

Life Under the Light

Lighthouse Families of New South Wales



Office of
Environment & Heritage
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service





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Lighthouse Families of New South Wales

prepared by
Kijas Histories

for the
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
Lighthouses of New South Wales Oral History Project

Office of Environment and Heritage
Department of Premier and Cabinet



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Introduction



The light Smoky Cape Lighthouse at night. Sitting on a high, narrow headland, Smoky Cape is more elevated than other lighthouses even though its tower is relatively small.

PHOTOGRAPHER MICHAEL VAN EWIJK
COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND
HERITAGE

A family affair Married men were given preference for lighthouse jobs as the long hours, isolation and hard work often necessitated a family partnership. Lachlan McKinnon, shown here with his wife and 11 children, was assistant lightkeeper at Green Cape from 1893 to 1905. His daughter Eliza Grace (far right) was the lightstation postmistress.

COURTESY MCKINNON FAMILY COLLECTION

A comforting light in the wilderness or places of loneliness? Lighthouses hold a fascination for the modern imagination. Standing firm against the battering of fierce winds and waves, providing a symbol of safety and hope, or symbolising the 'mastery of man over nature', they mean different things to different people.

But what was it actually like to live on a lightstation? The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service² (NPWS) contracted historians to explore the lives of families who once lived on the lightstations now located within the national park system of New South Wales. The 'NPWS Lighthouses of New South Wales Oral History Project' covered seven of the ten lightstations managed by NPWS, namely Cape Byron, South Solitary Island, Smoky Cape, Sugarloaf Point, Point Stephens, Montague Island and Green Cape. The other three Sydney lightstations managed by NPWS – Barrenjoey, Hornby and Cape Baily – do not have a history of lightkeeping within living memory and were therefore excluded from the project.

This publication provides a brief glimpse of life on these lightstations based on interviews from the oral history project. To look at these stories in their historical context, the first chapter of this publication 'Establishing the lights' reviews the founding of the NSW lightstations from the nineteenth century onwards.

The second chapter, 'People, place, family and work' explores two major interrelationships. The first was between people and place – the landscape that helped shape the lighthouse families and in turn was shaped by them. The second significant interrelationship was that between family and work, particularly the partnerships that characterised life on the lightstations. Men were the only ones paid as lighthouse keepers and the permanent jobs went predominantly to those who were accompanied by their families. 'The family' was understood to be a cohesive and independent unit that could weather the isolation of the lighthouse posts. Wives were expected to nurture that unit and thus sustain their lightkeeping husbands. The history of the NSW 'lights' is therefore inseparable from that of the partnerships involved in marriage and family.





Time off The Duncan and the Tulk families together on the beach at Smoky Cape in the 1940s.
COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN

The seven NPWS lightstations by date of light

Lightstation	Location	Date light was first 'exhibited'	Date of automation
Point Stephens	near Nelson Bay, close to the entry of Port Stephens	1862	1973
Sugarloaf Point	Seal Rocks, south of Forster	1875	1997
South Solitary Island	18 km north-east of Coffs Harbour	1880	1975
Montagu(e) ³	9 km off the coast of Narooma	1881	1986 Staff remained at the lighthouse after automation
Green Cape	south of Eden – the most southerly lighthouse in NSW	1883	1994
Smoky Cape	near South West Rocks, north-east of Kempsey	1891	1985
Cape Byron	Byron Bay	1901	1989



Highway of coastal lights The lightstations managed by the NPWS stretch the length of the NSW coast protecting ships and sailors from dangerous shoals, headlands, bars and reefs.

Note that map excludes the metropolitan lighthouses of Barrenjoey, Hornby and Cape Baily which are also managed by the NPWS but are not covered in this booklet.



Seven of the nine staffed non-metropolitan lightstations were transferred to the NPWS in the 1980s and 1990s. Only Norah Head on the Central Coast and Point Perpendicular on the South Coast remain outside the NPWS park system. These lightstations form part of the major or 'First Order Lights' protecting shipping along the NSW coastline.

Thirty-two people were formally interviewed for the oral history project and many more contributed through email and phone discussions. They spanned the generations from the 1930s until the lighthouse families left in the 1990s and included past lightkeepers⁴, their wives and children and regular visitors. Despite this extensive group, recorded story telling about these lightstations has only just begun and it is hoped that many more will contribute their stories in future years.

There is no single experience of living 'under the beam' and each lighthouse represents a diverse range of memories and stories. Families moved regularly and independently of each other so that each move brought a new lighthouse community and a new landscape. Different historical periods meant different experiences across the generations, particularly as access to the outside world improved after the Second World War. Some people, whether male or female, young or old, were more suited to the life than others.

But there are also commonalities between the generations and places that shaped the stories of those living on the lightstations. While many of the tales are similar to those of other people who live in remote places, some lighthouse tales relate to the broader societal expectations of the time regarding family relationships and workplace hierarchies. And some are unique to the lighthouse families who lived on the edge of the land facing seawards, with the sacred duty of care to keep the light burning.

FROM TOP:

Point Stephens Lightstation.

COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Sugarloaf Point Lightstation.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY

South Solitary Island Lightstation.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY

Montague Island Lightstation.

PHOTOGRAPHER STUART COHEN
COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Green Cape Lightstation.

PHOTOGRAPHER KYLIE GAMELL
COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Smoky Cape Lightstation.

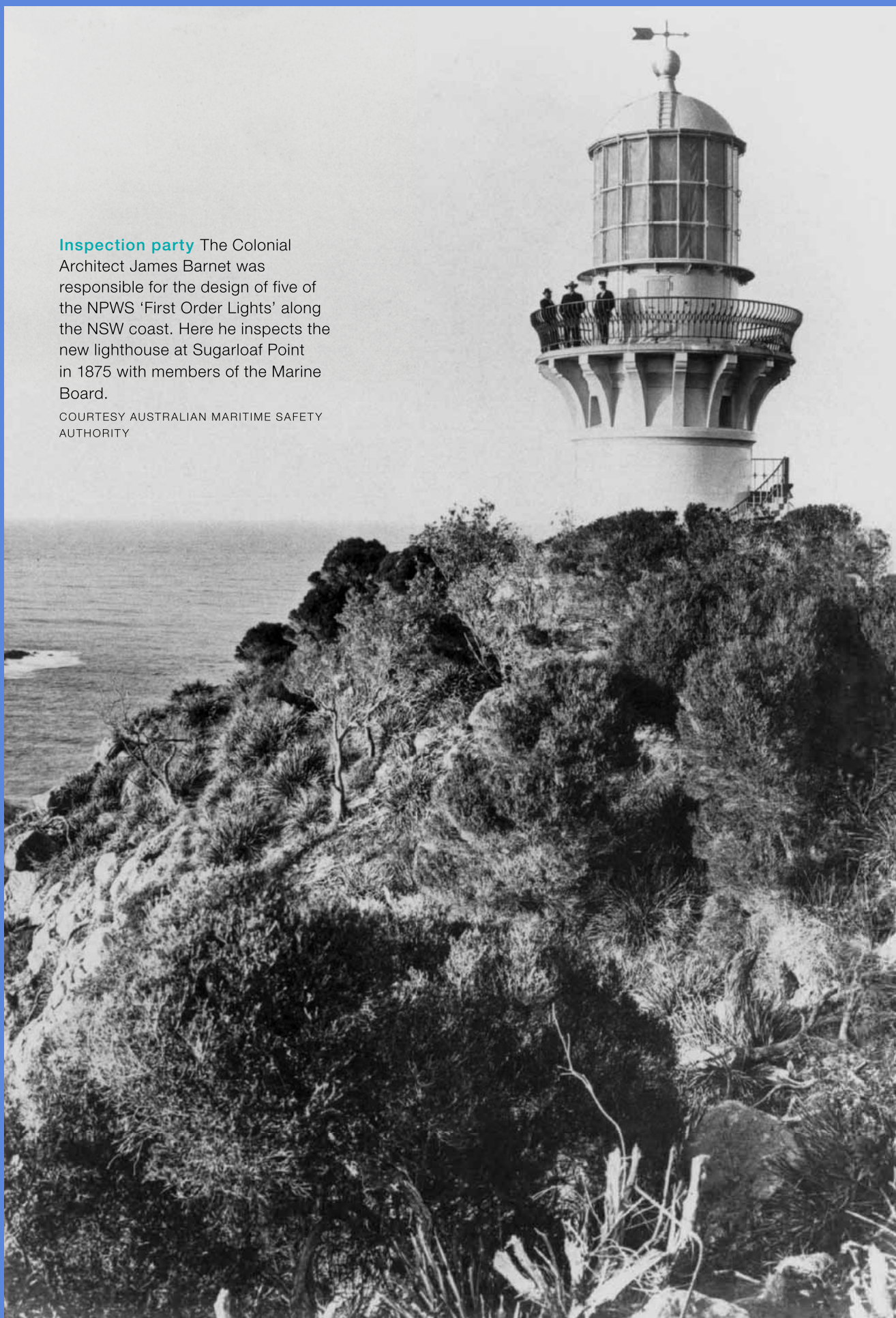
PHOTOGRAPHER MICHAEL VAN EWIJK
COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Cape Byron Lightstation.

COURTESY DALLAS NOCK

Inspection party The Colonial Architect James Barnet was responsible for the design of five of the NPWS 'First Order Lights' along the NSW coast. Here he inspects the new lighthouse at Sugarloaf Point in 1875 with members of the Marine Board.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY



Establishing the lights

The first navigational aid in Australia was a coal burning brazier set up on South Head in 1794 showing ships at sea the way into Sydney Harbour. Despite the technological experience of the British in lighthouse building and the early discovery of how treacherous the Australian coastline could be for shipping, no lighthouses were placed on the route to Port Jackson until 30 years after the First Fleet arrived. Macquarie Lighthouse was the first, built on South Head and lit in November 1818. The far more dangerous waters of Bass Strait and the entrance to Hobart Town had to wait until 1832 for the Iron Pot Light.⁵

The 'grand disasters of colonial life'



'Grand disasters' Shipwrecks were the tragic backdrop to the expansion of settlement and trade along the state's coastline. The wreck of the *Ly-ee-moon* off Green Cape in 1886, illustrated here by Alfred Martin Ebsworth, cost 71 lives and had a great effect on people across the state.

COURTESY PICTURE COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA: A/S29/06/86/100

Shipwrecks and the coastal run

Northbound shipping on the New South Wales coast had to contend with the southbound East Australian Current. Vessels tried to avoid the current and increase their speed by hugging the shore where the current's power was greatly reduced. Points of the coast protruding into the current such as Green Cape in the south and Sugarloaf Point to the north therefore jutted into the path of these vessels. Despite these potential hazards, the NSW coastline was relatively free of shipwrecks in the early colonial period. But the situation radically changed after the 1850s. The gold rushes brought a rapid growth in migration and trade to the east coast and new-settler populations increasingly opened up the coastal areas to the north and south of Sydney. Between 1873 and 1896 there were 419 shipwrecks with a loss of 595 lives and huge loss of cargo. The estimated value of vessels lost during this period was 1.8 million pounds.⁶

Shipwrecks were the 'grand disasters of colonial life' and their stories filled the press.⁷ Relief funds for shipwreck victims and their families were established and often generously supported. In one of the worst shipwreck disasters of the nineteenth century, the *Ly-ee-moon* was wrecked off Green Cape in 1886 with the loss of 71 lives. Donations were collected as far away as Bathurst for destitute wives and orphans.⁸ Even today the wreck peppers the stories of lighthouse families who served there. However, it is the region north of Sydney to the Queensland border that has the dubious honour of containing one of the highest densities of shipwrecks in the world due to its extensive navigable river systems and treacherous bars.⁹

While generally providing guidance to vessels around dangerous headlands and promontories, many lighthouses were built to assist the safe entry of ships to harbours and rivers. Many of the 13 major and minor lighthouses built north of Sydney before 1915 were to help safe passage at entrances to Newcastle, Port Stephens, the Hastings and Macleay Rivers, Coffs Harbour, the Clarence and Richmond Rivers, the jetty at Byron Bay and the Tweed River. With few navigable rivers south of Sydney only three major lighthouses were built along that stretch of coast.¹⁰

‘Like a street with lamps’



Naval tradition The houses of the lighthouse families were known as quarters – following naval terminology. The quarters of the head lightkeeper and two assistant lightkeepers at Point Stephens, which burnt down in 1991, were unusual in being joined within one structure.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY

Winter warmth Barnet's quarters had fireplaces in most rooms. Chimneys marched across the roofs at every lightstation, as shown here at Smoky Cape.

COURTESY KIJAS HISTORIES

The lights of colonial New South Wales

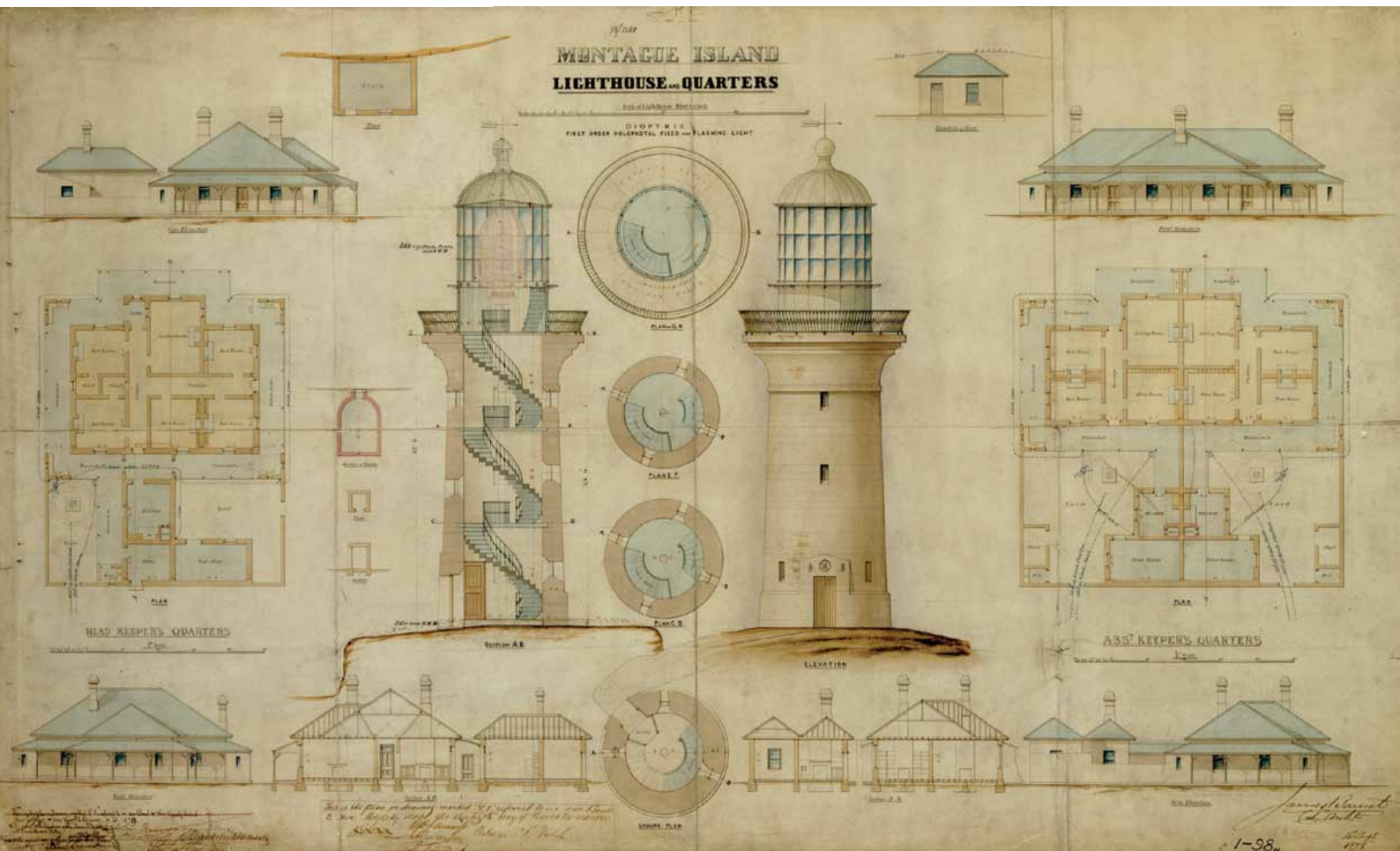
The building of lighthouses around the coastline of the other Australian colonies proceeded slowly in the mid-nineteenth century, often with a diversity of styles and wide variation in the standard of accommodation. However New South Wales was taking a different direction with two men dominating the building of the colony's lighthouses – James Barnet, NSW Colonial Architect, and Francis Hixson, the Superintendent of the Department of Harbours, Lighthouses and Pilots. Hixson famously wanted the NSW coast 'illuminated like a street with lamps'.¹¹

Five of the major lightstations now managed by NPWS were designed by Barnet following the stylistic principles of Francis Greenway's Macquarie Lighthouse (1818), on South Head. Barnet was also responsible for Sydney's Barrenjoey Light (1881) and many of the smaller lighthouses. While the design of Point Stephens is attributed to Barnet's predecessor Alexander Dawson, it is likely to have been Barnet's first experience of a major lighthouse. Smoky Cape, completed in 1891, was the last of Barnet's designs. And the later lightstations at Cape Byron and Norah Head designed by Charles Harding retained many of Barnet's design features.¹²

While each of the first-order lighthouse towers had similar design themes, they were unique in two ways. They used different, locality-dependent building materials, and they varied in height and structural features according to their particular setting.

High on its dramatic headland 128 metres above sea level, Smoky Cape Lighthouse is a squat tower of 17.4 metres, compared to the tallest of the lighthouses at Green Cape reaching 30 metres. Both lighthouses, along with Cape Byron and South Solitary Island lightstations were unusual in being made of concrete, rarely used at the time for public buildings. Green Cape was the largest concrete structure in Australia when it was completed. Montague was built of dressed granite, quarried from the island, Point Stephens of stone and Sugarloaf Point of rendered brick.

The houses of the families were known as quarters, following the naval terminology and traditions that underpinned the establishment of the lightstations. While the lighthouse towers were distinctive, the NSW quarters were designed in a consistent style making these lightstations unique among the Australian colonies. The two assistant lightkeepers' quarters were semidetached while the larger head lightkeeper's quarters stood a short distance away and closer to the lighthouse tower. Point Stephens offered the only dramatic departure in accommodation design, with a terrace of three residences forming a single building.



Grand designs Colonial Architect James Barnet's plan of the lighthouse and quarters at Montague Island, 1878. The quarters were generally designed in a consistent style – with those of the two assistant lightkeepers being semidetached and the head lightkeeper's quarters larger and closer to the lighthouse tower.

COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA: A9568, 1/11/11

Links in a chain



Built for the elements The exposed locations of the lightstations necessitated solid buildings designed for a harsh environment. On South Solitary Island a high protective wall provides sheltered access between the quarters and the lighthouse.

COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Greetings from Smoky Cape Many of the NSW lights have a history of being popular tourist destinations.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN

The beginnings of Commonwealth management

At the time of Federation, New South Wales was well ahead of the rest of Australia in its attention to maritime safety. All the NSW lightstations that exist today had been built by 1903 except for two small ones at Botany Bay and Port Kembla. However, many gaps remained along the rest of the Australian coastline and many of the lightstations that did exist provided poor accommodation for lighthouse families.

Following numerous discussions at late nineteenth-century inter-colonial conferences about a unified approach to lighthouse building and operation, the Commonwealth Lighthouse Service was eventually established in 1913. Two years later the states' lighthouses began to come under Commonwealth jurisdiction.¹³

Commonly referred to as just 'the service' by lighthouse families, the Lighthouse Service came under the control of the Department of Shipping and Transport in 1951 then, in 1975, the Navigational Aids Branch (generally referred to as Nav aids) of the Department of Transport and Communications. Today, while most of the lightstations are managed by national parks authorities in each state for their cultural and recreational values, the actual navigational lights are generally managed by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), which took responsibility of marine aids to navigation in 1991.



A changing job but a constant duty



Under the beam Perched on the edge of a peninsula, Green Cape Lighthouse is the tallest and most southerly in New South Wales.

COURTESY IAN CLIFFORD

The lightkeeper's role

Although progressive automation and 'demanning'¹⁴ began in 1915 with Commonwealth management, the process gathered pace in the years following the Second World War when more mechanics were employed to maintain the increasingly complicated technology of the new navigational equipment that was beyond the scope of lightkeepers' traditional skills. This trend increased rapidly during the 1970s, through the installation of automatic lights and new aids such as radio beams.¹⁵

The acceleration of staff removal in the 1970s led to the establishment of organisations opposed to demanning. In 1983, when a Parliamentary standing committee investigated the staffing of lightstations they found that the number of staffed stations around Australia had been reduced from 103 in 1915 to 41. The committee found that while the historical role of the lightkeeper in maintaining the integrity of the aid to navigation had declined in importance, other roles, many assigned by the Department of Transport and some voluntary, were now performed by the lightkeepers.¹⁶

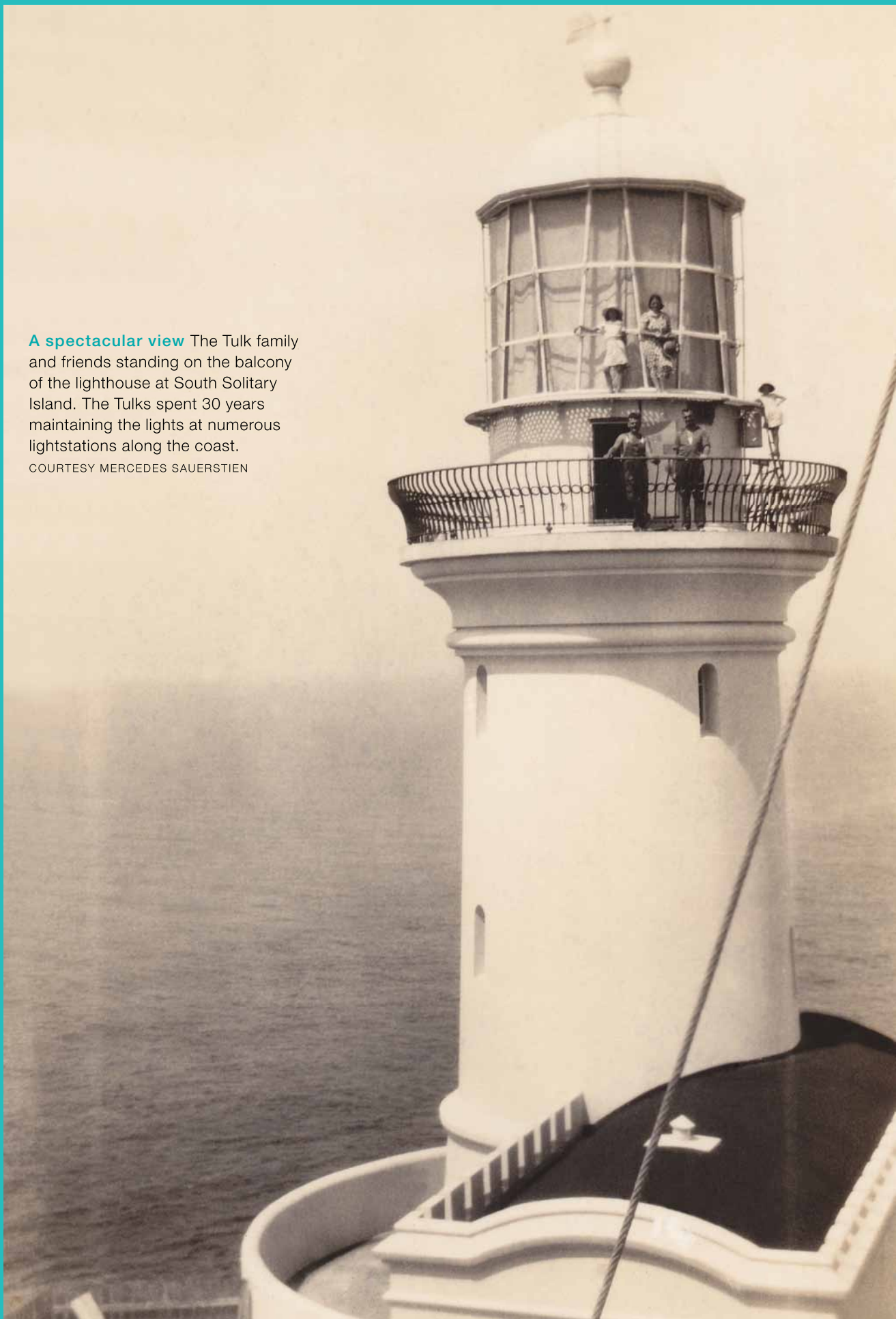
For some lightstations, such as Cape Byron, Smoky Cape and Sugarloaf Point on the North Coast, and Green Cape in the south, the committee considered that the benefits of a human presence at the site would be greater than the cost savings from automation or complete removal of staff. It recommended maintaining staff at these lightstations to continue functions such as protection of the cultural and natural environment, coastal surveillance, observations for the Bureau of Meteorology and assistance in search and rescue. The largest community opposition to automation was rallied at Narooma in support of keeping the lightkeepers on Montague Island.¹⁷ While the Department of Transport continued with plans to automate the lighthouse, it agreed that the state government through the NPWS would take over management and would retain fulltime staff on the island.

Despite the changing roles and tumultuous times, one thing endured unchanged for those who remained, that the duty of the lightkeeper was to ensure the light shone each and every night. The capitalised instruction to lightkeepers at the front of the *Standing Orders for Personnel at Aids to Navigation Stations* remained to the end:

YOUR DUTY IS TO ENSURE THAT THE AID TO NAVIGATION UNDER YOUR CONTROL IS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY AT ALL TIMES. THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA DEPENDS ON YOU.¹⁸

A spectacular view The Tulk family and friends standing on the balcony of the lighthouse at South Solitary Island. The Tulks spent 30 years maintaining the lights at numerous lightstations along the coast.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTIEN



People, place, family and work

The reason the lighthouses existed was to safely guide those at sea around dangerously protruding headlands or rocks and into harbour and river entrances. The history of the lighthouse families is thus inextricably linked with the landscape and environment in which they lived. People and place, and family and work cannot be seen independently from each other.¹⁹ The working life of the lightkeepers was interwoven into the daily lives of their wives and children. It required a presence on the lightstation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Everyone knew they were there for the light and in various ways participated in that duty of care.



Coastal vista Harry Handicott at Smoky Cape Lighthouse. Harry joined the Lighthouse Service in 1958 and Smoky Cape was his last posting before he retired in 1983.

COURTESY HANDICOTT FAMILY COLLECTION

Stories in the landscape Shane Chalker grew up at Sugarloaf Point (shown here in the 1980s). On the lighthouse road he remembers 'a story every second step'.

COURTESY CHALKER FAMILY COLLECTION

Family portrait The Stubbs family – Fred and Mary, twins Marie and Isobel, and Joyce – with family friend at Sugarloaf Point in the 1930s.

COURTESY JOYCE STUBBS



‘Each place had a different feel’



Enthusiastic fishers The Conley family lived on Montague Island for seven years in the 1970s. Jane, who spent most of her childhood and adolescence on lightstations, is fishing here with the children's constant companion.

COURTESY MARY CONLEY

Life on the lightstations

Despite the commonalities of the wind, sea and rocks and the design of the quarters, each station had its own unique character.

Not only was the environment and landscape different at each site but the impact of technological change over time meant that each generation experienced the same stations in different ways. Modernisation changed the experience of isolation and access on both shore stations and island stations alike.

The other defining difference between lightstations was that the communities of people changed regularly as individual families moved between the stations, bringing a different social experience with each shift.

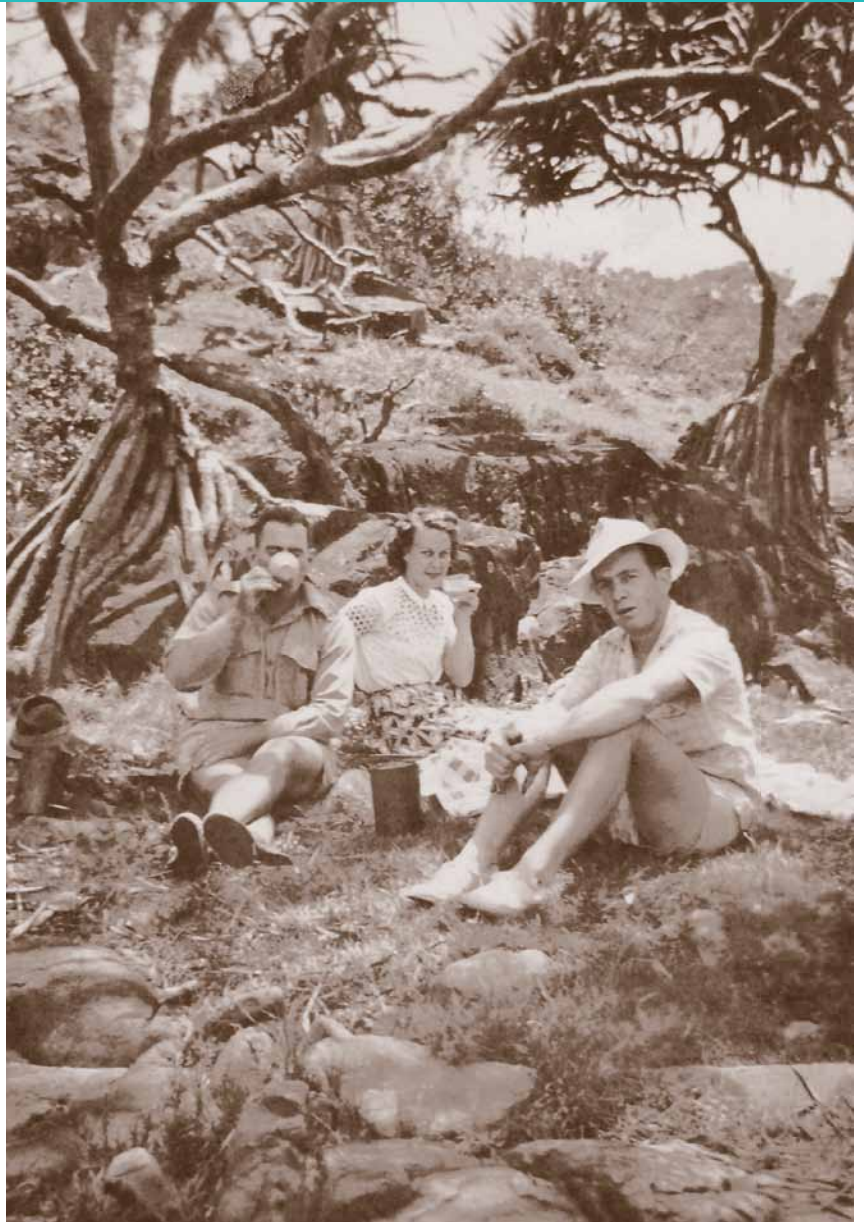
The environment and landscape

The wind blew everywhere, yet each lightstation offered its own escape from the elements. The only place to escape the wind on the exposed island of South Solitary was within stone wall enclosures and buildings. However at Point Stephens, respite could be found amongst the native bush in the middle of the island where the natural windbreak allowed lighthouse families to plant fruit trees protected from the salty winds. And at Green Cape the station had the reputation as the windiest, coldest and driest of all.



Beach access Joyce Stubbs lived at the Sugarloaf Point lightstation in the 1930s as a young teenager and would ‘swim, swim, swim’ at the long sandy beach. Not all lighthouses had easy access to the sea.

COURTESY JOYCE STUBBS



FROM TOP:

Living on a rock Lighthouse families often referred to South Solitary Island as 'The Rock'. For Shirley Northam, who lived there for four years in the early 1960s, 'there was nowhere to run'.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY

Picnic pleasures Marg and Jack Munday with a friend picnicking at Smoky Cape in 1947.

COURTESY MUNDAY FAMILY COLLECTION

The windiest of all Windswept heath inland from the lightstation on Green Cape. Here the Duncan family in 1939 load the draughthorse cart with bunches of boronia.

COURTESY BERYL ROYAL





Close to town The Cape Byron Lightstation was not far from Byron Bay and is the least isolated of the NSW lights. Lighthouse families often joined the Wategoes on their patch of beach for surfing, swimming and picnics through the 1930s and 40s.

COURTESY GLORIA COX



Long white beaches were accessible from Sugarloaf Point, Smoky Cape and Cape Byron. The lighthouse families used each of them differently. For Colleen Chalker and her family, the central aim of joining the Lighthouse Service was to eventually work their way to Sugarloaf Point, which they regarded as the best place in the world to live. Shane Chalker, then in his early teens, could make it to the surf from his front door in one minute. But at Smoky Cape or Cape Byron they thought you had to be a mountain goat to get to the beach. And, while Barbara Munday (now Atchison) rarely ventured down to the beach at Sugarloaf with her baby daughter Jayne, her ten minute walk down to North Beach at Smoky Cape and the steep 20-minute climb back was a daily joy not to be missed.

Everyone missed access to the water for swimming at South Solitary Island where the rocks and waves were too powerful for all but the most daring or foolhardy. While not all the stations had easy beach access, everyone who wanted to could get access to the sea for fishing.

There were those who lived to fish and there were those who didn't, but fishing exploits fill the stories of many families. Barbara Atchison was an outdoors person and on the island stations 'learned to like fishing as there wasn't much else to do'. But she also taught herself to knit, crochet, make clothes for her girls and many other craft works. The men who preferred not to fish, read. Others knitted their family's woollies or wrote poems and novels during their night shifts. Jess Tulk was the fisher in her family while her husband Wilfred wrote and published stories.

An island home Barbara Munday (now Atchison) with her two daughters, Jayne and Mellissa in 1979 at the small beach on Montague Island. The Mundays served twice on Montague – Jayne and Mellissa remembered a boisterous and busy outdoor life.

COURTESY MUNDAY FAMILY COLLECTION

Ted Pascoe was another who preferred to read rather than fish. He took up writing during the long night shifts although his writing was never about life on the lighthouse but rather to escape it. The Chalkers were of a latter era when the all-night shifts were no longer necessary because of 'semi-automation'. They were passionate fishers and surfers and loved the coastal environment. Colleen sometimes wondered whether the life of the lightkeeper wasn't a bit wasted on those who didn't fish.



Good catch Fishing was one of the main pastimes for lighthouse families. Jess Tulk, on the right, and her friend Poppy Maggs at South Solitary Island in the 1930s display their haul.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN



Isolation and access

Relationships with the outside world differed between lightstations and changed over time. Ian Cameron, for example, spent his childhood growing up on NSW lights in the 1920s and 30s. He became a lighthouse mechanic and later Lighthouse Service Supervisor of Maritime Aids. He noted that:

'Looking at them today you've got no idea how isolated even the shore stations were.'

The reputation of the lighthouse life as lonely and harsh is reflected in a poem hand-written in an old *Instructions to Lightkeepers* manual and retold by Harry Handicott:

**The man stood at the pearly gates looking all tired and old.
He meekly asked the man of fate for admission to the fold.
'What have you done,' Saint Peter asked, 'to gain admission here?'
'I was in the Lighthouse Service and got leave once a year.'
The gate swung open widely as Saint Peter tolled the bell.
'Come in,' he said, 'and take a harp. You've had enough of hell.'**

After the Second World War, as the shore stations were provided with ex-army vehicles and modern communication technology, Ian Cameron commented that conditions started to improve. Even so, stations such as Green Cape and Sugarloaf Point remained isolated because of their terrible roads. In the late 1950s Joan Mackay's young son Mark hated the road to Sugarloaf:

'He used to call it "dark time," going through these tunnels of lantana and other scrub. It was a wilderness.'

It was still considered a hard station by many into the 1970s due to its poor access.

However, while the roads remained rough to the shore stations for many years, access to the local communities became increasingly feasible. For some, the gap therefore widened between the island experience and the shore stations. For Shirley Northam who lived on South Solitary Island for nearly four years before a transfer to the shore-based Green Cape in the early 1960s, the experiences were not comparable:

'It's an entirely different proposition out there to the shore stations. There's a lighthouse, yes, but that's where it starts and finishes.'

She loved the fortnightly trip from Green Cape into Eden for supplies and didn't mind the rough road.

And yet for others who had not spent time on 'South Sol', Green Cape was as isolated as you could get. For Norma McCabe there was a

FROM TOP:

A long haul Prior to the arrival of a motorised cart on South Solitary Island in the mid 1960s, all the stores and equipment had to be manually pulled up the steep incline. Here, in 1944, the Smith and the Ryan families are 'whipped' into action.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION

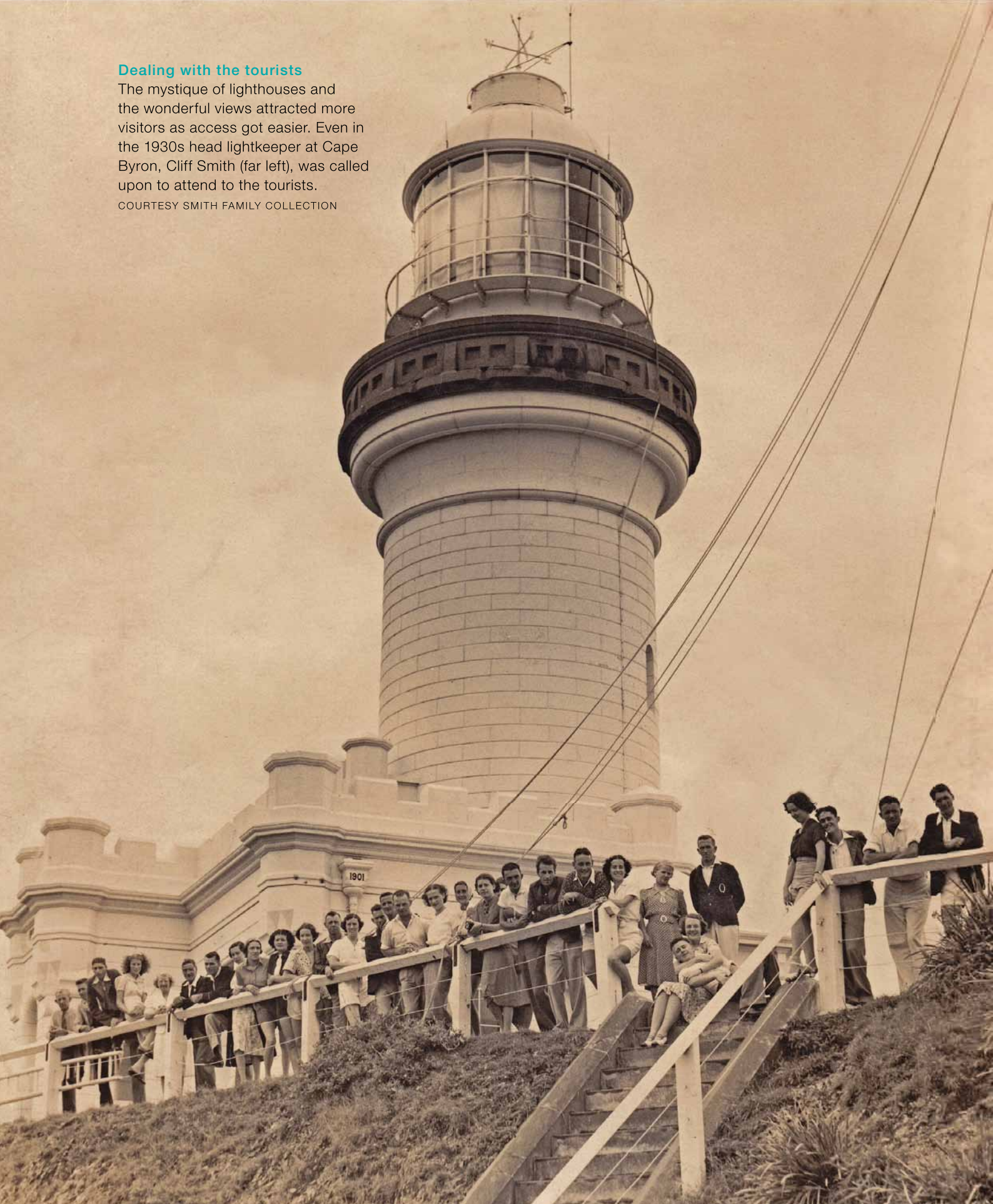
Flying fox Gordon Ballantyne on the flying fox between South Solitary Island and 'Bird Island' in the mid-1940s.

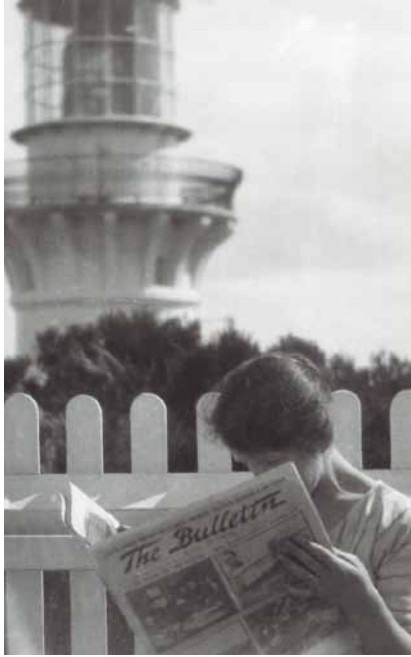
COURTESY GLORIA COX

Dealing with the tourists

The mystique of lighthouses and the wonderful views attracted more visitors as access got easier. Even in the 1930s head lightkeeper at Cape Byron, Cliff Smith (far left), was called upon to attend to the tourists.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION





FROM TOP:

Late news Jean Smith at Sugarloaf Point in about 1926. She is reading newspapers that her mother bundled and sent out to her at intervals from Scotland.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION

Family business Phyllis, Joyce and Margaret Smith at Point Stephens in the mid 1940s.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION

substantial gap in experience between the exposed rock of South Solitary and the greater diversity of Montague Island where there was room to move, a small beach and the interest of seals and penguins. The islands were the usual testing grounds for new lightkeeping families. If they could survive the isolation during their first posting on one of the islands, then the lightkeeper was likely to gain permanency. For some, the outside world was more an intrusion. From the 1970s at Cape Byron there was too much visitor access for a number of families. Regional Lighthouse Engineer Jack Duvoisin noted that:

'It was the inverse of the problem you think of with isolation. So close to the town, with such a magnificent outlook, there were always people at the station.'

Even in 1958 when Harry Handicott began his lightkeeping life at Cape Byron he commented that 'every day was visitors' day' rather than the regulation Tuesdays and Thursdays. Norma McCabe noted this issue as the reason her husband John requested a transfer:

'He said, "I didn't join the Lighthouse Service to become a tourist guide," so we went back to Point Perpendicular.'

By the late 1970s at Cape Byron the situation had become so intolerable for the head lightkeeper that he locked the gates during the day, frustrating the local community who thought it was 'their lighthouse'.²⁰

The communities

Maintaining the light was a constant duty. In later years families got six weeks holidays once a year but otherwise they generally spent every night on the station. But the combination of people at each station changed regularly. During the twentieth century, through to the 1970s, families were usually moved every three or four years so that everyone shared the isolation of the island stations.²¹

The combination of people at each station affected the memories of each place. Everyone noted that 'you didn't want to be in each other's pockets' and that casual visiting among the lighthouse families was strongly discouraged. The men had to work together every day – a situation either companionable or difficult depending on the personalities. Women rarely visited each other casually, and those who did were sometimes remembered as a burden. Such careful social management meant that usually only dogs and children were noted as the triggers for community disharmony.

Despite the generally held rule of 'keeping to yourselves' the degree to which meetings occurred differed from station to station. Sometimes people never visited the other houses. Whilst at one station a group



FROM TOP:

Social management Lighthouse families often found it best to keep out of each other's way and casual visiting was not encouraged. But on special occasions the station families would gather together. Here, Christmas is celebrated in 1947 at Smoky Cape in the Uhres' dining room with the Munday and Holmes families. COURTESY MUNDAY FAMILY COLLECTION

Mail delivery News from the outside world was eagerly awaited by lighthouse families on all stations and across every decade. Mr Collett delivered the mail to Green Cape during the 1930s and is welcomed here by the Duncans and the Martins. COURTESY BERYL ROYAL

RIGHT:

Lighthouse Ladies of the 1970s from left: back row Barbara Munday (Atchison), Val Lalor, Barbara Oxley (Rayner), Marg Munday. Front row: Julie Crooks, Jayne Munday, Dulcie Pead, Jean Smith and Tuppie O'Brien.

COURTESY BARBARA RAYNER

of families would hold regular card nights or barbecues while the next group might only gather for an irregular special occasion. Everyone, however, gathered for the weekly or fortnightly arrival of the supplies and mail. The attitude of the head lightkeeper and his wife, combined with the nature of the site itself, were the key ingredients in how community life was conducted.

During the 1970s Bruce and Mary Conley and their family lived on Montague Island for seven years and the family remember lots of social occasions. There was usually a sufficiently sheltered spot on the island to find a picnic site despite the relentless wind, and the head lightkeeper's family was always ready to enjoy a convivial gathering. On the other hand once the Conleys moved to Green Cape, Mary remembered there was less social interaction, in part because the environment was far less hospitable for outside gatherings.

The combination of age of adults and children, personalities, leisure interests and lifestyles naturally affected relationships within the communities. It was almost universally considered essential to regulate personal interaction to maintain harmony in such closed communities and those who were 'cup of tea or club people' were less likely to survive the life happily. And yet some people would build friendships regardless of the nature of the shared experience, and a few lightkeepers were remembered particularly affectionately by everyone interviewed who knew them.

Often the communities worked as relatively harmonious units but sometimes they did not. The dynamic could change over time. Mark Williams knew it was time to move on when after a few years with one family he realised that they had run out of things to talk about. Such was the nature of day-to-day life in remote places.



A job for married men



FROM TOP:

A roof and a wage Lightkeeping, while poorly paid, offered a home and wage for the family man. Wilfred Tulk was a signalman in the First World War and his family were living in a tent settlement in the sandhills of Coffs Harbour in the early years of the Depression when he was offered a job as assistant lightkeeper on South Solitary Island. Wilf remained in the Lighthouse Service for over 30 years.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN

In the service Pride in the job was an important aspect of life on the lightstations. Here, at Smoky Cape in the 1950s, lightkeepers Ted Pascoe, Fred Stubbs, and Bernie Hickey show off their new winter uniforms.

COURTESY JOYCE STUBBS

The lighthouse families

Married men were encouraged into the Lighthouse Service from the early years of Commonwealth management. Therefore many women and children shared the varied experiences of life on the lightstations.

Between the two world wars the men who became permanent lightkeepers were generally returned servicemen, often with maritime experience. Jack Duvoisin noted that:

*'They had the skills to maintain the towers working with bosun's chairs, rope handling and knot skills and working at heights. They were used to the sea and the Instructions to Lightkeepers manual included keeping a lookout to sea.'*²²

Pay and conditions were poor but due to the severe employment and housing shortages of the Depression and immediate postwar years of the late 1940s, lightkeeping meant the security of a wage and housing for the family.

Many of the lighthouse children remember their mothers and grandmothers of this era as independent, resourceful country women who accepted life and got on with it. Phyllis Miller (nee Smith) talked about her mother Jean:

'Mum was never one to mix with a lot of people, because at some of the lighthouses she was the only woman. I think Mum liked that life really.'

The Smiths were one of the dynasties of lighthouse families who served over a number of generations and Jim Smith remembers his mother Joyce (of the following generation to Jean) enjoying the life. She had been brought up on an outback property and he felt she understood the life.

Not everyone is remembered as being so well suited. Beryl Royal (nee Duncan) grew up on lightstations in the 1930s and 40s. She well remembers the new city wife of one of the lightkeepers at Green Cape, who arrived with no understanding of what she would find. She spent a lot of time with Beryl and her siblings who were fascinated by her heavy makeup and lack of any experience of things like spiders and insects. Beryl thinks she was terribly lonely in those early years.²³

Bill Condon brought his young wife June to South Solitary Island in 1949. While Bill remembers it was a good place for a honeymoon, he also remembers his wife was terrified of the island.²⁴ She wasn't alone, as a number of people on the exposed island recalled some women rarely moving outside their homes. The Condons only remained in the Lighthouse Service for a year. When the authorities wouldn't allow Bill to join his wife in Sydney after pregnancy complications he decided that it



Basket transport Marg and Jack Munday with son Steve at Point Stephens in about 1960.

COURTESY MUNDAY FAMILY COLLECTION

RIGHT:

Returned servicemen preferred Harry Handicott, a Second World War commando, joined the Lighthouse Service with his wife Amyce in 1958, on the invitation of fellow serviceman Bob Smith. Over 25 years the Handicotts served on all the NSW lights except Montague Island and Norah Head.

COURTESY HARRY HANDICOTT

wasn't the business for him. Not all the men were suited to the isolation either, or dedicated to the job. Tales of terrible alcoholism circulated despite the strict rules of abstinence in the early days on the stations. Lesser issues also caused grievance. One log entry from a head lightkeeper requesting the removal of an assistant not only complained about the man for being late to duties, 'but what's more he has fleas'.²⁵

After the Second World War returned servicemen continued to fill the ranks, although they were not necessarily navy men and had to be taught morse code and signalling. The ex-servicemen were favoured as more likely to be independent, resourceful men, used to a highly disciplined life and ready to keep things 'shipshape'.

As the supply of ex-servicemen was exhausted, later lightkeepers still kept a passion for, and experience of, the sea. Some were the sons of lightkeepers and many gained employment through a network of friends





and acquaintances already in the service. A range of all-round skills was considered an advantage.

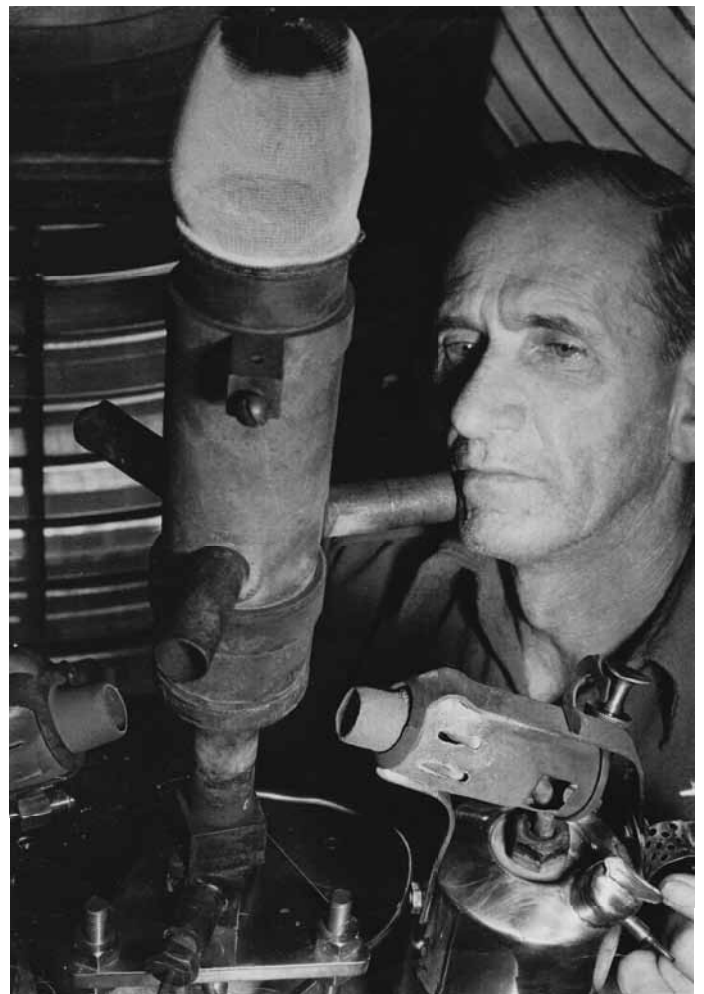
By the 1950s the move away from ex-servicemen meant that the Lighthouse Service began to conduct formal job interviews. The women were also interviewed. John Hampson related their experience:

'I was only interviewed for about a minute and a half. The questions put to me were: are you frightened of heights? Can you use a saw, a hammer and a paint brush? Out I went. Mrs Hampson, in she went and two hours later ...! It was the wives who got their husbands the job because if there was any sway – or 'I mightn't like it' – that was it.'



Barbara Rayner grew up on the Lights with her grandparents Jean and Cliff Smith and later spent nearly three years on South Solitary Island with her husband Robert Oxley before moving around the southern NSW Lights:

'You made your own life. You adapt to anything, and if you're with the one who you want to be with, what does it matter?'



FROM TOP:

Lighthouse dynasties Cliff Smith at Sugarloaf Point in about 1926. Four generations of Smiths grew up on NSW lightstations.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION

Willing helper Eric Mackay and son Paul at the water pump on South Solitary Island around 1963.

COURTESY JOAN MACKAY

RIGHT:

Keeping a good light Gordon Ballantyne at South Solitary Island in 1946. The light and its reliability was the focus of every lightkeeper.

COURTESY GLORIA COX

Long way down Access to the sea on precipitous South Solitary was always difficult. Here Barbara Oxley (Rayner nee Smith) in the early 1960s demonstrates the action needed to swing the full kerosene toilet bucket down the wire and into the sea at the base of the cliffs.

COURTESY BARBARA RAYNER



‘I never thought about how amazing it was’



FROM TOP:

Family friend The Bailey children with Phyllis the horse on the beach near the Point Stephens Lightstation in 1969.

COURTESY BAILEY FAMILY COLLECTION

Lighthouse baby Phyllis Smith was a baby when Cliff and Jean Smith began their lightkeeping life at Sugarloaf Point in the 1920s.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION

Life for the lighthouse children

Memories of growing up as a lighthouse child are mixed. It varied between the stations, the amount of company there was and whether one was able to remain on the station for schooling or had to be sent away to board. Iain McCabe was pleased when other children arrived for a while at South Solitary Island but enjoyed the ‘Robinson Crusoe’ adventures that an eight-year old from the suburbs could develop. As he grew older he looked forward to moving to Cape Byron because ‘on the rounds of the lighthouses it had a good reputation’ of being close to town and the pictures. But he took longer than his sister to settle into high school and he missed the direct and solitary connection to nature of the other lighthouses. Jane Conley completed most of her schooling with her brother Jeff on Montague Island – both taught by correspondence through their mother. The family moved to Green Cape for the last year of Jane’s schooling so that she could attend the high school in Eden but it was an experience she found miserable and alienating.

For many of the lighthouse children doing the round of the stations, Norah Head, Smoky Cape and Byron Bay were the only locations where they could attend school while still living at home. (In later years schooling was accessible via long drives at Sugarloaf Point, Point Perpendicular and Green Cape.) Otherwise they boarded or were educated through Blackfriars Correspondence School, the standard of which was thought to be high. Some Byron Bay townspeople remembered the lighthouse children as sticking together and not mixing easily unless a school teacher paid particular attention to their needs.²⁶ For those at home on the isolated lightstation, correspondence classes could be finished by lunchtime or midway through the week, giving the children ample time for other pursuits and adventures.

Cecilie Handicott loved the adventure of South Solitary Island where her father would take them clambering down the rocks to sit for hours fishing and watching the waves. However, she and her brother Les were in high school and had to board in Coffs Harbour. They would walk down to the jetty from where they could see their home on the island and she would cry and cry.

Phyllis Miller was sent away to school from a young age in the 1930s and missed her family terribly. When her husband suggested he would like to join the Lighthouse Service she said no – she wanted to bring up her children at home. Other children boarded with local families. Gloria Cox’s brother, for example, stayed at nearby Jerseyville during the week and returned to Smoky Cape on the weekends.

Each station had a different appeal. Jayne Hindle (nee Munday) remembers enjoying life at Smoky Cape with the beach, warm weather and access to South West Rocks, in comparison to the cold and isolation of their other lighthouse homes at Montague Island and Green



Cape. But they were never on stations with children of their own age and found the experience of constant moves between schools a strain:

'You miss out on a lot of interaction with other people when you're younger. I notice it more now that I've got young kids and see them and they're surrounded by people all the time. We didn't have that growing up, so I think it was harder to interact.'

Beryl Royal, two generations older, commented that while she was never lonely and enjoyed her upbringing, she and her sister were 'never easy in civilisation'. While she can only speak for her own family, she says they were 'quiet people'. Jim Smith remembers his childhood at Cape Byron and South Solitary among others:

'I loved where I was and what I was doing. I never thought about how amazing it was in those days. It didn't worry me not having friends and neighbours and that's been part of all my life.'

Regardless of the differing memories of growing up on the lightstations, their lighthouse heritage is treasured and special to all the interviewees. Shane Chalker reflected a general sense amongst the lighthouse children of stories embedded in the landscape. Growing up at Sugarloaf Point he said that:

'All the tourists who walked that road from the lighthouse gate to the top – there was a story every second step. Every corner there was something that happened at some point. Every little section of the sand hills – there was always a place where one of your friends hurt themselves, or where you found a rock with a really good fossil. Every six feet there's a story out there.'



FROM TOP:

Collecting pipis Trevor, Cecily and Shane Chalker at Sugarloaf Point.

COURTESY CHALKER FAMILY COLLECTION

Rock pool Norma Tulk and Ken Duncan playing at Smoky Cape in the 1940s.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN

Lighthouse children Experiences differed markedly among the children but most came to treasure their memories of growing up on the lights. In the 1930s Neville Paddon was the only boy on South Solitary Island with the three Tulk girls.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN



‘We always said it was a partnership’

Family and working lives

The lives that people made for themselves on the lighthouse stations were fully integrated into their working and family lives. There was a saying among some of the men that they ‘did the light house work and the women did the heavy house work’.²⁷ Reflecting a commonly held sentiment among the interviewees, Harry Handicott said that he and his wife Amyce ‘always said it was a partnership’. They worked as a team.

Colleen Chalker commented about many married partnerships:

‘The thing is, your husband was there all the time. You made their morning tea, their lunches, their afternoon teas, and it was good. If you didn’t like each other very much it wouldn’t have been very good, but if you liked each other it was a great life.’

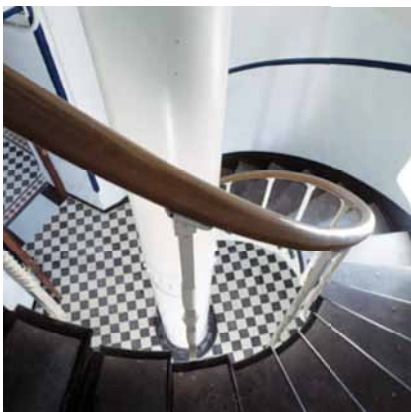
Traditional gender roles were largely divided between the home and the lighthouse precinct, but there were always overlaps and everyone in the family knew that the light was the priority. Everyone had a different story to tell about that relationship – different feelings and experiences – but the nature of the job was all encompassing and everyone played a part.

In the days when the light sources were kerosene burners the stations housed three families as the men took one of three shifts each night to tend the light. On the late shifts the women often took a cup of tea or spent some time with their husbands in the lantern room to keep them company. Even when the lights were electrified and the night shifts were no longer necessary, everyone was aware if there was a problem. Alarms went off in the houses to indicate that the light had failed or that a vessel was radioing for assistance. No one could escape the roles of the lightkeeper. A commonly held view was that: ‘It wasn’t a job. It was a way of life’.

Once a station was semi-automated the number of lighthouse families was reduced from three to two. However, it was still potentially a 24-hour job, seven days a week. The ‘turn on’ and ‘put out’ of the light was a daily duty and it had to be at precisely the right time or a ‘lighthouse spotter’ was sure to ring if the light was even five minutes late. The heavy canvas curtains that enclosed the lantern room had to be taken up or put back each day and it was not unusual, even if officially frowned on, for the older children or wives to take on these tasks.

When Iain McCabe became a relief keeper he once slept through the alarm and didn’t turn off the light on daybreak. His father woke him up that morning and was not impressed because the light was still turning in daylight. It ‘was one of those things you don’t let happen in that business; a cultural no-no’.

It was a regimented lifestyle guided by the strict official instructions manual. Even leaving the lightstation if a family member was unwell was



FROM TOP:

Working together Cliff and Jean Smith were one of the many married couples whose working life on the lightstations was a team effort.

COURTESY SMITH FAMILY COLLECTION

Accessing the light Internal view of the spiral staircase at Cape Byron Lighthouse.

PHOTOGRAPHER JOEL WINTER
COURTESY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE



Drawn curtains Green Cape Lighthouse showing the curtains which were drawn each morning to keep the sun off the lens. The thick magnifying glass could form a focal point that was a potential fire hazard for the surrounding landscape. Once the light was automated the curtains were no longer needed as the lens rotated 24 hours a day.

COURTESY KIJAS HISTORIES

RIGHT:

Proud domain Wives took pride in keeping their quarters as clean and tidy as their husbands kept the lighthouse. Here Edna Pascoe shows off the kitchen of her South Solitary Island home.

COURTESY TED PASCOE

not always possible. Holidays came once a year and that was the only time that the families could usually leave the stations for more than a night.

There was much pride among family members of those men who 'kept a good light'. This entailed keeping the extensive brass work in the tower sparkling and the huge lens gleaming. These were very labour-intensive jobs and, as a child, Shane Chalker noted that:

'We weren't allowed to touch the polished brass in there. You'd get done over for that.'

On the outside, the grounds would be closely mown and cleaned and the paint-work kept in good condition. Given the environment, permanent relief keeper Rod Tilly noted that painting the tower was like:

'the Sydney Harbour Bridge; you start at one end, and by the time you get to the other end, you need to start all over again.'

Likewise, keeping the salt off everything in the quarters and towers was a constant duty for lightkeepers and their wives. The women worked within their homes, alone or in the company of their children. It was generally the role of the head lightkeeper's wife to cater for the regular visits of the mechanics or official visitors and the bosses on their annual inspection of each station. Those who were proud of their family's reputation kept their homes as shipshape as the lighthouse itself.

The annual inspections were reported to all. In 1971 the formidable and respected regional controller Captain Taylor noted that:

'The standard of maintenance of all stations is adequate, and at several stations it is outstanding.'

He went on to name four stations. However, as automation gathered pace, funds decreased and morale declined. Some stations deteriorated rapidly and were in very poor condition when passed from the Commonwealth to the NPWS.



A cow, chooks and vegetables



FROM TOP:

Self sufficiency The Bailey family inherited Susie the cow when they lived at Point Stephens from 1969.

COURTESY PETER AND MAUREEN BAILEY

Growing provisions Two generations of the Munday family kept gardens at Green Cape, Montague Island, and Smoky Cape lightstations. Jack Munday was renowned for growing large vegetables.

COURTESY MUNDAY FAMILY COLLECTION

Keeping the family in provisions

Access to fresh food was often unreliable. While fish was a constant diet for many, especially in the earlier years, the lighthouses had chooks and vegetable gardens where possible, and often an orchard. The salt air, while always a challenge, did not dissuade a number of women and some men from the difficulties of tending a garden and providing food where they could. Jayne Hindle remembers her mother always having a garden – ‘flowers and vegies’.

When they lived at Green Cape, renowned as the windiest place in New South Wales with one of the lowest rainfalls, Barbara and Stephen even tried hydroponic gardening.

Two generations earlier, on South Solitary, Jess Tulk had chooks and grew root vegetables as well as petunias and carnations – a major achievement on that island.

In the earlier days most places had a cow for milk. Later the Mundays milked a goat while living on Montague Island when they found their daughter Mellissa was intolerant to dairy products.

If the family lived on an island, food was delivered weekly or fortnightly in the postwar years, but it was necessary to have at least two months supply in case bad weather delayed the arrival of the supply boat. Up until the 1930s, Montague Island was a favourite site for day visits by tourists from Narooma and nearby towns despite the hazardous weather. On New Year’s Day in 1904, 23 guests became stranded on the island for nearly a week, sorely testing the supplies of the lighthouse families.²⁸ On the shore stations, once a station vehicle was available, supply day involved an official fortnightly trip to the closest town centre by the assistant lightkeeper and his wife.

The women were often the glue that sustained life on the stations. Joan Mackay commented that in the late 1950s supporting their husbands was seen by the Lighthouse Service as the primary role of women on the lightstations. She felt that leaving the station would be the cause of some reproach. Aside from their domestic duties and correspondence lessons for their children, they were often called on to help in a variety of unpaid roles. In latter years they took the phone calls, did the weather reports, operated the radio to assist small vessels and helped out in emergencies.

While the importance of the role women played was recognised by the preference for married men to take up work as lightkeepers, their contribution was not always well acknowledged. Joyce Stubbs, whose parents served on lighthouses from Smoky Cape to Green Cape, remembers that in the 1930s only half of the travel costs for women were paid when they were posted and her father joked that her mother ‘was only half a person’. While acknowledgment of women’s roles



Lighthouse horse Draughthorses worked hard on days that supplies were delivered. At Sugarloaf Point Lightstation the sand made the horse's job particularly heavy work.

COURTESY JOYCE STUBBS

RIGHT:

Stranded Some of the 23 Tilba residents stuck for almost a week on Montague Island in 1904 during bad weather. Day visitors were denied access to the island, in 1953, once it became a National Trust sanctuary to protect the nesting sites of sea birds, the seal population and the fragile island flora.

PHOTOGRAPHER WILLIAM CORKHILL
COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA: AN2501614

among officials of the Lighthouse Service improved somewhat in later years²⁹, the lives of women and children were entirely dependent on the men retaining their job.

No woman was ever employed to care for the lights and when a lightkeeper died or was permanently incapacitated there was no option for the family but to leave the station. Jock Cameron was head lightkeeper on Montague Island in 1935 when he died in Sydney from the legacy of wounds received in the First World War. Ian Cameron remembers the situation faced by his mother Ada and his five siblings: 'After our father died we had nowhere to go'. It was the Depression and Ada couldn't find a job, having to place the four youngest children in an orphanage while the older children sought work.³⁰

For many women their role on the lightstations was all they needed while for others it could be a wearisome and lonely existence. For some women in later years, the greater freedom to take up jobs away from the lighthouse, where accessibility allowed, was a respite that enabled them to enjoy their life on the stations. Other observers worried that this trend marked a shift away from the concept of family partnership that kept the stations running smoothly.

For the men who were made redundant during the process of automation and demanning, their memories of the Lighthouse Service are mixed. Such an unusual occupation with unique challenges and requiring diverse skills did not necessarily translate easily to other employment. The lifestyle and location could rarely be matched. However, in many cases successful family partnerships continued, as husband and wife were accustomed to working together and sharing tasks. Some lightkeepers retired to work on the land, another occupation where the whole family contributes. For others the sense of lifestyle loss was too great and marriages broke up. When they left the Lighthouse Service, people often returned to family homes or the area around the lightstation where they had been most happy – such as South West Rocks and Kempsey for those who enjoyed Smoky Cape; Old Bar for those from Sugarloaf Point; Coffs Harbour (South Solitary Island); Byron Bay (Cape Byron) and Narooma (Montague Island).





An elegant design Each of the lighthouses in the NPWS collection is distinctive. The circular tower at Point Stephens, with its flared base, external stairs and clean lines stands tall and elegant from its low elevation. Built in 1862, it was the first of the 'First Order Lights' along the NSW coast.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY



Conclusion



Lighthouses hold considerable fascination for us and many of the people interviewed for the ‘NPWS Lighthouses Oral History Project’ had been asked about their experiences many times before. They have told their stories to those interested in the distinctiveness of their lifestyle and how they carried out a job that didn’t survive the changes in technology, employment conditions, and other developments of modern life. Recording these stories will make the memories and traces of that special and unique lifestyle more widely available as the lived experiences of the lighthouse families recede further into the past.

The construction of lighthouses accelerated as trade and migration expanded the movement of shipping along the NSW coastline in the second half of the 1800s. By the late twentieth century the development of reliable automated lights had replaced the need for human supervision and at the same time improvements in roads and transport made the lightstations more accessible to other families moving to the coast or using their car for family holidays at the beach. But the association of the coast with leisure and relaxation should not obscure the challenges and hardship lighthouse families endured to keep the light burning, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Each lighthouse and each family has its own historical place and unique experiences. But they also share histories wrought by the combination of time and place, and by the integration of their family and working lives around the lightstations. The stories these people tell about their experiences serve to make sense of a vital part of our past and of the historical links that lightkeepers and their families retain.

Illuminated Detail of the light at Sugarloaf Point.

COURTESY AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY

Family gathering The Paddon and Tulk lighthouse families in the mid-1930s on South Solitary Island – the most isolated of the NSW lightstations.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTEIN





Cape Byron Lighthouse Mounted below the main light is the red sector light which alerted ships to the danger of nearby Julian Rocks.
COURTESY DALLAS NOCK

Notes

- 1 The term 'lightstation' is used to refer to the complex of buildings around a lighthouse including the lighthouse itself, the lightkeepers' quarters and storage buildings.
- 2 See note on departmental names p 41.
- 3 A number of interviewees spell Montague without the 'e' and feel frustrated that NPWS followed the NSW Geographical Names Board which made the official change on 2 June 1972.
- 4 When referring to the lightkeepers the interviewees often used the terminology from the *Standing Orders for Personnel at Aids to Navigation Stations*. Uppercase 'Lightkeepers' (one word) refers to the Assistant Lightkeepers rather than the Head Lightkeepers; lower case 'lightkeepers' refers to all the lightkeepers. In this booklet the term 'lightkeeper' is retained but is lower case throughout.
- 5 Reid G 1988.
- 6 Reid G 1988, p 76; Carleton H R 1898.
- 7 Barrow G 2010.
- 8 Foster L 1998, p 586.
- 9 Richards M 1996.
- 10 See Reid 1988, map pp vi–vii; *Town and Country Journal* 3 August 1878.
- 11 Reid G 1988, p 76.
- 12 Brooks G 2001, p 31.
- 13 The date of 1915 marked the beginning of functional changes in lightstation management implemented by the Commonwealth.
- 14 The process of removing lighthouse staff is variously known as 'demanning', 'unmanning' or 'unstaffing'.
- 15 Reid G 1988.
- 16 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure vol. 1, 1983.
- 17 Pacey L 2001.
- 18 Commonwealth of Australia Department of Shipping and Transport, *Standing Orders for Personnel at Aids to Navigation Stations*, (amended 1968–1973). Also see the 1917 *Instructions for Lighthouse Keepers* reproduced in Buchanan S 1994.
- 19 All quotations following come from interviewees of the oral history project unless otherwise stated. The date and place of interview is noted at the end of the booklet.
- 20 Peter Bailey interview.
- 21 Death, retirement, resignation or community disharmony could mean a spate of more-regular moves, or leave communities in place for longer. The pattern of transfers was relaxed from the 1970s and 80s so that families with high-school children could stay in one place for longer, and those at the top of their seniority could remain at their chosen station.
- 22 Jack Duvoisin interview.
- 23 Beryl Royal telephone comm. 2009.
- 24 Bill Condon telephone comm. 2009.
- 25 Harry Handicott interview.
- 26 Merle Wright Byron Centenary story 2001, Doris Parkes telephone comm. 2009.
- 27 Julie Crooks noted it in reverse, see Duvoisin 1975.
- 28 Pacey L 2001.
- 29 In 1975 Regional Engineer Jack Duvoisin thought it was about time that the women of the lights were acknowledged and wrote an article about all those who were currently serving on the NSW lightstations.
- 30 Cameron I 2003.

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Atchison, Barbara (previously Munday); Hindle, Jayne (nee Munday); Eather, Melissa (nee Munday); and Williams, Melissa. 26 March 2011 with Jo Kijas at South West Rocks.

Bailey, Peter and Maureen. 18 March 2009 with Jo Kijas at Old Bar.

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Chalker, Colleen and Shane. 16 March 2009 with Jo Kijas at Tuncurry.

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Cox, Gloria (nee Ballantyne). 24 January 2009 with Adele Wessell at South West Rocks.

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Duvoisin, Jack. 28 February 2009 with Jo Kijas at the Queensland Maritime Museum, Brisbane.

Future, Frank. 14 March 2009 with Jo Kijas at Nelson Bay.

Hampson, John and Nancy. 25 January 2009 with Adele Wessell at South West Rocks.

Handicott, Harry. 12 March 2009 with Jo Kijas at the Central Coast.

Hindle, Jayne (nee Munday). 19 March 2009 with Jo Kijas at Smoky Cape Lighthouse.

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Stubbs, Joyce. 25 January 2009 with Adele Wessell at South West Rocks. 26 March 2011 with Jo Kijas at South West Rocks.

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Thorn, Val, (nee Ryan). 11 February 2009 with Jo Kijas at Coffs Harbour.

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Treize, Rob and Deirdre. 19 May 2009 with Jo Kijas at Coffs Harbour.

Williams, John. 14 February 2009 with Jo Kijas at Toowoomba.

Williams, Mark. 22 March 2009 with Adele Wessell at South West Rocks.

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A NOTE ON DEPARTMENTAL NAMES

In the 1990s following the automation of the lighthouses along the NSW coastline, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) became the manager of most of the major lightstations. The NPWS is now part of the Office of Environment and Heritage, Department of Premier and Cabinet (OEH) and the oral history project on which this booklet was based was commissioned by OEH. Previous incarnations of the department since 2003 were the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) and the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW). These are referred to as OEH in this publication.

COVER:

The beach at Sugarloaf Point Lightstation in the 1930s.

COURTESY JOYCE STUBBS

INSIDE COVER:

The Tulk family and friends on the balcony of South Solitary Island Lighthouse.

COURTESY MERCEDES SAUERSTIEN

BACK COVER:

Harry Handicott at Smoky Cape Lighthouse.

COURTESY HANDICOTT FAMILY COLLECTION

This publication was prepared by Dr Johanna Kijas of Kijas Histories, on behalf of the Office of Environment and Heritage.

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