



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Friends of Cape Brett



May 2007



Tuesday, 13 November 2007

The Cape Brett Lighthouse was first lit on the 21st of February 1910 under the watchful eyes of Robert McIver (Principal Keeper) and Frances Earnest Lee (Assistant Keeper). The light then proceeded to act as a guide to vessels for the next 68 years until the tower was decommissioned in 1978.

Constructed at an approximate cost of £11,237 3s 5d (approximately \$1.77million today) this light was unique in that it was the first light of three in New Zealand to utilize mercury bath technology. This allowed the light to revolve with less resistance at a rate of two flashes every 30 seconds with a visibility of up to 30miles (48km) away.

The more than 100 keepers who looked after the station over its lifetime not only acted as lighthouse keepers but also as postmasters, weathermen, butchers, gardeners, carpenters, painters and as the general fix-it men the majority were also family men.

Some of the major events in the history of Cape Brett:

1908	Marine Department votes to construct light at Cape Brett.
1909	Station under construction.
1910	Light switched on, Connected telegraph for signalling.
1940	Signal Station established (manned by 2 Naval Reserves).
1942 (March)	Naval radar station established.
1955 (May)	Converted to diesel electric operation.
1967	Connected to power mains.
1978	Fully automated beacon replaced the tower & keepers were withdrawn.
2005 (October)	DOC takes over management from Maritime Safety Association.
2007 (May)	Lighthouse receives facelift (a fresh coat of paint care of DOC).

The number of different people and aspects involved in both the construction and day to day running of the station make the history of Cape Brett quite complex. The Department of Conservation is currently in the process of conducting a more in-depth investigation into the settlement's history.

The current focus of the research is in gathering together as many different photos taken at or of the station while it was in operation in order to provide an insight into the changes that occurred at the station.

We are also aiming to create a chronology of keepers and buildings and a list of the families, contractors and visitors who were at the station.

Information gathering has so far led us to the National Archives in Wellington and to the many books published on the history of lighthouses in New Zealand. Our aims

Bay of Islands Area

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for the future involve another trip to Wellington for visits to the archives, the Alexander Turnbull library, the City and Sea Museum, the Film Archive and Maritime NZ. An Auckland trip is also planned for the maritime museum and the Auckland branch of the National archives.

Other work DOC is planning in relation to the lighthouse settlement is the clearing of the tramway, some of the structures and other tracks. There are also plans for the clean up of the internal of the lighthouse and the establishment of a Community Group to aid in the maintenance of the station. A quarterly newsletter and website are hoped for and we would welcome any articles and/or other input from the public.

Enclosed within this pack is a 'Cape Brett volunteer form' to gauge initial interest and provide us with an idea of who would be interested in volunteering and in which capacity. We have divided these into physical labour (i.e. working on track vegetation clearance or cleaning the internal of the lighthouse), the newsletter, the community group and the technical (ie working on website or another specific skill). We ask that you provide some additional details on what you would like to aid us with.

We have also asked if you have any specific relationship with the lighthouse, i.e. whether you worked out there, lived there, were a visitor during the station's operation or whether you just have an interest in either the station or lighthouses in general.

If you wish to help fill out this form and send it back via the enclosed envelope provided. We thank you all for your help so far with this project and the wonderful information you have given us.

If you have any questions feel free to contact either Andrew or myself:

Andrew Blanshard

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OR

Christen McAlpine

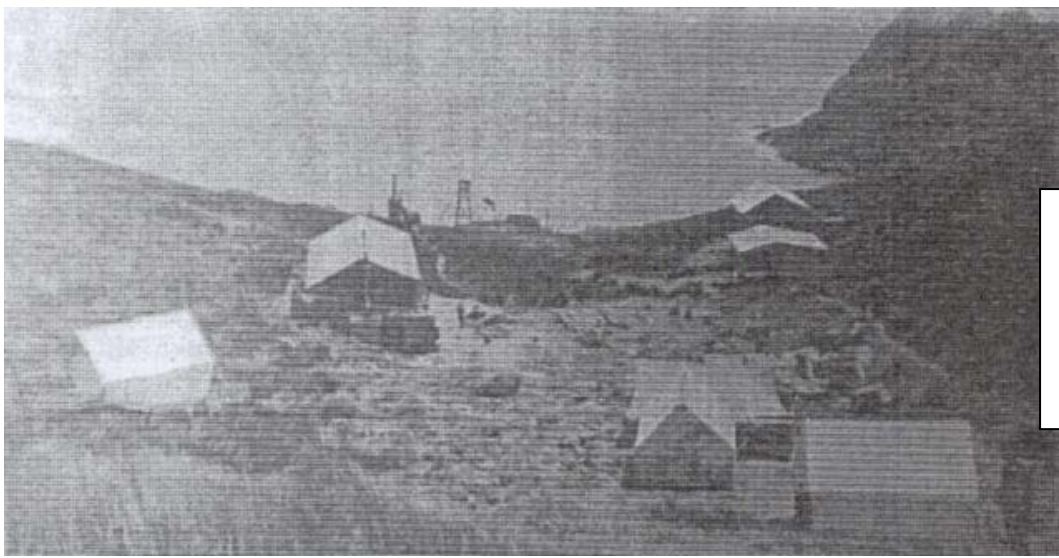
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We hope to hear from you soon,

Christen McAlpine

Bay of Islands Area

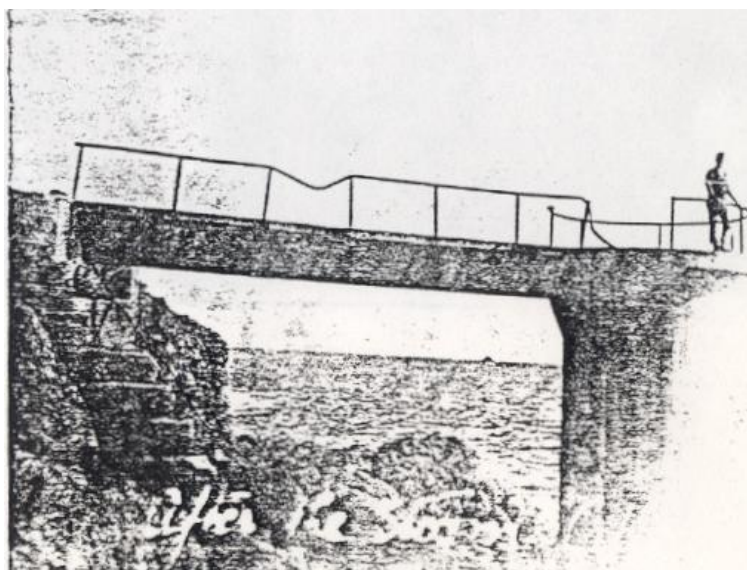
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The workers camp and apparatus for moving materials up to site of lighthouse. c.1909.



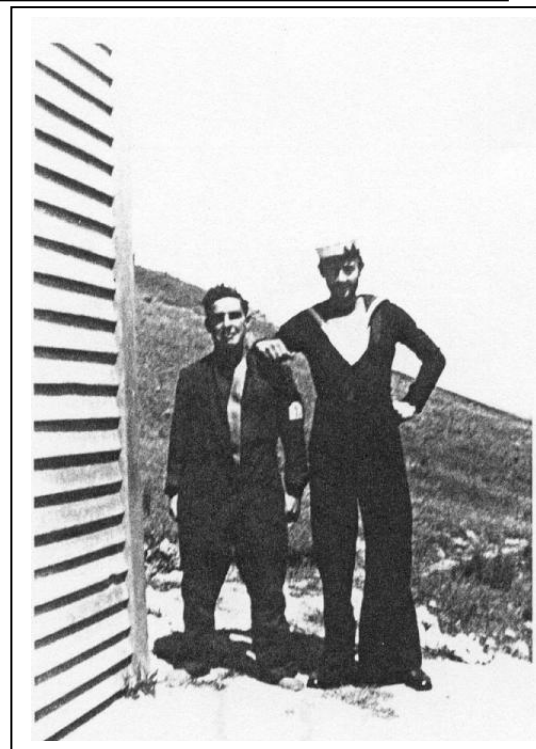
Offloading stores using crane. October 1934.



After the storm washed away the crane and bent railings 17 May 1924.



The 1923 Crane where it lies today.

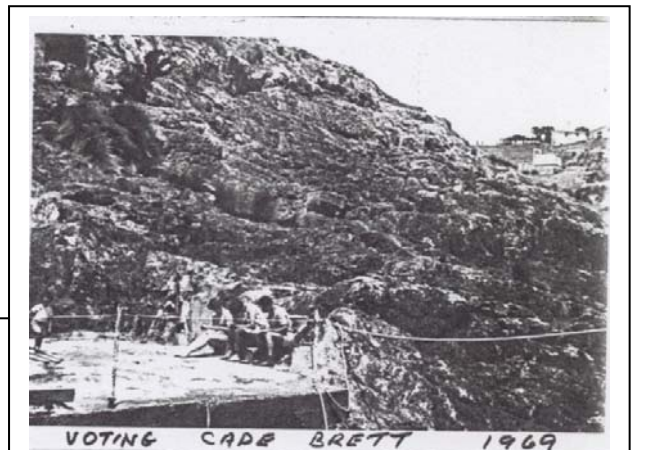
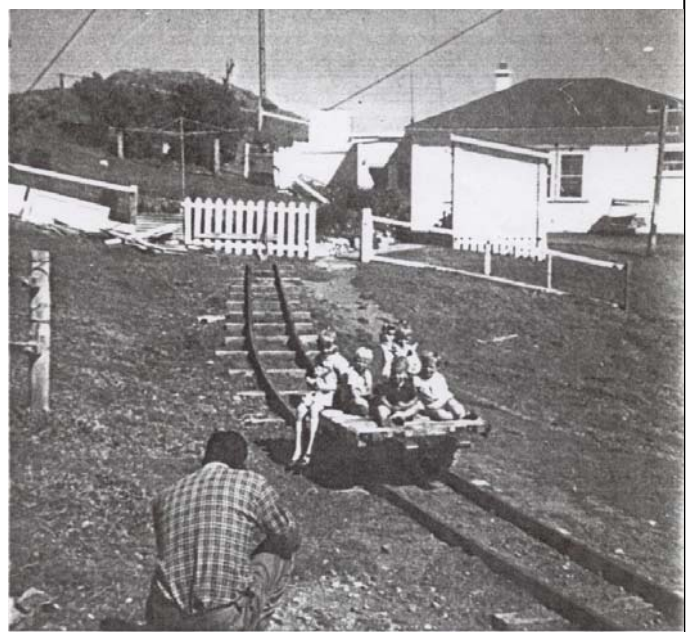


Clockwise from top left:

All photos 1930s-40s:

- ⬆ Painting the lighthouse;
- ⬆ The days catch;
- ⬆ LSig Sinclair and Stg F Stoddard – 1942;
- ⬆ The stations pet kiwi;
- ⬆ The Jamieson Family with Prinicipal Keeper Hugh Jamieson sitting first row, 2nd from left.

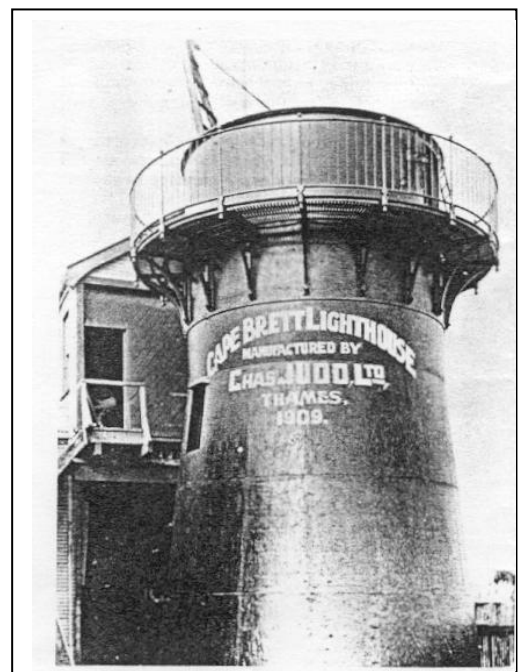
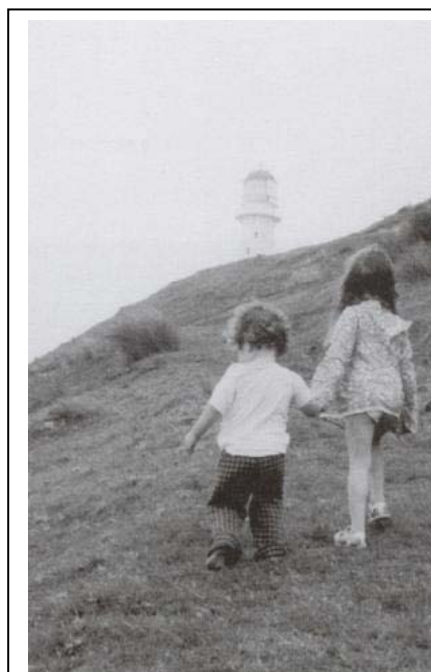
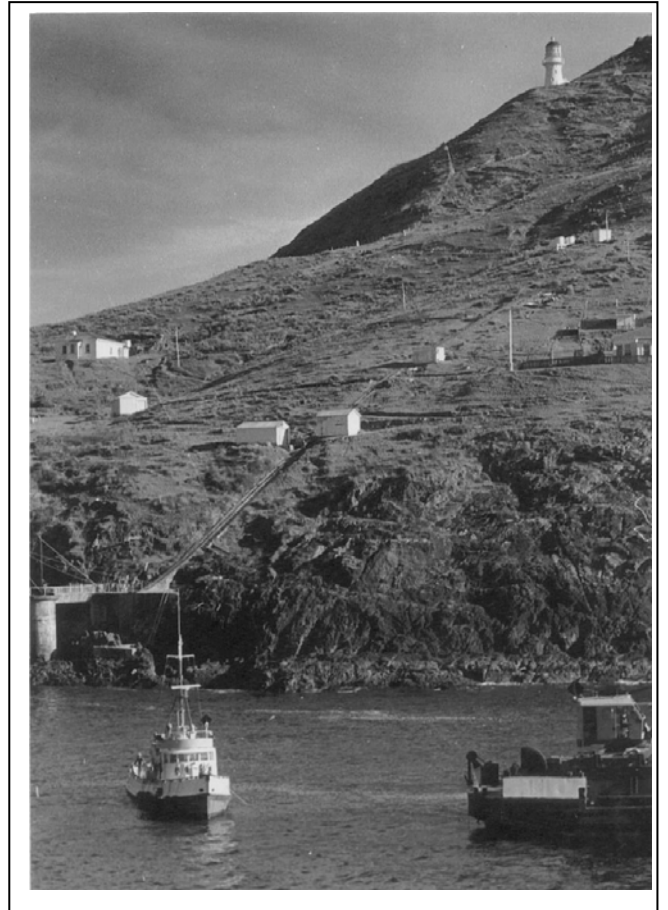




Clockwise from top left:

All photos 1960s-70s:

- ▲ 1970 - The opening of the new railway;
- ▲ The children playing on "Puff the Magic Wagon";
- ▲ 1978 - Group photo on the landing;
- ▲ Voting on the landing in October-November 1969 - Bill & Kowhai Chee, Darren(?) & Joy Probstel;
- ▲ The kids enjoying the sun;
- ▲ Christmas 1973-74. Craig, Cliff, Sam, Billy & Joy going down to landing.



Clockwise from above:

- The Schoolhouse pre 1955;
- Western side of Cape;
- The second and third houses;
- Eastern side of Cape in the 1960s.
- The lighthouse under construction at the Chas Judd Foundry in Thames in 1909;
- The O'Neill Children in the early 1970s.



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Cape Brett Volunteer Form

Type of Involvement:

Physical Labour

☐

Newsletter

☐

Community Group

☐

Technical

☐

Description of Skills:

Relation to Lighthouse:

Lived

☐

Worked

☐

Visited

☐

Interest

☐

Description

Contact Details

Name

Address

Email

Phone #

Do you want to be contacted?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Send to:

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