

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 26 No. 1 Summer 2019

[www.nslps.com](http://www.nslps.com)

# The Lightkeeper

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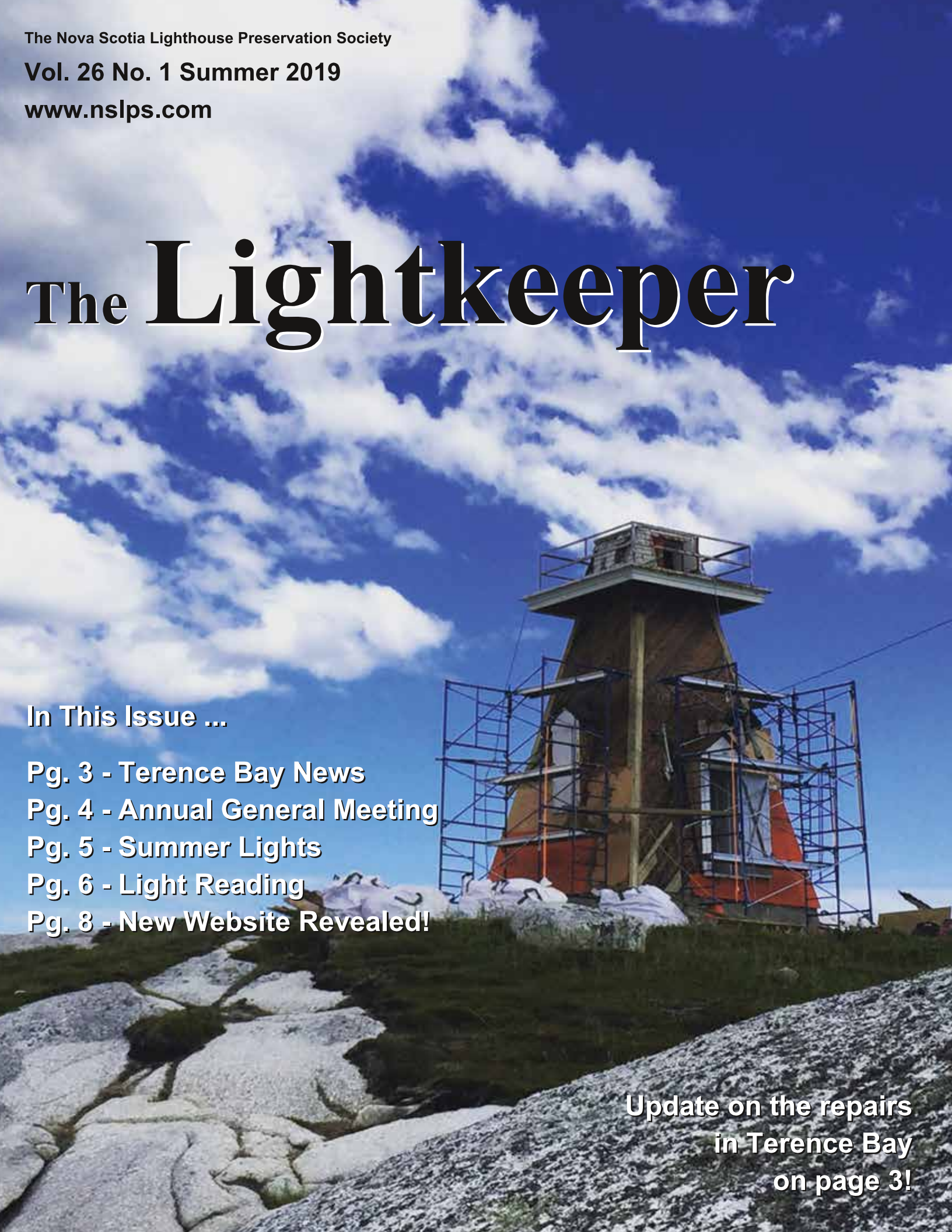
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The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are to promote and to support the preservation and awareness of Nova Scotia lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of the lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographic documentation; to initiate oral history research; and to classify and monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites.

## NSLPS Executive 2019 / 2020

### **President:**

Joe Flemming

### **Past President:**

Joanne McCormick

### **Treasurer:**

Matthew Burke

### **Membership/Website Content:**

Denyse Contrasty

### **Secretary:**

Sarah Almon

### **Social Media:**

Maggie Jane Spray

### **Member-at-Large:**

Howard Eaton

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## Welcome New Members

David Charbonneau; Natalie d'Auteuil; Rose Haynes; Lisa Moffat; Matthew & Betty Semple; Mark & Lana Shupe; and Jeffrey Smith.

### Patrons

Doris A. Arnold; Bruce Blakemore & Hugh Jones; David Charbonneau; Sydney & Sandra Dumaesq; Barbara Joan Davis; Rod MacLennan; Sherry Mochinski; and Edith Northfield.

### Sustaining Members

Joanne McCormick; Eric & Ann Mills; Steve Moulton; Joan Pattison; Jeffrey Smith; and Stanley Van Dyke.

### Affiliates

Cape Sable Historical Society; Henry Island Lighthouse Preservation Society; Heritage Trust Nova Scotia; Isle Madame Lighthouse; Neil's Harbour - New Haven Development Association; Port Bickerton & Area Planning Association; RUSH-ALS Maintenance Supplies; Tiverton & Central Grove Heritage Association; and Walton & Area Development Association.



## Terence Bay Gets Some Major TLC

By: Pam Corell

The Terence Bay Heritage Lighthouse has had an exciting year. She has a new look that is reminiscent of her original construction with a cupola and a white flashing light. The community and lighthouse enthusiasts are singing her praises.

It is not all good news. Along with their renovations on the building, DFO also was attempting to resolve the access issue the community has been dealing with for many years. As of now, there are no updates on progress. The coming year will find the Terence Bay Lighthouse Committee stepping up its efforts to find some additional ways to move forward on this important issue. The Committee's goal of acquiring the lighthouse for the community remains pending as long as access remains unresolved.

**Our commitment to our goal will continue. This beautiful, newly renovated, heritage lighthouse needs to be accessible for all Canadians to enjoy!**



***Above: Our lighthouse before the repairs.***

***Left: After DFO/Coast Guard completed their thorough renovation.***



## 2018 NSLPS Spring AGM Update

By Maggie-Jane Spray

We hosted our Annual General Meeting on April 25 at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. It was an information meeting, as we welcomed new board members, and introduced our new website.

President Joe Flemming reflected on the 25th year for the NSLPS, highlighting the culture of preservation that was established by the founding board.

The recipient of the Craig Harding Award was the Terence Bay Lighthouse Committee, who worked tirelessly over many years to preserve their lighthouse. Pam Corell accepted the award on behalf of the committee, and she also gave a presentation with photos showcasing the lighthouse before, during and after the significant restoration.



Top: President Joe Flemming addressing the crowd.

Left: Board member Howard Eaton acted as AGM emcee.

Bottom: Pam Corell accepts the Craig Harding Award on behalf of the Terence Bay Lighthouse Committee.





## Summer Lighthouse Fun!

By: Sarah Almon

Summer is finally here and with the beginning of tourism season comes the reopening of Nova Scotia's lighthouses! As of July 1, 2019, the following lighthouses are open and looking forward to visitors this season:

- Cape George Lighthouse Park, Antigonish County
- Walton Lighthouse, Hants County
- Burntcoat Head Park, Hants County
- Fort Point Lighthouse Park, Liverpool
- Fort Point Museum, LeHave River
- Seal Island Light Museum, Barrington Passage
- Gilbert's Cove Lighthouse, Evangeline Route
- Out of the Fog Lighthouse Museum, Queensport
- Church Point Lighthouse, French Shore
- Five Islands Lighthouse (Colchester County)
- Arisaig Lighthouse (Antigonish County)
- Port Bickerton Lighthouse (Guysborough Country near Sherbrooke)
- Cape Forchu Lighthouse (Yarmouth)
- Port Medway Lighthouse Park (South Shore)
- Cape Saint Mary Lighthouse Park (Evangeline Route)
- Cape d'Or Lighthouse (near Joggins)

Check out the website or social media page for each lighthouse listed above to confirm hours of operation before planning your visit.

Please take a look at the new NSLPS website, under the menu "News and Events" – "Lighthouse Events", for an updated list of lighthouse openings throughout the summer.

NSLPS would be happy to advertise local lighthouse society community events on our website; please forward all lighthouse-related community event notices to [websupport@nslps.com](mailto:websupport@nslps.com)

For visitors requiring further information on these lighthouse, please email [ask.us@nslps.com](mailto:ask.us@nslps.com)

One upcoming event to highlight is on Saturday August 10, 2019, when the Cape Sable Lighthouse, the tallest lighthouse in the Maritimes and located just off of Cape Sable Island, is celebrating Cape Day 2019! For more information, see the Facebook page of the Friends of the Cape Sable Lighthouse.

## Welcome our Newest Board Members



**Maggie-Jane Spray** was born and raised in rural Prince Edward Island. Growing up she spent ample time by the ocean and the lighthouses that dotted the island. Her family was actively involved in the preservation and rehabilitation of the West Point Lighthouse, and are fortunate to still be active quilt suppliers to the gift store at the light.

A Senior Communications

Advisor for the Halifax Regional Municipality by day, she brings her background in social media management and marketing to the NSLPS. She looks forward to visiting more lighthouses throughout the province, and meeting those dedicated to preserving them.



**Sarah Almon** is a corporate lawyer with Stewart McKelvey in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Recently returned to the province after spending several years in Saint John, New Brunswick, Sarah is enjoying travelling around Nova Scotia and taking in the spectacular natural scenery, including our many lighthouses.

Sarah currently acts as secretary for the NSLPS.

## Light Reading: A Book Review

By Chris Mills

**Archie's Lights: The Life and Times Of A Scottish Lightkeeper. Archie MacEachern and Anne MacEachern. Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Scotland. 2019. 188 pp. Map. Photographs. Paintings.**

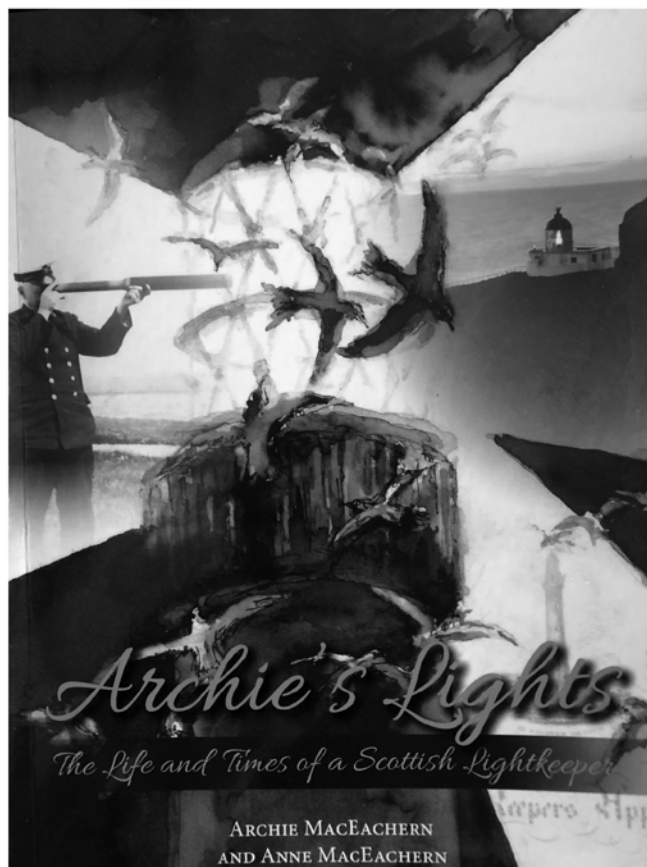
Quaint anachronisms, or proud sentinels with a storied past? No matter what your view of lighthouses, these coastal structures inspire awe and kindle romance. But let's face it: lighthouses were not built as splendid seaside attractions. They served a very real purpose in guiding mariners and protecting lives at sea. Beyond that, they were homes to keepers, and in some cases to their families.

Archie MacEachern was born into a Scottish lightkeeping family: his father and grandfather kept lights, and his brother became master of a Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) tender. It was only natural that Archie follow in family footsteps and become a keeper, after a brief stint as a seaman aboard the NLB Tender Pharos. In the end, Archie served an amazing 66 years with the NLB. In his later years, Archie didn't seem to think that folk would be much interested in his life and times on the lights. Fortunately, his second wife Anne, did. Over a period of 30 years, Anne took notes, asked questions, and listened closely to Archie and his former colleagues as they discussed a way of life that had meant so much to them.

For Archie, it all began near the Scottish border at St. Abb's Head, where his father was an assistant keeper. His first memory was of a woman's scream: "Norman's over the cliff!". The three-year-old son of the other assistant keeper was dead before he could be carried up the cliff. That grim memory set the stage for what was often an extremely dangerous job. It was also a way of life that called for stoicism and resourcefulness: Archie's father gave his children kelp to chew on to relieve the discomfort of teething.

When his father received a promotion to Principal Keeper, the family moved to the Outer Hebrides, where Archie's rugged childhood experiences included getting to know hardy crofters in their primitive "black houses", being rescued after a salt-water dunking, and learning to respect the spinning 6-foot flywheels of the lighthouse engines, which could kill a man within seconds if he got tangled up in them.

At Barns Ness, on the east coast, the adventures continued. One day, a ship "hit the rocks before our eyes".



Shortly after, the lightkeepers found the bodies of two drowned seamen, a monkey, and a canary. None of this dampened young Archie's desire to live and work near the sea. In fact, he signed on as a seaman aboard a lighthouse tender at the age of 16. But after six years at sea, Archie knew he had to swallow the anchor, and return to the lights. He married Peggy, the daughter of a lightkeeper herself, and thus began a lightkeeping career which lasted into the 1980s.

Lightkeeping involved strict routines and discipline; top of the list being that a light must never go out or stop rotating. Nor must the keeper on duty ever fall asleep while on watch. Breaking any of these rules could lead to instant dismissal. In Archie's day, lightkeeping hadn't really changed much since the late 1700s, with the strict routine juxtaposed against a backdrop of wild storms, shipwrecks, lifesaving drills, illnesses, and the parade of characters who kept the lights.

Here, Archie's dry humour shines through. He describes the main lightkeeper on Fair Isle, a man sporting two gold earrings and who owned a parrot he often cursed roundly for leaving "large messes" on his coat. On the Bass Rock, as at other sites, the Principal keeper's word was law. So

were his eating habits. No assistant was permitted second helping of pudding. Only the Principal. And once he'd finished the pudding, the keepers had a novel, if not entirely hygienic way of dealing with the pudding bowl: they left the empty dish to soak overnight in the lighthouse courtyard. By morning, the rats would have it scoured and sparkling clean.

Archie and Peggy started a family, but there was no guarantee that the job would allow them to be together all the time. A posting to Fair Isle's North Light introduced them to the close-knit world of lighthouse and community on this isolated island in Shetland. But after five years, Archie, Peggy and their two children were forced to leave a "wonderful experience" behind with a new posting for Archie. His family would have to live with other rock keepers' families at NLB housing on the island of Erraid (near Mull on the west coast), while Archie and two other keepers spent weeks at a time on Dhub Artach.

These were Archie's "lonely years", Stations such as Dhub Artach ("black one of death") did not inspire warm and fuzzy feelings. The stone tower rising from a wave-battered mound of rock was relegated to crews of three keepers. The tower shook in heavy seas. Landings were notoriously difficult. One keeper at a time would be relieved every two weeks (weather permitting), bringing fresh blood to what could become a stale society of three. Interestingly, Archie remembered that relationships were remarkably stable in this tiny world. Occasionally, weeks of over-familiarity could lead to acrimony – sometimes over things as simple as someone tapping on the side of a teacup. Sanitation was another challenge: "Each man kept a two pound jam jar beside his bunk at night."

War-time meant the keepers (and their families at mainland or larger island sites) were essentially sitting ducks. Three members of lightkeeping families at Fair Isle's South Light died during direct bomb hits in the early 1940s. Despite the constant worry and need for vigilance, the occasional basket of fish, or a container of navy rum, helped relieve the tedium and the apprehension for the crew at Dhub Artach. From the lantern and tower windows, the keepers witnessed the sinister periscopes of German U-boats, "an eerie reminder of how powerless we were." Dead chickens, a crate of whiskey and a defunct elephant also floated by the tower, the results of U-boat attacks on various ships.

The "lonely years" came to an end for Archie with a transfer to Buchan Ness on the east coast. He was glad to arrive at a "happy station" where the keepers got on well. The excitement continued though, with more war-time shipwrecks, exploding mines and run-ins with German spies adding to an already busy workload. A promotion led Archie to return to the Outer Hebrides to keep light at Butt of Lewis, and finally, back east, to Chanonry, where he retired in 1975. He returned to the NLB as a welfare officer and occasional keeper. It was fitting that in 1998, Archie was part of the ceremony to de-staff the final manned lighthouse in Scotland, at Fair Isle South.

Archie has been gone since 2005, but through Anne MacEachern, his voice, dedication and his dry humour sound loud and clear. Jam-packed with stories of adventure and adversity, and well-illustrated with colourful details, photographs, paintings and most importantly, memories of a way of life now gone, Archie's Lights is an excellent addition to Whittles' line of top-notch books covering aspects of lighthouses and lightkeeping.





# Enhanced NSLPS website launched April 1 2019!

By Denyse Contrasty

NSLPS was thrilled to give their members advance notice of the enhanced website sporting the new NSLPS logo and to unveil it at the AGM held April 24 2019. Board members who have basic knowledge of web programming will be able to make changes as required, for example, this year's Craig Harding award winner. Any complicated technical change will be handled by the IT firm, Immediac, who will also provide NSLPS with website visitor statistics by month and with instructions on how to make changes on their own.

Pages from the former website were updated or removed depending on their relevance to the status of NS lighthouses today. For example, each lighthouse have links to any No Ka 'Oi Drone video of the lighthouse and to the website and/or Facebook page of the local group maintaining the lighthouse. Visitors can now sort the Lighthouse list into five categories, Visit, Remote, Photo Op, Lost and Museum, or as before by County or Region.

New content includes oral history clips with former NS lightkeepers and soon to come NS lightship(s). NSLPS is currently working with Immediac to provide instant tax receipts for people paying membership dues and making donations online. The added benefit of doing this will reduce NSLPS's postal and stationery expenses meaning those savings can be used to support NS lighthouses plus using less paper means saving a tree or two in the process!

Looking for a summer destination? Be sure to check "News and Events" on the home page to see which lighthouses are open to the public and when. Also any special events held at individual lighthouses will posted on the Community News page. Why not go for a drive and support NS lighthouses at the same time!

