987 and 1989.

By the 1990s most New Zealand lighthouses had a lens which revolved around a 1000-watt bulb, switched on automatically by a photoelectric daylight sensor. There was a standby power supply, lamp and rotation gear, which automatically came into play if any of the originals broke down. A computer in the Maritime Safety Authority's head office in Wellington detected any fault in the system.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Reid, p.35.

²⁴⁵ R. Vincent, 'The light to go out on keepers' lives', *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 11 July 1988, p.16.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: a Brief History', pp.5-6.

CHAPTER FOUR: Marine Department

The Marine Department came into being in late 1866, seven years after the construction of New Zealand's first lighthouse at Pencarrow Head.²⁴⁸ Ultimate responsibility for administration of the country's lights was passed between a number of government departments between the 1860s and the present day. The Marine Department was originally under the control of the Postmaster-General, until 1870 when it became part of the Customs Department. Except for a brief interlude between 1878 and 1881 when it was made a stand-alone government department, the Marine Department remained associated with the Customs Department until 1903.²⁴⁹ During the early 1970s, the Marine Department was converted into the Marine Division of the Ministry of Transport. The Marine Division had two sections: the Inspection and Survey Section and the Nautical Section. The Nautical Section was further divided into four sub-sections, including the Lighthouse and Navigational Aids section which was responsible for New Zealand's lighthouses.²⁵⁰ The Maritime Safety Authority was established in 1993 and one of its primary roles is 'to undertake activities that promote a safe maritime environment', which included responsibility for coastal lights.²⁵¹ The operational lighthouses of New Zealand (outside harbour limits) are now owned and maintained by the Maritime Safety Authority.²⁵²

The Marine Department was given statutory recognition with the Shipping and Seamen's Act of 1877, which authorised New Zealand's Governor to appoint a Minister and a Secretary to take charge of the Department. The first Minister of Marine was Harry A. Atkinson who was appointed to the position on 10 October 1879. Subsequent Ministers of the Marine Department included such well-known men as William Larnach, Richard Seddon and Peter Fraser.²⁵³ The person in charge of the day-to-day running of the Marine Department, however, was the Secretary. William Seed was the first Secretary to the Marine Department and served as such from 1870 to 1878 and again from 1880 until his retirement in 1887. Seed was apparently a very competent Secretary and ably ran the Department.²⁵⁴

After 1865, Marine Engineers were appointed to oversee the construction and maintenance of New Zealand's lighthouses and to provide expert

²⁴⁸ For a brief history of lighthouse administration up to 1866, see Chapter 2 (National Context).

²⁴⁹ Martin, pp.7-8, 13.

²⁵⁰ State Services Commission, *Directory of Official Information 1983*, Wellington, 1983, pp.623, 625.

²⁵¹ Ministry of Justice, *Directory of Official Information 1997-1999*, Wellington, 1997, p.326.

²⁵² Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: a Brief History', pp.4-5.

²⁵³ Martin, pp.127-128.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.10-11.

advice to the Marine Department.²⁵⁵ New Zealand's first Colonial Marine Engineer was James Melville Balfour who made a tremendous contribution to the development of the New Zealand Light Service. Born in Edinburgh in 1831, Balfour (the uncle of novelist Robert Louis Stevenson) arrived in New Zealand in 1863 and began work as Marine Engineer for the Otago Provincial Council. During this time, Balfour supervised the erection of a number of lights and prepared plans for the Tairaroa Head and Dog Island lighthouses. In October 1866, Balfour was appointed Colonial Marine Engineer and went on to prepare plans for other lights as well as issuing written instructions to regulate light keepers' duties and conduct. Among other things, Balfour was also instrumental in introducing a general code of danger signals for the whole of the New Zealand coast. Balfour was well respected by his colleagues and was expected to enjoy an outstanding career. This was not to be, however, as Balfour's life was cut tragically short. Balfour drowned at Timaru on 18 December 1869 on his way to attend to the funeral of his friend Thomas Paterson who had, himself, drowned two days earlier. Balfour's untimely death was greatly mourned by the government, which flew flags on its buildings at half-mast upon hearing the news.²⁵⁶ F.W. Furkert described Balfour as 'a far-seeing man of boundless energy and sound judgement whom the young colony could ill afford to lose'.²⁵⁷

John Blackett was appointed Colonial Marine Engineer following Balfour's death, and remained so until 1889.²⁵⁸ Blackett was born at Newcastle upon Tyne, England, in 1818 and in 1844 embarked upon an engineering career. In 1851 Blackett sailed for New Zealand where, in 1859, he was appointed Nelson's provincial engineer. In this position he was responsible for construction and maintenance of the province's roads, bridges and wharves as well as the Nelson lighthouse, public buildings and the Nelson city water works. In 1870, Blackett moved to Wellington where he became New Zealand's acting Chief Engineer, a job which included taking responsibility for the colony's marine engineering. The following year he was formally appointed Marine Engineer. Between 1871 and 1889, Blackett was responsible for supervising the erection of fourteen lighthouses, including the lights at Centre Island, Puysegur Point and Waipapa Point.²⁵⁹ In 1878, Blackett was appointed Engineer-in-Charge of the North Island and continued in this capacity until he became Engineer-in-Chief for the whole country in February 1884.²⁶⁰ In 1889, Blackett moved back to England to act as a consulting engineer for the New Zealand government. Three years later he resigned because of ill health and returned to Wellington where he died in January 1893.²⁶¹

²⁵⁵ *AJHR*, 1865, D-1c, p.2.

²⁵⁶ Martin, pp.7-8.

²⁵⁷ F.W. Furkert, *Early New Zealand Engineers*, Wellington, 1953, p.104.

²⁵⁸ Martin, p.8.

²⁵⁹ *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume One, 1769-1869*, Wellington, 1990, p.31.

²⁶⁰ Furkert, p.116.

²⁶¹ *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume One*, p.31.

The Marine Department sought advice on maritime matters from its Nautical Advisers. These men often made considerable contributions to the New Zealand Light Service. Captain Robert Johnson was the first official Nautical Adviser to the Department and was perhaps the most important. As early as 1861, Captain Johnson had a vision for lighting New Zealand's coast. His plan comprised thirteen coastal lighthouses (including lights on Dog Island and the northwest corner of Stewart Island) and was adopted by the Chief Marine Board and its successors, the Marine Board for New Zealand and the Marine Department.²⁶² Johnson was the officer for Nelson on the original Chief Marine Board (established in 1862) and in 1863 was appointed Inspector of Steam Vessels. Johnson was temporarily put in charge of the Marine Department in the period between James Balfour's death in December 1869 and John Blackett taking up the job in February 1870. Johnson was again entrusted with the running of the Department when it was separated from the Customs Department between 1878 and 1880. At this time, Captain Johnson was made the official Nautical Adviser to the Marine Department. He continued in this capacity until his death after an operation on 19 August 1894.²⁶³ Captain Johnson's partnership with John Blackett guided the busiest period in New Zealand lighthouse construction. In 1874, they undertook a comprehensive survey of the greater part of the New Zealand coast together on board the *Luna*. Their journey took them from the North Cape to Foveaux Strait and the survey they produced became the reference point for the future construction of New Zealand lights.²⁶⁴

Another influential Nautical Adviser was Captain H.S. Blackburne who was appointed to the position in 1899 after the previous Adviser, Captain Allman, was dismissed from the Service as a result of the so-called 'Marine Scandal' of 1898.²⁶⁵ Blackburne was born in Leicester, England, in 1854 and spent over twenty years working for the P&O Line then teaching navigation skills before becoming Nautical Adviser to the New Zealand Marine Department. He spent 21 years as such and produced the first *New Zealand Nautical Almanac*, in 1902.²⁶⁶

The Marine Department had the sometimes difficult job of trying to balance the efficient, economic and safe operation of the Light Service with the needs of the light keepers and their families. In the first years of the New Zealand Light Service, light keeping was not a particularly pleasant occupation, especially as there was considerable uncertainty and conflict over the keepers' duties. Marine Engineer James Balfour identified this as a significant problem and set about improving the situation for both the Marine Department and the keepers themselves. In 1866 he put together a set of rules to govern the conduct of Light Service employees, entitled 'Instructions to Lightkeepers'. Balfour found that the new regulations soon improved harmony within the Light Service and

²⁶² Martin, p.55.

²⁶³ Ibid, pp.3-4, 8, 10, 12.

²⁶⁴ Ross, p.61.

²⁶⁵ The 'Marine Scandal' was over Allman's involvement in alleged irregularities in the examination of shipping masters and mates.

²⁶⁶ Martin, p.13.

instilled a measure of order and discipline, which had previously been lacking.²⁶⁷ This mix of concern for the welfare of keepers and concern for the smooth running of the Light Service continued throughout the history of the Marine Department.

There was always going to be a certain amount of conflict between the keepers and their superiors in the Marine Department, as in any sector of the workforce. The keepers, so very isolated on their remote stations, sometimes felt that they were somewhat 'out of sight, out of mind' to those in Head Office. There were numerous complaints made by keepers to the Marine Department about various issues, usually in as polite and respectful a manner as possible. The supply of stores was a common cause for complaint as supply vessels were often very late in bringing fresh stocks, or sometimes brought the wrong thing, for which keepers blamed Head Office. For example, in July 1890 the Centre Island Principal Keeper complained that while the *Hinemoa* had landed stores and paraffin, it had brought 'no coal, [double underlined in text] which the Keepers are most urgently in need of'. The keepers had apparently repeatedly requested more coal and were particularly desperate, as there was virtually no firewood on the island.²⁶⁸ In 1938 the keepers at Puysegur Point complained a little more vehemently about the treatment of keepers and wives on government transport vessels. They said that they were made to feel less important than the other passengers. They added that keepers' belongings were often handled roughly too.²⁶⁹ In the same year, Puysegur Point keepers became increasingly resentful over the lack of a regular mail service to their station, and expressed their displeasure in a number of letters to the Marine Department on the subject.²⁷⁰

In addition to more legitimate complaints such as those outlined above, Marine Department officials also had to sift through large volumes of more petty complaints from keepers throughout the country. Some keepers were prone to picking up a pen and writing to the Department at the slightest irritant. Personality clashes were another common cause for complaint.²⁷¹ Some keepers were also personally offended by certain Marine Department decisions and wrote to complain about this. For example, in December 1932, one Puysegur Point keeper wrote to the Department in protest at the other Assistant Keeper being appointed to take charge of the station's wireless operations. He was obviously feeling a little hard done by as he was a qualified wireless operator while the other man was not. 'I feel that I am being asked to play "second fiddle" and would be thankful if you would offer me some enlightenment'.²⁷²

The Marine Department influenced nearly every aspect of a light keeper's life and keepers had to seek permission for almost anything they did on

²⁶⁷ Ross, pp.45, 47.

²⁶⁸ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 3 July 1890. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

²⁶⁹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 26 August 1938 and 24 September 1938, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

²⁷⁰ For example, see *ibid.*, 27 September 1938.

²⁷¹ For example, see 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 19 February 1938. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3f.

²⁷² 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 15 December 1932.

a station, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of the things keepers needed permission for may seem somewhat petty these days. For example, in August 1928 Centre Island's Principal Keeper wrote to the Department to —

...apply for permission to shift the first assistant's fowlhouse to a more sheltered spot as the S.W. gales have shaken it badly and it is likely to blow down. I also ask permission to build a new pigsty.²⁷³

Occasionally, the Department's insistence on being consulted before work was undertaken interfered with station maintenance. For example, in December 1888 the following letter was sent from Centre Island.

We could have got the inside of the Tower painted, had we the necessary authority. The dark side of lantern, dome & c. are badly in want of renewing the outside of the Tower and other buildings are getting covered with rust. [sic]

The Principal Keeper urged that permission for the work be granted as soon as possible because the weather allowed only three or four days a month on which the work could be done.²⁷⁴ Keepers also had to meticulously record all their daily activities in the Daily Journal, a summary of which had to be contained in the Principal Keeper's monthly report to the Secretary of the Marine Department. Principal Keeper Henaghan of Waipapa Point was reprimanded in 1900 for not having stated in his report that the light's lenses had been cleaned daily. Henaghan was very apologetic about his oversight and humbly thanked the Department for the reprimand.²⁷⁵ Sometimes Marine Department admonishments seemed a little harsh. In September 1893 the Assistant Keeper's wife fell very ill at Waipapa Point. The Principal Keeper wrote to the Marine Department Secretary afterwards, saying —

...be had to get her to Hospital and under a Doctors care without delay. I could not communicate with you in the ordinary manner, hence I sent a Collect Telegram, and thought that under such circumstances it would be allowed. I am sorry I done wrong [sic] and will not do so again.

The keeper's wife was taken to hospital where the doctors gave no hope of her recovery.²⁷⁶ Even in the direst emergency, then, the Marine Department did not allow its rules to be broken.

There were numerous other complaints made by keepers about the Marine Department's running of the Light Service, some of which were probably justified. One significant area where the Marine Department could have perhaps improved their methods was in keeper recruitment. It seems that some potential keepers were not fully informed of what

²⁷³ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 8 August 1928. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3f.

²⁷⁴ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 December 1888.

²⁷⁵ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1898-1906', 20 August 1900. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14a.

²⁷⁶ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 14 September 1893. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/ 13h.

was actually involved in light keeping. In November 1918, six weeks after arriving at Waipapa Point, Probationary Keeper Frame resigned from the Light Service citing 'Misrepresentation of Duties'. He said that he was unable to carry out his duties as he was 'not ... an all round fit man'. His Principal Keeper concurred, saying 'He is not a suitable man for this Service'. Frame left the station in December 1918.²⁷⁷ Former light keeper Thomas Smith said that throughout his career he came across several men who had joined the Service without the duties being fully explained to them. For example, a radio operator joined the Light Service and was surprised, and a little put out, to discover that he had to perform night watches at the tower as well as run the station radio.²⁷⁸

The Marine Department seemed to expect a lot from its keepers and their families. The issue of accommodation for Public Works Department men and other official visitors to the light stations was ongoing and could be contentious. At most stations there was no extra accommodation provided for such visitors until the later years of the Light Service. This meant that the keepers were usually expected to put them up and provide their meals as well. This was an example of the sometimes poor liaison between the Department and light keepers. The Department did not seem to realise the unwanted pressure that visiting workmen could put on a keeper and his family. His wife was usually busy enough without having to look after extra people who sometimes ate into an already stretched stock of provisions. When Thomas Smith arrived at his first keeping post at Puysegur Point in 1939, it was to a less than warm welcome from his fellow keepers. Smith was told in Invercargill that three Public Works Department men would be going to the station with him to make improvements to the houses, and it would be best if they could lodge with him. Smith agreed to this, unaware that the work had been held in abeyance for some time as the Puysegur Point keepers, Marine Department and Public Works Department argued over who was responsible for accommodation and board for the workmen. The keepers had refused board and lodgings for the men so were unimpressed when Smith unwittingly arrived at the station with them.²⁷⁹

While some keepers sometimes felt neglected, forgotten, or taken for granted by the Marine Department, others, like Ernie McArthur, felt reasonably well looked after by Head Office.²⁸⁰ It seems that, despite its deficiencies, the Marine Department was concerned about the welfare of its keepers and their families. Efforts were made to improve living and working conditions on the light stations throughout the Department's history.

²⁷⁷ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919', 6 November 1918. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14b.

²⁷⁸ Smith, p.103.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, pp.79-80.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Mr Ernie McArthur, 11 March 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 447.

CHAPTER FIVE: Keepers

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Men from various backgrounds joined the Light Service and became lighthouse keepers for many different reasons. Particularly in the early years of lighthouse operation in New Zealand, keepers tended to be former seafarers. In more modern times, keepers came from a wider background lured, said the Marine Division of the Ministry of Transport, by 'the provision of large and comfortable housing, furniture and other amenities'.²⁸¹ The varied backgrounds of keepers and their reasons for joining the Service are illustrated by the following examples. Upon his return to New Zealand after serving in the Boer War, Harry Harvey was offered a position in either the Light Service or working in the Railway Service as part of a government scheme for returned soldiers. Choosing to become a light keeper, Harvey went on to serve for 25 years.²⁸² Norman White served in the Royal Navy before he settled down with his family in Wellington and worked for the Post and Telegraph Office as an electrician. In 1939, he noticed an advertisement in the newspaper asking for new lighthouse keepers. He decided to apply, thinking it would be a healthy, interesting life for his three daughters, and was accepted.²⁸³ Don Mead, a blacksmith by trade, joined the Light Service in the late 1940s after being introduced to the job by his next door neighbour, a Lighthouse Inspector.²⁸⁴ After starting his career as an electrician, Ernie McArthur joined the Light Service in 1954 as a result of reading an article about lighthouse keeping.²⁸⁵ John Shandley worked on Wellington's wharves until he became a light keeper in the mid-1960s. He saw the move as an opportunity to improve his family's quality of life.²⁸⁶ Kevin Pennell joined the Light Service in April 1975 after he heard that the Marine Department was looking for keepers. He contacted the Department who wrote back and said they required staff on a relieving basis. Thus, Pennell became a relieving lighthouse keeper, after working in the army as a radio operator.²⁸⁷

²⁸¹ Ministry of Transport, Marine Division, Information Bulletin, *About Lighthouses*, Wellington, 1974, p.4.

²⁸² Interview with Mrs Alice Wybrow, 23 February 1999, extra interview notes.

²⁸³ Interview with Mrs Doreen Withington, 20 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 022 and Side Two, tape counter 004.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 004.

²⁸⁵ Interview with Mr Ernie McArthur, 11 March 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 025.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Mrs Hinemoa McLelland, 9 March 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 039.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 011.

Instructions to Lightkeepers, written in 1866, set out the criteria which prospective keepers had to meet before being employed by the Light Service. The applicant had to forward the application 'in his own handwriting' and include a 'certificate of good conduct' from his last employer, and letters from 'each of the gentlemen by whom he is recommended'. The letters were to show that the applicant had, to the writer's knowledge, been 'sober, honest, industrious and obliging, and has enjoyed good health'. If he was selected to progress past the application stage, the man had to undergo a medical examination and have his eyesight tested.²⁸⁸ The 1886 version of *Instructions to Lightkeepers* set out further specifications. Keepers had to be aged between 21 and 31 when they joined the Service, had to be able to read and write and have 'a fair knowledge of arithmetic', and be 'healthy and robust in constitution'.²⁸⁹ In later years, preference was given to men with trade experience as all keepers were encouraged to be handy men and 'do-it-themselves' whenever possible.²⁹⁰

Training of new keepers was basically on-station until the 1960s.²⁹¹ With the advent of more sophisticated lighting and communication systems, it was recognised that new keepers needed some amount of training before being sent to a light station. Moreover, current keepers needed on-going training. The Training School for Lightkeepers was opened at Seaview, Wellington, in August 1964.²⁹² At first, the Training School catered only for existing keepers, running courses on lighthouse administration, and also training departmental electrical and mechanical staff.²⁹³ The courses involved follow-up on-station training by the Lighthouse Instructor at some locations. A basic training course for newly appointed keepers was implemented in 1967.²⁹⁴ Much of the training had to be practical and hands-on, however, so keepers still received most of their training on their first station.

HIERACHY AND PROMOTION

Marine Engineer James Balfour established the graduated keeper system in 1866. He set up the keeper hierarchy based on the Scottish Light Service. Newly appointed men started out as Probationary Keepers. If the Probationary Keeper was found to be proficient after six months, he was made an Assistant Keeper. Assistant Keepers could either be Second Assistant Keepers or First Assistant Keepers, depending on the number of keepers at a station, with First Assistant being the more senior position. A Second Assistant could be promoted to First Assistant upon gaining

²⁸⁸ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

²⁸⁹ *Instructions to lightkeepers in the service of the Marine Department of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1886, p.1.

²⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1960, H-15, p.15.

²⁹¹ For example, see McArthur interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 037.

²⁹² *AJHR*, 1964, H-15, p.9.

²⁹³ *AJHR*, 1965, H-15, p.9 and *AJHR*, 1966, H-15, p.11.

²⁹⁴ *AJHR*, 1967, H-15, pp.11-12.

more experience and there being a vacancy on their station. Presiding over all Probationary and Assistant Keepers, however, was the Principal Keeper on each station. The Principal Keeper was, in turn, responsible to his superior officers in the Marine Department.²⁹⁵

Charles Colfer, newly employed by the Marine Department, arrived on Centre Island as a Probationary Keeper on 7 June 1905. For the first seven nights he kept watch with the Principal Keeper, after which he was deemed to be competent to keep watch by himself.²⁹⁶ This was normal practice and allowed the Principal Keeper to train the new recruit in keeping the proper operation of the light. After six months, the Principal Keeper would write to the Marine Department and state whether or not the probationer was competent to be taken on as a permanent keeper. For example, in December 1888, Principal Keeper Charles Tregurtha of Centre Island wrote of Probationary Keeper Walter Canton, six months to the day he arrived.

*I have much pleasure in certifying, that, during that time he has conducted himself in a most satisfactory manner, that he has been sober, cleanly and diligent in the performance of his duties, and that I consider him fully competent to take charge of a light.*²⁹⁷

Not all potential keepers passed the probationary stage successfully, however. For example, C. Smith lasted only six weeks as a Probationary Keeper at Puysegur Point. He arrived at the station on 1 April 1936 and, according to Principal Keeper Pullen, started to complain within a fortnight 'and has taken every opportunity since then to cause trouble with Assistant Keeper Hobbs and myself'. Pullen wrote to the Marine Department saying —

I regret to report that Mr Smith conduct [sic] is unsatisfactory. He particularly resents being instructed usually claiming that his own experience is so wide that he knows better than myself how work should be done ... Owing to the friction I should be pleased if you could see your way clear to transfer Mr Smith from this station a.s.a.p.

Smith reacted badly to the unfavourable report and Pullen requested that the Marine Department Secretary suspend him. On 16 May, Smith apparently interfered with the light and threatened the other two keepers. He seems to have been removed from the station after this.²⁹⁸ According to the 1866 *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, probationers who failed to become permanent keepers were to be 'landed at the nearest port, and shall be paid at the stipulated rate up to the date of landing, but shall not be entitled to any further allowance for travelling or other expenses'.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

²⁹⁶ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 July 1905. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 27 December 1888.

²⁹⁸ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 16-18 May 1936. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

²⁹⁹ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

Promotions generally occurred fairly regularly in the Light Service. *Instructions to Lightkeepers* of 1866 stated that —

*Assistant lightkeepers shall be regularly promoted, according to their seniority in the service, to the post of principal lightkeepers, as vacancies occur, unless it shall be reported that any obstacle arising from the misconduct of an assistant lightkeeper, or other circumstances affecting his efficiency, shall exist to such promotion, or unless the assistant shall choose to remain at the same station without promotion, rather than to accept promotion which will compel him to remove to another station.*³⁰⁰

For example, Probationary Keeper Whitiri and his family arrived on Centre Island in February 1922. Six months later, he was taken on permanently as a Second Assistant Keeper. Within two-and-a-half years, Whitiri was promoted to First Assistant Keeper when the man filling this position was transferred. By January 1925, he was Acting Principal Keeper on Centre Island while the senior keeper was on leave. In October that year, Whitiri was transferred to Castlepoint lighthouse.³⁰¹

Promotions also incorporated pay rises so they were much sought after. The *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, 1886, set out the ordinary salary rates paid to keepers. Probationary Keepers started on £80 per annum, increasing to £90 when they became Assistant Keepers. Newly appointed Principal Keepers were paid £130 a year.³⁰² In 1909, all keepers' salaries were increased by £10. Experience also brought fairly regular pay rises for keepers. For example, in 1909 an Assistant Keeper was paid £110 after two years in the position, £120 after four years experience, and £130 after six years as an Assistant. Principal Keepers' salaries also increased by £10 for every two years of experience they had in the position, up to £180 for eight years as a Principal Keeper.³⁰³ Salaries were again increased in 1946, to try to attract more men to the Light Service.³⁰⁴ These pay rises were not always given automatically despite keepers being entitled to them. They often had to be requested. In September 1880, both Assistant Keepers at Puysegur Point were entitled to salary increases but neither had yet been paid theirs, so their Principal Keeper wrote to the Marine Department to complain.³⁰⁵ In another instance, Assistant Keeper Ansin wrote from Centre Island in January 1894, requesting the Marine Department Secretary to —

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 1 April 1922, 1 May 1924, 1 January 1925, 2 November 1925. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3e.

³⁰² *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, p.29.

³⁰³ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 27 January 1909. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

³⁰⁴ *AJHR*, 1946, H-15, p.18.

³⁰⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 8 September 1880. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D2810b.

...kindly see into the increase in my salary du [sic] to me on the first October 1893 witch i see [sic] by my Bank account have not being payd [sic] in.³⁰⁶

Light keepers were not paid well enough to ensure that some did not seek higher paid work elsewhere. For example, Assistant Keeper Bell resigned from his position at Waipapa Point in April 1900, 'having secured more profitable employment' in the carpentry trade at Fortrose.³⁰⁷ Keeper Gwynne, also of Waipapa Point, resigned from the Light Service in May 1908. His main reason for resigning was that —

...the salary does not compensate for the hours of duty, & c., nor is it sufficient to live upon and pay board and lodging for my children to learn a trade now they are leaving school.³⁰⁸

Other keepers also left the Service for other employment where, presumably, the pay and conditions of work were better.³⁰⁹

The graduated keeper system instituted by Balfour was very hierarchical and rigid, particularly in the nineteenth-century Light Service. The Principal Keeper was ultimately responsible for the light station and the assistant keepers 'must, in all things connected with lighthouse service, implicitly obey his instructions'.³¹⁰ The Principal Keeper was ordered to 'treat the Assistant Lightkeeper with courtesy and civility, but at the same time with firmness in maintaining his superior position'.³¹¹ Inflexible interpretations of these rules occasionally caused problems on the light stations. For example, Assistant Keeper Nicolson and Principal Keeper Ericson clashed over a variety of issues at Waipapa Point in 1887, including Ericson's alleged treatment of Nicolson. Nicolson claimed that he was always respectful to his superiors but would not practice 'servility' which, he said, 'is what this Principal Keeper wants but what he will not get from me'. Ericson strongly rebutted these claims, however.³¹² In the later years of the Light Service, the hierarchy, while still officially in place, was generally much more relaxed than in the past. Kevin Pennell was a Relieving Keeper in the 1970s and 1980s and says that although there were still some Principal Keepers who enjoyed wielding their 'power', most were more low-key and the keepers always had their union, the Public Service Association, to turn to if things got out of hand.³¹³

³⁰⁶ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 9 January 1894.

³⁰⁷ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1898-1906', 9 April 1900, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14a.

³⁰⁸ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919', 9 May 1908, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14b.

³⁰⁹ For example, see 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 12 June 1905, 7 July 1909, 12 October 1917. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4a.

³¹⁰ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

³¹¹ *Instructions to lightkeepers*, p.3.

³¹² 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 6 October 1887. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h

³¹³ Pennell interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 329.

DUTIES

The duties that keepers were expected to perform were fairly varied and wide-ranging. Of course, their most important task was tending to the light. The 1867 *Instructions to Lightkeepers* included very detailed instructions on watch keeping. Duties while on watch included trimming the wick (if an Argand lamp was in use), ensuring the flame remained at an even height, admitting outside air to try to keep the lightroom temperature as near as possible to the external temperature to prevent sweating, and rubbing the lantern's glass if it became dim through condensation created by the heated air of the lightroom.³¹⁴ Some lighting apparatus also required regular winding if a clockwork mechanism was used to revolve the light's lens, such as at Dog Island and Waipapa Point. By 1956, all New Zealand lights had been converted from kerosene power to electricity. This ended the traditional watch keeping system in New Zealand. Keepers no longer had to take shifts to watch the light at night. Automatic alarm systems now signalled keepers to get up only if there was a malfunction.³¹⁵ The old kerosene lights were retained as emergency backup lights should there be a total electrical failure. This was not very likely, however, as all stations powered by diesel-electric generators had at least one standby generator. The cessation of watch keeping changed the face of light keeping permanently and paved the way for the de-manning of New Zealand light stations.³¹⁶

Besides watching the light at night, up until the mid-twentieth century anyway, keepers also had to tend to the light and apparatus during the day. It was imperative that the blinds or curtains in the light room to be drawn during daylight as direct sunlight could cause 'irretrievable damage' to the lantern.³¹⁷ The lantern's lenses were to be cleaned and polished daily 'to the highest possible state of brilliancy', as were the glass windows of the lightroom, particularly on the exterior where a constant battle with the salt sea spray was waged. Other duties to be carried out in the tower included —

*All bright brass and copperwork, and utensils, apparatus, and machinery to be daily cleaned (and machinery oiled), the lightroom walls and floor, the balcony, tower stair, and storerooms to be daily swept out, and to be washed as often as may be necessary.*³¹⁸

As well as cleaning the apparatus and tower, the keepers had other daytime duties to carry out. These mainly involved routine station maintenance such as painting, repair work and gardening. The 1886 lightkeepers' rulebook also stated that keepers 'are required to act as signalmen, telephonists, or undertake such other duties as may be required of them, without receiving any extra remuneration'.³¹⁹ The Principal Keeper

³¹⁴ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.10.

³¹⁵ *AJHR*, 1956, H-15, p.15.

³¹⁶ *AJHR*, 1957, H-15, p.13.

³¹⁷ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.10.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.11.

³¹⁹ *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, p.29.

was required to record all of the keepers' activities in a Daily Journal. Centre Island's Daily Journal between 1931 and 1935 showed the keepers performing a variety of tasks. They cleaned the lenses daily, sledged stores to and from the landing to the station, repaired dwelling roofs, went fishing, built a new coal bunker, killed stock for meat, burnt off tussock, tended sheep, swept chimneys, planted trees, repaired telephone lines, tended the garden, and carried out general maintenance on the station buildings.³²⁰ Weather reporting was another duty for keepers on Southland light stations. Doreen Withington recalls her father, Norman White, sending regular weather reports to Awarua Radio while stationed on Dog Island during WWII.³²¹ The weather reports included giving current wind speed and direction, and describing the extent of cloud cover and sea conditions.³²² Kevin Pennell said that a typical working day for the duty keeper at Puysegur Point in the 1970s included weather reports at three-hourly intervals (beginning at 6 am), checking the electric generators and oil levels, milking the station cow, then participating in such station maintenance as checking and maintaining the telephone line from the oil store to the station, road maintenance and general painting and cleaning.³²³

TRANSFERS

Keepers were generally transferred to different light stations reasonably regularly. The Marine Department had the power to direct a keeper to move to any station throughout the country. He was expected to comply with the order as soon as possible, 'on pain ... of dismissal from the service, unless bad health or any other sufficient plea be laid before the Marine Engineer as a reason for the removal not being carried into effect'.³²⁴ The Department usually tried to shift each keeper to a new station about once every two to five years. This was to give all keepers their fair share of working on favourable and not-so-favourable stations and also to give keepers experience working with different kinds of lights and other keepers. New keepers were usually transferred to a different station after twelve months on their first station to give them wider experience.³²⁵ Despite this policy of rotation, some keepers remained at the same station for longer than was seen as ideal. For example, Assistant Keeper Sandager and his family arrived at Puysegur Point in January 1895 and were still there in July 1902.³²⁶ Keepers could not refuse to go to a certain station without good reason and some resigned as a result of this. Keeper Harry Harvey resigned from the Service in

³²⁰ 'Centre Island Daily Journals, 1931-1935'. ANZ, Dunedin, DAA/D28/2eng,3a-c.

³²¹ Withington interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 392.

³²² Pennell interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 146.

³²³ Ibid, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 218.

³²⁴ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

³²⁵ *About Lighthouses*, p.5.

³²⁶ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 1 February 1895, 26 July 1902. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10c.

October 1925, partly because he had received word that he was to be transferred to Puysegur Point. Harvey had apparently always said that Puysegur Point was one place he would 'never ever' go and resigned rather than work there.³²⁷ Once at a station, however, keepers could request to be transferred and, for a variety of reasons, regularly did. It appears that the Marine Department tried to accommodate these requests whenever possible, but some keepers had to remain at the station for some time before they were transferred. For example, Keeper Ansin asked to be shifted from Centre Island in April 1891 (after two years on the island), but was not removed until October 1894.³²⁸

WARTIME

Keepers were required to perform extra duties in wartime. During WWI, a 'Confidential Circular' was sent to all light stations stating —

*With a view to preventing the possibility of mine laying by the enemy, merchant ships under false colours round the coast of New Zealand, lighthouses are to keep careful watch on the movement of all shipping passing them, under British or Foreign colours, especially the latter ... any suspicious conduct should be reported at once by telegraph to Naval Wellington, giving full details and the reasons for suspicion.*³²⁹

In WWII, too, keepers were required to carry out extra coast-watching and radio-watching duties. They also prepared meteorological reports which were transmitted to the appropriate authorities, and the details of any suspicious vessels were noted and reported to the Navy.³³⁰ The light keepers were praised for their contribution to the war effort, which often entailed longer hours of work than usual.³³¹ During WWI, seven keepers joined the armed forces and the Marine Department became concerned at the loss of experienced keepers. The Department then began to appeal against any keepers conscripted for military service. In each instance, the Military Appeal Boards adjourned the case sine die, subject to the men remaining in the Light Service. Some returned soldiers were appointed to the Service as part of their rehabilitation back into civilian life, but most of them did not stay long, as 'the Life does not appear to suit them'.³³²

³²⁷ Wybrow interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 301.

³²⁸ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 10 April 1891, 1 November 1894.

³²⁹ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 15 February 1915. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

³³⁰ *AJHR*, 1946, H-15, p.12.

³³¹ *AJHR*, 1943, H-15, p.1 and *AJHR*, 1944, H-15, p.1.

³³² *AJHR*, 1918, H-15, p.5.

WATCHES

Before the introduction of electrically powered lights, keepers had to keep a constant watch over the light throughout the night and wind the operating mechanism by hand. The length of watches varied between stations and seasons. Ideally, the duration of each watch was not to exceed four hours.³³³ The Marine Department set down the following standard watch times realising, however, that they would vary according to the location of the lights as the sun set at different times in different areas. Between November and February on three-man stations, the night was divided into four watches. The first watch was from sunset to 8 pm, the second was from 8 pm to midnight, the third was from midnight to 4 am and the fourth was from 4 am until sunrise. On two-keeper stations, there were two watches during the summer months, the first from sunset to midnight and the second from midnight to sunrise.³³⁴ The keepers were to rotate their watches so that whoever had the first watch one night, had the second watch the next night, and so on. At one-man stations, the sole keeper was to remain in the tower during the night and 'do his utmost to maintain the light in a state of efficiency' and had to trim the lamp at least once every four hours.³³⁵ In addition to their night watch duties, keepers were expected to do at least a morning's further work during the day. This left afternoons free for keepers to catch up on sleep or spend time however they pleased.³³⁶ Some keepers did not cope very well with the night shifts they were required to do. In November 1938, Principal Keeper Ager wrote of the effect night watch had on him and other keepers:

*The majority of us after a year or two, are unable to enjoy good restful sleep during daylight hours, and the broken rest at night almost invariably interferes with our health, makes us very irritable, and in other ways effects our well being.*³³⁷

The introduction of the forty hour working week in the mid-1930s forced the Marine Department to address the issue of keepers' hours. Day duty was officially reduced to two hours per day for five days a week. At two-keeper stations, annual leave was increased to six weeks to offset the extra hours of duty they had to work over forty hours per week.³³⁸ The Public Service Commissioners directed that keepers only work from 9:30 am to 11:30 am for five days per week as well as their night work in the light tower.³³⁹ One keeper's reaction to news of the forty-hour week was scornful. He wrote —

³³³ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

³³⁴ *AJHR*, 1915, H-15, p.6.

³³⁵ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.9.

³³⁶ Wybrow notes.

³³⁷ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1936-1945', 2 November 1938, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4c.

³³⁸ *AJHR*, 1937-38, H-15, p.6.

³³⁹ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 23 November 1936.

*This is supposed to bring ... keepers also in line with the forty hour per week worker. (what a joke) If you care to go into the matter you will find that there is somewhere in the vicinity of 500 hours per year for which we get no remuneration whatsoever.*³⁴⁰

RULES

The rules that keepers had to live by were very strict, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The basic tenets of light keeping were simple: do not let the light go out or become stationary, and do not, under any circumstances, fall asleep while on duty. By the 1860s, it was found that numerous disputes were taking place on New Zealand light stations due to the lack of ‘a sufficiently definite division of the duties and responsibilities’. Therefore, in 1866, Marine Engineer James Balfour set about drawing up a set of instructions to govern the conduct of light keepers. These rules were based on those adopted by the Scottish Light Service and from now on keepers had to sign a statement saying they would abide by them. Balfour soon reported that —

*The more perfect definition of duty thereby introduced has already diminished the tendency to quarrelling, which has too often ended in subordination which could not be overlooked.*³⁴¹

The 1866 *Instructions to Lightkeepers* included rules such as ‘The lightkeeper on duty shall, on no pretence whatever, during his watch, leave the lightroom or balcony’; ‘Except in cases where there is but one lightkeeper, no bed, sofa, or other article on which to recline, shall be permitted in the lightroom, or in the watchroom beneath’; ‘When stores of any kind are to be landed for the use of the lighthouse, the lightkeepers shall attend to give their assistance’; and ‘The lightkeepers must conduct themselves with civility to strangers, and show the premises at such hours as do not interfere with the proper discharge of their duties’.³⁴² These rules were superseded by the publication of *Instruction to lightkeepers* in 1886 which, although still based on the most recent version of the Scottish Light Service’s rules, incorporated such additions and changes as were considered necessary to meet New Zealand requirements.³⁴³ The rules now included instructions like: keepers were not to take meals in the light room except when ‘absolutely necessary’; keepers at stations within six miles of a town (by road) could go there without special leave as long as they returned at least half an hour before light-up time; and ‘No lightkeeper on an island station may on any account quit the same, however short may be his intended period of absence, without

³⁴⁰ ‘Dog Island Letter Book, 1936-1945’, 2 November 1938.

³⁴¹ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.3.

³⁴² *Ibid*, pp.9-13.

³⁴³ E.R. Martin, *Marine Department Centennial History, 1866-1966*, Wellington, 1969, p.61.

special permission, and arrangements made for calling in a temporary keeper'.³⁴⁴

There were severe penalties for any keeper who broke the most important rules of the Light Service. Letting a revolving light become stationary or any light go out altogether were grounds for dismissal. Keepers convicted of sleeping while on duty were liable for instant dismissal, although the Marine Department had some discretion in this matter and could reduce the offending keeper's rank or impose a fine instead.³⁴⁵ A number of keepers were dismissed from the Light Service for breaching these rules on Southland light stations. In July 1885, Probationary Keeper Fisher omitted to wind Waipapa Point's machine and the light stopped revolving. Although Fisher assured the Marine Department that he had not been asleep (he said that he had 'always been careful of that'), he was dismissed and left the station in September.³⁴⁶ Less than three years later, another keeper was dismissed from the Service after Waipapa's light again became stationary. On 9 January 1888, Assistant Keeper Allan admitted falling asleep and letting the light stop rotating for twenty minutes. Allan was immediately suspended and subsequently dismissed.³⁴⁷ A General Order was circulated to all stations in 1895 about an Assistant Keeper who fell asleep on duty while suffering from influenza. Under the circumstances, the Marine Secretary decided not to enforce the rules by dismissing the keeper and, instead docked his salary by £10 and removed him 'to a station less favorably [sic] situated'.³⁴⁸ Sometimes keepers had to wait for months to hear their punishment for a misdemeanour. For example, Keeper Bawden let the Waipapa Point light stop revolving one night in September 1938. It was not until 14 June 1939, however, that a temporary keeper arrived to relieve Bawden, 'who had been suspended'.³⁴⁹ In March 1944, Keeper White confessed that he fell asleep for about 45 minutes while on duty on Dog Island. The light did not stop or go out, though, and White remained employed until he resigned from the Service in December 1945.³⁵⁰

TEMPORARY KEEPERS

When permanent keepers left their station on annual leave, because of illness, or when one keeper was transferred and the next had not yet arrived, temporary keepers were required to relieve them. Originally, temporary keepers were not full-time, trained employees of the Marine Department. They were generally men who lived nearby who agreed to

³⁴⁴ *Instructions to lightkeepers*, pp.10, 33, 34.

³⁴⁵ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.10.

³⁴⁶ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 29 July 1885, 19 September 1885, and *AJHR*, 1886, H-24, p.1.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 9 January 1888, 1 February 1888.

³⁴⁸ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 18 September 1895.

³⁴⁹ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1935-1943', 3 September 1938 and 1 July 1939. ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14e.

³⁵⁰ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1936-1945', 13 March 1944.

be called upon to help at the station when necessary. For example, on 22 April 1924, Keeper Cameron was transferred from Centre Island to Farewell Spit. The new permanent keeper did not arrive on the island until 16 May. In the meantime, Mr J. King from Riverton was employed as a temporary keeper.³⁵¹ Temporary keepers were employed on a day by day basis and paid at a daily rate. This wage rate could be a cause of dispute. A temporary keeper on Dog Island in 1904, for example, left the island upon discovering that he was to be paid seven shillings per day. He had mistakenly been promised eleven shillings when he agreed to do the job.³⁵² Temporary keepers' wages were increased to nine shillings per day in January 1912.³⁵³ Because of its isolated location, it could be particularly difficult to find temporary keepers for Puysegur Point lighthouse. In December 1902, Keeper Eade of Puysegur Point was off duty due to an eye condition. Principal Keeper Raynor commented that, 'after considerable trouble', a Mr Garrick was engaged as a temporary keeper. Four months later, Eade left the station for medical advice in Dunedin. This time Raynor could not find anyone to use as a temporary keeper.³⁵⁴ In 1908, Principal Keeper McIver wrote to the Marine Secretary saying, 'As there is no other man available at present, I have put my Son on as Temporary Keeper.'³⁵⁵ In 1912, a Mr Seymour was the usual temporary keeper for Puysegur Point, being the only person living within five miles of the station.³⁵⁶

In the 1930s, Puysegur Point's regular temporary keeper was a local man named Jules Berg. Berg was a fascinating character and had a lot to do with the keepers and the fishermen who frequented the area. Born Axel Borg in Scandinavia, Berg travelled the world as a seaman before settling in Fiordland in around 1925. Originally employed as a roadman to help upgrade the lighthouse track, Berg then moved to Te Oneroa (about three miles from the station) where he built a hut, fossicked for gold, did occasional stints as a keeper, and concocted parsnip and various other kinds of wine, until his death in the early 1950s.³⁵⁷ In September 1934, the Principal Keeper reported that Jules Berg had given up temporary keeper work, but by May 1935 he had obviously changed his mind as he was again being used.³⁵⁸ In February 1937, Berg fell and broke several ribs while on duty at the lighthouse and was sent to hospital. The Principal Keeper's son was the only man available at the time so was employed to replace Berg as temporary keeper.³⁵⁹

³⁵¹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 1 May 1924 and 16 May 1924.

³⁵² 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 1 February 1904. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/49.

³⁵³ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 12 January 1912.

³⁵⁴ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 1 January 1903 and 30 April 1903.

³⁵⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 10 September 1908. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10d.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1912.

³⁵⁷ 'I remember Jules; Confessions of a lighthouse keeper', sound recording, Spectrum, Radio New Zealand, #690/692, Hocken Library.

³⁵⁸ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 1 September 1934, 2 May 1935.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 March 1937.

Another problem with temporary keepers was raised by Principal Keeper Ager in 1938. When a casual keeper was engaged during the absence of one keeper on a two-man station, the other keeper was 'obliged to remain on watch with him until such time as he is deemed competent to keep watch alone'. Ager continued 'Think that one out for yourself. On an average it takes a week to break in a new man'. He was complaining that the remaining keeper would effectively have to remain on night watch constantly until he was sure that the casual keeper was 'broken in'. Ager's solution to this problem was to make all lighthouses three-man stations.³⁶⁰

During the 1950s, the temporary keeper system was regulated and came under closer Marine Department control. Up until then, temporary keepers had mainly been locally engaged, untrained men who were 'not necessarily subject to sufficient disciplinary control'. These men were replaced by a small, mobile group of trained relieving keepers who moved around New Zealand light stations as and when they were required. After a successful trial period, these relieving keepers could be transferred to the permanent staff. The new relieving keeper system was much more efficient than in the past. It also allowed some permanent keepers to use up the arrears of annual leave which had built up when no temporary keepers were available.³⁶¹

The reorganisation of the Light Service created a new career option for some single men. Relief keeping became a lifestyle choice for some men, like Kevin Pennell. Relieving keepers were based on Brothers Island in Cook Strait, one of the most rugged stations in the country. Married keepers were not sent to the island because of the extremely harsh living conditions. From here they were sent out relieving around the country, often at very short notice. Pennell feels that it was a unique and very interesting job which was quite different to that of a regular, permanent light keeper. Pennell worked on 24 of the 25 manned stations still remaining in New Zealand between 1975 and 1987, while he says most permanent keepers worked on only two or three stations during their careers.³⁶² He felt that light keeping was a harder life for married keepers than relieving keepers (who were always single). Relieving keepers could always send a telegram to the Marine Department asking to be transferred immediately if things were not going well at a particular station, and they could be taken off the next day. Married keepers, however, lived permanently at the station and had their families and possessions to consider, making it more difficult for them to be uprooted and shifted to another station.³⁶³

According to Pennell, many relieving keepers were 'fly-by-nighters' who would serve for about eighteen months at a time. Pennell himself achieved a total cumulative service of six years, spread out over twelve years. One exception to this rule was Frank Williams, known as the 'granddaddy of all relieving keepers', who worked as a relieving keeper for twenty

³⁶⁰ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1936-1945', 2 November 1938.

³⁶¹ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, pp.18-19.

³⁶² Pennell interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 011, 050, 066. The only light station he did not work on was Godley Head.

³⁶³ *Ibid*, tape counter 234.

years.³⁶⁴ Pennell believes that unmarried keepers often had a reputation for hard drinking and wild living. He says that the relieving keeper was often viewed as ‘a horrible little troll under the bridge’, and someone from whom wives and daughters needed to be protected.³⁶⁵

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

With keepers living so closely together, some conflict was inevitable. Sometimes the problem was simply a clash of personalities, other times it was how well a keeper performed his duties. Assistant Keeper Payn arrived at Puysegur Point in February 1887. In October, Principal Keeper McNeil complained to the Marine Department about his conduct, saying —

I got nothing but abuse and this kind of conduct is becoming daily worse tonight [sic] he refused to keep the first watch.

Payn was discharged from the Service in January 1888 as a result of these allegations.³⁶⁶ Around the same time at Waipapa Point, Principal Keeper Ericson and Assistant Keeper Nicolson were engaging in a war of letters to the Marine Department, each complaining about the other. It began with Ericson complaining about the dirty state of Nicolson’s house and escalated into character attacks by both men. Nicolson said he had been —

Subject to verry [sic] foul and insulting language from the Principal Keeper who is an expert at such ... I would request that you order him to stop it.

Ericson accused Nicolson of using abusive language and of cruelty to the station horse. Their relationship became so bad that an inquiry was carried out into the situation in December 1887, and Nicolson was removed from the station.³⁶⁷

In May 1907, Principal Keeper Scott of Centre Island wrote to the Marine Department saying —

With regards to Keeper Pepper I would like very much if you could remove him to another Station as he is a very undesirable person to have on a station where women and girls are, the Brothers would be a more suitable place for him.

A month later, Pepper resigned from his Centre Island position. Scott said —

...the reason that I asked for a shift for him and was that he was continually scratching his person and he could not see any of the women or girls outside the house but he would be in their company whether they liked it or not and continued the scratching when in their company.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁴ Ibid, Side Two, tape counter 003.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, tape counter 189.

³⁶⁶ ‘Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892’, 1 March 1887, 1 October 1887, 11 January 1888.

³⁶⁷ ‘Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898’, 5 October 1887-3 January 1888.

³⁶⁸ ‘Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912’, 1 May 1907, 22 May 1907, 2 June 1907.

On Centre Island in late 1928, the other two keepers reported problems with Keeper Brown, including finding him in one of their houses, uninvited. In September, Principal Keeper Mitchell wrote —

...owing to Keeper Brown's conduct the situation here has become critical and I request that an inquiry be held immediately, before serious trouble arises. Also that Keeper Brown is instantly removed from this station.

The keepers' relationship with Brown continued to deteriorate to the extent that he refused to help unload stores, including his own, from the *Tutanekai* in November. On 2 December, the mail launch arrived with a telegram ordering Brown's removal from Centre Island. The launch returned a week later with Constable Fraser from Riverton and Brown finally left, apparently after keeping the launch waiting for him all day.³⁶⁹

In April 1931, Assistant Keeper Hugh Campbell asked to be transferred from Centre Island, saying

... the displays of petty temper and fault finding by the Principal Keeper are getting too frequent to be comfortable. I can put up with the displays of petty temper and have done so but it requires a lot of patience to put up with the unfairness ... To write a letter like this is not a pleasure and does not tend towards good feeling and co-operation which is very necessary especially stationed on an island but I must be fair to myself as I always try to be to others.

Campbell complained that Principal Keeper Mitchell did not try to teach him a number of necessary skills. Mitchell refuted these claims, saying —

In reply to the ... deceptive charge he lays against me I simply ignore them as I have worked for the Department over 14 years and no one else has had cause to complain, his complaints are purely imaginary.

He said that Campbell resented being shown how to do anything and asked for him to be transferred as soon as possible 'as life here is going to be Hell while we are together'. Campbell left Centre Island in May 1931.³⁷⁰

It was not always the keepers themselves who caused the conflict. For example, in February 1938, Principal Keeper Watts asked for Assistant Keeper Pullen to be removed from Centre Island as his son was 'making himself a nuisance and very insulting when spoken to'. He was apparently shooting and trapping birds when he had been told not to. In response, Pullen said that it was not his son killing the birds but Watts' cat. He accused Watts of 'interfering in privat [sic] family affairs' and said he was 'making trouble hear [sic] as he do not like [sic] the station'. Pullen requested a transfer to the Customs Department for health reasons. Accusations were then made about Watts lighting up late and Pullen

³⁶⁹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 24 September 1928, 27 November 1928 and 2 January 1929.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 21 April 1931, 24 April 1931 and 1 June 1931.

being asleep on duty and interfering with the Daily Journal. In the end, both keepers were transferred from the island in December 1938.³⁷¹

While it seems that some lighthouse keepers did not get on very well with each other, the majority probably worked together with few problems, but did not bother writing about it to the Marine Department. This means that there is little record of good relationships, only those which went wrong. Light keeping required a reasonable amount of teamwork and most keepers probably made an effort to get along with the other men on the station for the sake of a quiet, happy life. There is no doubt that life on a light station could become very uncomfortable for all its inhabitants if there was constant conflict between two or more of the keepers. There is also no doubt that some keepers struck up very close friendships while working with each other. Thomas Smith met Norm Miller when they were stationed at Puysegur Point and they formed a friendship that was to last a lifetime.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Ibid, 19 February 1938, 18 March 1938, 30 September 1938, 30 October 1938, 8 November 1938 and 2 December 1938.

³⁷² Smith, p.114.

CHAPTER SIX: Families

MARITAL STATUS OF KEEPERS

Lighthouse life was not only experienced by light keepers, but by their wives and children as well. Throughout the history of the New Zealand Light Service, the policy was generally to employ only married men as permanent light keepers. Married keepers were seen to be more stable and reliable than single men and the presence of their families on light stations was supposed to have a civilising influence on them. Single men were employed as relieving keepers but had to be married if they wanted to be appointed to a permanent position.³⁷³ Most keepers, therefore, had wives and most also had children. While having families on light stations had advantages for both the keepers and Marine Department, it also created a number of problems for them to deal with.

While nearly all permanent light keepers were married, not all wives lived with their husbands on the light stations. Principal Keeper Hodge arrived at Puysegur Point with his family in April 1937. His wife and daughter left the station five months later.³⁷⁴ Hodge lived alone for the remaining two years he was stationed at Puysegur Point, his family living in Dunedin. Hodge considered Puysegur's living conditions to be unsuitable for a mother and young family. Thomas Smith, who arrived at Puysegur Point when Hodge was transferred, was urged by the remaining two keepers' wives not to expect his wife and as yet unborn child to live there. Smith's wife, Faith, was determined to be with her husband, however, and travelled to the station in September 1939, six weeks after giving birth to a son in Wellington.³⁷⁵ It appeared to be common for a keeper to go to a station ahead of his wife and family and for them to join him later. This gave the keeper a chance to get himself acquainted with his new job and surroundings and to find out what sort of stores and equipment his wife would need to bring with her. It also allowed his family the opportunity to visit relatives and friends before moving on to another isolated station where they may not see them again for months or even years. For example, Probationary Keeper John McKinna arrived at Puysegur Point in April 1888 and it was not until September that he requested that the Marine Department provide passage for his wife from Bluff on the government vessel *Stella*.³⁷⁶ Probationary Keeper

³⁷³ Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Lighthouse Keepers', p.2.

³⁷⁴ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 19 April 1937 and 2 September 1937. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

³⁷⁵ Smith, pp.92, 99.

³⁷⁶ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 1 May 1888, September 1888, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10b.

Millett arrived on Dog Island by himself in May 1908. His wife and two children travelled to the island four months later, in September.³⁷⁷

On rare occasions keepers were unmarried when they entered the Light Service. Provision was made for such keepers in the 1886 publication, *Instructions to lightkeepers* which stated: 'In the case of an unmarried lightkeeper the Secretary may permit that a respectable female (a relative, if practicable) live with him as a housekeeper'. Under normal circumstances, the only relatives permitted to live with the keeper were his wife and children.³⁷⁸ Keeper Thomson arrived on Centre Island with his sister in August 1898. His sister remained on the island and four years later they left the island together.³⁷⁹ In December 1904, Assistant Keeper Halla wrote to the Marine Department asking permission for his sister to move to Dog Island as his housekeeper, saying that he would 'find it more convenient than at present'.³⁸⁰ Second Assistant Keeper Mitchell arrived on Dog Island in September 1907. In July 1908 he asked for his annual leave to be extended to three weeks as he was getting married in September. On 26 September 1908, Mitchell arrived back on the island with his new wife by his side.³⁸¹ In March 1907, Centre Island's Principal Keeper wrote to the Marine Department, upon hearing that a single man was being appointed to the island, asking —

...if there is any possibility of Mr Hill being married before arriving here as I would like very much to see a married man coming here as I think it is to [sic] lonely and isolated for only one married woman to be on the station alone in case of sickness.³⁸²

WIVES

It cannot be claimed that lighthouse life was easy for New Zealand light keepers, particularly in the nineteenth century, and it seems that it was especially difficult for their wives. The life of a light keeper's wife can probably be equated with that of a farmer's wife in many respects. Both usually lived in remote areas, often with very little contact with the outside world, and they shared many of the same experiences. While keepers' wives were not necessarily unique in their life experience, they make an interesting topic to examine, particularly as their life stories are not generally as accessible as those of their husbands. Keepers' wives had to contend with many inconveniences while living on remote, often primitive, light stations but, like other rural women, perhaps the most frightening and potentially dangerous hurdle they faced was childbirth.

³⁷⁷ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 1 June 1908, 1 October 1908. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4a.

³⁷⁸ *Instructions to lightkeepers in the service of the Marine Department of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1886, p.5.

³⁷⁹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 31 August 1898, 30 June 1902, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

³⁸⁰ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 1 December 1904.

³⁸¹ Ibid, 30 September 1907, 1 July 1908, 1 October 1908.

³⁸² 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 March 1907.

Ideally, pregnant women shifted from their station to a town with proper medical facilities well before the baby was due. For example, in August 1916 Keeper McLaren of Dog Island requested time off to take his wife and two young children home as she was expecting a baby.³⁸³ Keeper Stringer's wife travelled from Dog Island to Invercargill in 1924 when her baby was nearly due.³⁸⁴ Sometimes emergency trips to Bluff or Invercargill were required when Southland babies chose to make their appearances early. In February 1925, Assistant Keeper Sinclair's wife was 'suddenly taken ill' and was rowed to Bluff, where she gave birth to a child the next day.³⁸⁵ Keeper Lloyd's wife had already experienced one 'mishap' at sea while pregnant so when she was expecting again in 1893, she engaged 'a competent woman' to come to Centre Island for the birth so she would not have to cross the water for assistance. However, the woman had not arrived ten days before the baby was due and the couple were so anxious that Mrs Lloyd said she would risk the journey across Foveaux Strait 'rather than remain here without the slightest hope of attendance'. Lloyd rowed his wife to Colac Bay but despite her severe seasickness and imminent labour, had to leave her there and return to his post on Centre Island. Lloyd had to rely on a local fisherman to bring news of his wife and baby the next day.³⁸⁶ He was told that Mrs Lloyd had been 'confined' and safely given birth in a 'native's hut' at Colac Bay.³⁸⁷

Many women did not leave, or were unable to leave, the light station when pregnant and had to turn to those around them for support during the labour and birth. Keeper Murray and his pregnant wife arrived at Puysegur Point in April 1899. One night during September, Mrs Murray 'was taken suddenly ill at midnight'. At 2am her husband went to Long Beach where a nurse was residing, returning with her at 6:20am. By this time, however, Mrs Murray had already given birth to a baby boy and both mother and child were doing well.³⁸⁸ Probationary Keeper Sutherland and his 23-year-old, six-months-pregnant wife arrived at Puysegur Point in March 1919. Principal Keeper McLeish reported to the Marine Department that on 1 July 1919, Mrs Ruahine Sutherland gave birth to a girl on the station. He said 'as no arrangements had been made by them consequently my wife had to officiate'.³⁸⁹ The Sutherlands were obviously very grateful for the assistance given them by the McLeishs as they named their daughter 'Grace McLeish S. Sutherland'.³⁹⁰ Women frequently helped each other through childbirth on isolated light stations when there was no time to get outside assistance. In around 1917 Principal Keeper Harvey's wife helped to deliver Mrs Williamson's baby on Dog Island when the

³⁸³ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 14 August 1916.

³⁸⁴ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1923-1929', 30 September 1924. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/ 4b.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 1 March 1925.

³⁸⁶ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 14 October 1893.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 31 October 1893.

³⁸⁸ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 2 October 1899, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/ 10c.

³⁸⁹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 31 March 1919, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10d.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 31 August 1919.

doctor did not arrive in time. Mrs Harvey, herself, gave birth to two babies while her husband was stationed on Dog Island, although she had a nurse from Bluff to help with the deliveries.³⁹¹

Childbirth on isolated stations was also a concern for the Light Service administration. Hinemoa McLelland (née Shandley) recalls that complications during one of her mother's pregnancies apparently led to a change in Light Service rules. In the late 1960s, Mr and Mrs Shandley and their three children were stationed on Mokohinau light station. Mrs Shandley gave birth at the lighthouse six weeks prematurely. The Marine Department had not been aware that she was even pregnant and, not wanting a recurrence of a potentially dangerous incident like this, changed the rules to ensure that all pregnant women were removed from light stations at least six weeks before their due date. Mrs McLelland recalls leaving Mokohinau with her mother and staying with her grandmother two months before her mother's fifth baby was due.³⁹²

Childbirth could be dangerous for any mother and child in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but was especially risky for isolated women such as those living on New Zealand's light stations. These births did not always have a happy outcome and infant deaths were relatively common at Southland lighthouses. These deaths were sometimes reported to the Marine Department in the official station letter books. Being official letters, the language was generally unemotional and the news was stated very matter-of-factly. For example, on 29 January 1916, Centre Island's Principal Keeper wrote 'I have to inform you that I left the station on the 17th instant to attend the funeral of my child. I returned and resumed duty today'. There had been no mention of the death before this.³⁹³ At Puysegur Point in around 1918, one of the keepers' wives went into labour. A call was sent by radio to the operator at Awarua Radio who called an Invercargill doctor for medical advice. According to one of the other keepers —

*It was a harrowing time for those concerned and fortunately the mother came through it all safely, but next morning there was a new grave at the landing, and a tiny cross beside the three already there.*³⁹⁴

On Boxing Day 1918, Waipapa Point's Principal Keeper reported that 'My Infant son died at 10am'.³⁹⁵ The wife of Dog Island's Acting Principal Keeper went into labour and was taken to Bluff on 27 January 1926. On 1 March her husband wrote 'I have to report that I left the station on the 17th inst. on 24 hours special leave to arrange the funeral of my two daughters.'³⁹⁶

³⁹¹ Interview with Mrs Alice Wybrow, 23 February 1999, extra interview notes.

³⁹² Interview with Mrs Hinemoa McLelland, 9 March 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 500.

³⁹³ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 29 January 1916. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3e.

³⁹⁴ G. Sheehan and A. Gibbons, p.113.

³⁹⁵ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919', 31 December 1918, ANZ, Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14b.

³⁹⁶ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1923-1929', 1 February 1926, 1 March 1926.

Lighthouse life could be both a difficult and rewarding lifestyle for women. It is hard to gauge exactly how keepers' wives felt about their lives from examining the official letter books, but there are occasional glimpses of the difficulties they experienced, although not much about their positive experiences. Numerous keepers asked for transfers from Southland lighthouses to different stations because of their wives' health.³⁹⁷ It is possible that sometimes a wife's poor health was used as an excuse to shift to a more favourable station when the real problem was actually the wife's, or indeed the keeper's, happiness. The isolation of many light stations could be hard for some women to cope with. They were often far away from family and friends and could sometimes go for months or even years without seeing them. Hinemoa McLelland reflects that this aspect of lighthouse life was very difficult for her mother, Hinekino, to deal with. Mrs Shandley was a Maori woman who was used to living with a large extended family and having a lot of people around her. When her husband joined the Light Service in the late 1960s, she found it difficult to adjust to the isolated lifestyle where the only people around were often the other keepers and their families. For all this, Mrs McLelland believes that for the most part her mother thoroughly enjoyed lighthouse life.³⁹⁸ Life could definitely be lonely for some women on light stations. Alice Wybrow felt that it was an easier life for the keepers in this respect as they were able to get 'out and about' more often and probably had more day-to-day contact with each other than their wives did.³⁹⁹ It was a very busy life for keepers' wives, however, so many did not have time to worry about being lonely, particularly if they had children to look after. There was always washing, sewing, baking and cleaning to be done, vegetable gardens to tend, or butter to churn. In fact, women on light stations, as anywhere else, often had little time to themselves, which could be another problem.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even transferring from one lighthouse to another could be trying for some women. Mrs Wybrow recalls that her mother hated climbing up and down the rope ladder to the government steamer in the early 1900s, as her long wide skirts would embarrass her by billowing up around her legs.⁴⁰⁰ In August 1938, Assistant Keeper Newson complained to the Marine Department about the treatment received by keepers and their wives on government transport vessels, saying —

When embarking or disembarking, women have to scramble over the ships side [sic] on a "Jacob's ladder" very often with young children in their arms and this has been the cause of many accidents. Despite the excuses made for this practice it is disgraceful and entirely unnecessary.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ For example, see 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 20 June 1894.

³⁹⁸ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 365.

³⁹⁹ Wybrow interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 129.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, extra interview notes.

⁴⁰¹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 26 August 1938.

Newson's Principal Keeper wrote one month later to concur with his complaints.⁴⁰² Soon afterwards, Puysegur's third keeper also complained about the suitability of government vessels for women.

*Transport facilities to and from Puysegur are normally unsatisfactory; but to womenfolk wishing to go for, and return from, medical attention, they are doubly so.*⁴⁰³

While I have not come across any more evidence to support Newson's claim of 'many accidents' occurring to women embarking or disembarking from government vessels, it seems that it could be an uncomfortable business. Besides the rope ladder, sometimes women and children were hoisted aboard the light tender in a large wicker basket – a somewhat nerve-wracking experience for them as they swung back and forth above the sea. Mabel Pollock vividly describes the Jamieson family's ordeal in getting from the beach at Waipapa Point to the *Matai* which was to transfer them to East Cape lighthouse in 1932. The journey from shore to where the *Matai* was anchored was bad enough with heavy seas pounding the surfboat and Mrs Jamieson and her children became seasick. They then had to suffer through the torture of the wicker basket first swinging like a pendulum then spinning in the wind above the churning sea. Once aboard the *Matai*, however, Pollock describes the children's delight at exploring the stately ship. As soon as they 'found their sea legs', the family began to enjoy their trip aboard the *Matai*. They found the crew very friendly and helpful and savoured their company and that of the other keepers and families on board.⁴⁰⁴ So, despite the complaints of some keepers, others thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality extended to them on board the government vessels and revelled in the novelty of the experience whenever they were in transit.

Puysegur Point was a very difficult station for both men and women to live on. One keeper, in fact, said 'it is practically unfit for human habitation' and went on to say that 'a woman has to be indeed courageous to stick it out for the allotted time'.⁴⁰⁵ The lack of some amenities at lighthouses made life harder than necessary for keepers' wives. In May 1907, Principal Keeper Gwynne of Waipapa Point wrote to the Marine Department about the necessity of wash-houses on the station. He wrote —

*It is most trying to a woman's health to have to wash outside at such a bleak cold place as this, in fact washing has often to be held over for days for want of this convenience.*⁴⁰⁶

As the twentieth century wore on, housing and facilities provided for keepers and their families fell behind those provided elsewhere by the state. Mabel Pollock describes Mrs Jamieson's outrage at discovering that the Naval Coast Guard Station built at Cape Brett during WWII was better-equipped than the keepers' houses, including a new enamel stove (which, unlike her own, required no blackleading) and a kerosene

⁴⁰² Ibid, 24 September 1938.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, 27 September 1938.

⁴⁰⁴ Pollock, pp.28-34, 42.

⁴⁰⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 28 September 1939.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919', 28 May 1907.

refrigerator. Mrs Jamieson refused to put up with this and began an ultimately successful campaign demanding new stoves and refrigerators for the keepers as well.⁴⁰⁷

Despite these and other hardships, family life on New Zealand light stations could be very enjoyable. As there were often very few other people or distractions around them, families had to rely on each other for support and entertainment. Thus, families often became very close-knit. They enjoyed many activities together and spent a lot of time in each other's company. Hinemoa McLelland believes that all this created a very stable home environment for children to grow up in. This was because their parents were able to spend so much time with them and were always available to their children. Family became more important than anything else, and there were few outside influences to contend with. Mrs McLelland recalls having a very good relationship with her parents.⁴⁰⁸

HEALTH

Health and medical care on isolated light stations had to be mainly self-administered and illness could cause problems. In the case of serious sickness, a doctor would be brought from the nearest town but this often took a long time. In April 1892, one of the keepers' wives was taken ill on Centre Island during the night. The keeper rowed to Colac Bay and telegraphed for a doctor to come as soon as possible. The doctor arrived on the island at 1 pm.⁴⁰⁹ Sometimes the sick person had to be taken to hospital at Bluff or Invercargill. In May 1889, Keeper Tutt of Waipapa Point took his wife to Fortrose, enroute for Invercargill Hospital, as she had been 'ailing for some time from Neuralgia Abcesses and general debility'. Mrs Tutt returned to the station on 4 August.⁴¹⁰ Four years later, Mrs Tutt was very ill again and had to be urgently taken to hospital. Her husband remained with her at the hospital for a week where the doctors gave her no hope of recovery. Fortunately, Mrs Tutt did survive and, after six months in hospital, returned to Waipapa Point where she was able to get about the house and do light duties but had to wear 'specially constructed steel corsets to support her spine' for the next three years.⁴¹¹ Principal Keeper Johnston of Waipapa Point was admitted to hospital in March 1934, dangerously ill with peritonitis. On 7 March he was operated on for a stomach ulcer and two months later returned to duty at Waipapa Point. He wrote in the normally unemotional official letter book —

⁴⁰⁷ Pollock, p.176.

⁴⁰⁸ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 278.

⁴⁰⁹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 30 April 1892.

⁴¹⁰ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 1 June 1889, 2 September 1889. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13H.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, 14 September 1893, 12 June 1894.

*I earnestly hope and trust I never have to go through another period like this last three months - once in a lifetime will be quite sufficient for me.*⁴¹²

Johnston resigned from the Light Service about eighteen months later saying that he had not been feeling well and needed a complete change and rest.⁴¹³

On rare occasions, medical attention came too late to save the lives of those stationed at Southland lighthouses. Principal Keeper Parks of Puysegur Point died in hospital in October 1896. He had fallen ill on 13 October and was unable to continue duty. On 15 October, First Assistant Keeper Sandager reported that Parks' condition had worsened, saying —

...the symptoms indicate a serious derangement of the digestive system, and should no improvement take place very shortly it appears to me a matter of urgency that medical advice should be obtained, for home-treatment seems of no use.

A boat passing the station the next day was requested to report the sickness to the Customs Department in Invercargill. On 20 October, the tugboat *Awarua* arrived and took Parks to hospital where he later died.⁴¹⁴ Parks' son, Edward, took over the vacant keeper's position at Puysegur Point when his father went into hospital, and remained there after his death.⁴¹⁵ Keeper Nicolson died in hospital in September 1903 after being stationed at Waipapa Point. His wife and two children arrived at the hospital 'in time to have a few minutes talk with him before he died'.⁴¹⁶ Nicolson's death was apparently the result of suicide.⁴¹⁷ Only one month after his arrival at Waipapa Point, Principal Keeper Edmonds fell seriously ill with pleurisy and a temporary keeper was engaged on 19 December 1922. Four days later Edmonds was transferred to Southland Hospital where he developed pneumonia and died on 27 December.⁴¹⁸ At Puysegur Point, Keeper Leighton first complained of feeling ill on 16 October 1934. His condition deteriorated and he was taken away for medical treatment by the *Aparima* on 19 October. The treatment could not save Leighton and he died soon after.⁴¹⁹

As doctors were not usually readily accessible for keepers and their families, they had to be reasonably self-sufficient when it came to health care, with women generally acting as the family nurse. The Marine Department provided each station with medical supplies as well as medical guidebooks to give some assistance in diagnosing and treating

⁴¹² 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1925-1935', 29 March 1934, 1 April 1934, 7 April 1934, 2 June 1934. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14d..

⁴¹³ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1935-1943', 21 October 1935, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14e.

⁴¹⁴ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 18972-1907', 22 October 1896.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 1 December 1896.

⁴¹⁶ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1898-1906', 16 September 1903. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14a.

⁴¹⁷ Sheehan and Gibbons, p.104.

⁴¹⁸ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1919-1925', 19 December 1922, 23 December 1922, 27 December 1922. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14c.

⁴¹⁹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 1 November 1934.

illnesses and conditions. In June 1883, Puysegur Point's Principal Keeper wrote to the Marine Department requesting that a better medical guide book be sent to the station as the old one was not very helpful and 'the want of such a Book has been much felt'. In April 1884, a new medical guide, *Household Medicine*, was delivered to Puysegur Point.⁴²⁰ The lighthouses were supplied with a wide range of medicines. Those used in the nineteenth century had interesting sounding names, as demonstrated by this excerpt from Waipapa Point's 1893 letter book:

*The children have been troubled with coughing and colds during the winter and I have expended all of the undermentioned medicines. Paregorie. Sweet spirit of Nitre, Syrup of Squills, and Epicecuana.*⁴²¹

During the twentieth century, when telephone and radio links brought light stations into easier contact with the outside world, medical experts could be called for advice when keepers or their families fell ill.⁴²² Kevin Pennell recalls that by the time he joined the Service in 1975, there were usually two medical cabinets on a light station, one with general first aid supplies and the other containing stronger drugs. The first aid cabinet was accessible by anyone, while the second cabinet was kept locked and could only be opened by the Principal Keeper or other designated person after consulting with the medical superintendent of the nearest hospital by radio. Access to this cabinet was restricted as it contained some very powerful drugs, including Omnipon, a Morphine derivative.⁴²³

Home-made remedies were used to treat some ailments. For example, Mrs Wybrow remembers that her keeper father's remedy for toothache was ginger and flour mixed to a paste with whisky and applied to the outside of the face with a cloth. According to Mrs Wybrow, the concoction seemed to work.⁴²⁴ Toothache was a common problem and could be difficult to deal with as there was generally no dentist readily available. One Dog Island keeper went to extraordinary lengths in 1897:

*I was nearly crazy with tooth ache. There was no chance of getting away therefore I had to become my own dentist. Sending to Dunedin for two pairs of forceps, I managed to pull all my own teeth. Anyone who thinks this is an easy job let him give it a trial. I could not get anyone to act for me, but it soon became known what I had done and those forceps (including myself of course) were quite useful to some others besides Lightkeepers.*⁴²⁵

Other keepers had their dental problems dealt with professionally. In July 1909, for example, Keeper Tipene was granted two days leave from Centre Island to have his teeth extracted.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁰ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 30 June 1883, 25 April 1884.

⁴²¹ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 1 August 1893.

⁴²² *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16.

⁴²³ Interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 408.

⁴²⁴ Wybrow interview, extra notes.

⁴²⁵ Quoted in Sheehan & Gibbons, p.105.

⁴²⁶ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 July 1909.

The Marine Department, realising that health care was difficult to administer to those on the lights, became concerned with preventive measures in the twentieth century. In 1936, the following circular was sent to all stations:

*With a desire to maintain and improve the general health of residents at the lighthouse stations, more especially in the case of those who have not been accustomed to providing for themselves under isolated conditions, this department has sought the advice of the Department of Health.*⁴²⁷

The two departments collaborated on a series of pamphlets which were distributed to all lighthouse staff. The publications were entitled *Suggestions to parents; The hair and scalp of the school child; Care of children's teeth; Common skin diseases in school children; and Hints on diet.*⁴²⁸ After WWII, district health nurses began visiting the lighthouses periodically.⁴²⁹ According to the Marine Department, these visits were 'welcomed by keepers and families'.⁴³⁰ Ernie McArthur, a light keeper during the 1950s, recalls that the district nurse would visit about once every six months to check on the health of the children, keepers and wives.⁴³¹ Hinemoa McLelland also recalls district nurses visiting Puysegur Point when she was a child in the early 1970s.⁴³²

EDUCATION

In addition to playing nurse, lighthouse women were often also called upon to fulfil the role of teacher to their children. Access to education was always a very important issue for light keepers and their families. Schools were not generally provided on remote light stations, which meant that keepers had to send their children away to school, employ a teacher, or teach the children themselves. The first option, while guaranteeing the child a reasonable education, was too expensive for some keepers, particularly if they had more than one child of school age. For example, in November 1914, Keeper Marlow asked for a transfer from Puysegur Point to Moeraki lighthouse or any other station which had a school. He pointed out the difficulties of educating his children, aged between four and eleven, and said boarding them out would cost more than he could afford.⁴³³ Despite the cost, some keepers' children were boarded out while they attended school. Alice Wybrow (née Harvey) started school in Bluff in around 1916 when she was almost nine years old. Her keeper father and the rest of her family had recently been transferred to Dog Island and, feeling that it was time their eldest child

⁴²⁷ Quoted in 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Lighthouse Keepers', p.6.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, p.5.

⁴³⁰ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16.

⁴³¹ Interview with Mr Ernie McArthur, 11 March 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 214.

⁴³² McLelland interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 146.

⁴³³ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 1 November 1914.

started school, made enquiries about a place for her to board on the mainland. In the end, she moved in with the man who delivered the mail to the island and his family, and thoroughly enjoyed herself. Three years later, Keeper Harvey was transferred to Waipapa Point where his children were able to attend the local school and live at home. When Harvey was again transferred, this time to Centre Island, his wife and children did not go with him as by this stage they had five children attending school. Instead, they moved to his parents' farm at Slope Point, from where the children could still go to school and live at home.⁴³⁴

The second education option was for the keepers themselves to employ a teacher to live on the station and teach their children. While this sounded like an ideal solution, and the Education Board subsidised teachers employed at light stations, there were some problems with this system. In June 1896, Principal Keeper Colley applied to the Southland Education Board for assistance to educate the children on Centre Island. They granted a capitation allowance at the rate of £4 per pupil. The teacher, Miss Stephens, arrived on the island on 6 October 1896. Only seven months later, in May 1897, the teacher resigned from her post.⁴³⁵ In May 1903, Keeper Jess applied for a teacher to be appointed to Centre Island again to teach his three children. The keeper had to pay £15 per year towards the teacher's salary and provide free board.⁴³⁶ In January 1906, Jess asked for a transfer to a mainland station with a school as he was having difficulty keeping his household teachers.

Owing to the isolation of a place like this it is a hard matter to get a young woman that has been brought up in a town to stay a year. And as the children can't be examined here, teachers can't be expected to take the same interest in them they otherwise would.

Jess went on to say that he had four children of school age and believed that his thirteen-year-old son needed to be in a school with other boys his own age.⁴³⁷ The Southland Education Board also sent teachers to Dog Island. For example, Miss R. Vallance arrived in June 1903 to teach the keepers' children. She remained on the island for less than a year and in May 1904 Miss Daphlyn arrived to take her place. Miss Daphlyn was transferred to another teaching post in December 1905.⁴³⁸ Puysegur Point appeared to be the worst Southland station in terms of access to education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In August 1914 Keeper Smith asked to be transferred from Puysegur Point to Stephens Island where there was a school, complaining that he could not persuade any teachers to come to Puysegur Point.⁴³⁹ Keepers stationed at Waipapa Point were fortunate in that their children could attend the primary school at Otara, about three miles from the light station. In 1898, however, Waipapa Point's

⁴³⁴ Wybrow interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 051, 224.

⁴³⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 30 June 1896, 31 October 1896, 31 May 1897.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, 7 May 1903.

⁴³⁷ Ibid, 2 January 1906.

⁴³⁸ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 1 July 1903, 1 June 1904, 1 January 1906.

⁴³⁹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 1 August 1914, 1 November 1914.

Principal Keeper reported that he had sent his eleven-year-old daughter to Dunedin to attend school as the long walk to Otara “was too much for her”.⁴⁴⁰ Alice Wybrow remembers driving to school each day with a horse and gig while her father was a keeper at Waipapa Point in the early 1920s.⁴⁴¹ In November 1928, the Waipapa Point keepers wrote to the Marine Department complaining about the state of the road to the lighthouse. They said that the mud was up to one foot deep in places and were concerned that ‘Our children have to ride through this sea of mud every day on their way to and from school’.⁴⁴²



Correspondence schooling at Waipapa. Ceri & Gwenyth (top) and Ceri. COURTESY OF JANET RICHARDS

The third education option, home-schooling, was the one most often taken by light keepers’ families. Keepers’ children made extensive use of the Correspondence School Section of the Education Department on stations where it was not possible for them to attend school. In 1939, the Marine Department reported that Correspondence Schooling was ‘proving invaluable’ and cited the recent pass in matriculation achieved by a keeper’s daughter as evidence of the system’s usefulness.⁴⁴³ Doreen Withington, Stephen Mead and Hinemoa McLelland were all taught by Correspondence School (supervised by their mothers) while their fathers were keepers on Southland light stations. Mrs Withington (née White) recalls that her mother had never heard of Correspondence School before her husband joined the Light Service and she was suddenly thrust into the role of teacher in 1939. Mrs White apparently adapted to her new occupation well and Mrs Withington recalls having to study during regular school hours, after which her time was her own. When the Whites moved ashore in 1945, Doreen started school in Bluff. She found that Correspondence School was much more intense than regular primary school and she and her sisters were further ahead than their classmates, having done more advanced work. For example, Correspondence School introduced decimals and fractions in Standard Three, while the school in Bluff did not teach them until

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in Sheehan & Gibbons, p.102.

⁴⁴¹ Wybrow interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 198.

⁴⁴² ‘Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1925-1935’, 1 November 1928.

⁴⁴³ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.2.

the end of Standard Four. On the island there had been more pressure to get their assignments finished as new work came in every fortnight and they had to send back their completed projects.⁴⁴⁴ Kate Jamieson also found that her Correspondence School work while growing up on light stations put her well ahead when she started boarding school as a teenager. She discovered that the Correspondence School of the 1930s and 1940s was significantly more advanced than ordinary schools 'in its outlook and quality of teaching'.⁴⁴⁵ Stephen Mead started school by correspondence while living on Dog Island in the early 1950s. The thing he most vividly recalls about his Correspondence School experience is the bright green canvas envelopes that the school work and supplies arrived from Wellington in. He also remembers listening to the Correspondence School programme on the radio.⁴⁴⁶ Hinemoa McLelland began Correspondence School while her father was stationed at Mokohinau light station and continued at Puysegur Point in the early 1970s. Her mother supervised her work and, at first, was concerned that she would not be able to teach effectively, not having a background in teaching. However, the Correspondence School realised that most parents in this situation had no teaching experience and sent separate packages to the parent and child packages to provide encouragement for both and to help the parent in educating their child. Mrs McLelland believes that the Correspondence School system could be as good as or better than regular schooling as there was more time for one-on-one teaching. She recalls that one keeper's wife taught one of her three children right up until he achieved University Entrance.⁴⁴⁷ To complement and reinforce parents' efforts, teachers from the Correspondence School periodically visited all light stations.⁴⁴⁸ While Correspondence School was a viable option for primary school aged children, once they reached high school age, it became more difficult. This was a major problem for both keepers and the Marine Department as it was one of the most common reasons why keepers left the Service. Between the 1940s and 1970s, Keepers White, Mead, McArthur and McLelland all left the Light Service for the sake of their children's education.⁴⁴⁹ Keepers with teenaged children were the older, more experienced and settled men whose services the Marine Department valued and who generally wanted to remain in the Service but for the problem of obtaining secondary education for their children. In the 1960s, the Marine Department increased assistance with boarding school expenses to £120 per annum per child to try to retain these men.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁴ Withington interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 041, 423.

⁴⁴⁵ Pollock, p.214.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 059.

⁴⁴⁷ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 328.

⁴⁴⁸ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16.

⁴⁴⁹ Withington interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 331, Mead interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 217, McArthur interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 362, and McLelland interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 319.

⁴⁵⁰ *AJHR*, 1963, H-15, p.9 and *AJHR*, 1964, H-15, p.9.

LEAVE

Keepers were granted annual leave from their light stations. 'Instructions to lightkeepers' set down the leave allowance each keeper was entitled to in 1866. Men stationed at lights with three keepers were allowed one week's leave each six months. Under 'special circumstances' the keeper could take one leave of two weeks within a year rather than two one-week breaks. At two-man stations, keepers had one week annual leave when the government paid for a temporary keeper to take his place. If he wanted to be absent for longer he could, with the Marine Department's permission, find a substitute at his own expense. It appeared that sole-charge keepers had to seek 'special permission' to take leave 'as the absence of a sole keeper would place all the lighthouse stores at the mercy of a stranger'.⁴⁵¹ Even though keepers were entitled to annual leave, they were required to stay at their posts 'until permission has been sought and obtained from the Marine Engineer'.⁴⁵² For example, on 21 June 1890, Keeper Canton of Centre Island wrote 'I beg respectfully to ask for the usual leave of absence allowed to keepers at this Station'. Canton was granted one week's leave and left the island on 31 July, returning on 8 August.⁴⁵³ In October 1895, the Marine Department circulated a General Order altering annual leave allowances. The length of leave depended on the location of the station and how long the keeper had been in the Service. Leave ranged from one week per year for keepers with five years or less experience working on mainland stations with one or two keepers, to ten days per year for keepers of five years or less experience working on island stations, to an extra eleven days leave every second year for all keepers with more than fifteen years service.⁴⁵⁴

Despite these increases, annual leave allowances were still a source of discontent for some keepers. Sometimes strict adherence to time limits was not practicable. Returning to an island station on time, for example, could be difficult. Keeper Johnston of Centre Island returned to the station on 16 August 1893, 'having I regret to state exceeded his leave through a succession of heavy gales with high seas'.⁴⁵⁵ In February 1896, Principal Keeper Parks of Puysegur Point complained that he had never taken a single day's leave during over 21 years continuous service 'for the reason that the seven days that used to be the regulation amount was too brief to be able to go anywhere in the time'. Parks wanted leave owing to be allowed to accumulate from year to year. Unfortunately for Parks, he did not live to take his first day's leave as he died in October 1896.⁴⁵⁶ There was also the problem of transport to and from isolated stations, like Puysegur Point, while on leave. In 1913, Keeper Smith asked

⁴⁵¹ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.4, pp.12-13.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, p.12.

⁴⁵³ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 21 June 1890, 31 July 1890, 31 August 1890.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 5 October 1895. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 31 August 1893.

⁴⁵⁶ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 1 February 1896 and 23 November 1896.

if he could have a party of friends visit him at Puysegur Point for a few weeks in December while he took leave —

...as their [sic] is no regular mail now it will be impossible to take holiadays [sic] outside as their [sic] will be no way of getting back, and to spend holiadays [sic] here without company would not be very enjoyable.⁴⁵⁷

In November 1909, the Marine Department changed its rules on accumulating leave. Keepers at 'stations difficult of access', including Puysegur Point, Centre Island and Dog Island, were now permitted to let their leave accumulate for two years if they wished.⁴⁵⁸ This was because it took keepers so long to reach their destinations and travel back again. Leave allowances were increased again in 1914. Keepers with less than five years experience stationed at mainland lights were now entitled to fourteen days leave, while those on island stations now had seventeen days annual leave.⁴⁵⁹ On top of official annual leave allowances, keepers and their families occasionally spent a pleasant week or two on the government light tender being transferred from one station to the next, often stopping at several points on the way. This constituted an informal break from lighthouse life for lighthouse families although keepers were sometimes required to assist with loading and unloading stores at the various stations.⁴⁶⁰

Keepers and their wives often used their leave to visit the family and friends they usually only saw once a year at the most. Ernie McArthur would often spend his annual leave travelling from wherever he and his immediate family were stationed to see the rest of their family in Dunedin, even travelling from Cuvier Island.⁴⁶¹ Stephen Mead recalls holidaying with friends in Bluff while his father was a keeper on Dog Island in the 1950s. Occasionally his parents, Don and Joan, would leave the children in Bluff and go on holiday by themselves.⁴⁶² Hinemoa McLelland remembers vacationing in Riverton during her father's stint as a light keeper at Puysegur Point.⁴⁶³

RECREATION

Keepers and their families used their recreation time on the light stations in a variety of ways. Reading was a favourite pastime for many keepers, wives and children. Recognising this, the Marine Department tried to provide a certain amount of reading material to each lighthouse. During the nineteenth century, magazines and newspapers were circulated around each light station. In June 1888, for example, the mail delivered to Centre

⁴⁵⁷ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 29 August 1913.

⁴⁵⁸ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 15 November 1909.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 3 April 1914.

⁴⁶⁰ See Pollock, pp.32-55.

⁴⁶¹ E.W. McArthur, 'The McArthurs Life on the Light Service', unpublished notes, p.12.

⁴⁶² Mead interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 198.

⁴⁶³ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 429.

Island included the March issue of *Harpers Magazine* which had last been at Dog Island. Other magazines included *Family Herald*, *London Society*, *Good Words*, *Leisure Hour*, *Cassells Magazine*, and *Century Illustrated*.⁴⁶⁴ Magazines such as these were eagerly awaited and there were numerous complaints to the Department when they did not arrive or arrived out of order. For example, in December 1924, the Principal Keeper on Dog Island wrote —

*I beg to acknowledge receipt of one Wide World Magazine for September 1924, and have to report that the issue for August of the above magazine has not yet been received.*⁴⁶⁵

Alice Wybrow remembers that there was always a great rush for the newspapers when they were delivered to Dog Island once a fortnight during WWI.⁴⁶⁶ The Marine Department also provided books for the light keepers and their families. Some of these were rotated round the stations, like the magazines, while others were part of each station's permanent library. In September 1923, twelve books were added to Centre Island's permanent book collection. These included: *Treasure Island*, *Fights for the Flag*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Natural History*, *White Fang*, *Life of Nelson*, and *Black Arrow*.⁴⁶⁷ The circulating library had been established in 1886 with provision made for it in the 1886 *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, and was 'much appreciated by the light keepers'.⁴⁶⁸ The library service to light stations was expanded in the twentieth century and was taken over by the Country Library Service. Kevin Pennell recalls that the Country Library Service would send three butter boxes filled with 75 books to each station every three months, and remove the previous boxes. Pennell said that 'The books were something we looked forward to'.⁴⁶⁹

Fishing was another common recreational activity for keepers and also supplemented the station inhabitants' diets. For Kevin Pennell, the hunting opportunities which Puysegur Point presented were one of that station's major attractions.⁴⁷⁰ Hunting expeditions were made by many keepers stationed at Puysegur Point. Hinemoa McLelland remembers sometimes accompanying her parents, John and Hinekino Shandley, on hunting trips as a child at the station. They also went for numerous bush walks around the area as a family.⁴⁷¹ Other hobbies enjoyed by keepers included listening to the radio, making models and wood carving.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁴ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 July 1888.

⁴⁶⁵ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1923-1929', 6 December 1924.

⁴⁶⁶ Wybrow interview, extra notes.

⁴⁶⁷ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 12 September 1923.

⁴⁶⁸ *AJHR*, 1887, H-4, p.1.

⁴⁶⁹ Pennell interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 439.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 081.

⁴⁷¹ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 146.

⁴⁷² *Ibid*, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 340, McArthur interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 278 and Mead interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 076.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Leisure activities were often undertaken as a family group. Sometimes two or three lighthouse families from the one station would get together for a particular activity, such as a picnic. Often other keepers' families were the only other people within the vicinity of the lighthouse and the only people a keeper and his family would have social contact with on a daily basis. Keepers' children played together and were often taught together as well. The keepers and their wives frequently socialised together too. Ernie McArthur says that, while the keepers did not want to 'live in each other's pockets', they would get together about once a week for something like a game of cards.⁴⁷³ The keepers and families on one station would sometimes celebrate Christmas together. Hinemoa McLelland recalls that her father, John Shandley, put on a hangi for all the Puysegur Point station residents one Christmas Day.⁴⁷⁴

With two or three keepers and families living so close together on one isolated lighthouse station, human nature dictates that there will be some friction. As in any other sector of society, there were personality clashes which could make life unhappy for some. For example, for most of 1938 letters were flying to the Marine Department from Centre Island detailing problems in the relationship between Keepers Watts and Pullen. In the end, it was decided that the men could not work together and both keepers were removed from the island.⁴⁷⁵ However, most keepers realised that light keeping required a great deal of co-operation and tolerance. Keepers had to work together on many station projects and also had to live alongside each other, so it did not pay to hold a grudge for too long. Keepers' wives also had a lot to do with each other, often being the only female company within miles. They often relied on each other for support during pregnancy, childbirth and injury. More experienced keepers' wives were often required to help new wives adjust to, and 'learn the ropes' of, lighthouse life. Doreen Withington remembers her mother teaching Keeper Emmens' wife how to sew and bake bread when they arrived on Dog Island during WWII.⁴⁷⁶

Generally, keepers on Southland's light stations had to create their own community as they were so isolated from other members of society. This was less so at Waipapa Point, however, as it was located closer to civilisation than the other lighthouses. Waipapa Point keepers were able to become part of the Fortrose-Otara area community to some extent. Their children attended the local school and they often travelled into town themselves to buy groceries, meat and other stores or to attend church. Some keepers also became involved in the community in other ways. In May 1911, for example, Assistant Keeper Smith wrote to the Marine Department requesting permission to drill the boys at Otara School for an hour every Wednesday afternoon. His Principal Keeper said

⁴⁷³ McArthur interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 263.

⁴⁷⁴ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 323.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 19 February 1938, 18 March 1938, 30 September 1938, 8 November 1938, 2 December 1938.

⁴⁷⁶ Withington interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 470.

that he was happy for Smith to do this as it would not interfere with the execution of his duties.⁴⁷⁷ Waipapa Point station was so accessible that the keepers sometimes craved more isolation! All lighthouses were required to be open to the public on certain days at hours convenient to the keepers, who were required to be 'civil' to all visitors.⁴⁷⁸ In August 1931, Principal Keeper Jamieson wrote a pleading letter to the Marine Department, saying —

*On behalf of keepers and their wives and families I ask you to refuse right-of-way past the dwelling houses, we haven't too much privacy as it is as people make a promenade of it on Sundays.*⁴⁷⁹

People living on Centre Island, Dog Island and Puysegur Point light stations could not complain about having too many visitors passing through. Visitors were very important to those on isolated stations as they provided contact with the outside world as well as a welcome change from the usual company of the other keepers and their families. For these reasons, the distraction of visiting fishermen, government service vessel crews, district nurses or Correspondence School teachers was looked forward to. With the permission of the Marine Department, keepers were allowed to have personal visitors stay with them on the stations. There were occasionally restrictions on visitors, such as during an Infantile Paralysis outbreak in 1937 when all visitors were refused, and during WWII when keepers were told not to expect permission for visitors to be automatically given, especially in the case of male visitors.⁴⁸⁰ At other times, though, visitors were fine. Doreen Withington recalls that her grandparents and cousins visited her family a number of times while they were stationed on Dog Island.⁴⁸¹ Stephen Mead also remembers his grandmother visiting his family on Dog Island.⁴⁸² As it was so isolated, Puysegur Point residents did not receive so many visitors as the more easily accessible Dog Island and Waipapa Point. However, some people did venture to the station to visit family and friends. The visitor who had perhaps the most adventurous stay at Puysegur was Bess Smith, Assistant Keeper Thomas Smith's younger sister, who was there during the traumatic events of 8 February 1942 when the light tower was burnt down by a mentally disturbed miner.⁴⁸³

While official visitors such as Public Works Department men were welcomed as extra company for keepers and their wives, there was always the issue of where they were to live during their stay. Usually the workers boarded with the keepers and their families as there was nowhere else for them to stay. In April 1908, the Marine Department circulated a memorandum stating the amounts payable to keepers for

⁴⁷⁷ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919', 26 May 1911.

⁴⁷⁸ *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, p.37.

⁴⁷⁹ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1925-1935', 28 August 1931.

⁴⁸⁰ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 15 April 1937, 4 April 1941.

⁴⁸¹ Withington interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 123.

⁴⁸² Mead interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 210.

⁴⁸³ Smith, pp.124-137.

boarding officers, artisans and labourers. Boarding an officer entitled a keeper to four shillings remuneration per day, while artisans and labourers were only worth three shillings per day. If there were a number of men due to come to a station, there were extra concerns over how they would be accommodated. In December 1937, Principal Keeper Watts of Centre Island wrote to the Marine Department wanting to know if the Public Works men coming to build the new dwellings on the island would be camping. He said that his wife was not well enough to board anyone. The Second Assistant Keeper's wife was leaving the island after Christmas (implying that the keeper could not board them by himself). The First Assistant Keeper could only board two workers but not for less than seven shillings per day. Watts also brought up the issue of who was to feed the workmen, wondering if they would have their own cook with them.⁴⁸⁴ This issue continued to be contentious until the demise of manned lights. Keepers' wives were expected to cater for any workmen sent to their station, causing great anxiety for some women while others took it in their stride. Hinemoa McLelland remembers that her mother was always nervous about having to cook for workmen or other visitors as she did not have much entertaining experience. She was also a very busy woman with five children to look after, so did not have much time for extra cooking.⁴⁸⁵

ALCOHOL

The 1866 *Instructions to Lightkeepers* stated that keepers were required to be 'sober and industrious, cleanly in their persons and habits'.⁴⁸⁶ Drunkenness could be cause for dismissal from the Light Service and, in fact, some keepers were dismissed for this reason in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸⁷ Married keepers were preferred to single keepers as it was felt that the presence of women and children on light stations would dissuade keepers from drinking too much alcohol. Despite this, alcohol appeared to play some role on most light stations, although it did not seem to cause as many problems as it could have. A stern warning was issued to all light keepers in the 1940s after a number of 'wild drinking parties' on certain light stations came to the Marine Department's attention. The keepers were told that 'Any further instances of this will be dealt with severely'.⁴⁸⁸ The later years of the Light Service appeared to see alcohol becoming more of an issue on light stations, particularly among relieving keepers. Puysegur Point, especially, seemed to be a place where large amounts of alcohol were drunk at various times. Relieving Keeper Kevin Pennell recalls one particular day in the late 1970s when some fishermen arrived at the station, the weather being too rough for them to put out to sea. The fishermen ended up staying the night at the station and having

⁴⁸⁴ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 1 December 1937.

⁴⁸⁵ McLelland interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 267.

⁴⁸⁶ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.13.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.3.

⁴⁸⁸ Quoted in Sheehan and Gibbons, p.103.

a wild party with the keepers, from which they did not recover for days afterwards. During Puysegur Point's last days as a manned lighthouse, very little work needed to be done, and the keepers took up brewing sake and began 'hitting the bottle' after about 11am each day.⁴⁸⁹

THE MARINE DEPARTMENT AND KEEPERS' FAMILIES

The Light Service was unique in that the government was responsible not only for the keepers but for their wives and children too. This meant that some Marine Department rules also indirectly governed the behaviour of keepers' families. Keepers were expected to be 'orderly in their families' and 'any flagrant immorality will subject them to immediate dismissal, without possibility of reinstatement'.⁴⁹⁰ The Marine Department was responsible for the general welfare of keepers and their families. The Department's decisions affected the houses these people lived in, the mail and provisions they received, their children's education prospects, the type of medical attention they could call on, and the duration of their stay on any one station.⁴⁹¹ In the mid-1950s, the Marine Department undertook an investigation into the conditions on New Zealand's light stations. A conference was held in Wellington in November 1956 to gauge the views of the keepers themselves. A representative number of keepers with combined experience of almost all the manned stations in the country attended the conference. A number of keepers' wives were also officially invited and attended to give their perspective on lighthouse life. The Department said that the difficulties of family life on isolated stations were 'a matter of great concern'. However, they went on to say that 'experience has shown that greater harmony is likely to prevail if stations are manned by "family units" rather than by single men'.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Pennell interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 056, 294.

⁴⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.13.

⁴⁹¹ *AJHR*, 1956, H-15, p.15.

⁴⁹² *AJHR*, 1957, H-15, p.13.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Dwellings

The Marine Department provided living accommodation for the keepers on every New Zealand lighthouse station. Many items of household furniture were also provided by the Department, probably to avoid the problems that the continuous transfer of such items would entail. The Principal Keeper on each station was held personally responsible for 'the good order and condition of the houses, both his own and the assistants, and of all other Government property at the station.'⁴⁹³

The hierarchical structure of the Light Service was occasionally reinforced by the type of accommodation provided for the Principal and Assistant Keepers. On some stations in some periods, the Principal Keeper's house was larger and more comfortable than those the lower-ranked keepers lived in. On Centre Island in 1929, for example, the Principal's house consisted of seven rooms, a landing, a passage and two porches. The First Assistant's house contained six rooms, a landing and one porch. The Second Assistant's cottage had only four rooms which included a scullery and store room.⁴⁹⁴ On other stations, the standard of accommodation provided for Principal and Assistant Keepers was very similar.

When the Light Service was first established, accommodation for the keepers was provided rent free, although keepers' salaries were lower than they would have been had they been living in their own houses. However, by 1915, it was recognised that the keepers were being unfairly penalised because of this when it came to the newly established Public Service Superannuation Fund. The superannuation allowances were based on salary and, as keepers' salaries were generally lower than other public servants who provided their own homes, they would be entitled to a smaller allowance when they retired. This situation was rectified by the Marine Department increasing keepers' salaries by £25 per year, then charging them £25 rent per year for the houses they lived in.⁴⁹⁵ This meant that their salaries were now on a similar level with other public servants. The keepers were informed of this change, and the reasons behind it, in a Memorandum dated 29 April 1915.⁴⁹⁶

According to the keeper's rule book, *Instructions to Lightkeepers*, part of the Principal Keeper's job was to ensure 'the cleanliness of the several apartments, passages, stairs, roofs and the like'.⁴⁹⁷ This occasionally caused problems. In December 1886, Assistant Keeper Nicolson wrote to the Marine Department requesting a transfer from Waipapa Point, stating —

⁴⁹³ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.12.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 9 July 1929. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3f.

⁴⁹⁵ *AJHR*, 1915, H-15, p.4.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 29 April 1915. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c .

⁴⁹⁷ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.12.

*It is very difficult for a single man to keep the Assistant's Dwelling, a large house of seven rooms, in good order and also do the work which I have to do, in addition to my duty in the Lighthouse.*⁴⁹⁸

Nicolson's request was turned down and he was obviously still struggling to keep his house tidy in August the following year when a visiting Marine Department officer censured him over the dirty state of the dwelling. Principal Keeper Ericson noted that he had 'frequently urged on to the Assistant the necessity of him keeping his house clean but got nothing but abusive language in return'. Ericson began inspecting Nicolson's house once a week and claimed that he found no improvement. Nicolson disputed this and offered three of 'the most Trustworthy and honorable Gentlemen in this district' as witnesses to how clean his house was. By this stage, the relationship between the two keepers was rapidly deteriorating and the dispute was over more than the state of the keeper's house. An inquiry was held into the conflict in December 1887 and Nicolson was removed from the station.⁴⁹⁹

Household items such as ranges, bedsteads, and later refrigerators, were provided by the Marine Department, while things like linen belonged to the keepers and their families. The items provided by the Department were not always of a high standard. Second Assistant Keeper Ansin, for example, arrived on Centre Island on 23 April 1889 to find the colonial oven in the house was 'unserviceable' as the back of it had rusted out. Moreover, there was only one single bedstead in his house, which forced some of his family to sleep on the floor. This situation continued for nearly three months until a new double bedstead arrived. Even then, the ornamental bedhead was cracked while in transit.⁵⁰⁰ As usual, keepers only wrote to the Department to complain about something which was wrong, never to heap praise on the Department when everything was satisfactory.

In 1909, the Marine Department embarked on a plan to improve the standard keeper's dwelling house. The improvements provided for a larger kitchen, three fireplaces instead of two, a bathroom with a bath, fixed cupboards in three rooms, and a wardrobe in one room. The new standard was to be used for any new houses built for keepers but was not applied to existing accommodation.⁵⁰¹

It was not until the late 1950s that another concerted effort was made by the Marine Department to improve keepers' living conditions in general. By 1958, the furniture and interior decoration of all light station houses was gradually being upgraded 'to a standard comparable with that enjoyed by other sections of the community'. This shows how keepers' housing standards had dropped below that of equivalent people not living on light stations. A committee of keepers' wives made recommendations on areas needing improvement and these were taken into consideration by the

⁴⁹⁸ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 6 December 1886. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 5, 8 October 1887, 13 December 1887, 3 January 1888.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 May 1889, 18 July 1889. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

⁵⁰¹ *AJHR*, 1909, H-15, p.4.

Department.⁵⁰² On the agenda for updating were wallpapers, cupboards, sink units, furniture and floor coverings.⁵⁰³ Part of the overall aim of the modernisation programme was to help slow the high staff turnover rate on the stations.⁵⁰⁴ In this, the Marine Department appeared to be successful. The turnover rate of lightkeepers was 24 per cent in 1958 but this rate decreased to 15 per cent in 1959.⁵⁰⁵

The modernisation of lighthouse dwellings continued into the 1960s with the provision of improved water supplies and the installation of newer domestic refrigerators. The Ministry of Works carried out a complete survey of all 25 manned light stations in 1961. It showed that keepers were still living in houses of a lesser standard than comparable people were. To bring keepers' houses up to 'something approaching state house standard', it was estimated that a further £123,000 would be needed.⁵⁰⁶ The renovation of married keepers' houses was almost complete by 1964, and the single, relieving keepers' quarters were next on the modernisation list.⁵⁰⁷ By 1970, the Marine Department reported that 'the updating of the older homes, some now over 80 years old, has helped to stabilise staff turnover and improve the morale of station staff'.⁵⁰⁸

The two original keepers' houses on Dog Island were built in 1865 at the same time as the lighthouse, and were constructed of stone. The tower and cottages were designed by Marine Engineer James Balfour, and the dwellings were apparently 'on a more extensive scale than at other places'.⁵⁰⁹ A third keeper's house was built on the island in 1884. The work was done by the keepers themselves without any outside assistance.⁵¹⁰ This house, the Second Assistant Keeper's, was enlarged by the addition of two rooms in 1897 as it was too small for a married man to live in.⁵¹¹ Both the First and Second Assistants' houses now had four rooms.⁵¹² Wash houses were erected on Dog Island in 1908.⁵¹³ The cottages on Dog Island had deteriorated by the 1920s. In September 1926, the Second Assistant Keeper and his family moved into the First Assistant's vacant house as his own leaked so badly that water dripped onto their faces at night. It had been decided by then that a new cottage was to be built. Principal Keeper Havern recommended that two new dwellings be erected, rather than just one.⁵¹⁴ The following year, two new six-roomed houses were constructed on the island and the old

⁵⁰² *AJHR*, 1958, H-15, pp.15-16.

⁵⁰³ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.17.

⁵⁰⁴ *AJHR*, 1958, H-15, p.15.

⁵⁰⁵ *AJHR*, 1960, H-15, p.16.

⁵⁰⁶ *AJHR*, 1961, H-15, p.13.

⁵⁰⁷ *AJHR*, 1964, H-15, p.9.

⁵⁰⁸ *AJHR*, 1970, H-15, p.14.

⁵⁰⁹ *AJHR*, 1865, D-1c, No. 2, p.2.

⁵¹⁰ *AJHR*, 1884, H-6, p.1.

⁵¹¹ *AJHR*, 1897, H-15, p.1.

⁵¹² 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 7 August 1903. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4a.

⁵¹³ *AJHR*, 1908, H-15, p.5.

⁵¹⁴ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1923-1929', 29 September 1926. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4b.

stone cottages were abandoned as keeper accommodation.⁵¹⁵ The original cottages remained and were used as storage space. In 1954 they were converted to house a diesel generator and later were also used as radio and office accommodation.⁵¹⁶ In 1979, a new house for the keeper was being planned.⁵¹⁷

Centre Island lighthouse was erected in 1878 and with it three wooden keepers' dwellings.⁵¹⁸ The First Assistant Keeper's house leaked in wet and stormy weather right from the beginning and in August 1888 was flooded in every room, drenching the keeper's clothes and bedding. Principal Keeper Tregurtha recommended that lead ridging replace the galvanised iron to stop the leaking. He also noted that 'a great many of the weather boards & c. in ... the other buildings are quite rotten, and it will be necessary to do considerable repairs before long'.⁵¹⁹ The First Assistant's house was flooded again in October.⁵²⁰ Fairly extensive repairs were made to the Centre Island houses in late 1896. Some of the repairs were carried out by Principal Keeper Colley, who was a carpenter by trade.⁵²¹ Four men were brought to the island in October 1908 to make further repairs to the houses.⁵²²

The Second Assistant Keeper's house on Centre Island was the source of on-going complaints. In 1897, William Ross complained that the house was 'inconveniently small'. It consisted of three rooms: a kitchen, bedroom and storeroom. The cottage was far too small for Ross, his wife, two children and 'a girl to assist in nursing etc'. (who did not even have a proper bed to sleep in).⁵²³ This particular house was often occupied by relieving keepers so there were no further complaints until 1922 when Probationary Keeper Whitiri and his family shifted into the First Assistant's house 'owing to the Second Assistant's dwelling being inconveniently small'.⁵²⁴ F.R. Tennent wrote to the Marine Department in 1937 about 'the very unsatisfactory accommodation provided for the Second Assistant. The house is a three roomed bachelor cottage, the rooms being very small, pantry and scullery being merely a lean-to'. Tennent's family of five found the house very inconvenient.⁵²⁵

It was obvious by the 1930s that new houses were urgently needed on the Centre Island light station. Plans and specifications for three new keepers' cottages were made in 1938 and the contract for the work was let.⁵²⁶ The builder, a Mr Turner, started work on the new houses

⁵¹⁵ *AJHR*, 1928, H-15, p.7.

⁵¹⁶ C.D. Kerr, 'Dog Island Lighthouse 1865', research notes, 1989, pp.1-2.

⁵¹⁷ *AJHR*, 1979, F-5, p.18.

⁵¹⁸ *AJHR*, 1879, H-10, p.18.

⁵¹⁹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 September 1888.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid*, 1 November 1888.

⁵²¹ *AJHR*, 1897, H-15, p.1.

⁵²² 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 November 1908.

⁵²³ *Ibid*, 23 June 1897.

⁵²⁴ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 15 April 1922. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3e.

⁵²⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 17 March 1937.

⁵²⁶ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.5.

in May 1939 and they were completed by the end of October.⁵²⁷ The new dwellings were described as 'modern' and 'comfortable' in the 1940 Marine Department report.⁵²⁸ All three dwellings were extensively renovated in 1973.⁵²⁹

Puysegur Point lighthouse was completed in 1879, as were three wooden dwellings for the keepers. By 1889, it was recognised that the houses would soon require 'a somewhat extensive overhaul'.⁵³⁰ Two years later they were repaired and new weather boards were fitted on the ends of the houses which were 'exposed to the prevailing winds'.⁵³¹ The dwellings continued to deteriorate, however, as the timber decayed in the harsh, often wet, weather conditions. In 1917, the timber for three new houses was transported to the site by the *Hinemoa*.⁵³² Construction was slow 'owing to the inaccessibility of the place'.⁵³³ A 1938 report on the condition of the three cottages prompted more renovation work.⁵³⁴ After the departure of the Public Works men (who had been there for almost four months) in August 1939, Principal Keeper Newson complained of the lack of accommodation for temporary keepers and workmen. It had been, he said, very inconvenient for his wife to board the men for so long.⁵³⁵ New relieving keeper quarters were finally erected at Puysegur Point in 1966, as was accommodation for Ministry of Works and other maintenance personnel, and a recreation room for keepers and their families.⁵³⁶

The original wooden Waipapa Point light keepers' houses were constructed at the same time as the lighthouse, between 1883 and 1884. In 1909 the corrugated iron roofs had worn out and were replaced with malthoid, which would better resist the corrosive salt spray from the sea.⁵³⁷ Porches were attached to the houses in 1912.⁵³⁸ Extensive repairs were carried out to the dwellings in 1928.⁵³⁹ New living quarters for relieving keepers were built at Waipapa Point in 1965.⁵⁴⁰ These were extended and improved in 1972.⁵⁴¹ The other houses, now over 80 years old, were also updated in the early 1970s.⁵⁴²

It seems, then, that light keepers, despite the vital job they were entrusted with, were still the last group of workers to receive adequate

⁵²⁷ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 22 May 1939, 2 November 1939.

⁵²⁸ *AJHR*, 1940, H-15, p.4.

⁵²⁹ *AJHR*, 1973, F-5, p.15.

⁵³⁰ *AJHR*, 1889, H-31, p.1.

⁵³¹ *AJHR*, 1891, H-30, p.1.

⁵³² *AJHR*, 1917, H-15, p.5.

⁵³³ *AJHR*, 1918, H-15, p.4.

⁵³⁴ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.5.

⁵³⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 28 September 1939. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

⁵³⁶ *AJHR*, 1966, H-15, p.10.

⁵³⁷ *AJHR*, 1909, H-15, p.10.

⁵³⁸ *AJHR*, 1912, H-15, p.6.

⁵³⁹ *AJHR*, 1928, H-15, p.7.

⁵⁴⁰ *AJHR*, 1965, H-15, p.9.

⁵⁴¹ *AJHR*, 1972, H-15, p.14.

⁵⁴² *AJHR*, 1970, H-15, p.14.

government-provided housing in New Zealand. Keepers' dwellings, in Southland at least, were generally of a lesser standard than ordinary houses in a town or other settlement. By the 1950s keepers' houses had fallen behind other houses provided by the state, and only now did the government make a real effort to improve the situation. This state of affairs was not deliberate, being brought about by a number of interlinked reasons. Firstly, maintenance of station houses was made difficult by the harsh weather conditions experienced on Southland light stations. The damp conditions, wind and salt spray contributed to faster-than-normal deterioration of building materials, particularly wood and iron. The weather sometimes did not allow keepers enough time to carry out the necessary building maintenance. The remote location of many stations meant that some maintenance work, which may have been reasonably minor but required materials or workmen to be brought to the station, was deferred until more major work, or a combination of smaller jobs, was required in order to make the trip worthwhile. Even then, the Marine Department found that it could be difficult to get suitable Public Works Department men or contractors to work so far from their homes, which caused further delays to repair work. The main reason why keepers' houses were not upgraded much sooner than they were, was the cost. While the cost of refurbishing or maintaining a house in town may have been expensive, the isolated location of most light stations added greatly to the expense of the same work there. The cost of transport of materials, boarding of workmen and overtime payments was all prohibitive to a Department with limited funds. Once the Marine Department embarked on its long-deferred maintenance programme, it realised that the cost was 'not totally reflected in the value of the completed work'. Nevertheless, the work was 'necessary and desirable' to give keepers and their families the same degree of comfort available to others and also 'of paramount importance to keep the service efficiently operational'.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴³ *AJHR*, 1960, H-15, p.15.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Environment

While the physical environment of each New Zealand lighthouse varied from station to station, Southland's four light stations had some environmental conditions in common. Perhaps the most influential environmental aspect of Southland lighthouse life was the weather. Sited on islands and rugged coastal outcrops, Southland's lighthouses were bound to struggle against the elements.

The weather made a big impact on light stations and the keepers living on them. Dog Island's weather seemed to be particularly wild with wind being a major factor in keepers' lives. Being only about 50 feet above sea level, wind just whipped across the 50-acre island. The wind was apparently so strong that it burnt the abundant tussock black.⁵⁴⁴ Ernie McArthur, a keeper on Dog Island between 1954 and 1957, recalls that 'it would blow a gale sometimes lasting a fortnight'. During such gales, the wind could wreak havoc. After milking the cows, the keeper would have to cover the bucket on his way back to the house, otherwise the wind could swirl around the top of the bucket and lift the milk out. One day the other keeper's cat followed McArthur to the light tower and sat in the recess of the doorway until he came out. Meanwhile, a strong gale had blown up. The cat jumped out from the tower, was picked up by the wind and was dropped ten feet down the track! During the worst storms, the keepers sometimes had to crawl on their hands and knees to the tower with their eyes tightly closed to protect them from the airborne dust and small stones. McArthur recalls one incident when the children were running around in the tower trying to keep the linoleum on the floor as it was being lifted by the wind.⁵⁴⁵ Alice Wybrow (née Harvey) was about eight years old when her father became a keeper on Dog Island in around 1916. She recalls that the wind sometimes provided her and her siblings with a great challenge - to try to get from the house to the tower.⁵⁴⁶

The weather could also be very cold and wet on Dog Island. It has been estimated that it rains there for three-quarters of the year.⁵⁴⁷ Mrs Wybrow remembers herself and the rest of her family getting chilblains from the cold when they first arrived from the somewhat warmer climes of Cape Brett lighthouse in the Bay of Islands.⁵⁴⁸ Several Dog Island keepers found the climate very difficult to live in and used this as a reason to either leave the Service or ask for a transfer. In July 1909, for example, Keeper Millett wrote to the Marine Department asking to leave the island (and the Light Service) by the next steamer 'as this climate

⁵⁴⁴ T. Reid, 'Last of the lighthouse keepers', *New Zealand Geographic*, No. 2, April-June 1989, p.33.

⁵⁴⁵ E.W. McArthur, 'The McArthurs life on the Light Service', unpublished notes, p.4.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with Mrs Alice Wybrow, 23 February 1999, extra interview notes.

⁵⁴⁷ Reid, p.33.

⁵⁴⁸ Wybrow interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 023.

does not suit any of my Family'. Millett left the following month.⁵⁴⁹ Keeper Tipene replaced him in August. Tipene's wife arrived on the island nine months later, in April 1910. Within a month, however, Mrs Tipene was in hospital. This prompted Principal Keeper Quinn to write to the Marine Department. 'I beg too [sic] suggest that as this station seems to be too damp for Mrs Tipene health, [sic] that he be removed to a warmer and dryer station'. Despite this advice, Keeper Tipene was not transferred until September 1912.⁵⁵⁰

Centre Island, too, had its share of rough weather that affected keepers' lives. The most southerly lighthouse in New Zealand stands on a 500-acre island with towering cliffs. Gary Schroeder, the island's last keeper, recalls the wind lifting small rocks from the cliffs which could then damage buildings or smash windows. One experience with the wind nearly killed Schroeder. It propelled him across the grass and hurled him into a wooden fence post on the brink of a 200-foot cliff. The post snapped with the impact but saved Schroeder's life.⁵⁵¹ When the original Centre Island buildings were erected in the mid-1870s, it was with the knowledge that the wind could cause problems. The buildings were ballasted against the strong wind by filling the gap between the interior lining and the weatherboards with broken rock.⁵⁵²

Relieving Keeper Kevin Pennell recalls the difficulty and frustration of carrying out maintenance on Centre Island in the 1970s due to the weather conditions. For example, if the keepers painted a house, within weeks there would be rust showing through the nail holes again.⁵⁵³ Early keepers also lamented problems caused by the weather. In 1888, Principal Keeper Tregurtha complained that the station buildings were covered in rust but it was difficult finding enough time to repaint them 'as in this climate we cannot reckon on more than three or four fine days in a month'.⁵⁵⁴ The rough weather on Centre Island caused some keepers to ask for transfers on health grounds. In June 1897, for example, Assistant Keeper Ross asked for a transfer 'to a milder portion of the coast' as the 'cold, wet and stormy' weather on the island interfered with his recovery from a throat condition. Ross was quickly transferred to Somes Island.⁵⁵⁵ In July 1912, Keeper McPherson wrote to the Marine Department saying 'Solely on account of my Wife's ill health I find it necessary to apply for a transfer from this station to some other situated in a warmer climate'. He went on to say that he had sent Mrs McPherson to Otago for three months. Her health recovered somewhat but became worse again upon

⁵⁴⁹ 'Dog Island letter book, 1903-1918', 7 July 1909, 15 August 1909. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4a.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid, 1 September 1909, 1 May 1910, 1 June 1910, 30 September 1912.

⁵⁵¹ Reid, p.37.

⁵⁵² G.H.A. Tanner, 'Some Otago-Southland Lighthouses - Centre Island', unpublished manuscript, c.1932, Hocken Library, Misc M 77, p.1.

⁵⁵³ Interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 182.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 December 1888. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 23 June 1897, 1 August 1897.

her return. The Department took heed of his letter and the McPhersons were moved to Cuvier Island in October 1912.⁵⁵⁶

Puysegur Point was one of the most extreme light stations in the country. Aside from being so isolated, the weather could also be difficult to deal with. According to one keeper, 'Nowhere could be as bad as Puysegur'. In the words of former keeper Peter Taylor,

*Puysegur Point is well-known in the service, if not by experience then certainly by repute. Bleak, storm-battered - winds reach over 100 knots from the storms which sweep in from across the Tasman Sea.*⁵⁵⁷

Legend has it that in heavy gales, the relieving keepers used to struggle their way to the edge of a towering cliff where they would stand, spread their oilskin coats out wide and lean so far forward that they would lose their balance. The wind would then catch them and force their bodies back, banging them onto their backs on the ground.⁵⁵⁸ In his book about his light keeping experiences, Tom Clark describes one night at Puysegur Point in the early 1960s when the wind was particularly ferocious. 146 mile per hour winds battered Puysegur Point, toppling a coal shed 'as though made of cardboard' and shattering windows in the First Assistant Keeper's house.⁵⁵⁹

As at the other Southland light stations, some keepers believed they could not cope with the harsh weather conditions at Puysegur Point. The first keepers at the station felt strongly enough about having to work in such an environment that they asked for a pay rise.⁵⁶⁰ In the first nine days of December 1886, Puysegur Point was drenched with over thirteen inches of rain which destroyed months of work recently done on the road to the station.⁵⁶¹ In June 1895, the weather was 'miserable' with almost eighteen inches of rain falling in only two days. The Second Assistant Keeper's house was leaking very badly because its iron roof had rusted into holes. The downpour also accelerated the rot that had already set in to the bridge on the road from the landing.⁵⁶² As well as strong winds and heavy rain, keepers sometimes also had to deal with snow. For example, between 25 and 28 June 1886, three inches of snow fell at Puysegur Point.⁵⁶³ In June 1909, Keeper McIver asked for a transfer from Puysegur Point to Cape Brett on account of his wife's health. 'The wet climate of this station is crippling her with Rehumatics [sic]'. Six months later, McIver got his wish and left Puysegur Point light.⁵⁶⁴ In 1921, Keeper Sutherland also wanted a transfer to a dryer station for the

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 1 July 1912, 1 November 1912.

⁵⁵⁷ Taylor, pp.57-58.

⁵⁵⁸ Reid, p.26.

⁵⁵⁹ Clark, pp.142-143.

⁵⁶⁰ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', May 1880. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10d. The pay rise was not given and, in fact, shortly afterwards salaries were reduced.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 31 December 1886.

⁵⁶² 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 2 June 1895. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10c.

⁵⁶³ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 30 June 1886.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 8 June 1909. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10d.

sake of his child's and his own health.⁵⁶⁵ In January 1933, yet another keeper asked to leave Puysegur Point on health grounds. Keeper McIntosh said 'I think that the climate... is seriously endangering our [his and his wife's] health.'⁵⁶⁶

The weather conditions at Waipapa Point appeared to be little kinder than at the other three Southland lighthouse locations. In 1888, the tower leaked in rainy weather. In dry, windy conditions, some of the seams cracked open and heavy rain usually followed before the cracks closed up again.⁵⁶⁷ In June 1896, Keeper William Tutt requested a transfer to Stephens Island or somewhere else 'North of this Station' on the advice of his wife's doctor as Mrs Tutt's health had been failing.⁵⁶⁸ Four months later the Tutt family was transferred.⁵⁶⁹

Bad weather also affected lighthouse buildings as well as the people who lived and worked in them. Lightning strikes were a common problem at Southland light stations and could damage station property or, in the worst cases, weaken the tower itself. For example, lightning struck the Dog Island tower at 12:30 am on 1 June 1914. The strike fused the telephone wires (destroying the island's phone connection to Bluff), broke four windows, and smashed the tank-stand where the current went to earth.⁵⁷⁰ The damp climate at Puysegur Point caused wooden buildings to rot and this was why the keepers' dwellings were rebuilt in 1917.⁵⁷¹

Despite the constant complaints by keepers, the weather on Southland light stations was, of course, not always bleak and depressing to live in. Stephen Mead lived at Dog Island as a child in the early 1950s and his memories of the island are mainly of fine, sunny days playing on the beach. He knows, however, that the weather did get rough at times.⁵⁷²

The wildlife surrounding the light stations added another dimension to keepers' lives. In fact, in the early years of the Light Service, reporting what kind of birds had been seen in the vicinity of the light was one of the keepers' duties. In November 1885, Principal Keeper Hansen, of Puysegur Point, wrote to the Marine Department requesting that they send 'a good many' of the forms used for recording birds seen about the station as 'the number of native and acclimatised [sic] birds is considerable'. The native birds Hansen recorded seeing included 'Kakas, Kakapus [sic], Parrakeets [sic], Pidgeons [sic], tuis and hawks'. Introduced birds included 'Skylarks, Starlings, blackbirds, gold finches, green limels [sic] and sparrows'.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, 25 November 1921.

⁵⁶⁶ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 18 January 1933, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

⁵⁶⁷ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 1 February 1888. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 30 June 1896.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 31 October 1896.

⁵⁷⁰ *AJHR*, 1915, H-15, p.5.

⁵⁷¹ *AJHR*, 1917, H-15, p.5.

⁵⁷² Interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 412.

⁵⁷³ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 30 November 1885.

Keepers at Puysegur Point in the 1880s and 1890s were under instructions to collect certain species of bird. In February 1886, Professor Parker, Curator of the Dunedin Museum, requested that Principal Keeper Hansen procure kiwi embryos and live specimens for 'scientific purposes'. Hansen agreed to this and organised to forward the birds on the government vessel *Stella*.⁵⁷⁴ It appears that the keepers were also asked to collect kakapo specimens. In July 1891, Principal Keeper Voyle reported that he had been unable to get any kakapo before the *Hinemoa* arrived, but would try to do so for her next trip.⁵⁷⁵ Three months later, Voyle still had not found any kakapo, nor had he been able to procure any kiwis.⁵⁷⁶ Keepers were again asked to carry out this sort of task in 1913. Dr C. Chilton of the Biological Laboratory of Canterbury College, Christchurch, was given permission by the Marine Department to instruct keepers what kind of animals he wished them to collect 'for scientific purposes'.⁵⁷⁷

A great many seabirds made Dog Island their home, alongside the keepers. Stephen Mead recalls that once a year, penguins would mate up and come ashore to lay their eggs. Occasionally one or two of them would get under the Meads' house and drive them mad with their noise. Mead recalls his father spending ages on his stomach trying to coax the penguins out.⁵⁷⁸ Mead also remembers the seabird colony at the east end of the island. He says it was an area the children generally kept away from as the birds sometimes dive-bombed passers-by. When people did go to that end of the island, they always ensured that they had hats with them.⁵⁷⁹ Ernie McArthur, too, recalls the dangers of dive-bombing birds during the nesting season at the eastern end of the island. Other birds on the island included gannets, red-billed gulls, terns, banded dotterels and mollymawks. Towards the end of summer, mutton-birds would fly above the island in flocks sometimes so dense they would almost block out the sun. Occasionally, McArthur said, the keepers would see the mutton-birds fishing close to shore. If they found a shoal of fish, the birds would sometimes gorge themselves to the extent that they would crash onto the island, spewing up fish. Sometimes the mutton-birds would drive some of the fish up onto the beach and the keepers would quickly gather as many as they could before waves took them back out to sea.⁵⁸⁰ Lighthouses could be hazardous for sea birds, and vice-versa. The birds were dazzled by the light at night and sometimes flew into the tower, killing or stunning themselves. On 16 June 1894, a Puysegur Point keeper reported that a large bird struck one of the lantern panes, breaking it.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, 28 February 1886.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, 31 July 1891.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, 1 November 1891.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 6 November 1913. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

⁵⁷⁸ Mead Interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 330.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 399.

⁵⁸⁰ McArthur, p.5.

⁵⁸¹ *AJHR*, 1895, H-29, p.2.

Other wildlife at light stations were not as helpful to the keepers as the mutton-birds. Keepers struggled to control pests, just as farmers did. On Centre Island native rats often scratched out and ate the keepers' seeds as soon as they planted them. In 1913 the keepers responded by letting several cats run wild on the island to keep the rat numbers down. However, the rodents continued to be destructive.⁵⁸² The rat problem had still not been eliminated by the 1970s and Kevin Pennell recalls the island being infested with kiore rats.⁵⁸³ Introduced animals could also be pests. In September 1885, keepers reported that rabbits were destroying the young trees they had planted at Waipapa Point.⁵⁸⁴ A number of bulls roamed free on Centre Island in the 1890s, owned by a local farmer. The keepers complained time and again of the danger these bulls posed to themselves and their families. In March 1898, Principal Keeper Anderson wrote to the Marine Department to 'again respectfully draw your attention to the number of Bulls on the Island as it is not safe for us to go about'.⁵⁸⁵ In 1913 there appeared to be only one rogue bull left, but Principal Keeper Parks requested that he be destroyed 'as he is both a destructive and dangerous animal'.⁵⁸⁶ Weasels were a nuisance at Puysegur Point in the 1930s and killed some of the station hens. The keepers were not sure how best to deal with the weasels and tried shooting them, killing several.⁵⁸⁷ As anywhere else, nature could be dangerous for light keepers' children. For example, Stephen Mead recalls his younger brother picking up a bluebottle jellyfish on the beach at Dog Island and eating it. He was stung all around his mouth but this did not deter him from doing the same thing again the next day!⁵⁸⁸

Sandflies were the cause of numerous complaints and much misery at Puysegur Point. Tom Clark referred to the insects as 'a serpent in ... paradise' during his tenure at Puysegur Point.⁵⁸⁹ Early keepers on the station claimed that they were 'tormented with thousands of sandflies while working' and used this as part of the reason to ask for a pay rise.⁵⁹⁰ Fifteen years later the keepers complained that on the few fine days they had during October they had to 'stay indoors with every window and door closed, the torture from sand-flies out of doors being altogether too horrible'.⁵⁹¹ In October 1906, Keeper Dennis requested a transfer from Puysegur Point as his thirteen-month-old child 'suffers terribly from the sandflies'.⁵⁹² Those passing through

⁵⁸² 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 1 December 1913. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

⁵⁸³ Pennell Interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 182.

⁵⁸⁴ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 1 September 1885, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 March 1898.

⁵⁸⁶ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 31 March 1913.

⁵⁸⁷ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 13 June 1937. The so-called 'weasels' could actually have been stoats as the term 'weasel' was often used erroneously.

⁵⁸⁸ Mead interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 424.

⁵⁸⁹ Clark, p.144.

⁵⁹⁰ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', May 1880.

⁵⁹¹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1902-1907', 1 November 1895.

⁵⁹² Ibid, 4 October 1906.

the area also found sandflies a nuisance. Andreas Reischek spent several months at Cape Providence in the 1880s and said —

*I was so pestered with sand-flies that I was frequently compelled to run away from them and bathe my eyes. They were sometimes so bad as to kill penguins on the beach.*⁵⁹³

*Local identity Jules Berg was also pestered by sandflies when he first arrived in the area in the 1920s. Legend has it that he later discovered an excellent way of repelling the insects: smearing the inside of the brim of his hat with rancid butter mixed with kerosene!*⁵⁹⁴

Fishing supplemented the diet of the keepers and their families at all Southland light stations. Blue cod fishing was particularly good off Dog Island. The wreck of the *Waikouaiti* in November 1939 ruined the best blue cod fishing spot on the island, though.⁵⁹⁵ Doreen Withington (née White) recalls a scary incident while fishing out at sea with her father and two of the other keeper's children in the station dinghy. All of a sudden, the boat heaved up and down. Mr White looked over the side and, seeing a huge shark, yelled "Chuck your lines, grab those oars!" They rowed back to shore as quickly as possible. It transpired that the shark they had encountered was known as "Whitecomb Jack" and had been annoying fishermen at Bluff for some time.⁵⁹⁶ Another well-known shark around this area was referred to as "Dog Island Tom" and gave another keeper the fright of his life when it brushed alongside his boat.⁵⁹⁷ One light keeper's wife obviously enjoyed the seafood available at Dog Island. She wrote 'will miss blue cod and pauas' in the visitor's book when her husband was transferred to Farewell Spit in 1962.⁵⁹⁸ Rock fishing at Waipapa Point was poor according to Ernie McArthur, but the keepers were able to collect paua off the rocks at low tide.⁵⁹⁹

Hunting was another pastime for the keepers at Puysegur Point and provided welcome fresh meat as well as a recreational activity. For Kevin Pennell, it was one of the biggest attractions of Puysegur Point, his favourite station. Each light station had its own reserve for the recreational use of keepers and their families. At 660 acres, Puysegur Point boasted the country's largest lighthouse reserve. The area consisted of 'pristine deer-stalking territory' in which only the keepers were allowed to hunt.⁶⁰⁰

During WWII, the children of Keeper White were able to earn pocket money from some of the natural resources available to them on Dog Island. Doreen and her sisters used to gather carrageen (a type of seaweed, also known as Irish moss) from the rocks and send it to Wellington where

⁵⁹³ A. Reischek, *Yesterdays in Maoriland: New Zealand in the 'Eighties*, London, 1930, pp.238-239.

⁵⁹⁴ Clark, p.134.

⁵⁹⁵ Interview with Mrs Doreen Withington, 20 February 1999, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter: 259.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter: 265.

⁵⁹⁷ Pollock, p.33.

⁵⁹⁸ 'Dog Island Visitors Book, 1898-1971', 15 August 1962. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4d.

⁵⁹⁹ McArthur, p.12.

⁶⁰⁰ Pennell interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 081.

it was used in certain medicines. The children were paid for the carrageen they collected and Doreen estimates that they sent over 1000 sacks of the seaweed off the island during the six years they were there. When washed and boiled, she said that the carrageen also made a lovely pudding.⁶⁰¹

The Whites also encountered other wildlife on Dog Island. One morning, while rounding up the cows, Doreen heard what she thought was a dog barking. It turned out to be a pure white seal chasing one of the young heifers along the beach 'barking' loudly at her. Seals were regular visitors and would lie, camouflaged, in the tussock where the island's human inhabitants almost tripped over them. Seals were also abundant at Waipapa Point where they startled humans, dogs, horses and cattle alike.⁶⁰² On Dog Island one evening, Mr White spotted from the tower what he thought was a large fish on the beach. Gathering his family on the way, they ran down to the beach and found a large sea elephant measuring about sixteen feet. When it began moving back towards the water, Mr White picked up his daughter and placed her on the animal's back while he kept hold of her. Doreen recalls that it was 'a weird sensation'. Another night, White woke his children to come and watch 'a swordfish fighting with a whale' off the island.⁶⁰³

While the light stations in Southland had plenty of interesting wildlife, perhaps none was as exotic as that on Cuvier Island while Ernie McArthur was a keeper there in the late 1950s. Cuvier Island doubled as a light station and a nature reserve. Part of the keepers' job was to cull the island's wild goat population which destroyed the birds' habitat. There were also several tuatara residing on the island. One lived under the McArthurs' house and was about 2 feet 6 inches long. One of the children had a particular fascination with the tuataras. His enthusiasm for the creatures was somewhat dampened, though, when one bit him, badly squashing the end of his finger.⁶⁰⁴

Trees were often planted on lighthouse reserves as windbreaks or simply to soften the harsh surroundings. For example, trees were planted on Centre Island in the winter of 1887. Principal Keeper Charles Tregurtha reported a year later that, while many of the trees were doing well, several had perished during 'the very violent storms we have had during the summer'.⁶⁰⁵ During the 1950s, the Marine Department encouraged keepers to plant shelter belts and, where possible, fruit trees, by providing the necessary gardening tools and fertilisers, and the trees themselves.⁶⁰⁶ In the early 1970s, the Marine Department, in liaison with the Ministry of Works, embarked on a long-term programme of tree planting on New Zealand's lighthouse reserves. This was because many light stations were situated on headlands and capes where land erosion was a problem. The trees were also planted to provide some form of protection to the station buildings and personnel.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰¹ Withington interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter: 230.

⁶⁰² Pollock, p.11.

⁶⁰³ Withington interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 218, 238 and Side Two, tape counter: 288.

⁶⁰⁴ McArthur, p.8.

⁶⁰⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 1 June 1888.

⁶⁰⁶ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.17.

⁶⁰⁷ *AJHR*, 1971, H-15, p.14.

CHAPTER NINE:

Supplies and self sufficiency

Lighthouse keepers and their families were fed with a combination of supplies brought periodically to the station and stock and produce raised and grown by themselves. In the early days of the Light Service, particularly, government supply vessels could not always be relied upon to arrive on time and a measure of self-sufficiency was vital.

In the nineteenth century, government supply vessels were supposed to visit each lighthouse and land stores every three months. This did not always happen, especially at the more remote stations such as Puysegur Point. Principal Keeper Ericson complained in April 1880 that they had gone almost five months without a fresh supply of stores at Puysegur Point. Three days later he reported that 'we were completely out of provision and had to hunt and fish for whatever we could get, to live of [sic]'.⁶⁰⁸ In November 1903, the keepers on Dog Island had also gone without new supplies for five months and ran out of provisions. With seventeen people living on the island, the situation was getting desperate and the Assistant Keeper was sent to Bluff in the lighthouse boat to purchase emergency supplies.⁶⁰⁹



Milking cow and calf at
Waipapa.
COURTESY OF JANET RICHARDS

A reserve stock of provisions was supposed to be kept on particularly remote stations to guard against such eventualities. In 1911, the Marine Department declared that only 200 lbs flour, 56 lbs sugar and 10 lbs tea should now be kept in the reserve store as very few of the stores had been used. The keepers were instructed to exchange the reserve stocks with their own stores regularly enough to keep them fresh.⁶¹⁰ This did not prevent all supply problems, however. In November 1938, Principal Keeper Hodge wrote bitterly from Puysegur Point:

We think the messages going out from this station were plain enough to show that we needed stores. I had nearly two weeks on dry bread and cocoa without sugar or milk. Then we hear of aircraft being used to take machinery to a station or voting papers to Milford also kerosene being landed here while keepers are short of food.

⁶⁰⁸ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 29 April 1880, 3 May 1880. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10b.

⁶⁰⁹ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 1 December 1903. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4a.

⁶¹⁰ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 25 July 1911. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

The next day, the *Tamatea* arrived with fresh stores.⁶¹¹ On 2 October 1939, a desperate telegram was sent from Puysegur Point saying ‘keepers in immediate need stores also three sacks chaff half oats please advise’. It appears that even the station horse was running low on food.⁶¹² Mrs Alice Wybrow (née Harvey) recalls visiting her keeper father on Centre Island for Christmas in the early 1920s. The keepers were running low on provisions, but Alice managed to scrape together enough flour to bake a Christmas pudding and a Christmas cake. They ate corned beef and vegetables from her father’s garden for Christmas dinner.⁶¹³

The keepers on land-based light stations which were close to major settlements were usually better off than those on off-shore or remote stations when it came to supplies. For example, the two keepers at Waipapa Point were able to travel to nearby Fortrose to collect their stores in the 1800s.⁶¹⁴ The keepers took turns to collect meat from the Fortrose butcher on Saturdays.⁶¹⁵ General stores were also landed at Waipapa Point by the government lighthouse tender.⁶¹⁶



Cow in a sling being unloaded from a ship for delivery to Dog Island in 1924.

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN,
ATL PA1-0-261-09-3

⁶¹¹ ‘Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943’, 29 November 1938. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

⁶¹² ‘Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943’, 2 October 1939.

⁶¹³ Interview with Mrs Alice Wybrow, 23 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, Tape Counter: 238.

⁶¹⁴ ‘Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898’, 1 November 1884. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid*, 1 May 1888.

⁶¹⁶ For example, see ‘Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919’, 1 March 1906, Archives New Zealand, Dunedin branch, DAAL, Acc D28, 3/3.

In more modern times, the lighthouses were supplied on a more regular basis. In 1939, the Marine Department tried to provide better 'victualling services' to the keepers, recognising that this was important to their quality of life.⁶¹⁷ During WWII, the government light tender was withdrawn from lighthouse duty, forcing changes to the method of supplying stations with provisions. Island stations were instead serviced by small coastal launches



Boats landing cargo at Dog
Island 1924.
ATL PA1-0-261-09-2

and land stations were supplied, where possible, by road. Depending on the access road, or lack of one, packhorses and keepers' physical labour were sometimes required.⁶¹⁸ By 1959, three weeks was the longest period between supply trips, whereas stations had previously been visited on average only once every three to four months. Some stations were now supplied fortnightly while most of them were supplied weekly. The three-

⁶¹⁷ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.2.

⁶¹⁸ *AJHR*, 1946, H-15, p.12.

week gap applied only to Puysegur Point.⁶¹⁹ To make servicing Dog Island more efficient and economical, an airstrip for light aircraft was constructed in the mid-1960s.⁶²⁰ Around this time, Centre Island also began to be serviced by air.⁶²¹ By the 1970s, Puysegur Point was being serviced by amphibian aircraft. In 1977, this was changed to a helicopter service.⁶²²

In the early days, stores had to be ordered from a shop in town and be ready for the government steamer to pick up at least two months before it was due to visit a station. There were frequent complaints to the Marine Department that because it was often five months between trips, perishable goods did not always survive the wait.⁶²³ On 18 September 1895, for example, the very overdue *Hinemoa* arrived at Puysegur Point. Principal Keeper Parks complained to the Department that —

*Our supply of fresh meat value £2-0-0 shipped at the Bluff was tainted and unfit for human food having been on a voyage to the "Snares". The gastronomic disappointment to us who had been on scant fare was harder than the pecuniary loss.*⁶²⁴

At stations where this was possible, supplementary supply trips were often made. On Centre Island, the mail boat brought a small stock of stores, such as butter, from the storekeeper with whom the keepers had an account.⁶²⁵ In May 1908, the Centre Island keepers asked permission to go to Colac Bay in the station boat in the middle of each month for an extra mail and stores trip. They said that the journey took about one-and-a-half hours.⁶²⁶

By the 1970s, the method of ordering stores had become much more sophisticated. Former Relieving Keeper Kevin Pennell described a typical stores day at Puysegur Point in 1975. About two or three days before stores day, the keepers would send a radio telegram to Awarua Radio listing the provisions they required. Awarua Radio then mailed the meat order to Farquhar's Butchery and the produce order to Lowe's store in Invercargill. Other items were ordered through the district Marine Department office. On the morning of stores day itself, the keepers would send a weather report to the amphibian aircraft pilot via the Ministry of Works radio link so he could decide if it was safe to make the trip. Once the decision to fly was made, the keepers would gather together any items which were to go off the station, and take them down to the landing on the station tractor. From there, the keepers travelled by boat to Te Oneroa (about three miles away) where the amphibian aircraft

⁶¹⁹ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16.

⁶²⁰ *AJHR*, 1966, H-15, p.11.

⁶²¹ New Zealand Lighthouse Division, *Brief outline history of New Zealand lighthouses*, Wellington, 1966, no page numbers.

⁶²² Interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter: 043.

⁶²³ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912'. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

⁶²⁴ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 2 October 1895. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10c.

⁶²⁵ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 2 May 1905.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid*, 1 May 1908.

could safely land on a long stretch of water. Once it arrived, the aircraft would taxi up out of the water, turn around, unload the provisions, then load any return cargo and take off again. The keepers' journey back to the Puysegur Point landing could be, according to Pennell, 'a wee bit more exciting' as they were laden down with all the incoming goods leaving very little freeboard. He recalls one incident where he and another keeper were lucky to survive the return trip, having encountered a massive wave with, as usual, no lifejackets.⁶²⁷

When the amphibian aircraft stores service to Puysegur Point was replaced with a helicopter service in 1977, the keepers still ordered their stores from the same Invercargill suppliers, but a Public Service driver would transport the goods to the Lilburn Valley, past Tuatapere. The Alpine Helicopter would fly there from Te Anau, load the supplies and fly to Puysegur Point, which took only fourteen minutes. This service was more convenient as the helicopter could land closer to the light station.⁶²⁸

Most lighthouse stations had vegetable gardens which the keepers were responsible for tending. This was often the only way keepers and their families could get fresh vegetables. Rules were in place early in the Light Service's history to deal with keepers who had sown but not reaped their crops before being transferred to another station. The incoming keeper was to 'compensate him for seed, manure, and labour, but nothing more'. That is, the outgoing keeper was not to lose out on, or make a profit from, the transaction. If the incoming keeper did not wish to take over the garden, the matter was to be referred to the Marine Department.⁶²⁹ Keepers sometimes had gardens attached to their houses. In 1903, Second Assistant Keeper McAllister of Dog Island wrote to the Department (after the First Assistant had left) asking if he could remain in the Second Assistant's house even if he was promoted, as he had just planted his garden and erected a fowl house.⁶³⁰

The keepers spent a significant amount of time tending to the station gardens. The time was considered to be part of their official working day. For example, the three keepers on Centre Island in 1935 recorded in the daily journal on 21, 22 and 25 February that they were all gardening and digging potatoes for most of the day. They also worked in the garden on days in July, August, September and October.⁶³¹ Growing vegetables on the light stations was not always easy. On Centre Island in 1913, the keepers planted seeds but found that 'Native rats' were quickly scratching them up and eating them. The keepers then laid poison and let 'several cats run wild'. They reported that 'the rats have not been as destructive, though they are still plentiful'.⁶³²

⁶²⁷ Pennell interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 320.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 502.

⁶²⁹ *AJHR*, 1867, E-6, p.12.

⁶³⁰ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 7 August 1903.

⁶³¹ 'Centre Island Daily Journal 1935'. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3b.

⁶³² 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 1 December 1913. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3e.

Mrs Doreen Withington (née White) lived on Dog Island during WWII, while her father was a keeper. She recalls her parents' garden producing enough vegetables to last the family all year. She says that the soil was already good and peaty but they enriched it further with kelp and cow manure. Doreen remembers crops of large cabbages and rhubarb growing in her father's garden.⁶³³ Stephen Mead, another lightkeeper's child on Dog Island, recalls a very good vegetable garden on the island in the 1950s. He remembers it being in a nice, warm, sunny spot and producing a lot of vegetables.⁶³⁴

Keepers were also encouraged to keep livestock for their own use if there was space on the station. This supplemented their diets with fresh meat, milk and eggs. Fresh produce was very important as much of the keepers' food was tinned, which caused some health problems. In 1900, Keeper Wakefield of Puysegur Point suffered a bleeding nose for two days. A 'surgeon' was brought from Cromarty and the bleeding was stopped. According to Principal Keeper Sandager, the surgeon told Wakefield that he required 'better food than he can get here, where for years we have to live — or starve as some call it — on tinned meat'.⁶³⁵ Living on tinned meat was also expensive for the keepers. Principal Keeper Watts complained to the Department about this in April 1933.⁶³⁶ At different times, however, there had been a stock of fresh meat at Puysegur Point. In 1884, the Principal Keeper owned fifteen sheep, the First Assistant had seven, while the Second Assistant had three.⁶³⁷

The keepers on Centre Island purchased some stock in 1913. The Principal Keeper bought 35 ewes and one ram. The Assistant Keepers put their money together and bought a young bull from Bluff.⁶³⁸ By 1927, there was quite a farmyard of animals on the island: six cows, eighteen sheep, almost 40 fowls, and two pigs.⁶³⁹ In 1940, two keepers from Puysegur Point bought two cows and twelve sheep from Centre Island.⁶⁴⁰ The keepers on Dog Island in the 1950s also had enough stock that they were able to sell off the excess. Ernie McArthur recalls selling cattle and sheep to the Maori owners of Ruapuke Island, south east of Dog Island. The only condition of this sale was that the keepers were responsible for getting the stock to their purchasers' boat anchored 150 yards from shore. McArthur recalls that this was something of a performance and included throwing and tying the cattle and winching them onto the station fishing boat.⁶⁴¹ While cattle and sheep could not easily be transferred from station to station with the keeper, poultry often was. This was not

⁶³³ Interview with Mrs Doreen Withington, 20 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 285.

⁶³⁴ Interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 158.

⁶³⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 25 October 1900.

⁶³⁶ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 9 April 1933.

⁶³⁷ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 30 June 1884.

⁶³⁸ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1912-1926', 31 March 1913.

⁶³⁹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1927-1940', 4 January 1927. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3f.

⁶⁴⁰ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 28 June 1940.

⁶⁴¹ E.W. McArthur, 'The McArthurs Life on the Lighthouse Service', unpublished notes, p.5.

always successful, however. For example, T.B. Smith arrived at Waipapa Point in December 1910 and complained to the Marine Department that he had lost all eighteen fowls on the voyage. It appeared that they had suffocated under a tarpaulin in the heat on the government vessel, and Smith was claiming remuneration of 1/6 per head.⁶⁴²

On stations which had the luxury of resident cows, the keepers and families were able to make butter and cheese. Doreen Withington says that they never lacked for anything on Dog Island during WWII, despite rationing. She says that her mother was virtually able to supply the whole of Bluff with the extra butter she made during the war years.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴² 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1906-1919', 23 December 1910.

⁶⁴³ Withington interview, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 298.

CHAPTER TEN:

Servicing and communications

New Zealand light stations of the nineteenth century were very isolated, not only in terms of their often-remote locations but in terms of contact with the outside world as well. Communication was mainly by letter, but mail services to and from stations were often infrequent and could be unreliable, leaving keepers and their families isolated for sometimes months at a time. Puysegur Point was particularly poorly serviced for mail delivery and collection, despite a 'post office' being established on the station in February 1914.⁶⁴⁴ There was still no regular mail service to Puysegur Point in 1938, which the keepers appeared to get increasingly agitated about. The *Tamatea* had the mail contract at this time and the keepers complained that it had not been on time for the last seventeen months and was not providing satisfactory service.⁶⁴⁵ Puysegur Point finally received a regular mail service in September 1941 when the Marine Department arranged for the launch *Vera* to deliver mail and stores to the keepers. The vessel came from Riverton and provided a regular mail service to the station every two weeks, weather permitting.⁶⁴⁶ Delivering mail to Dog Island and Centre Island was easier than to Puysegur Point, and, thus, more frequent and regular. Alice Wybrow, who lived on Dog Island as a child during WWI, recalls that a mailman would visit the island once a fortnight as long as the weather permitted it.⁶⁴⁷ During the 1930s, mail was delivered to Dog Island by sea roughly once a fortnight and this was still the case in the 1950s.⁶⁴⁸ In April 1911, the Marine Department authorised Centre Island's Principal Keeper to arrange with the mail carrier to deliver the mail fortnightly from now on, at a cost of £24 per year.⁶⁴⁹ The Southland station with the best access to regular mail services was probably Waipapa Point. In the station's early years, the lighthouse mail was generally delivered to the nearby township of Fortrose, and the keepers took it in turns to collect it each week.⁶⁵⁰ This continued until the late 1920s when the mail began to be taken daily directly to

⁶⁴⁴ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 9 February 1914. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10d.

⁶⁴⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 24 September 1938 and 27 September 1938. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

⁶⁴⁶ Smith, p.120.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with Mrs Alice Wybrow, 23 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 040.

⁶⁴⁸ 'Centre Island Daily Journal 1931', 18 January 1931 and 1 February 1931. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/2e and E.W. McArthur, 'The McArthurs life on the lighthouse service', unpublished notes, p.2.

⁶⁴⁹ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 1 April 1911. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3c.

⁶⁵⁰ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 1 May 1888. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h.

the station by rural mail delivery.⁶⁵¹ Mail services to Southland's light stations were improved in line with better supply services as mail was often delivered by the government supply vessels.⁶⁵²

Mail carriers also often provided other services for the light keepers. In April 1894, Centre Island's Principal Keeper wrote to the Marine Department asking that the Postal Department now send the mail via Colac Bay rather than Riverton. This would allow the keepers to have a quantity of meat delivered by the monthly mail boat, which would be 'a treat to the keepers'.⁶⁵³ In May 1905, Principal Keeper Jess of Centre Island wrote to the Marine Department to ask if the mail contractor was supposed to also bring a small stock of stores (such as butter) for the keepers when he brought the mail. Jess said that the current contractor refused to do this because of a dispute he was having with the keepers' storekeeper, and emphasised the importance of this service.⁶⁵⁴ The Marine Department responded in October 1905 by giving the mail contractor, Mr Hunt, one month's notice of termination and awarding the contract to Mr Schroeder of Colac Bay. 'It as [sic] been made clear to Mr Schroeder that he must carry anything which the keepers may require irrespective of where it may be procured'.⁶⁵⁵

As the years went by and technology advanced, forms of communication at light stations changed and improved. To allow keepers to communicate with ships passing the station, the Marine Department introduced the Morse signalling system in 1910 once they had obtained the necessary lamps and flags. Copies of the *British Signal Manual* were sent to all stations for keepers to familiarise themselves with.⁶⁵⁶ This system meant that passing vessels could request keepers at lighthouses connected by telephone to wire messages to their destination for them.⁶⁵⁷ Signal practice became a regular duty for light keepers and was recorded in the station's Daily Journal.⁶⁵⁸

Telegraph contact became a common form of communication used by light stations in the late 1800s. By the turn of the nineteenth century, many of New Zealand's lighthouses were connected with the telegraph system. The Marine Department recommended in 1898 that 'it would be of great benefit if arrangements could be made to connect... Dog Island and Puysegur Point' as well.⁶⁵⁹ In 1909, Dog Island was connected to the telegraph system and Puysegur Point's telegraph line was extended to the light tower.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵¹ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1925-1935', 11 March 1929. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/14d.

⁶⁵² See chapter on 'Supplies and Self-Sufficiency'.

⁶⁵³ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 25 April 1894. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/3d.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 May 1905.

⁶⁵⁵ 'Centre Island General Order Book, 1895-1949', 4 October 1905.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 July 1910.

⁶⁵⁷ *AJHR*, 1913, Vol. IV, H-15, p.5.

⁶⁵⁸ For example, see 'Centre Island Daily Journal 1932', 4 February 1932. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/2f.

⁶⁵⁹ *AJHR*, 1898, H-15, p.1.

⁶⁶⁰ *AJHR*, 1909, H-15, p.5.

The advent of telephones and radio equipment revolutionised lighthouse life. Suddenly the outside world seemed much closer and could be contacted much more easily than before. Assistance could now be called for in an emergency whereas in the past keepers had to rely on their own know-how or hope for a timely passing ship. Phone lines were also useful within the station boundaries. Bells or whistles were originally installed in the light tower and linked to the lighthouse dwellings to call the next keeper to duty or to signal a malfunction.⁶⁶¹ Gradually, telephones replaced the bells. For example, in July 1908, the telephone line from Puysegur Point's tower to the keepers' houses was completed.⁶⁶² In May 1907, the keepers on Dog Island installed telephones on the island which were expected to make a great improvement to life on the station. The telephone lines had been in use for less than two years when a lightning strike put them out of commission, along with all telegraph communication. Two weeks later, an electrician arrived on the island to examine the phone lines, and concluded that they would have to be repaired in town. He also found that 'the connections are in wrong, and that it was a wonder that the buildings were not all set on Fire [sic] by the lightning'. Sensibly, Principal Keeper Quinn asked that 'when the telephones are repaired that an Electrician be sent to put them up correctly'.⁶⁶³ In 1908 a telephone line between Puysegur Point and Tuatapere was erected after a track was cut through the bush. It seems that the main purpose for the phone line was for the keepers to report sighting the Melbourne mail steamer to Invercargill. The Post and Telegraph Department appointed two linesmen to maintain the line, which was an ongoing and difficult job due to the weather.⁶⁶⁴ The telephone connection to Puysegur Point was deemed too difficult to maintain during the 1920s so a wireless radio transmitting and receiving set was installed at the station instead. This was to 'enable constant and reliable communication with Radio Awanui' [sic. This should probably be 'Awarua'].⁶⁶⁵

By the late 1950s, all lighthouses were equipped with radio-telephones or fitted with a land phone to the nearest exchange, or in some cases, both.⁶⁶⁶ During the 1970s, the Marine Department replaced all the current radio-telephone sets in New Zealand lighthouses with new 'single sideband' radio-telephone equipment in compliance with new International Telecommunication Union rules.⁶⁶⁷ In later years, the immediate point of contact for keepers on Southland's light stations was generally the radio operator at Awarua Radio in Invercargill. The keepers would order

⁶⁶¹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 30 September 1889.

⁶⁶² 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1907-1923', 1 August 1908.

⁶⁶³ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 1 May 1907, 1 December 1908 and 2 December 1908. ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4a.

⁶⁶⁴ Clark, p.128.

⁶⁶⁵ *AJHR*, 1925, H-15, pp.7-8.

⁶⁶⁶ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16.

⁶⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1970, H-15, p.15.

their stores, submit weather reports and ask for assistance, among other things, via Awarua Radio.⁶⁶⁸

Another form of communication between keepers and their Marine Department bosses was through the annual lighthouse inspection, performed originally by the Marine Engineer or light tender captain and later by lighthouse inspectors. This allowed the Department to see first hand how the light stations were running and where improvements could be made. The inspections included examinations of the light tower and apparatus, keepers' dwellings and other buildings, and the station in general. Inspectors would also look at the station's Daily Journals and Inwards and Outwards Correspondence Books to ensure that official paperwork was being carried out correctly. Occasionally they wrote comments beside items of interest. For example, it was recorded in Centre Island's letter book that during September 1902, Keeper Butler was badly ill with influenza but decided to do his usual watches as there were only two keepers on the island. Written in blue ink beside this entry is 'Brave man', signed by 'L.B'. and dated 9 October 1902.⁶⁶⁹ While lighthouse inspections were regarded with some amount of dread in the early years of the Light Service, by the 1970s things were much more relaxed. Kevin Pennell believes that this was because lighthouse inspectors such as Bill Kemp had been keepers themselves. They knew the difficulties of lighthouse life and recognised that weather conditions sometimes made station maintenance impossible.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁸ For example, see interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 311 and interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter 320 and Side Two, tape counter 408.

⁶⁶⁹ 'Centre Island Letter Book, 1888-1912', 30 September 1902.

⁶⁷⁰ Pennell interview, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter 280.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Service vessels

With the erection of lighthouses around New Zealand's coast, some method of servicing the far-flung stations needed to be established. In 1870, the government purchased a powerful steamer, the *Luna*, for use by the Defence Department. The *Luna* was built in 1864 for use during the American Civil War, and was powered by old-fashioned double oscillating engines. The *Luna* was lent to the Marine Department and used for lighthouse work whenever she was not required for Defence Department duties or as the Governor's yacht.⁶⁷¹ It soon became apparent, however, that the Light Service needed its own steamer to tend the country's lighthouses, particularly as numerous new stations were being planned for construction. The *Luna* was often unavailable just when the lighthouses needed servicing and, as the vessel was based in Wellington, the lighthouses further afield were not visited and inspected as often as they should have been.⁶⁷²

Between 1870 and 1902. The paddle steamer 'Luna' at Port Chalmers. Several sailing ships also in port.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
DAVID ALEXANDER DE MAUS.
ATL1/2-014954-G



The government then agreed to the purchase of a steamer suitable for use as a lighthouse tender and to lift buoys and moorings.⁶⁷³ An order was sent

⁶⁷¹ Martin, p.72

⁶⁷² *AJHR*, 1874, H-22, p.3.

⁶⁷³ *AJHR*, 1875, H-12, p.2.

to Scott and Company of Greenock in 1875 and a schooner-rigged iron-screw steamer was completed in 1876.⁶⁷⁴ The SS *Stella* (named after the English Light Service's latest vessel) cost £10,694-12s-6d to build.⁶⁷⁵ The *Stella* arrived in Wellington on 25 October 1876 and within a week had undertaken her first duty, transporting members of the General Assembly to Nelson and Manukau after the close of the last session. After this, the *Stella* embarked upon lighthouse work, conveying building materials to the lighthouse sites at the Brothers, Centre Island and Puysegur Point, and servicing the Southern lighthouses. Captain R. Johnson, Inspector of Steamers and Nautical Adviser to the Marine Department was put in temporary command of the *Stella* upon her arrival in the country and he reported that the 268 ton gross vessel was 'well adapted for the service of the Marine Department'.⁶⁷⁶ A subsequent captain of the *Stella* was not so complimentary about her attributes. Captain Fairchild believed she could not carry enough cargo, and was heard to say "You had to fold a handkerchief to get it down the hatchway."⁶⁷⁷ SS *Stella* continued to service the lighthouses and undertake other duties, such as a quarterly mail service to the West Coast, until 13 May 1889.⁶⁷⁸ At this point she was laid up when a flaw was discovered in the vessel's shaft.⁶⁷⁹ The government invited tenders for the purchase of the *Stella* in 1892, but none were received so she was offered for sale by public auction in April 1893. Bidding failed to reach the reserve and the *Stella* remained laid up.⁶⁸⁰ The following year, a number of enquiries were made about purchasing the vessel, but no offers were made over the Marine Department's £2,000 minimum price.⁶⁸¹ In June 1895, Joseph Fleming chartered the *Stella* for coastal trade in the Auckland area. However, Fleming failed to pay the amounts due under the charter and the government repossessed the *Stella* five months later, in November 1895. Soon after, the *Stella* was finally sold, for the low price of £1,450 (minus £46-5s for missing fittings) to Messrs Jagger, Parker, Leyland and O'Brien of Auckland.⁶⁸² The purchasers used the vessel to tow kauri logs from the North Auckland coast to their sawmills at Freeman's Bay, Auckland.⁶⁸³ The *Stella* was sold to the Otago Iron Rolling Mills Company of Green Island, Dunedin, in 1918. The company used her until 1926 when she was partially dismantled. The *Stella* was then used as a freezer base for blue cod fishermen at Luncheon Cove in Dusky Sound and later at Northport, Chalky Inlet, where she still remains.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁷⁴ Martin, p.72.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., p.74 and *AJHR*, 1877, H-29, p.15.

⁶⁷⁶ *AJHR*, 1877, H-29, p.2.

⁶⁷⁷ Martin, pp.74-75.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ *AJHR*, 1889, H-31, p.3.

⁶⁸⁰ *AJHR*, 1893, H-31, p.2.

⁶⁸¹ *AJHR*, 1894, H-18, p.4.

⁶⁸² *AJHR*, 1896, H-15, p.4.

⁶⁸³ Martin, p.75.

⁶⁸⁴ K. Bradley & R. Egerton, 'Stella Wreck Conservation Plan - Extracts', report for the Department of Conservation, January 1996. For a more detailed history of the *Stella*, see this report.



Government Steamer, SS Stella in Milford Sound c1880. ATL ½-010355-G



Government Steamer, SS Stella hulk (right) moored at Port Chalmers..

New Zealand's second proper lighthouse tender was the SS *Hinemoa*. Slightly larger than the *Stella* (at 542 tons gross), she was very similar in design to the first steamer and was built in 1876, also by Scott and Company. She cost £23,500 plus £1,838-18s-2d for extras. The ship was ordered under Sir Julius Vogel's £10,000,000 Public Works Loan for special service as a Government and Parliamentary yacht. The *Hinemoa* came under the control of the Marine Department in 1878, after her arrival in New Zealand in October 1876, but did not carry out any lighthouse work until 1881. It was not until the *Stella* was laid up in 1889, however, that the *Hinemoa* became the regular lighthouse tender.⁶⁸⁵ In the meantime, she had been used by the Defence Department, to move members of the General Assembly, to carry cargo, and to bring 'madmen' into custody. The *Hinemoa* had also visited the sub-Antarctic islands in 1886 to establish depots for shipwrecked sailors and to search for castaways.⁶⁸⁶ The SS *Hinemoa* was a very busy vessel. In addition to attending to the lighthouses, she was responsible for overhauling and cleaning buoys, and continued to inspect the castaway depots on the Snares, Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes and Bounty Islands.⁶⁸⁷ In 1893, she rescued shipwrecked mariners from the Antipodes. They were survivors of the wrecked barque *Spirit of Dawn* and had survived on the island for 87 days before the *Hinemoa* found them. Other duties included charting and surveying the coast and patrolling the sea in search of 'seal pirates'. In 1893, the *Hinemoa* caught a Norwegian vessel, the *Antarctic*, illegally sealing in the closed season, south of New Zealand.⁶⁸⁸ In December 1896, the *Hinemoa* was withdrawn from service and the Marine Department attempted to sell her. Nobody wanted her, so the *Hinemoa* went back to work, including tending the lighthouses.⁶⁸⁹ In 1911, the *Hinemoa* was again withdrawn from service and offered for sale and again there were no buyers so she was put back into use. In 1922 she was laid up as a money-saving measure. After an extensive overhaul in 1925, the *Hinemoa* was transferred to the Department of External Affairs for use in Pacific Islands trade.⁶⁹⁰ The *Hinemoa* ended her days as a practice 'enemy' vessel and was sunk by the Navy in August 1944 in a training exercise in Lyttelton Harbour.⁶⁹¹

The SS *Tutanekai* worked in conjunction with the *Hinemoa* to service New Zealand's light stations between 1896 and 1922. The *Tutanekai* was built in Britain in 1896 at a cost of £29,261. Her first master, Captain Fairchild, travelled to Britain and brought the 810 tons gross vessel to Wellington, arriving in September 1896.⁶⁹² The Marine Department purchased the *Tutanekai* to attend to the lighthouses, to lay and repair

⁶⁸⁵ Martin, pp.75-76.

⁶⁸⁶ M. Gordon, *Vintage People & Things in Old New Zealand*, Christchurch, 1948, pp.137-138.

⁶⁸⁷ Martin, p.76.

⁶⁸⁸ Gordon, pp.140-141.

⁶⁸⁹ Martin, pp.76-77.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.77.

⁶⁹¹ Gordon, p.150.

⁶⁹² Martin, p.77.



Hinemoa moored at a wharf 1894. ATL

telegraph cables and to perform any other government work for which she might be required.⁶⁹³ After the *Hinemoa* was decommissioned in 1922, the *Tutanekai* continued servicing the lighthouses on her own. By the late 1920s, however, age was catching up with the *Tutanekai* and her heavy maintenance costs made her continued use uneconomic. The Marine Department recommended that a new lighthouse vessel be purchased.

In 1928, G.E. Breeze, the Chief Surveyor of Ships drew, up plans for the new ship, and tenders for its construction were called for. The vessel was designed specifically to meet the Light Service's requirements.⁶⁹⁴ Negotiations over the tenders continued through 1929 but by 1930, the *Tutanekai's* replacement was on her way to New Zealand. The SS *Matai* was delivered by the contractors, Messrs R.& W. Hawthorne, Leslie & Co. Ltd, on 12 October 1930 and was put into immediate service, visiting lighthouses.⁶⁹⁵ The vessel weighed 1049 tons gross and cost £81,250.⁶⁹⁶ Mabel Pollock says that the keepers of New Zealand were immensely proud of their new light tender and 'followed her progress with ... satisfaction'.⁶⁹⁷ The *Matai*, under Captain Burgess, seems to have been a good vessel to work on. Former crew member Tom Pook commented that he "would give anything in this world to be there again."⁶⁹⁸ The forty strong, mostly Maori crew were apparently a happy lot, secure in the knowledge that their jobs were safe as they were civil servants and belonged to the Public Service Association. The *Matai* was a well-known and well-liked visitor at ports throughout New Zealand. Her ten-piece band (made up of crew members) performed at dances to which everyone was invited at each port she docked at.⁶⁹⁹

The *Matai* serviced lighthouses until WWII when she was commissioned as a naval ship. During this time, light stations were serviced by overland routes wherever possible or by locally hired vessels.⁷⁰⁰ In 1947, the *Matai* was under refit at Auckland to complete her conversion from war service. While the *Matai* was otherwise engaged, Puysegur Point lighthouse was serviced by the GSS *Wairua*, normally used as the Bluff-Stewart Island ferry.⁷⁰¹ As a result of the improvements made to access roads and such like during the war, the Marine Department decided that a tender specifically for the lights was no longer required. In 1949, they decided to either lay the *Matai* up or use her elsewhere.⁷⁰² The *Matai* was then used for a number of different activities, including laying one of the Cook Strait power cables, and she later became a ferry transporting people between Bluff and Stewart Island. The *Matai* was eventually sold

⁶⁹³ *AJHR*, 1897, H-15, p.5.

⁶⁹⁴ *AJHR*, 1928, H-15, p.12 and *AJHR*, 1930, H-15, p.4.

⁶⁹⁵ *AJHR*, 1929, H-15, p.6 and *AJHR*, 1931, H-15, p.5.

⁶⁹⁶ Martin, p.82.

⁶⁹⁷ Pollock, p.18.

⁶⁹⁸ Quoted in *ibid*, preface.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.41-42.

⁷⁰⁰ *AJHR*, 1941, H-15, p.1.

⁷⁰¹ *AJHR*, 1947, H-15, p.3.

⁷⁰² *AJHR*, 1949, H-15, p.6.

to buyers in Singapore.⁷⁰³ The *Wairua* became the usual service vessel for the Southland light stations and was used up until the 1980s, although with less frequency with the trend towards aeroplane and helicopter servicing in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁰⁴

The captains of the government lighthouse service vessels were often interesting men. Captain John Fairchild was a familiar figure to light keepers and their families in the nineteenth century and served on many of the light tenders. Fairchild, the son of a Devonshire farmer, arrived in New Zealand as a young man in 1860. In the early 1860s he began serving the government as master of the paddle-wheel steamer *Sturt*, transferring to the *Luna* upon her purchase in 1870. In 1887, Fairchild briefly became captain of the SS *Stella* before she was laid up in 1888 and he transferred to the *Hinemoa*. Fairchild continued as captain of the *Hinemoa* until 1895 when he was sent to Britain to bring the new government vessel, *Tutanekai*, back to New Zealand. Tragedy struck only three years later, in July 1898, when Fairchild died after an accident on board the *Tutanekai*. Captain Fairchild was remembered as a 'fine leader, resourceful seaman, and firm disciplinarian' who had a 'shrewd and ready wit'.⁷⁰⁵ Captain C.F. Post became master of the *Tutanekai* after Fairchild's death and remained so until his retirement in 1921. He had previously been captain of the *Hinemoa*.⁷⁰⁶

Captain John Peter Bollons' life was particularly interesting. Born in London in 1862, Bollons went to sea at the age of fourteen. Five years later, in November 1881, Bollons was on board the barque *England's Glory* when she ran aground near the entrance to Bluff Harbour, and the young man ended up settling in Bluff. Bollons served on various vessels for the next decade, including the Bluff pilot cutter and the government ketch *Kekeno*, before gaining his master's certificate in 1892. From 1893 onwards, Bollons worked on the Marine Department's steamers and in 1898 became master of the *Hinemoa*.⁷⁰⁷ In February 1922, Captain Bollons transferred to the *Tutanekai* and remained her master through the 1920s.⁷⁰⁸ The Marine Department extended Bollons' retirement age to allow him to oversee delivery of the *Matai*, the *Tutanekai*'s replacement, from Britain. However, before he could leave for Britain, Bollons died unexpectedly in September 1929. Bollons was buried at Bluff. Besides his interest in things nautical, Captain Bollons was fascinated with natural history and Maori culture. He was a friend of ethnographer Elsdon Best and gathered a significant collection of Maori artefacts. Bollons was described as 'a tall, deep-voiced man with a King George V beard and an energetic manner', and reportedly never used bad language.⁷⁰⁹ Captain John Wood Burgess became master of the *Tutanekai* upon Bollons' death. He arrived in

⁷⁰³ Martin, p.85.

⁷⁰⁴ *AJHR*, 1954, H-15, p.16 and *AJHR*, 1983, F-5, p.26.

⁷⁰⁵ Martin, pp.74, 76, 78.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid*, pp.78-79.

⁷⁰⁷ *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume Three, 1901-1920*, Auckland, 1996, pp.59-60.

⁷⁰⁸ Martin, pp.81-82.

⁷⁰⁹ *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume Three*, p.60.

New Zealand in 1899 and joined the Union Steam Ship Company. In 1908 he was appointed harbourmaster, pilot and Customs officer at Picton and in 1915 became surveyor of ships. Burgess captained both the *Tutanekai* and the *Matai* before his retirement in the 1940s.⁷¹⁰

The lighthouse service vessels and their crews played a vital role in the lives of light keepers and their families. Light station residents eagerly awaited stores days, not just for the fresh supplies they brought, but for the chance to renew acquaintances with the tender crews and catch up on news from the outside world. It was a break in routine for the keepers and their families so was cause for great excitement, particularly in the early years of the Light Service when stations were generally only visited once every three months. In the early 1930s, one keeper's son at Waipapa Point was permitted to stay home from school 'to share the excitement of "Matai Day"' with the other keeper's children when the tender arrived.⁷¹¹ Mabel Pollock describes the Jamieson family's transfer from Waipapa Point to East Cape on board the *Matai* in 1932. The ship serviced a number of lighthouses along the way, including Puysegur Point, Dog Island and Centre Island. At Puysegur Point, the keepers' wives and children came on board the tender for a brief respite from their isolated station life, while the stores were unloaded. The women gossiped with Mrs Jamieson while their children mingled together and explored the ship.⁷¹² With the withdrawal from service of the last government light tender, came the end of an important era in lighthouse life in New Zealand.

⁷¹⁰ Martin, pp.82-83.

⁷¹¹ Pollock, p.27.

⁷¹² Ibid, p.32.

CHAPTER TWELVE: Shipwrecks

Shipwrecks and their prevention are one of the main reasons why lighthouses are required. It was often a shipwreck which identified the need for a light at a particular site or put pressure on authorities to act more quickly to erect a light at an already identified site. Thus, lighthouses were erected near frequent passage areas such as port entrances and straits, particularly those with dangerous reefs or waters which were difficult to navigate.

Those campaigning for a lighthouse on Pencarrow Head, near Wellington, had renewed attention drawn to their case in 1851 by the wreck of the barque *Maria* in which 20 lives were lost. A beacon of sorts had been erected at Pencarrow in 1842 but the wreck highlighted the need for a better mark. A fixed light (no more than a lantern shown from a cottage window) replaced the beacon soon after the accident.⁷¹³ Eventually, in 1859, a purpose-built permanent lighthouse, New Zealand's first, was erected to guide ships safely into Port Nicholson Harbour.

1835-1838 Wreck of Tararua
- 1881 Green Samuel Edwy.
ATL REF A-250-006



A number of wrecks occurred off Waipapa Point, some fatal, such as the wreck of the *William Ackers* in December 1876 in which eight people

⁷¹³ Ross, pp.17, 19.

died.⁷¹⁴ The tragic wreck of the SS *Tararua* at Waipapa Point on 29 April 1881 was the catalyst needed for immediate action to be taken to make the eastern approach to Foveaux Strait safer. The loss of 131 lives horrified people and a Court of Inquiry into the tragedy was held at Dunedin only ten days later. This resulted in a recommendation that a lighthouse be erected on Waipapa Point as soon as possible.⁷¹⁵ The lighthouse site was selected by the end of the year and the light was exhibited for the first time on 1 January 1884.

Despite the presence of lighthouses, shipwrecks continued to occur. Sometimes ships were even wrecked close to the lights themselves and lighthouse keepers could become involved in rescue and salvage efforts. Early on 7 February 1892, the barque *Star of Erin*, bound for London with a cargo of wool and grain, was wrecked near Waipapa Point Lighthouse.⁷¹⁶ At 4:40 am the Principal Keeper sent the Assistant Keeper to Fortrose with a telegram reporting the wreck. The ship broke up at about 11 am, only half an hour after the master and the last of the crew had finally abandoned her. The crew were taken to the lighthouse station by the keepers to recover from their ordeal. A nautical inquiry was held into the cause of the wreck on 24 February. The keepers were cleared of any suspicion of the light not operating when the crew all testified that they could see the lighthouse throughout the night.⁷¹⁷ It was found that the captain had been 'over-confident' in estimating distances from the lighthouse.⁷¹⁸

There were a couple of shipwrecks in which the keepers at Dog Island lighthouse were involved. During a heavy gale in October 1888, one of the keepers witnessed the fishing schooner *Nellie* founder about seven miles from the light when its rudder was carried away. The keeper bravely rowed out to the wreck and managed to save the two crew members on board. The captain, however, was washed overboard and drowned before help arrived.⁷¹⁹

The biggest wreck which occurred on Dog Island was that of the Union Steamship Company vessel the *Waikouaiti*. The ship struck a reef just off the island at 9:22 pm on 28 November 1939.⁷²⁰ The ship had been on its way from Sydney to Lyttelton when it ran aground in very dense fog.⁷²¹ Doreen Withington (née White) had arrived on the island with her parents and sisters only weeks before the wreck, and remembers waking up the next morning to see a large boat sitting up on the end of the island. She recalls the unsuccessful attempts that were made to get

⁷¹⁴ C.W.N. Ingram, *New Zealand Shipwrecks, 1795-1975*, Wellington, 1977, p.177.

⁷¹⁵ Maritime Safety Authority of New Zealand, 'Lighthouses of New Zealand: Waipapa Point', p.2.

⁷¹⁶ Ingram, p.247.

⁷¹⁷ 'Waipapapa Point Letter Book, 1884-1898', 8 February and 24 February 1892, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/13h.

⁷¹⁸ Ingram, p.247.

⁷¹⁹ Ingram, p.237.

⁷²⁰ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1936-1945', 1 December 1939, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/4c.

⁷²¹ Ingram, p.371.

the *Waikouaiti* off the island. It was too dangerous to get boats close enough to the stranded ship to move her and she began to break up. The crew were all rescued safely but it was eventually decided that the ship could not be saved.⁷²²

The keepers on Dog Island were told that they could keep anything they could salvage from the ship or that was washed up on the island. The ship was apparently laden with Christmas toys, and the keepers' children gathered up and kept items such as cricket bats, tennis racquets, kewpie dolls and pedal cars. There were more practical things salvaged as well, such as blankets, tea towels, bolts of cloth and leather, a kerosene lamp, pots and pans, tea, and Indian curry powder.⁷²³ Coal from the wreck of the *Waikouaiti* was still being washed up on the beaches of Dog Island over a decade later. Stephen Mead, whose father was a keeper at Dog Island in the early 1950s, recalls collecting the coal from the beach after a storm. The coal was apparently very hot when it burned and was excellent for baking bread.⁷²⁴



Photograph of the ship
Waikouaiti after going aground
on Dog Island, Foveaux
Strait. 1939. ATL: PACOLL-8380

The keeper at Puysegur Point came to the assistance of a shipwrecked crew in late 1886. On 22 November, three men arrived on foot at the station saying that their boat, the *Surprise*, and eight months' worth of provisions had been destroyed in a storm almost two weeks earlier. The men had been intending to prospect for gold along the Fiordland coast but had hardly started their trip when misfortune struck while their boat was anchored about two or three miles east of Wilcox Point. They left two of their party with the ship's wreckage and the other three walked to the lighthouse for assistance. The keepers provided the men

⁷²² Interview with Mrs Doreen Withington, 20 February 1999, Tape One, Side Two, Tape Counter 169.

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, Tape Counter 102.

with stores and a boat to bring back what could be salvaged from their vessel, along with the remaining prospectors. The five men were then permitted to stay at Puysegur Point's landing store until a passing ship agreed to take them back to Bluff. They left in December on board the *Hananui*.⁷²⁵

Although the introduction of lighthouses did not totally eliminate shipwrecks, the numbers were significantly reduced. Appendix V of the *Marine Department Centennial History, 1866-1966* shows that the frequency of shipping casualties on the New Zealand coast declined steadily with the erection of more lighthouses. For example, the average annual number of total ship losses for the period 1866-1885 was 23. By 1886-1905, the number had been reduced to ten, and was down to seven by the 1906-1925 period.⁷²⁶ By this stage there was considerably more sea traffic than in the earlier period but the development of the Light Service, as well as improved coastal charting, had helped to slow the rate of wrecks. Not only that, but lighthouse staff being posted as they were on the most dangerous sections of New Zealand's coast, were able to assist when disaster did occur.

⁷²⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1878-1892', 30 November 1886, 31 December 1886, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL./D28/10b.

⁷²⁶ E.R. Martin, *Marine Department Centennial History, 1866-1966*, Wellington, 1969, pp.136-137.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

Disasters, tragedies and accidents

Lighthouses are no strangers to disaster, tragedy and accident. Waipapa Point light, for example, was constructed almost solely because of an extremely tragic shipwreck in which 131 people lost their lives.⁷²⁷ Death by drowning appeared to be a relatively common occurrence near Puysegur Point lighthouse. On 16 September 1878, two of the men working on construction of the light attempted to row across Otago's Retreat to Coal Island. They believed they could see smoke on the island and thought it might be from a fire lit by shipwrecked men. A heavy gale blew up while they were on the water, their boat capsized and they were drowned. The bodies were not found, and it was later discovered that the 'smoke' they had seen was actually spray from a waterfall.⁷²⁸ On 28 June 1895, the keepers reported finding the remains of two drowned men.⁷²⁹ Only three months later, a miner arrived at the station with the news that another two men had drowned about half a mile up Preservation Inlet from the landing place.⁷³⁰ In February 1939, the body of a drowned miner was found in Wilson's River, and buried by the keepers.⁷³¹

Several keepers died tragically while stationed at the southern lighthouses. On 23 May 1883, Dog Island's Principal Keeper, James Clark, was killed while on duty. The inquest into Clark's death gave the following explanation of the accident: Clark had been adding weights to increase the speed of the revolving lens when he overbalanced and fell 76 feet down the shaft in which the driving weight operated. As Clark died while performing his duty, the Marine Department made a compassionate grant of £190 to his widow and family, which was the equivalent of one year's salary.⁷³²

In December 1943, two of the keepers on Centre Island went out fishing in a small boat. Principal Keeper John Tait and Assistant Keeper Phil Hewitt never returned, drowning at sea.⁷³³ The two keepers on Dog Island, Emmens and White, wrote to the Marine Department upon hearing of the deaths. They said that they found the news very distressing as they had both known and liked Tait. They added that they would like to assist Mrs Tait and her young family financially and suggested that 'a list

⁷²⁷ See chapter on 'Shipwrecks'.

⁷²⁸ *AJHR*, 1878, H-12, p.2.

⁷²⁹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 1 July 1895, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10c.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid*, 2 October 1895.

⁷³¹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 1 February 1939, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL/D28/10e.

⁷³² G.H.A. Tanner, 'Some Otago-Southland Lighthouses: Dog Island', unpublished manuscript, c.1932, Hocken Library, Misc. MS 77, p.1.

⁷³³ G. Sheehan & A. Gibbon, p.110.

be sent to all Lighthouse Stations to enable all who wish to contribute to do so'.⁷³⁴

Keepers could also be at risk of serious injury while on the job. Lightning strikes were a constant problem on New Zealand's light stations and could prove dangerous for keepers. One night in November 1898, Assistant Keeper Sandager was on duty at Puysegur Point. The tower was struck by lightning and Sandager was fortunate not to be killed.⁷³⁵ A similar incident occurred on Dog Island on the night of 1 June 1914. Principal Keeper Murray was on watch at the time and described the lightning tearing about twenty of the lining boards off the light room wall, breaking most of the small windows down one side of the lighthouse, and fusing the telephone lines. Murray added that the lightning conductor needed replacing and commented that 'I never want to [be] put in such an experience again. The explosion threw me out of the chair and put out several of the lights'.⁷³⁶ However, it was not until late November that Mr Veitch, a Post and Telegraph Department Engineer, arrived to take measurements for a new lightning conductor.⁷³⁷

The isolation of the lighthouses and the solitary nature of the work compounded the dangers inherent in the keepers' environment, and medical help was generally many hours away. In February 1925, Assistant Keeper Stringer of Dog Island got his hand caught in the gearing of the machinery which operated the light, crushing his thumb and palm. It was some time before the other keepers were able to attract attention from Bluff and the injured man was taken off the island for medical assistance. Stringer lost the use of his right thumb as a result of the accident and was unable to resume his duties until 29 July. It appears that Stringer had difficulty working as a keeper with his injury as he was transferred to the Customs Department only two months later.⁷³⁸ At Waipapa Point Light in February 1942, Coast Watcher Murphy fell while on duty. He injured his head, back and knee and was unable to ring for assistance from the other keepers for some time and the light became stationary for a short while.⁷³⁹

The early Light Service did not provide first aid training for its keepers, so they had to rely on their own existing knowledge or that of those around them in an emergency. Getting outside help to stations further afield was of particular concern for keepers as it would sometimes be days before assistance could arrive. For example, on 13 October 1896, Principal Keeper Alexander Parks of Puysegur Point became too ill to

⁷³⁴ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1936-1945', 15 December 1943, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL./D28/4c.

⁷³⁵ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 1 December 1898.

⁷³⁶ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1903-1918', 2 June 1914, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL./D28/4a.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 November 1914.

⁷³⁸ 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1923-1929', 3 February 1925, 28 February 1925, 1 August 1925 and 30 September 1925, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL./D28/4b.

⁷³⁹ 'Waipapa Point Letter Book, 1935-1943', 1 February 1942, ANZ Dunedin, DAAL./D28/14e. Coast Watchers were placed on some New Zealand coastal lighthouse during WWII. They often undertook lighthouse duties as well as their own observation duties.

continue duty. His condition rapidly worsened so a passing steamer was requested to report the serious nature of his sickness to the authorities at Bluff on 16 October. While the harbour tug *Awarua* was sent immediately to Puysegur Point, it did not reach the station until 20 October. Parks was transported to Invercargill Hospital where he died on 12 November.⁷⁴⁰ In November 1937, Keeper Newson's wife fell seriously ill with suspected appendicitis at Puysegur Point. By this time the keepers were able to send a telegram to the authorities for assistance, but it still took some time for help to arrive from Bluff. Concerned about this, Principal Keeper Hodge wrote —

*If, in the case of serious illness or accident we are to rely on some little "tub" from Bluff getting here then Puysegur will not be a very nice place for women or children.*⁷⁴¹

On the day that Keeper Stringer had his hand crushed on Dog Island, Acting Principal Keeper Schofield wrote to the Marine Department over his concerns about getting help to the island. The previous month, Keeper Sinclair's youngest child had been badly scalded by pulling a pan of boiling water over himself. It was a considerable time before the keepers were able to attract the attention of a passing launch, which then travelled to Bluff and brought back a doctor. Schofield complained that without a flagstaff on the island, it could be very difficult to communicate with the Bluff Hill signal station.⁷⁴² Even by the 1950s, it still took some time for medical assistance to arrive at Dog Island. Stephen Mead, recalls breaking his wrist as a child and says 'it seemed to take forever before I managed to get to Kew Hospital' as they had to wait for the pilot launch to make the crossing from Bluff.⁷⁴³ Other times, injury victims on Dog Island were attended to promptly. Ernie McArthur, a keeper on the island in the mid-1950s, remembers one occasion when a child fell off a box and nearly bit his tongue in half. He was in hospital within two hours of the accident as the pilot launch had been working nearby in the harbour and had come straight to the island as soon as they heard the news.⁷⁴⁴

Keepers who had some form of medical training were often required to use their skills. Norman White, Assistant Keeper on Dog Island between 1939 and 1945, had been in the Royal Navy and, according to his daughter Doreen, had a very good knowledge of first aid. This knowledge was often called into service to tend to his three daughters' various injuries. These included deep gashes, head wounds and burns.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴⁰ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1892-1907', 22 October 1896 and 23 November 1896.

⁷⁴¹ 'Puysegur Point Letter Book, 1932-1943', 10 November 1937, 1 December 1937.

⁷⁴² 'Dog Island Letter Book, 1923-1929', 1 February 1925, 3 February 1925.

⁷⁴³ Interview with Mr Stephen Mead, 26 February 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 181.

⁷⁴⁴ Interview with Mr Ernie McArthur, 11 March 1999, Tape One, Side One, tape counter: 320.

⁷⁴⁵ Interview with Mrs Doreen Withington, 20 February 1999, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter: 004.

By the late 1950s, keepers were being encouraged by the Marine Department to obtain a St John's First Aid Certificate and 'have an elementary knowledge of treatment in case of accident'.⁷⁴⁶ However, First Aid training was still not compulsory for Relieving Keepers when Kevin Pennell joined the Light Service in the mid-1970s. By this stage, though, radio contact could be made with medical services and keepers could be advised on a course of action by the appropriate person.⁷⁴⁷ For example, while Pennell was stationed at Puysegur Point in 1978, a deckhand was badly injured in a fishing boat accident at sea. The vessel's captain radioed the light station for assistance. Pennell was on duty at the time and recalls calling up Awarua Radio on the distress frequency and describing the horrific injuries as they had been described to him by the captain. A helicopter was sent to Puysegur Point and the man was taken to hospital.⁷⁴⁸

The keepers and their families also experienced various personal tragedies while on New Zealand light stations. The deaths of at least six keepers' children were reported to the Marine Department from Southland's four lighthouses between 1916 and 1926.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁶ *AJHR*, 1959, H-15, p.16.

⁷⁴⁷ Interview with Mr Kevin Pennell, 24 February 1999, Tape One, Side Two, tape counter: 408.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid*, tape counter: 408.

⁷⁴⁹ This is discussed further in the chapter dealing with family life.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Conclusion

While this study aims to encompass as many aspects of lighthouse life in the Southland area as possible, many gaps remain, leaving the opportunity for further research into areas which have not been covered, or covered only briefly, in this work.

Time constraints meant that only a handful of people could be interviewed for this work. There is room for extensive oral history work in the story of the Southland lighthouses. In particular, more interviews with former light keepers and their wives should be undertaken. Another angle yet to be covered fully is that of lighthouse service vessels and their crews, which could be readily explored through interviews with former crew members and masters of the ships. These men could give another view of the Light Service and offer their observations on lighthouse life and light keepers. The lifestyle of the men who serviced the lighthouses would be another interesting aspect to investigate.

Each Foveaux Strait light ought to have an in-depth study of its individual history. As it stands, this project has put together an overview of each light's history but a detailed look at each station is lacking. Work has to be done on discovering what buildings were erected on the site and where, and their purposes, construction materials and life span. A detailed inventory of what items remain on the station and what have long since been removed or demolished would be useful. Another approach to providing a history of each lighthouse would be to prepare a timeline of events on a station, including such things as staff turnover, visitors to the station, major maintenance or building work, changes in technology, and notable meteorological occurrences.

As this project has, out of necessity, mainly focussed on the earlier period of lighthouse life (up to around the 1940s), there is much work still to be done on the modern Light Service. The period from the electrification of the Foveaux Strait lights in the 1940s and 1950s to their automation and demanning in the 1970s and 1980s needs to be investigated more fully. An in-depth study of the whole lighthouse demanning process, why it was needed and how it was achieved, is still required. The positive and negative effects of this policy could also be evaluated.

More work also needs to be done on the Marine Department's side of the story. This project has mainly relied on keepers' letters to Head Office to gain an idea of what lighthouse life was like. There is no doubt that many keepers liked to complain about anything and everything and it is rare to find a keeper praising anything the Department has done. Unfortunately, this can lead to a somewhat biased view of life on Southland lighthouses. Again, time and resource constraints meant that very little research could be done to rectify this imbalance. It would be very valuable to look at the Department's files and see if a different picture of events emerged. This would then allow us to see the sometimes petty squabbling among keepers from the Marine

Department's point of view, and to examine just how it dealt with such things.

Other areas requiring more research include keepers' involvement in trade unions, and a history of other coastal navigational aids around Foveaux Strait, why and when they were erected and how long they remained in use. A national study of lighthouses and lighthouse life would also be of considerable value as broader comparisons would then be able to be made.

APPENDIX ONE:

Chronology of light station structures

CENTRE ISLAND

1877	Material for three dwellings and three stores landed, to be completed by November 1877.
1897	Repairs to dwellings.
1909	Repairs to dwellings and other buildings.
1912	Flag-house, fowl-house and boat shed erected.
1938-1939	Three new dwellings built, completed October 1939. Keepers now housed in 'comfortable modern' houses.
c.1963-1965	General programme of modernising keepers' houses.
1967	Plans underway to replace plant and powerhouse over next two years.
1969-1970	Boat sheds planned for replacement.
1972	Major improvements to houses to begin soon, new powerhouse completed.

DOG ISLAND

1865	Dwellings built of stone. Contractor was Mr Garside. Interior partitions were wooden.
1867	Dwellings water-proofed, roofs riveted.
1884	Dwelling for third keeper erected by keepers.
1885	New oil store built by keepers.
1897	Repairs to dwellings. Second Assistant's house enlarged (two rooms added) as it was too small for a married man.
1908	Wash-houses built. Fowl-houses and oil store repaired.
1912	New roof put on Principal Keeper's wash-house.
1915	Rooves repaired, porches built.
1927-1928	Existing accommodation dated back to 1868 and had become out-of-date and weather worn. Two new six-roomed dwellings were erected to replace the old stone houses.
c.1963-1965	General programme of modernising keepers' houses.
1967	Plans underway to replace plant and powerhouse over next two years.

1969-1970	Boat sheds planned for replacement.
1972	Small outbuildings replaced, wash-houses constructed.
1975	Principal Keeper's dwelling planned to be replaced 1976-1978.
1979	New house planned for keeper.

PUYSEGUR POINT

February 1875	Small wooden store built. Men constructing road from landing place to proposed lighthouse site, nearly completed by November 1875.
1877	Material for three dwellings and three stores landed, to be completed by January 1878.
1891	Keepers' dwellings repaired. New weather boards fitted to ends of houses exposed to prevailing winds.
1897	Repairs to dwellings.
1905	New rooves put on Principal Keeper's and First Assistant's houses. New landing store erected.
1908	Repairs to boat shed.
1910	Wash-houses erected.
1917-1918	Present houses were built 1878-1879 and the timber was rotting. Three new wooden houses and outbuildings were erected.
1925	Additions made to buildings.
1939	Materials landed for renovation of three cottages.
1940	New shed to be constructed at landing and site selected for erection of radio beacon powerhouse.
1941	Reconstruction work. Powerhouse completed.
c.1963-1965	General programme of modernising keepers' houses.
1965	Fifth quarters for relieving keeper almost completed.
1966	New relieving keeper's quarters and accommodation for Ministry of Works and other departmental maintenance personnel, and a recreation room for staff and families completed.

WAIPAPA POINT

1908	Wash-houses erected.
1909	Galvanised iron roofs covering dwellings rusted out so were replaced with malthoid.
1912	Porches erected on houses.
1928	Extensive repairs to dwellings.
c.1963-1965	General programme of modernising keepers' houses.

1965	New quarters for relieving keepers erected.
1970	Houses updated.
1972	Relieving keeper's quarters extended and improved.

APPENDIX TWO: Beacons and lights

ACKERS POINT

The Ackers Point light, positioned at the eastern extremity of Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, was originally sited at “The Neck”, Stewart Island. It was apparently shifted to the Point in the early 1930s.⁷⁵⁰ The light was situated at Ackers Point by 1937, at least, when a substitute flasher was being procured for it by the Marine Department.⁷⁵¹

A security fence was erected around the light in April 1965 to prevent possible vandalism. There was no suitable track through the bush to the light, so the fencing material had to be winched up the steep cliff at high tide.⁷⁵²

The apparatus was converted from gas to battery power in 1968. This made servicing easier and the light was brighter.⁷⁵³ It is still operating.

PEARL ISLAND

The automatic light on Pearl Island, at the entrance to Port Pegasus, Stewart Island, was established around 1937. It consisted of a flashing light with a 140 mm dioptric lens erected upon a steel tower.⁷⁵⁴ The light was established to guide the fishing vessels using a freezing factory at Port Pegasus, and the fishermen assisted in the light’s maintenance.⁷⁵⁵

The Pearl Island light was extinguished during WWII, but such was its value to the local fishermen, that they wrote to the Marine Department and asked if it could be re-established in March 1944.⁷⁵⁶

The freezing factory at Port Pegasus closed down and was demolished in the 1950s. This meant that the Pearl Island light was no longer required, and it was discontinued in 1957.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁰ Unknown provenance, ‘Lighthouses’, Vertical File, Invercargill Public Library.

⁷⁵¹ *AJHR*, 1937-38, H-15, p.6.

⁷⁵² Unknown provenance, ‘Lighthouses’.

⁷⁵³ *AJHR*, 1968, H-15, p.15.

⁷⁵⁴ *AJHR*, 1937-38, H-15, p.6.

⁷⁵⁵ *AJHR*, 1957, H-15, p.14.

⁷⁵⁶ *AJHR*, 1946, H-15, p.11.

⁷⁵⁷ *AJHR*, 1957, H-15, p.14.

ST ANNE'S POINT

An interesting point about this light is that tourism, rather than the usual shipping or trade interests, highlighted the need for a navigational aid at St Anne's Point, the southern headland of Milford Sound. In 1935, the Tourist Department began a campaign to have the light erected at the head of Milford Sound as it was hoped that the hotel to be built there would attract regular visits by cruise liners.⁷⁵⁸

The site for the light (on a difficult-to-approach rocky ledge) was chosen by Captain J.W. Burgess of the *Matai*. The 21-foot tall tower was constructed in the New Zealand Railways workshops and erected at the site by a working party supervised by Lighthouse Artificer W.A. Fraser. The light was first exhibited on 20 May 1937.⁷⁵⁹ It was a Fourth Order flashing light with a 300mm dioptric lens which was automatic and unwatched.⁷⁶⁰

The light was extinguished in December 1940 during World War II and re-exhibited in 1945.⁷⁶¹

Servicing the light at St Anne's Point was always difficult. At first it was serviced by the GMV *Wairua*. However, this was inconvenient as it meant chartering another vessel to run the *Wairua's* Bluff—Stewart Island Ferry Service while it undertook the 420 mile return journey. In 1956, the Marine Department investigated how best to reduce its lighthouse servicing costs. It was decided that it would be more cost effective to service St Anne's Point light by launch from the Milford Hotel, with equipment being sent overland.⁷⁶²

The light apparatus at St Anne's Point was converted from gas to battery operation in 1968. This made servicing and repair work easier, as well as giving out a brighter light.⁷⁶³ It is still operating.

STIRLING POINT

The 1903 New Zealand Nautical Almanac records a small red tower on a black frame on Stirling Point, at Bluff, showing a fixed red light visible for four miles in clear weather.⁷⁶⁴ A new light tower was constructed at Stirling Point in 1912.⁷⁶⁵ The seven metre tall tower was built on the roof of the old signal station and had a fixed red light which showed for six miles. Up until 1986, the structure was also used as a signal station.⁷⁶⁶ It is still operating.

⁷⁵⁸ Ross, pp.139-140.

⁷⁵⁹ Ross, p.140.

⁷⁶⁰ *AJHR*, 1937-38, H-15, p.6.

⁷⁶¹ *AJHR*, 1945, H-15, p.2.

⁷⁶² *AJHR*, 1956, H-15, p.16.

⁷⁶³ *AJHR*, 1968, H-15, p.15.

⁷⁶⁴ Captain H.S. Blackburne (ed.), *New Zealand Nautical Almanac and Tide Tables, 1903*, Wellington, 1902, p.182.

⁷⁶⁵ *AJHR*, 1912, Session II, H-15, p.74.

⁷⁶⁶ Churchman, p.127.

OTHER LIGHTS/BEACONS MENTIONED IN AJHR

- 1896 Beacons placed on Louie Rock and May Rock, Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island.⁷⁶⁷
- 1899 Beacon erected on Barclay Rock, Stewart Island.⁷⁶⁸
- 1939 The Bluff Harbour Board and the Marine Department worked together to place an automatic light and buoy on Fairchild Rock, Bluff Harbour.⁷⁶⁹ This light was extinguished during WWII.⁷⁷⁰
- 1950 An electric automatic light was installed at Slope Point at the eastern entrance to Foveaux Strait (between Nugget and Waipapa Points). Another electric automatic light was erected at Bushy Point.⁷⁷¹ Still operating.
- 1951 An automatic light was established at Waituna Point in Foveaux Strait.⁷⁷² This light was found to be too often obscured by mist, and was dismantled in 1957.⁷⁷³ It was re-erected at Bushy Point the following year.⁷⁷⁴
- 1964 Nine sites were selected in Doubtful Sound for automatic lights to guide vessels discharging cargo associated with the Manapouri tail race tunnel project.⁷⁷⁵ These lights were discontinued in 1972 upon the completion of the Manapouri project. The lights were used elsewhere.⁷⁷⁶
- 1965 A new light was installed on South Head, Dusky Sound, to assist shipping bound from Australia to South Island ports and the Fiordland Sounds.⁷⁷⁷ It was discontinued in 1968 as its upkeep was no longer warranted. The light was in a difficult to service, exposed position and shipping had declined.⁷⁷⁸
- 1969 A light was installed on Centre Island, Lake Te Anau, to assist tourist launches visiting Glade House and the Glow Worm Caves.⁷⁷⁹
- 1974 Two new automatic coastal lights were installed on Long Point (Foveaux Strait) and Five Fingers Point (Fiordland), primarily to assist shipping bound for the Bluff Aluminium Smelter.⁷⁸⁰ Still operating.
- 1979 The light at Jamieson Head, inside Doubtful Sound, was removed and a new automatic coastal light was installed on Secretary Island at the entrance to the Sound.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1896, H-15, p.13.

⁷⁶⁸ *AJHR*, 1899, H-15, p.4.

⁷⁶⁹ *AJHR*, 1939, H-15, p.4.

⁷⁷⁰ *AJHR*, 1947, H-15, p.5.

⁷⁷¹ *AJHR*, 1950, H-15, p.5.

⁷⁷² *AJHR*, 1951, H-15, p.4.

⁷⁷³ *AJHR*, 1957, H-15, p.14.

⁷⁷⁴ *AJHR*, 1958, H-15, p.16.

⁷⁷⁵ *AJHR*, 1964, H-15, p.9.

⁷⁷⁶ *AJHR*, 1972, H-15, p.16.

⁷⁷⁷ *AJHR*, 1965, H-15, p.9.

⁷⁷⁸ *AJHR*, 1968, H-15, p.15.

⁷⁷⁹ *AJHR*, 1969, H-15, p.15.

⁷⁸⁰ *AJHR*, 1974, F-5, p.22.

⁷⁸¹ *AJHR*, 1979, F-5, p.19.

APPENDIX THREE: Keepers — a partial list

CENTRE ISLAND

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS							ASSISTANT KEEPERS						
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
McKinley, Alexander	29	4	1878	28	6	1882	Chandler, William	25	7	1878	8	3	1881
							Gibbons, Charles	25	7	1878	7	8	1878
Campbell, Robert J	28	6	1882	20	6	1885	Reid, William	7	8	1878	24	1	1879
							Cameron, William	24	1	1879	12	1	1889
Tregurtha, Charles	20	6	1885	30	7	1889	Dow, David (temp)	8	8	1880	30	9	1880
							Brennan, John	8	3	1881	6	6	1881
Johnston, Charles E	30	7	1889	14	7	1894	Spencer, William	6	6	1881	20	12	1881
							Tregurtha, Richard	20	12	1881	18	4	1883
Sandager, A.F.S.	14	7	1894	21	1	1895	Reid, William	18	4	1883	5	10	1884
							Cox, Thomas J.	5	10	1884	27	12	1887
Colley, William	21	1	1895	10	4	1899	Runge, Richard	27	12	1887	27	6	1888
							Canton, Walter	27	6	1888	9	5	1891
Sinclair, Jeremy	10	4	1899	3	8	1902	Ansini, John V.E.	23	4	1889	8	10	1894
							Lloyd, Robert H.	9	5	1891	14	7	1894
Jess, John	9	10	1902	4	10	1906	McLellan, John	14	7	1894	5	1	1895
							Anderson, James	8	10	1894	8	8	1898
Scott, William	4	10	1906	1	5	1909	Ross, William J.	21	1	1895	7	8	1897
							Fowler, Walter	7	8	1895	19	2	1901
Cox, Thomas J.	19	5	1909	7	1	1913	Thompson, Henry	8	8	1898	5	6	1902
							Butler, Alfred C.	19	2	1901	20	2	1903
Parks, Edward M.	7	1	1913	20	11	1914	McEwan, Archibald	5	6	1902	11	4	1903
							Martin, Henry	20	2	1903	25	5	1905
Field, Edwin H.	6	1	1915	26	7	1920	Koppert, Henry	26	4	1903	3	11	1903
							Marlow, George F.	3	11	1903	19	4	1907
Grenfell, Peter W.	7	12	1920	13	11	1922	Colfer, Charles J.	7	6	1905	31	3	1906
							Thwaites, John	31	3	1906	18	1	1907
Harvey, Henry	13	11	1922	19	10	1925	Pepper, Arthur N.	22	1	1907	7	12	1907

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End Date			Name	Start Date			End Date		
							Duthie, James	19	4	1907	23	1	1909
Mitchell, Albert	19	10	1925	23	8	1927	Simmons, George T.	7	12	1907	7	2	1911
							Tipene, John W.	23	1	1909	17	8	1909
Mitchell, Roy	23	8	1927	27	7	1934	Garland, Malcolm W.	17	8	1909	2	10	1912
							McPherson, George	7	2	1911	2	10	1912
Ager, George	27	7	1934	7	4	1937	Duncan, Alexander	2	10	1912	16	12	1915
							Partridge, F.S	2	10	1912	20	7	1915
Watts, F.N. (Ted)	8	4	1937	1	12	1938	Ross, William J.	21	6	1915	15	8	1918
							McGarvie, James	10	12	1915	16	6	1919
Smith, William	1	12	1938			1943	Williamson, Adam	15	8	1918	27	8	1921
							Morrison, August	22	11	1919	28	3	1922
Tait, John O.	3	8	1943	3	12	1943	Cameron, Donald	27	8	1921	22	4	1924
							Whaitiri, Harry	28	3	1922	19	10	1925
McCrea, Hugh G.							Pullan, A	16	5	1924	20	4	1927
							Brown, G.E.	7	9	1926	9	12	1928
Wagg, Jack C.H.							Jones, F.E.V.	20	4	1927	9	7	1928
							Lock, A.E.	9	9	1928	12	12	1925
Harris, E.R							Bowley, Eric	30	1	1929	10	6	1931
							Campbell, Hugh	10	6	1930	14	5	1931
Hitchings, George F.	23	1	1951	15	1	1954	Beardslaw, J.S.	14	5	1931	29	1	1932
							Ashton, H.W.T. (Dick)	29	1	1932	7	8	1933
Ross, Colin A.							Tennant, Fleet, R	12	6	1933	23	8	1937
							Pullen, A	7	4	1937	1	12	1938
Harris, Geoffrey F.							Smith, Charles E.K.	23	8	1937	25	7	1940
							Campbell, A.F.	30	11	1938	29	4	1939
Jenson, John S.							Wylie, Edward	16	5	1939			
							Stewart, W	27	5	1940	8	7	1941
Walter, Raymond M.							Hewitt, Philip (temp)				3	12	1443
							Ward, Richard (temp)						
Sears, Ronald							Fitzgerald, J.C. (temp)						
							Harris (temp)						

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End Date			Name	Start Date			End Date		
Wilson, Kevin I.													
							Harris, E.R.						
Coleman, Peter J.													
							Loader, C.E.						
Johnson, Raymond S.							Smith, Richard G						
							Cransden, Blake						
Schroder, Gary							Broam, Leslie H.R.						
							Aitchison, E.B.						
							Skerton, I.D.						
							Stewart, J.A.						
							McFadden, F.E.B.						
							Sutherland, James H.	8	1	1957	6	3	1957
							Coltman, Peter L.G.	6	3	1957			
							Jepson, John J.						
							Wilson, Kevin I.						
							Gunby, D.I.						
							Murray, John R.F.						
							Leggott, D.E.						
							Sole, Neil W.						
							Austin, G.Harry						
							Parish, David A.						

DOG ISLAND

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
Connochan, Alex	1	8	1865			1869	Cunningham, Peter	22	2	1865	15	12	1869
							Dove, J.C.		8	1865	30	10	1867
Cunningham, Peter	16	12	1869			1875	Cunningham, William	5	11	1865	11	3	1870
							Cunningham, James	16	12	1869		11	1872
Cunningham, William	1	6	1875			1879	Campbell, Robert, J.	5	3	1870	13	5	1870
							Smith, Fitzroy, M.	13	3	1871		7	1874
Clark, James			1879	23	5	1883	Robson, Charles, H.O.		10	1872		5	1873
							Johnson, James W		5	1873		6	1876
Henaghan, Patrick		6	1883	24	12	1888	Wilson, J.D.				30	9	1875
							McLeod, William,		6	1876		3	1878

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS							ASSISTANT KEEPERS						
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
Cunningham, James	29	12	1888	19	6	1894	Wilson, Robert H.	29	7	1877		1	1878
							Brennan, John	1	1	1878		3	1881
Erecson, John F.	18	6	1894		11	1900	Spencer, William	2	4	1878		5	1881
							Harper, William	1	3	1881	25	6	1883
Nicholson, James W.		2	1901	16	2		Colley, William		6	1881	17	1	1887
							Jess, David	25	5	1883	3	11	1884
Anderson, James		2	1903	30	10	1906	Sanderson, Edward	3	11	1884	27	6	1888
							Allan, George, H.	13	1	1887		12	1887
Ansini, John, V.E.	1	10	1906	17	5	1907	Nicholson, James W.		12	1887		2	1890
							Thompson, Louis	5	7	1888		12	1893
Quinn, Denis	18	5	1907	13	1	1912	Fleming, George		2	1890	4	5	1892
							Sinclair, Jerome		6	1892		9	1895
McLeish, David, W.	13	1	1912	1	9	1913	Bell, William		12	1893		12	1996
							Cox, Thomas J.		9	1895		3	1898
Murray, William	1	9	1913		3	1916	Gwynne, George		12	1896		11	1900
							Duthie, James		3	1898		11	1898
Harvey, Henry			1916		8	1919	Thwaites, George	5	12	1898	11	10	1902
							Fellowes, Robert T.		11	1900	1	12	1903
Livingstone, John	1	8	1919	11	11	1922	McAllister, Alexander	7	10	1902	22	7	1904
							Falla, Daniel J.		1	1904	9	6	1905
Leighton, Robert H.	28	2	1923	30	11	1923	Cody, Daniel		7	1904		5	1906
							Burgess, Walter W.		6	1905	1	10	1906
Scholfield, Sydney	1	12	1923				Johnston, John C.	9	6	1906	11	7	1907
							Arthur, John W.	1	10	1906	22	5	1908
Haven, Robert							Mitchell, William J.		9	1907	3	2	1911
							Millet, George N.	22	5	1908	17	8	1909
Smith, William						1933	Tipene, John W.		8	1909	26	9	1912
							McAlpine, Thomas	3	2	1911	2	5	1913
Watts, F.N. (Ted)	15	6	1933	8	4	1937	Sanders, Alfred H.	26	9	1912		6	1915
							Latham, Cecil E.	2	5	1913	4	9	1915
Ager, George	8	4	1937	24	7	1940	Albert, John J.		7	1915		1	1917
							Shamrock, Francis		8	1915	7	2	1916
Emmens, Charles C.	24	7	1940		6	1946	McLaren, Daniel		3	1916	10	11	1917
							Williamson, Adam		1	1917		8	1918
Curruthers, L. (Act)		6	1946				Scholfield, Sydney		4	1918			
							Dougall, John		6	1918	19	3	1919
White, Percy E.							Shamrock, Francis	25	5	1919	31	7	1919

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
							Fouder, Edward L.		4	1920			
Olsen, A.W.							Sinclair, George	6	3	1922	25	3	1925
							Evans, Frederick N.	11	3	1922	7	8	1923

PUYSEGUR POINT

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
Erceson, John F.	8	8	1878	1	12	1880	McLeod, William	1	4	1878	5	12	1879
							Scopes, Charles W.			1878			1881
Nelson, Martin	1	12	1880	3	7	1882	Henaghan, Patrick	5	12	1879	3	1	1883
							Lyall, David	29	8	1881	31	12	1884
Cunningham, James		7	1882		10	1885	Hansen, Anders	3	1	1883	6	10	1885
							Payne, Philip D.G.	1	11	1885	3	1	1888
Hansen, Anders	7	10	1885	15	1	1887	Scott, William	30	12	1885	23	4	1888
							Johnston, Charles E.	3	1	1888	12	7	1889
McNeil, Donald	14	1	1887	4	7	1890	McKinna, John	23	4	1888	10	5	1891
							Dawson, Duncan C.	12	7	1889	25	3	1890
Voyle, Philip J.	3	7	1890	11	10	1894	Partington, David		3	1890	25	1	1895
							Sinclair, Jerome	10	5	1891		6	1891
Parks, Alexander E.	11	10	1894	12	11	1896	Butler, Frederick W.		6	1891	11	10	1894
							Semmens, Gideon	11	10	1894	27	4	1897
Wakefield, Horace A.	27	4	1897	7	6	1902	Sandager, Andreas F.	25	1	1895	29	2	1904
							Parks, Edward M.		11	1896		3	1899
Rayner, John F.	7	6	1902	4	10	1906	Murray, William		3	1899	29	9	1902
							Eade, Charles G.	11	10	1902	31	5	1903
McIver, Robert	4	10	1906	19	12	1909	Burns, William B.		6	1903	27	7	1903
							Crumpton, James W.	23	7	1903	21	12	1904
Voyle, Philip J.	30	12	1909	17	1	1913	Dennis, Thomas	24	7	1904		2	1907
							Lee, Francis E.		12	1904	4	10	1906
Hart, Samuel	17	1	1913	23	7	1914	Kent, Henry J.	4	10	1906		7	1907
							Thwaites, John		2	1907	27	7	1908
Marlow George F.	23	7	1914		3	1916	Johnston, John C.	11	7	1907	3	8	1910
							Arnold, John		9	1908	13	6	1909
Pearce, Albert V.		3	1916		4	1918	Chalmes, D.	13	6	1909	31	10	1912
							Trewern, Reuben H.	1	8	1910	3	10	1912
McLeish, David W.		4	1918		4	1920	Dusting, Charles M.	3	10	1912	9	5	1913
							Smith, James P.	3	10	1912	17	1	1913
Goddard, James A.	10	4	1920	17	7	1922	Smith, Thomas B.		1	1913		11	1914
							Pottinger, John	9	5	1913			1916
Hooper, A. Joseph	17	7	1922	16	3	1923	Brown, George H.		11	1914		7	1916
							Willers, Percy R.W.		3	1916		4	1919
Mitchell, Albert	16	3	1923		10	1925	Cargill, Richard		7	1916		9	1916

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
							Albert, John J.		1	1917			
Hooper, A.J.(Act)							Harvey, Norman H.		4	1918			1919
							Sutherland, Robert S.		3	1919		4	1922
Irvine John H.							Irvine, John H.		11	1919		11	1921
							Young, Frederick	25	11	1921	7	8	1924
							Fowler, Edward I.	1	4	1922	9	12	1923
Stanley, (Act)							King, A.E.	22	11	1923			
Scholfield, Sydney							Bond, Walter D.	7	8	1924			
							Duncan, A.O.						
Watts, F.N. (Ted)							Hart, Thomas						
							Donaldson J.J.A.	11	9	1926		3	1928
Smith, William							Stanley R.G.						
							Payne, Albert J.E.						
Pullen, A							Jones, F.E.N.						
							Whiteman, V.George						
Hodge, Alfred G.							McKernon, F.H.						
							Campbell, Hugh						
Newson, Henry							Leighton, Walter J.				24	10	1934
							McIntosh, John A.						
Brown, George H.							Duncan, A.O.				1	4	1936
							Hobbs, James H.	19	11	1934	31	8	1937
Auld, John O. (Act)							Smith, P.O.	1	4	1936			
							Newson, Henry	6	4	1937	17	5	1939
Bawden, Douglas							Richardson, Arthur	31	8	1937			
							Smith, Thomas G.	17	5	1939	2	4	1943
Frec, Noel, J							Earl, Edward H.				10	12	1940

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS						ASSISTANT KEEPERS							
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
						Miller, E.D.Norman	10	12	1940	9	11	1946	
Kemp, William D.						Corson, Ronald							
						Carter, G.H.							
Coleman, Peter J.						Mayall, H.M.							
						Loader, C.E.							
Bonnievie, Torris						Smith, Richard, G.							
						Beaver, Kenneth R.G.							
Clark, Thomas A.						Welsh, T. Robert							
						Kemp, William D.							
Mason, Brian F.						Broom, Leslie H.							
						Hill, Barry W.J.							
Walter, Raymond M.						Greenen, D.W.							
						Usmar, I.S.							
Pilone, Michael P.						Mitdgard, Arne H.							
						Walter, Raymond M.							
Johnson, Raymond J.						Skeates, Edward C.							
						Whitley, William G.							
Daniel Peter W.						Trainor, Ronald R.							
						Smith, B.A.C.							
Therkleson, Paul						Hopper, Brian H.							
						Williscroft, B. Murray							
						Nicholls, Clive C.						1964	
						Connell, Maxwell B.							
						Heap, Alan							
						Norris, Edward B.		5	1966				
						Scott, R.G.							
						Daniel, Peter W.							
						Russell, Warren, P.	28	11	1967	29	4	1969	
						Hewson, R.J.							
						Bransley,							
						Potter, A.							
						Therkleson, Paul							

WAIPAPA POINT

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS							ASSISTANT KEEPERS						
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
Ercson, John F.	1	1	1884	18	6	1894	Tregurtha, Charles			1884	18	6	1885
							Fisher, William H.	18	6	1885			1885
Cunningham, James	19	6	1894	3	12	1898	Payn, Philip D.G.	18	9	1885			1885
							Nicholson, James W.	17	11	1885		12	1887
Henaghan, Patrick	1	12	1898		11	1903	Allan, George H.			1887	13	1	1888
							Thompson, Louis		4	1888	5	7	1888
Lyall, David		11	1903	23	4	1907	Tutt, E. William	30	6	1888		11	1896
							Gwynne, George		11	1896			1896
Gwynne, George	23	4	1907	19	6	1908	Bell, William		12	1896	30	4	1900
							Clark, Alexander T.		7	1900		11	1900
Greig, George		6	1908	19	6	1911	Gwynne, George		11	1900	10	2	1903
							Nicholson, James W.	16	2	1903	9	9	1903
Duthie, James	19	6	1911	20	7	1914	McAlpine, Thomas		9	1903	20	6	1906
							Simpson, George J.	30	6	1906	24	4	1907
Anderson, James	20	7	1914		4	1917	Fellowes, Robert T.	23	4	1907		10	1910
							Smith, Thomas B.	21	12	1910	6	1	1913
Arthur, John W.		4	1917		8	1918	Smith, James P.	28	1	1913	28	3	1915
							Conway, James H.C.		6	1915			1918
Livingstone, John		8	1918		8	1919	Frame, Ernest A.		9	1918	10	12	1918
							Smith, James P.				24	6	1920
Harvey, Henry	5	8	1919	10	11	1922	Cartwell, Leo, G.	2	7	1920	16	7	1923
							Bawden, Alexander W	16	7	1923		12	1923
Edmonds, William N.	10	11	1922	27	12	1922	Sinclair, George						
							Pullen, A.						
Hooper, A. Joseph	22	3	1923	30	11	1923	Bacon, (temp)		6	1930		11	1930
							Young, Harold R.						
Simmons, George T.	30	11	1923		4	1927	Peterson, John A.	1	8	1934	20	8	1937
							Bawden, Alexander	20	8	1937	15	5	1939
Jamieson, Hugh B.		4	1927		1	1932	McGarvie, James (temp)						

PRINCIPAL KEEPERS							ASSISTANT KEEPERS						
Name	Start Date			End date			Name	Start Date			End date		
							Tait, John O.						1941
Johnstone, John C.													
							McElligot, W.B.						
Smith, William	2	4	1936	30	11	1938							
							Flett, James H.						
Watts, F.N. (Ted)	2	12	1938		7	1941	Stuart, Edward C.						
Tait, John O. (Act)		7	1941			1943	Ross, Colin A.						
Smith, William		8	1943			1949							
Auld, John D.													
Stuart, Edward C.													
Kemp, William D.													
Armstrong, K.M.		4	1958										
McArthur, Ernest W.		2	1960										
Downie, Ronald D.			1961	29	9	1964							
Wilson, Norman L.	29	9	1964			1969							
Williscroft, B.Murray			1965										
Richards, Bryn M.		8	1976										
Scapens, John W. (Act)		8	1976	18	10	1976							
Automated		9	1976										

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