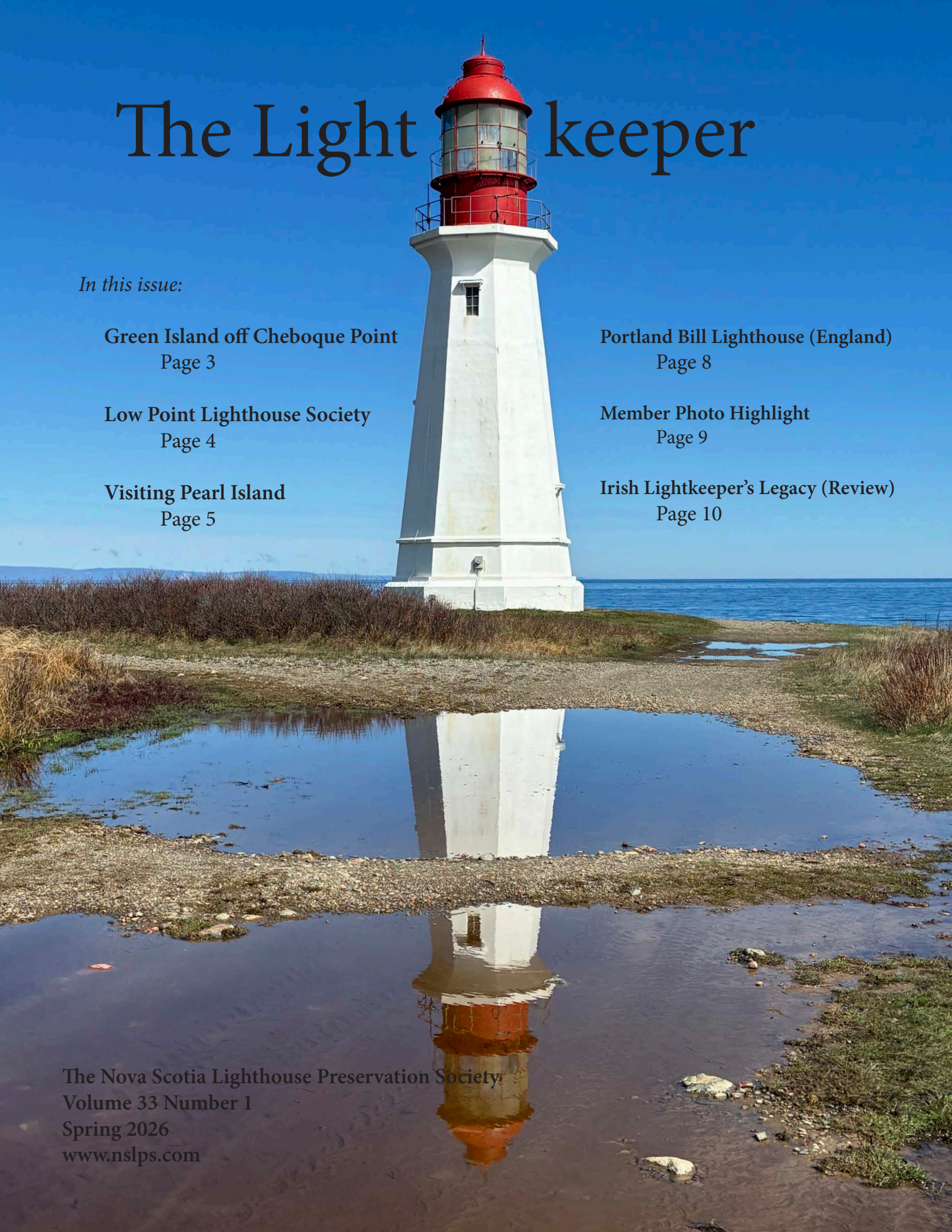


The Light keeper



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The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
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Welcome New Members

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Eric Machum

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Kevin McSwain

H Powell

David Roth

Cover Photo

Low Point Lighthouse, Cape Breton
Credit: Denyse Contrasty

NSLPS Activity & News

Our 32nd Annual General Meeting will be held Sunday May 24 at 2pm at the Central Library on Spring Garden Road, Halifax. We hope to record and post it to our Youtube Channel.

With climbing costs, the NSLPS Board decided this year to revise our rack card with a QR code that opens to our online NS Lighthouse Site map. Their smaller size makes them easier to handle and cheaper to distribute.

Visiting NS Lighthouses in 2026 started with Cape Forchu Lighthouse in Yarmouth that opened Saturday May 16. See nslps.com for all Open Hours. Be sure to show your support this summer and visit a Nova Scotia lighthouse!

Board members, Shauna and Denyse, met with the Low Point Lighthouse Society on May 8. Read page 4 for this Society's latest news.

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

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.

Membership Information

The current membership year runs from April 1 2026 to March 31 2027 and membership fees must be paid by November 1 2026. The last year you paid will be either in the email delivering your digital newsletter or on the newsletter mailing label if you paid for a printed copy. For any membership inquiries, please email:

member.info@nslps.com

Membership fees and donations can now be paid by automatic e-transfer to:

member.info@nslps.com

Please put a reason in the Message field.
For example: 2026 fees, donation.



Memories of Green Island Lighthouse off Cheboque Point

Article and Photos Provided by David Smith

In 1961 my father, Albert Smith, took the job as lightkeeper of the Green Island Lighthouse off Cheboque Point in the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth. Originally from Kelley's Cove, Albert had been a lobster fisherman, a carpenter and a Mr. Fixit.

The Green Island Lightstation included the lighthouse, lightkeeper's house, shed, boat landing and tanks that held diesel to run generators and furnace oil for the houses. There was even an exterior staircase to help the lightkeeper climb the hill to the lighthouse (see photo below). It had a sheltered cove where fishing boats from surrounding areas would stay overnight rather than travel back to their respective home wharves. During my father's term on Green Island, a new house was built around 1962 and the fog warning cannon called *The Gun* was replaced by an air horn.



Green Island Lighthouse as seen in the 1970s.



Staircase to Green Island Lighthouse.

Starting in 1961, I spent my summers on Green Island with my father until he resigned in 1970. His leaving Green Island was hard on me as it was like home to me and was my only time with my father as a child.

In the spring of 1978, I was hired as a temporary assistant on a small lighthouse in Yarmouth Harbour aka Bug Light. To my joy I was offered a position on Green Island in the fall of 1978. It was like going home!

Eagerly my wife, Carol, and I with our two small daughters, Angela and Krissy, moved to the island in October 1978. I loved my job there but received notice that automation was coming in a year or so. I was offered a job on shore at a local Home for Special Care and it was best to accept it given I had a family to support. Yet it was a hard decision to leave Green Island that still bothers me to this day.

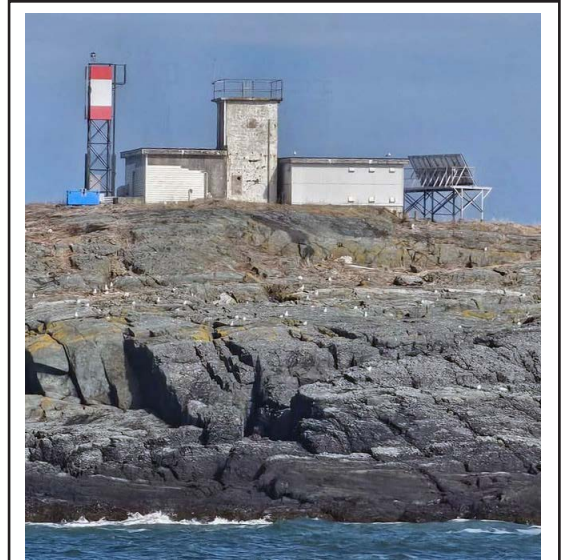
I tried a return trip a few years ago but the boat that took us out to the island was too big to land in the cove. This year in June I'm returning home for a couple of weeks and am trying to set up a boat to take us to the island one last time. I plan to take some photos and a note to the island and push them



View of Green Island from the mainland.

under the lighthouse door for the repair technicians to see what the Station looked like in its heyday. I will leave my phone number and email address in hopes of getting a few pictures of the inside of the old engine room to see what it looks like today. 🛠️

Note from the editor: Green Island is the name of several Nova Scotia Islands (with Lighthouses). If you are looking for more information on Green Island, be sure to specify the correct Green Island. This very issue has an article about Pearl Island, which was historically called Green Island until 1914.



Green Island Lighthouse seen recently from the water.



Low Point Lighthouse Society News!

Article and Photos by Denyse Contrasty



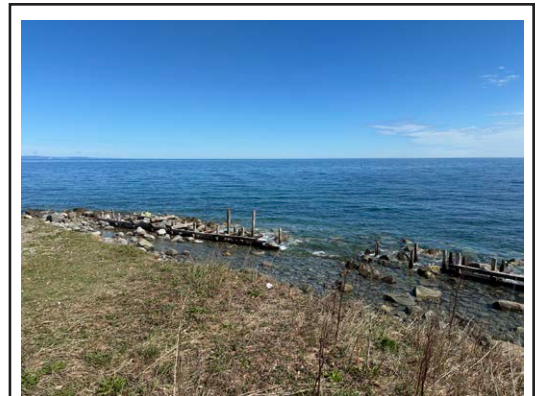
LPLS Display Table at the Cruise Pavillion.

The Low Point Lighthouse Society (LPLS) is looking forward to another season of greeting visitors at the Joan Harriss Cruise Pavilion, an events facility located on the Sydney waterfront in Cape Breton where cruise ships tie up. Not yet a charity, the Society relies on donations and the sale of branded merchandise to raise funds to preserve the Low Point Lighthouse (*seen on the front cover of the newsletter*). The newly released movie, “Little Lorraine”, used shots of the Low Point Lighthouse as background and these have generated new interest in the lighthouse.

Two NSLPS Board members, Shauna and Denyse, recently met with three LPLS members, Lawrence, Leslie and Linda, in New Waterford. We dis-

cussed challenges that included reasonably priced transportation from the Sydney waterfront to the lighthouse as there is no Uber service in the Sydney area. There was a strong military presence around the lighthouse during World War II and the local Mi’kmaq (a First Nations people) knew the lighthouse grounds as “the blackberry picking place”, two facts that could be used to underline the importance of the lighthouse in the community.

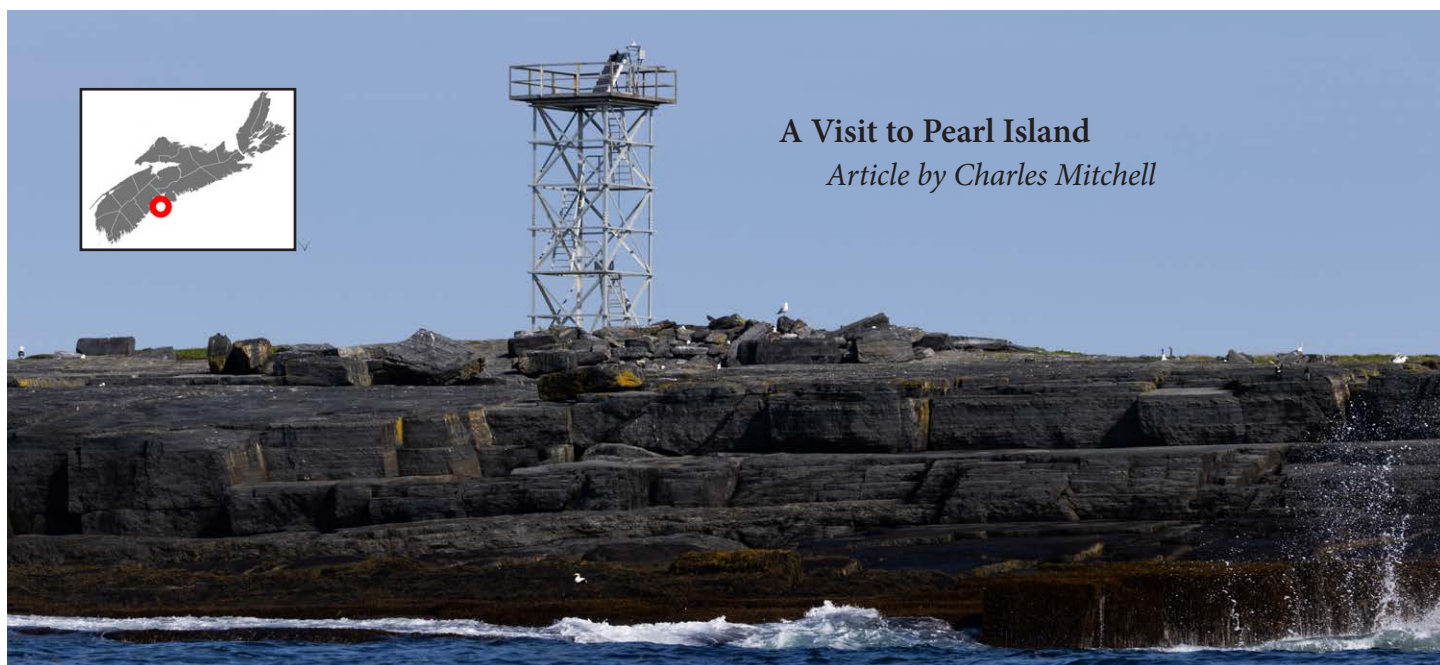
LPLS Board members were pleased to inform us that the seawall protecting the lighthouse will be repaired and reinforced this fall. Maintaining this wall is important as it prevents shoreline erosion by the



The Low Point seawall will be repaired this fall.

front of the lighthouse. The alternative of not doing this would be to move the lighthouse back from the shoreline. Given its height of 22 m (72 ft) and its construction of reinforced concrete, it would be a wildly expensive and lengthy project to undertake.

The LPLS Board does have one question that readers may be able to answer. Where did their 3rd order Fresnel lens end up after it was replaced by a rotating airport beacon in 1984? In his 2003 book, *Lighthouses & Lights of Nova Scotia*, author E.H. Rip Irwin stated that the lens had become part of the office décor of the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) Base in Dartmouth, NS. However this base was closed and CCG operations moved to the Bedford Institute of Oceanography in 2011. If you can answer this question, please email us at ask.us@nslps.com. Alternatively message our Facebook or Instagram page. 🏠



Pearl Island, seen earlier in the summer when birds are still present.

Growing up fortunate enough to spend summers in and out of lots of small boats on the waters of Mahone Bay, Pearl Island always held legendary status. Pearl Island was the furthest piece of land we would visit on the calmest summer days in our small motorboat, or when the wind was right and we wanted an extra long day sail. Pearl was always a barely visible speck seen from the inshore islands our family frequented. My sister shares my affinity, even naming my niece Pearl after the island.

Thus, I was thrilled when my neighbor Colin invited me to embark on an attempt to land and explore. We had visited together a few times to take photos of the puffins, dovekeys, razorbills, and other sea birds during nesting season; however the conditions were never such that we could land, and equally important, it is forbidden to visit the Island during nesting season (April 1 - August 15).



Landing on the island required good weather, this location only usable at low tide giving us a short time. *Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn*



Metal embedded in the rocks (arrows in photos) shows the location of the old landing. Now inaccessible from the sea. *Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn*

After several offshore photography trips where landing was impossible due to weather or the strict April-August nesting ban, my neighbor Colin finally spotted a window to try a landing. We set out from St. Margaret's Bay on an early September morning, eventually mooring in a narrow crack at the northern tip of the island. Aware that offshore conditions change rapidly, we made haste to explore.

After scrambling over the low, seaweed covered ironstone shelf which surrounds the island we trudged over to the historical landing, where we observed the iron bolts and eyes remaining in the walls of the narrow rocky slot where the landing had been. It was difficult to locate the landing spot where the Canadian government had provided funds to dynamite a landing in summers 1874-1878. It appeared as if the sea had rearranged the old landing and deposited many large boulders, blocking it again.

We made our way to the cross commemorating Albert Pearl near the landing placed by Robert (aka Whoopee) Wentzell in 2011. The cross is in pretty good shape considering the weather it has experienced over the last 16 years. Albert Pearl, the 3rd generation keeper on Pearl Island disappeared and was never found, an enduring mystery. (See *Lightkeeper* Vol. 18, No. 2, 3)

The island is covered in shin high to waist high grasses. We were lucky that it was a remarkably dry summer and fall; I could tell that the thick spongy turf would usually make this an ankle deep marshy experience. The drought also prevented the clouds of mosquitoes that we'd heard about from other visitors.



This cross commemorates Albert Pearl.
Photo Credit: Author



Kittiwake nests on the cliff-side, these are repaired over generations. *Photo Credit: Author*

Making our way clockwise around the shore, we explored the deserted puffin colony in and near the 5 meter cliffs on the SouthEast end. Puffins nest near other seabird species such as guillemots, razorbills, murre, kittiwakes, and northern fulmars. It was interesting seeing the Kittiwake nests, built up precariously on indents in the rock, obviously built up over many generations.

The puffins disperse across the North Atlantic after leaving Pearl Island. Only as recently as 2009, scientists were unsure where puffins wintered. Scientists from Audubon's Seabird Restoration Program tracked a group from Maine seeing that they visited the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and then returned South to the rich "coral canyons" along the edge of the continental



Few signs remain of the more complete structures that were once on Pearl Island.

Photo Credit: Author

shelf. The author has learned while writing this that puffins and other seabirds have special glands above their eyes allowing them to drink seawater and excrete salt allowing them to spend months at sea.

There are no signs of the Storm Petrels featured in Mather DesBrisay's June 1867 visit and tour with the original light keeper, Mr Pearl. DesBrisay described "*The turf is almost completely honey-combed, even close to the lighthouse, with the holes or resting-places of "Mother Carey's Chicken's" (Storm Petrel), of which there are countless, living in holes by day*" and "*Attracted by the light, they often fly against the lantern...*" by night. The account includes an observation of "*A large Newfoundland dog, owned by the keeper, maintained himself in good condition by scratching out and devouring the occupants of the holes*". This may have something to

do with the Storm Petrel disappearance. Fun fact: in places such as the Orkney and Shetland Islands, these fatty birds were used as natural candles! Bear Grylls: take note.

Continuing South along the eastern cliffs, the island's ridges roll up to a higher flat plane where the current beacon stands above the Southern cliff and slab of rocks extending out to the deeps. There are almost no signs of the wooden lighthouse, attached keeper's dwelling, concrete cistern, or any outbuildings. A small ironstone drain, rusty metal remains of a boiler and odd metal detritus are all that remains.

The modern tower is a square aluminum skeleton, the outer cladding being removed at some point. A simple sturdy set of stairs



The author surveying the rock cliff.

Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn

with a ladder leads

up to the top, where a solar powered beacon blinks its lonely duty.

The Western side of the island hosts a Cormorant colony, quite different from the puffin colony, looking like mounds built on a flat area of dirt among some large rocks. Small bright green scummy ponds looked to be the only source of fresh water on the island. The only other animals we encountered were some bones of mice and a small garter snake.

We were fortunate to have great weather to visit this lonely island and I was left with much respect for the Pearl family who watched over the lonely light on the edge of the continent for three generations and 89 years. 🏠



The current tower, a purely functional affair.

Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn

Portland Bill Lighthouse, Dorset, England

Article and Photos by Denyse Contrasty



Portland Bill Obelisk & Lighthouse.

Portland Bill is the name for the triangular-shaped cliff at the south end of the Isle of Portland in Dorset, England. It juts out into the English Channel while the nearby Shambles sandbank creates a tidal race that has been the cause of many shipwrecks.

Consequently in 1716 two lighthouses known as the Upper and Lower Lighthouses were lit on the west and east side of the Bill to warn mariners of the dangers offshore. Trinity House responsible for lighthouses in England later erected in 1855 a 23 foot (7m) stone obelisk as a daymarker at the south tip of the Bill along with stationing a lightship on the Shambles sandbank in 1859. The two lighthouses from 1716 were rebuilt in 1869 and served as

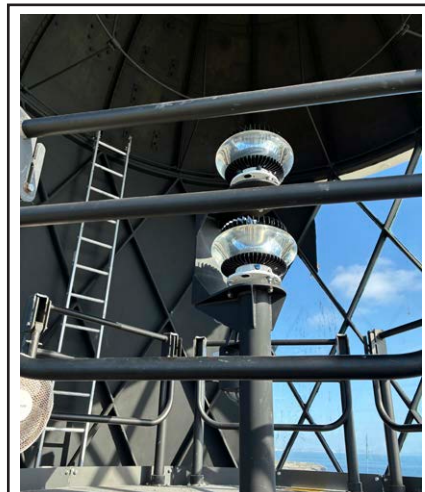
aids to navigation until they were replaced in 1906 by the current lighthouse.

Located directly behind the stone obelisk, this lighthouse stands 41m (134.5 ft) tall and once used a 1st order Fresnel lens to shine 25 nautical miles (46 km; 28.8 mi) across the Channel waters. Built with Portland rubble stone, its white tower sports a broad band of red that identify it as the Portland Bill Lighthouse.

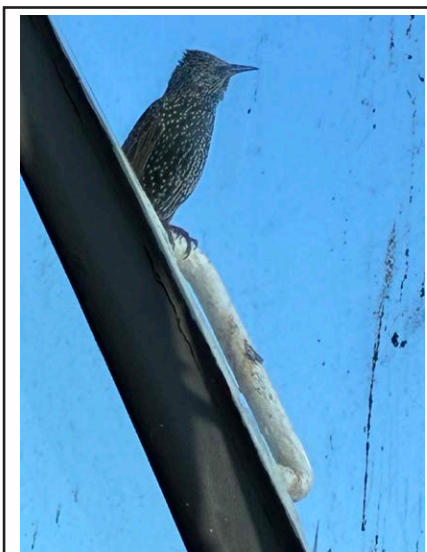
In October 2025 I paid 8 GBP (about \$15CA) to climb the 155 steps to the lantern room. On the way up, the guide explained on each landing the purpose of equipment that was either used in the past or had been upgraded to modern

standards. For example, a red sector light on the 1st landing shines out to the east to warn of the Shambles sandbank where once there was a lightship and older diaphone foghorn equipment on the 2nd landing had been replaced with a modern electric fog signal.

At the top there is a walkway around the interior of the lantern room where I photographed the latest 21st century LED lights that were installed in 2019 and at the same time enjoyed spectacular views of the Channel. Looking at the starlings perched on the hand and footholds that the lightkeepers once used to clean the exterior side of the diamond-shaped panes of glass of the lantern, I couldn't imagine doing this task at such a high height without any safety gear.



New LED light installed in 2019.



Lightkeeper hand and footholds.



Lower Lighthouse, now a bird watch-
er tower.

Returning to ground level, I visited the small museum that was the former lightkeeper's quarters at the Portland Bill Lighthouse. This museum has many artifacts and information about this and other UK lighthouses.

Going outside, it is possible to see the older two lighthouses that still stand today. On the property of the Upper Lighthouse are four holiday cottages and the Lower Lighthouse has been repurposed as the Portland Bird Observatory. If the Shambles lightship had been preserved in nearby Portland Harbour, I would have seen the complete evolution of aids to navigation at Portland Bill!



Upper Lighthouse with holiday cottages.

The Portland Bill Lighthouse is one of sixty-six still dotting the UK coastline as aids to navigation. However given its unique geographical position and history, it should definitely be on your itinerary if you visit Dorset's Jurassic Coast in England. 🏠

Member Photo Highlight: Borden Wharf Lighthouse

Photo by Grace Bortolin, Article by Denyse Contrasty



Grace Bortolin emailed this lovely shot of the Borden Wharf Lighthouse with a winter sun behind it. Not looking the best, this lighthouse was first lit in 1904, discontinued in 1921 and stood unused until 1959 when it was moved to a farm to become a pig shed.

In 1995 the Village of Canning moved it again to use as a Visitor Information Centre. In 2003 the local Fielding Historical Society moved it to its current location

where they restored the lighthouse (see "The Lightkeeper" Vol 11 No.3 September 2004).

Unlike the proverbial saying of "Three times the charm", this lighthouse must be now moved for the 4th time to a new site. Stay tuned for updates! 🏠

BOOK REVIEW: *The Irish Lightkeeper's Legacy*

Article by Chris Mills

It's easy to forget just how important lighthouses were to early navigators. Sure, tourists flock to them today like moths to a flame, enraptured by the sight of stalwart towers standing tall against a heaving sea. But the lighthouse itself has been reduced to a second-class aid to navigation; usurped by radar, satellites and pin-point electronic accuracy. A once crucial service to mariners has been increasingly relegated to a scattering of lighthouse museums, holiday rentals and history books.

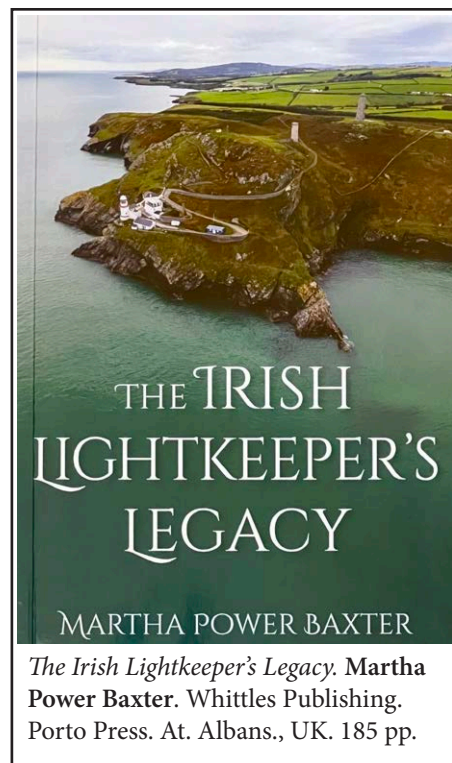
However, for centuries, lighthouses were absolutely crucial for all manner of vessels traveling the waters of the globe. Through nightly vigils, tending guiding beacons, lightkeepers worldwide became part of the revolution of international maritime trade, forming the very basis of safe navigation. In *The Irish Lightkeeper's Legacy*, Martha Power Baxter brings to life the story of her forbears, who became part of Irish lighthouse and transportation history before uprooting and immigrating to the United States.

The story begins at the mouth of Waterford Estuary in south eastern Ireland. The massive Hook tower, at the dangerous tip of the Hook Peninsula, went up in the very early 13th century, as a guide for shipping transiting from the tumultuous Atlantic ocean up to Waterford. It was a stronghold, built like a fortress; tended by monks who lived in lofty chambers within, while tending a coal-fired beacon at the top. Six centuries after its construction, the massive stone tower alternately overshadowed and illuminated the life of one young Alexander Power. Descended from the invading knights of the 12th century, Power lived not as a conqueror or a landowner, but as "a peasant working ancestral lands now owned by someone else".

However, the Hook lighthouse was to provide an escape and a chance for betterment for young Alexander Power, the author's great-great-grandfather. From a crowded and smoky cottage in the nearby village to the great Hook tower, Power became a temporary keeper and married his sweetheart Maggie. The scene was set for a family light-keeping "dynasty" that lasted for two generations until social and economic conditions took the family legacy to another continent.

The Hook lighthouse was a stepping stone to a long career for Alec Power. From Tuskar Rock, to Wicklow Upper, to The Maidens, Eagle Island West, and Inishgort, Alec and his family braved storms, medical emergencies, cramped living conditions on tiny rock lights, and the loss of an infant daughter. Life was tough. Not only did the family live in some of the most exposed places along the Irish Coast, there were wider challenges at play. The Great Hunger, which began in 1845 with the failure of potato crops, led to a million deaths in Ireland.

During their 16 years of marriage, Alec and Maggie Power raised 8 children on the lights. Their escape from tenant farming elevated the family's standard of living, offering them a stability unheard of for many. However, life expectancies for Irish folk in the middle of the 19th century were low; 50 years for men and 51 for woman. When Alec Power died at Inishgort Lighthouse in 1865, he was in his late 50s. As Power Baxter writes: "Alec had beaten the odds."



For 17-year-old son Thomas, “childhood was over” and the family moved to Dublin. Their move came as things were heating up in Ireland, with insurgents battling for Irish independence from British Rule. The call of stable lighthouse life was strong; Tom and the family moved to Wicklow Head lighthouse. Brother John joined the lighthouse service. But Tom was at a crossroads. He’d spent 18 years of his life on lighthouses; it was the only life he knew. But he also had to consider his aging mother’s health, living in damp and exposed coastal areas. So, Tom resigned from the lighthouse service and joined the railway. It was a time of great expansion for transportation in Ireland, and Tom had a ringside seat in working for the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford Railway Company. As Power Baxter writes, it was also a huge change for the family, living and working in a densely populated, noisy, polluted city.

As Tom rose through the ranks to engine driver, family hardship and tragedy continued. Brother John died at age 27 after being injured on the job at Roches Point lighthouse. The family’s lighthouse ties were finally broken. But the life lessons they had learned along the coast, would continue to carry them forward during uncertain times.

Tom, at 35, married Susannah, the daughter of an army pensioner. Years of hard work and sacrifice, instilled in him by his lightkeeping father had allowed Tom to achieve middle class success. And in 1884, Susannah gave birth to Alexander John, named for his grandfather and for his uncle, who’d died as a lightkeeper at Roches Point. Three years later, matriarch Maggie Power died at age 67. Her life symbolized that of many Irish women who endured harsh living conditions and the loss of children. But...she had “given her all.”

Meanwhile, unrest continued in Ireland with agrarian rebellion and evictions of tenant farmers. No doubt Ireland’s “violent transition” was a topic of discussion for Tom Power and his family. Tom worried about his son Alec, feeling the need to mentor his son as his own father had. Lightkeeping friends agreed to take the young Alec on as a helper at Aran Island North Lighthouse. For two years he learned the skills of lightkeeping and surviving the harsh conditions on the West Coast of Ireland, just as his father and grandfather had done.

After two years he came ashore to a vastly changed Ireland. The middle class was growing, motorcars began to appear on the roads and Marconi’s wireless telegraphy was crackling through the ether. However, the Irish economy was stagnant, and unemployment was high. Home Rule was on the frontburner again, creating divisions between political camps, and violence in communities.

In 1908, Alec joined the thousands of his country folk, immigrating to North America. He found work at a textiles mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, married (of all people!) an English girl, and started a family. Then came brother John, and finally, after Tom’s death in 1919, his widow Susannah and their daughter Rose. “The Power family transition from Ireland to the new world was complete”.

Martha Power Baxter has taken on a colossal task in writing *The Irish Lightkeeper’s Legacy*, traveling to Ireland to delve into archival records, digging deep to extract a family story beginning in the early years of the 19th century. Meticulously researched, *The Irish Lightkeeper’s Legacy* intertwines a family legacy with the social and political history of Ireland; famine, uprisings and instability, all overlaid by the Power family’s tenacity and work ethic. It’s a lot to take in; this is not a book to idly thumb through. It’s an engrossing chronicle; Power Baxter Brings to life the daily struggles which today, are difficult to comprehend, although echoes of those struggles ring loud to this day in Ireland. *The Irish Lightkeeper’s Legacy* is as important as a social document as it is a history of one family’s faithful contributions to lightkeeping in Ireland. 🏠

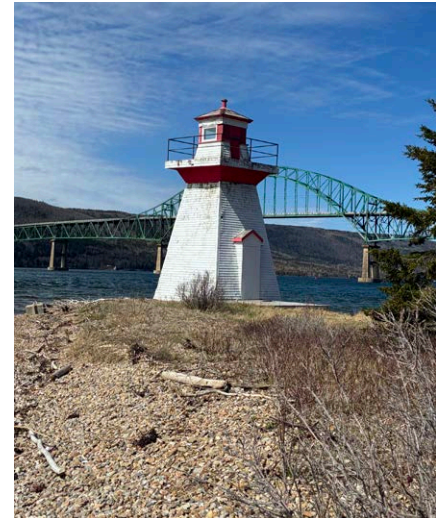
A Sampling of Lighthouses from Members



Gabarus Lighthouse, NS
Photo Credit: Denyse Contrasty



Louisbourg Lighthouse, NS
Photo Credit: Denyse Contrasty



McNeil Beach Lighthouse, NS
Photo Credit: Denyse Contrasty
This lighthouse is on private property, and was visited with the owner's permission.



Pearl Island Tower, NS
Photo Credit: Charles Mitchell



Seal Island Lighthouse in the fog, NS
Photo Credit: Graham Howes

Do you have a photo of a lighthouse you took? We would love to put it in our next newsletter! Please send your photo in (medium or large size) to member.info@nslps.com.