WLV-189

by George M. Feirer, Historian

This article is, in effect, an obituary. Currently docked at Gardner’s Basin in Atlantic City, is the resting and rusting hull of lightship WLV-189. Built in 1947 by the Defoe Shipbuilding Company of Bay City, Michigan, her 128 foot long hull was once adorned by such notable names as “NEW ORLEANS,” “FIVE FATHOM BANK,” “CAPE MAY,” and “BOSTON.”

WLV-189 at Gardiner’s Basin, August 1983
At this time she was painted blue; she was painted red again in 1985.

Photo by Kim M. Ruth

Her tenure in Atlantic City extended from 1976 until sometime in the spring of 1994. Her usefulness as a lightship was terminated and she became a vocational training ship for the Atlantic County Manpower Services Administration and was placed in charge of instructors from the Oceanic Society. That too, came to pass, as Atlantic County has turned her over to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Game, which has decided to sink her along with other hulls to develop an artificial reef for the propagation and harborage of marine life. Efforts have been made by your chapter officials to obtain some of the artifacts from the ship prior to its demise—So far, without success. Current plans call for Atlantic County to retain her mast lights and the fog signal. Other parts may become available, but what and for how much remains to be seen. State officials have promised the author to be notified when final demolition is to begin in order that he may go aboard for final photographic documentation.

Specifications:
Built: 1947
Builder: DeFoe Shipbuilding Company
Bay City, Michigan
Length: 128 Feet
Beam: 30 feet
Draft: 11 feet
Anchors: 2,700 lb. mushroom (2)
Lights: 400,000cp, 67 feet above waterline visible 14 miles
Fog signal: Two-tone diaphone
Crew: 15 men

Gash in stern caused by collision with Swedish vessel while lightship was under tow to Gardiner’s Basin.

Photo by Kim M. Ruth, June 1985.
Addenda

Contrary to information published on page 32 of “The Keeper’s Log,” Vol. X, No.2, Winter, 1993, the WLV-189 is still tied to a dock at Gardner’s Basin. This was confirmed on January 27, 1994. As we go to press, the possible time for sinking is mid-February, although this is yet to be confirmed.

[Ed. I believe her last station was BOSTON, and she was decommissioned from there in 1974, being replaced by a LNB (Large Navigational Buoy)].

A Visit to Trinity House — London & Lights “Across the Pond”

By Ted & Jo Panayotoff

Last summer we had a opportunity to visit England on business. Not wanting to waste a great opportunity to visit with and learn more about our fellow lighthouse enthusiasts “across the pond,” we were able to schedule time enough for some sightseeing in London as well as a drive along the coasts of Kent and Sussex.

Prior to our trip, we had corresponded with the headquarters of Trinity House in London. They graciously invited us to visit during our stay. Trinity House, correctly the Corporation of Trinity House, is the organization responsible for maintaining lighthouses, light vessels, buoys and beacons for coastal navigation on the coast of England, Wales, and the Channel Islands. Other responsibilities include the location and marking of wrecks, as well as maintaining electronic aids to navigation. Beyond their function as the General Lighthouse Authority for their jurisdictional area, Trinity House is a charitable organization for mariners and their dependents and is the licensing authority for deep sea pilots in the United Kingdom. Based on information supplied by the headquarters, Trinity House maintains 82 lighthouses (less than one third now manned), 11 light vessels (all unmanned), 8 large buoys or light floats, and 550 other buoys. Harbor lights and small buoys are the responsibility of the various Harbor Authorities of the ports along the coast.

The exact origin of the Corporation of Trinity House has been said to be obscure, but it undoubtedly evolved from various medieval mariners’ guilds concerned with providing for their members and families. In 1514, King Henry VIII granted a charter to “The Brotherhood of Trinity House of Deptford Strond,” a group of mariners associated with navigation on the Thames River. Douglas Hague and Rosemary Christie, in their book, “Lighthouses,” tell us that this charter was later confirmed in 1547, 1553 and again in 1558.

In 1565, Queen Elizabeth I, by Act of Parliament, empowered the Corporation of Trinity House to erect “Beacons, Marks and Signs for the Sea.” The first lighthouse built by Trinity House was at Lowestoft in 1609; however, at that time most lighthouses in Great Britain were privately owned under patents or grants from the Crown. Trinity House expanded its role gradually until finally in 1836, it was given complete authority to buy out all the remaining private lights. This was very costly as the value of the lighthouses included the anticipated future revenue from light dues. The most paid for a lighthouse was 444,984£, a vast sum in 1841, when the last private lighthouse was purchased.

The Corporation of Trinity House has no jurisdiction over Scotland and Ireland and in 1786, The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses was established for Scotland and the Commissioners of Irish Lights for Ireland. These organizations and this division of responsibilities are still in effect with the Commissioners of Irish Lights jurisdiction including both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Our visit to Trinity House was arranged with a follow-up call to the Information Department at Headquarters in Tower Hill, London.

After a visit to the Tower of London, where we learned that one of the towers — the Lanthorn Tower — is said to have been a lighthouse, we kept our appointment at Trinity House. Trinity House is located on the opposite side of Trinity Square across from the Tower of London. We were greeted by our host Mr. Russell Dunham of the Information Office. He graciously escorted us on a breathtaking tour of the building and its historic contents. At every turn, on every floor, there are treasures associated with lighthouses, light vessels and the Corporation. Mr. Dunham explained that the Corporation of Trinity House is governed by a Board of Elder Brethren who are Master Mariners with long command experience in the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy. Many historically significant members have their likenesses on the scores of paintings exhibited on the walls. We saw several models of light vessels along with the two current Trinity House Tenders, THV PATRICIA and THV MERMAID. There are examples of different lighting equipment on display, and models and paintings of many Trinity House lighthouses. We would be remiss in not mentioning the extensive library as well as an exquisite Persian rug which is the second largest one-piece hand-tied rug in existence (second only to the one carried from Windsor Castle during its fire in 1992).

In addition to the contents, the building itself, built in
1793, is magnificent. It is even more impressive because it suffered extensive damage during the London Blitz in 1940 and was rebuilt in 1953.

The Trinity House Lighthouse Service, as well as the Northern Lighthouse Board and Commissioners of Irish Lights, are financed by light dues which are paid by all vessels entering ports in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The rates are set under the Merchant Shipping Act of 1898. As the U.S. Coast Guard has done, Trinity House is automating its lighthouses. Their light vessels have also been automated with the last manned light vessel withdrawn in 1989. These light vessels are different than those in the U.S. in that they were not powered and required a tow to get to their station. Some light vessels have been replaced by large automated buoys, or LANBYS, similar to the U.S. practice, but in most cases the existing light vessel was converted to automatic operation and returned to its station.

Trinity House makes extensive use of helicopters for relief of offshore light stations with difficult access and for resupply and maintenance operations. Many rock tower lighthouses, such as the famous Eddystone, have had helicopter landing pads installed above the lantern. This spoils the aesthetics but certainly makes the relief and resupply much easier and safer. The Trinity House automation program intends to automate all their lighthouses by the end of the decade.

Trinity House maintains a refreshingly enlightened attitude toward the public relations aspects of their responsibilities. Many of the remaining manned lighthouses are open to visitors and we were certainly made to feel very welcome on our visit to their headquarters in London. We only wish that we had been better informed to take full advantage of the time Mr. Dunham so graciously made available to us.

While in London, there are other locations well worth a visit because of their lighthouse and nautical association. Two which we managed to include were St. Katharine’s Dock and the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The first location is within walking distance of Trinity House and contains a light vessel, the one from NORE station. As in the U.S., the name is associated with the station and the vessel itself is identified by a number. St. Katharine’s Dock was once a commercial facility but now is a yacht marina and contains a number of restored historic vessels as well as the light vessel. The NORE light vessel appears to be privately owned and according to a sign, is used as a yacht broker’s office. We visited the dock on Sunday when there was no one on board so we could not confirm its status or whether one could get access to it for a visit. The National Maritime Museum is another outstanding facility well worth a visit. It is a part of the complex in Greenwich that includes the Royal Observatory, the location of the 0 longitude line, and the Royal Naval College, similar to our Naval College in Newport, R.I. All the museum’s exhibits are very interesting but of special interest is a beautiful 1st order lens with its rotating machinery in operation and several other exhibits about Trinity House and their lighthouses.

Last but not least if you are in London and want to pick up any books on lighthouses, we discovered an outstanding bookstore with an excellent selection of lighthouse books from around the world. It is “Motor Books,” just off St. Martins Lane about two blocks north of Trafalger Square. The phone number is 071-836-5376.

Following our London visit, we were able to spend two days touring the coasts of Kent and Sussex by rental car.

The counties of Kent and Sussex are about 1 1/2 hours east and south of London respectively. Driving on the “wrong” side of the road was a bit of a challenge at first but we quickly adjusted, aided by the excellent directional signs and courteous drivers, who seemed to make allowances for our inexperience. On our first day, we headed for Margate on the East Kentish coast. All of our trips were aided by the excellent 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Maps which show the accurate location of the lighthouses, both active and inactive.

The light at Margate is a harbor light at the end of the sea wall. The present light dates from 1954 and replaced an earlier one, dating from 1828, which was destroyed in a storm in 1953. That storm must have been an exceptionally bad one because that original lighthouse was a 100 foot tall building. The Margate light exhibits a fixed red light.

The second lighthouse we visited was the North Foreland Lighthouse. This is an active Trinity House light, a manned light and the monitoring and control station for other unmanned lights along this part of the English coast.
According to a booklet by Stephen Hale, on the "Lighthouses and Lightships of East Kent," there has been a light maintained at this location since 1499. The first lighthouse was built here in 1636 and was replaced in 1691. This second lighthouse was enlarged in 1790 and Argand oil lamps installed as the illuminating source. The earlier light source was coal. In 1890, a new lantern was installed and this exists today. The light was electrified in 1930 and is now fed from the power mains. There is both a generator and an acetylene gas light for emergency back-up. The lower half of the present 85 foot tower is part of the structure of the circa 1691 tower. The light is a flashing white light with a red sector. Judging from the sign at the lighthouse (see photo), the lighthouse is open at times; however, we were not able to find out when.

Working our way south along the coast, we stopped at the town of Ramsgate. For those who remember WWII history, this was the harbor from which the Dunkirk evacuation was organized in the summer of 1940. Hundreds of private yachts and fishing boats left from here to assist in the rescue of the British troops trapped across the English Channel. At Ramsgate, there is another harbor light, Shaw’s Lighthouse, designed by John Shaw. Shaw’s Lighthouse was built in 1842. It has a very interesting feature in that the color of the light varies according to the depth of the water in the harbor entrance. A float mechanism below the base of the lighthouse controls the light and also operates a device to record the rise and fall of the tides. The light is red when the depth is more than 10 feet and green when less than 10 feet, according to the

Continuing on, our next lighthouse was located on the famous White Cliffs of Dover at South Foreland between Dover and St. Margaret’s Bay. The South Foreland Lighthouse is no longer an active light and is owned by the National Trust. It is open to the public from 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays from the end of April to October. It is being actively maintained, as can be seen from the photo, and is manned by a group of enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteer “keepers.” Only the lighthouse is open at present, but the tour includes the lantern with the second order lens, rotating mechanism and weight drive. The first lighthouse at South Foreland was actually a pair of lighthouses to distinguish the location from the single lighthouse at North Foreland. These were built in 1634. The two lights were rebuilt in 1843 and in 1846. The lower light was discontinued in 1909. The original illuminant was a coal fire, then oil in 1793 and eventually the high light was electrified in 1872. Additional experiments on electrical generating equipment for lighthouses were carried out at South Foreland in 1876 and 1877. In 1922 South Foreland was the first English Lighthouse connected to the electrical power mains. The
lower light structure is still in existence some distance away; however, lack of time kept us from walking down to it for a closer look. The lighthouse is a “must see” one and is very accessible. Although a good mile from the closest public parking, if one ignores the “travel at own risk” signs on the narrow tracks, one can drive out to the lighthouse. The tower is only 69 feet high but the over 300 foot high chalk cliffs put the light 374 feet above mean high water. The area off the coast from Ramsgate down to South Foreland is called the Goodwin Sands and is particularly dangerous. Several light vessels, all now automated, are stationed there. The South Foreland Lighthouse tower has a long range video camera, which is part of the monitoring system from North Foreland, trained on the South Goodwin Lightship.

A short distance down the coast from South Foreland, is the city of Dover. This has a large and very active harbor where cross channel ferries of various types—from conventional ships to hovercraft—operate. There are four active harbor lighthouses on the various breakwaters at Dover; however, only one is completely accessible and another, the largest of the four, can only be approached after a long walk past the Western Docks RR Station and along the breakwater. Access and good photos are limited from the closest point to the light because of a radar

Our second lighthouse day began the next morning at Hythe on the coast and proceeded south to the lighthouses at Dungeness. Dungeness is the site of two standing lighthouses and part of a third. A total of five lighthouses have been built in this unique location since the first one was completed in 1621. The continued movement of Dungeness Point to seaward has been the reason for the replacement of all but the next to last lighthouse. In 1635, a tower with a coal fire light was built. It operated for over 100 years. By 1792, a third lighthouse was needed and Samuel Wyatt built one to use sperm-oil lamps as the light source. Just after that project, he also built the Trinity House building in London, finishing it in 1795. This third lighthouse tower had a two story concentric keepers quarters as its base. The remains of the keepers quarters can still be seen at the present site. The fourth lighthouse, built in 1901, was near the site of the third tower but was higher to accommodate the farther seaward movement of the point. Its 143 foot tower, known as the “High Light,” was one of the highest in Great Britain when it was built. This lighthouse is now privately owned and is open to the public from March to the end of September daily from 9:30a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The classic lens is still installed; however, the rotating machinery is no longer functional. On the level just below the main lantern, there is an unusual two sector light which exhibited a red and a green sector. The brick tower construction is similar to many lighthouses here in the U.S. There is the usual circular stair around the inner wall with iron railings and iron platforms at several levels. While the paint could stand a little work, the lighthouse appears to be sound and generally well kept.

The last keepers houses are still intact; however, they are not in use and are boarded up. We did not inquire about the process that resulted in their present private ownership, but it is fortunate that they are available for preservation and public access. The last lighthouse at Dungeness was placed in operation in 1961. This new one was made necessary by the construction of a large nuclear power station near the High Light which partially obscured it. The new lighthouse is of reinforced concrete construction with a tall narrow cylindrical shaft. There is an enlarged section at the top for the lantern and electronic fog signal equipment. It has an unusually large base with a spiral ramp, which we speculated was part of the foundation system to support the lighthouse on the soft shingle beach. The illuminating equipment at “New Dungeness” is somewhat unique in that it consists of a panel of sixteen 250 watt sealed-beam lamps on a rotating assembly. These lamps are identical to the ones in railroad locomotive headlights. This design has an economic advantage over specially designed, lighthouse specific equipment. While not as aesthetically pleasing when compared to the classic beauty of the Fresnel lens, these lights are quite functional and more cost effective.

Leaving Dungeness, we continued down the coast past.


Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff

station next to the lighthouse. With a quick drive-by of the Channel Tunnel construction site at Folkstone, we returned to our “digs” at Redhill, south of London, to recuperate for day two of our lighthouse blitz.
The resort town of Eastbourne to Beachy Head. This is another area of spectacular white chalk cliffs and is part of the Sussex Wildlife Trust. There are two lighthouses at Beachy Head. One is an automated active light and the other is inactive and is part of a private home. The latter was the first lighthouse at Beachy Head. It was called Belle Tout and was constructed in 1828 on top of the cliff.

Beachy Head Lighthouse from the edge of the cliff.

Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff

The problem with this location was that it placed the light 284 feet above mean high water. Due to the height, the light was frequently obscured by fog. Many of you know that this was a problem experienced at many of our U.S. West Coast lights. It became clear that the solution to the problem was to lower the light. This was done at Beachy Head in 1902. A new lighthouse, measuring 142 feet, was built at the foot of the cliff with the light now at 103 feet above Mean High Water. The lighthouse is painted white with a large red band and red lantern so it stands out from the white cliff behind it. It has been an automated light since 1983 and features a double flashing white light which is monitored and controlled from the North Foreland lighthouse. The Beachy Head area is a beautiful location and well worth a visit, even though the lighthouses are only available to photograph.

This completed our whirlwind visit to English lighthouses. We are still amazed at what we managed to pack into the few days available. What we can't show you from our photos is the warmth and hospitality of all our fellow lighthouse enthusiasts we met along the way. We shared stories and exchanged information with many people who have our interest in the continuing preservation of this most important legacy.

Some information on Trinity House and English lighthouses can be found in the following books published in England:


NJC Spring Meeting & Events

The Spring meeting of the NJC will be held on Saturday, March 26, 1994, at the Barnegat Light Fire House on Central Avenue in Barnegat Light, at 11:00 a.m. Our guest speaker will be noted author, John Bailey Lloyd, speaking on the history, disappearance and re-appearance of Tucker's Island (Little Egg Harbor Lighthouse). At this writing the museum will be open and we are working on arrangements to have the lighthouse open. Please bring a lunch as dining opportunities are rare this time of year on the island.

Officers for 1994 were elected at the December meeting (see "From the Presidents' Desk" - this issue). We want to thank Bill Geifuss, Katie Moser, & Carl Nelson for their hard working and dedicated service on behalf of the New Jersey Chapter in the past years.

Upcoming Events:

A Lighthouse Cruise, scheduled for June 4, 1994, at 9:30 a.m. out of the Inner Harbor, Baltimore, aboard the Baltimore Sentinel. We expect to see 5 or 6 lighthouses and the trip is expected to last about 7 hours. We will also be able to see the CHESAPEAKE Lightship and the Seven Foot Knoll Lighthouse. Cost is $30 and the trip is rain or shine because the boat is enclosed. Cost does not include transportation to Baltimore. The trip will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Send count and check, made payable to U.S.L.H.S. - New Jersey Chapter to Carole DiNapoli, 1150 Kearney Drive, North Brunswick, NJ 08902.

We are planning a picnic for the June Meeting at Fort Mott State Park near the Finns Point Light on June 25, 1994, at 11:00 a.m.
The September meeting will be at Sandy Hook, possibly on the 3rd Saturday in September. Dates have yet to be finalized.

From the Presidents' Desk

by Jack Granger

I am always enthusiastic when I speak to you all, either in person, or through the “BEAM” because I think we have the greatest organization made up of the greatest people.

I greet you all now with double my usual enthusiasm, as we will be entering our fourth year with many new faces in our official family. I would like to officially welcome Tom Laverty as our new First V.P., Marge Ridolfi as our new Treasurer, Kathy Hackney as our new Secretary. Additions to the Board of Directors are Ted Panayotoff, Dick Phillips, Fred Thies, and Jack Thomson. New Chairpeople are Betty Smith - Hospitality, Joan Walton - Membership, and last, but not least, Yvonne Miller -Programs, who has really “hit the ground running.” She has so many good ideas that I do not think we have enough months in 1994. As you could see in the extra mailing, many activities are already “locked-in.” She will be ably assisted by Carole DiNapoli. Since an organization is measured by the enthusiasm of its people, we are off to a great year. Please remember that we are constantly looking for your input as to things you would like to do. It is your organization.

Reservations for the Baltimore boat trip are really coming in according to “Admiral” Di Napoli. We are pleased that we have finally been able to put together the picnic that many of you have asked for. That will be on June 25th at Fort Mott State Park near Pennsville, N.J. [More later in The “BEAM”]

It is pleasing to see the number of membership renewals that we are receiving.

The Preservation Committee is shaping up nicely under Tom Laverty. We will be re-doing our by-laws to accommodate some new ideas that we did not consider when we drew up the first ones. We would like your ideas on this also. A fall cruise, probably in Long Island Sound, is starting to shape up.

I think that is it for now. Please try to attend our activities because getting to know each other is the name of the game.

Jack Granger

F.Y.I. - Cape May Point Lighthouse

by Patricia Lewis

This “Lady” has held up very well—considering she’s 135 years old! Time for a complete face-lift—that’s what is happening at the Cape May Point Lighthouse these days.

The severe weather this winter and error in the original building plans (it was discovered that the sixteen vertical posts holding the lantern in place actually extended several feet into the lighthouse brickwork making it impossible to remove the lantern without damaging the original structure) have caused the restoration to be behind schedule. Revised plans now call for the removal of the corroded copper roof and the beacon. These will be shipped to and restored in Buffalo, New York. A large metal can will be placed on the lantern gallery allowing the crew to replace the glass panes and restore the rusting framework. In addition, the tower is expected to be repainted to its original colors of gray and red.

The Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts (MAC) has been operating and restoring the lighthouse since 1988. The recent major restoration has been made possible by the acquisition of two grants-The New Jersey Historic Trust Preservation Bond Program and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (ISTEA) Grant, the former for the lantern work and the latter for the painting of the tower.

Watching this restoration, as noted by the Cape May Point Lighthouse Manager, Susan Senior, is a bit like visiting a dear old friend in the hospital. To those of us who are fortunate enough to work there, we are anxiously awaiting the results of the “surgery,” hoping our “friend” will be as good as new by the Memorial Day Weekend and ready for the thousands of visitors again.

Revised, tentative timeline for the project is as follows:

February 16 - Framework used to lift the metal roof and can structure will be delivered to the site.
February 17, 18 - Preparation work to remove same.
February 19 - Removal of roof and placement of the can.
Mid-May - Removal of can and replacement of the beacon and the restored roof.
May 27-Re-opening of the lighthouse to the public.
June 4-Grand Re-opening ceremony will be held at 3:00 p.m. at the Lighthouse.
**Lighthouse Crossword**

**ACROSS**

1. Our favorite aid to navigation
2. Inventor of bee hive type lens
4. Floating aid to navigation
7. Keeper's journal
8. Compass direction
9. Oldest Operating Lighthouse in the U.S.
14. C.G. Aids to Navigation Teams
15. Early lighthouse lamp fuel
16. Light
17. Early fog signal
18. Obsolete distress signal
19. Recluse description of lantern room, a r.m.w.a.
20. Tower lighthouse - such as Ambrose
21. Fog Signal Manufacturer
24. Lightship designation
26. Bane of lighthouse keeper's
28. Ancient lighthouse
30. Acetylene
33. Body of water
34. Purple Dinosaur or NJ Lighthouse
37. Light Characteristic
38. Sector
39. Point Lighthouse, California
40. Coast Guard, abbr.
42. Fog Signal Inventor
43. NJ lighthouse in a baseball field
44. Lens size
45. The Commissioner of Lighthouses
46. Commissioner's Award

**DOWN**

1. Optical device
2. Low lying cloud
3. Delaware Bay Lighthouse, NJ
5. Abbr. United States Lighthouse Establishment
6. The Fifth Auditor
7. Large Navigational Buoy, abbr.
10. Lighthouse on east side of Wigwam Harbor, Massachusetts
11. Maine Lighthouse near Rockland
12. Builder of Barnegat - Hero of Gettysburg
13. Lover's Lighthouse
15. Lightship designation
22. Boston's Lighthouse's first keeper
23. Jeffries Lighthouse
25. Type of Lighting device
27. Lighthouse aerobic device
29. NJ Range Light Station no longer in existence
31. How to tell which way a fish is traveling or a New Jersey lighthouse
32. Itinerant lightship or cooking necessity
34. Exhume from Lighthouse lantern or N.J.C. Publication
35. Famous Lighthouse tender
36. Old West, famous women lighthouse keeper
39. Type of Light
41. Navigational aid

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