

Friends of Cape Brett Newsletter

Number 2

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Introduction

The Cape Brett Lighthouse guided shipping around Northland's east coast from 1910 to 1978 and was home to over 100 lighthouse families. The lighthouse site is managed by the Department of Conservation which has established the Friends of Cape Brett to enable the community to become more involved in its future.

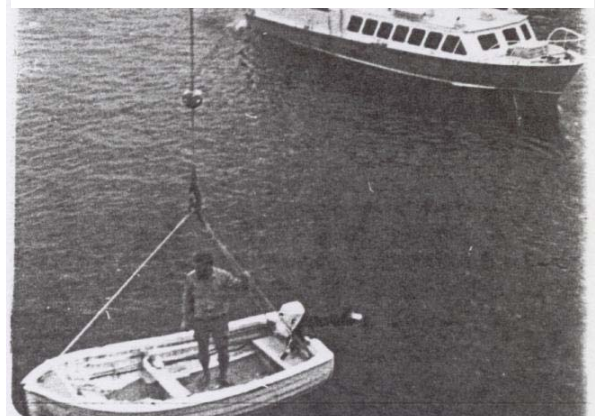
The community group consists of people with an interest in or personal relationship with this magnificent lighthouse and the surrounding area. To join, see the information provided in the link below or utilise the contacts provided at the end of the newsletter.

- For more information about the lighthouse's history
- For previous newsletters
- For the community pack

see the Department of Conservation website at:
<http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/page.aspx?id=34087>



Riding the boat down the crane was a common activity - above 1939-41 (Ken Webley) and below 1970 (Noel Proebstal).



Inside This Issue

- 2 An Update from DOC.
- 2 The Murray DVD.
- 3 The Keeper Chronology.
- 4 The First Letter.
- 4 The Webley Album.
- 6 Auckland Archives.
- 6 Track Reinstatement.
- 8 Future Plans.
- 8 Credits.
- 8 Contact Details.

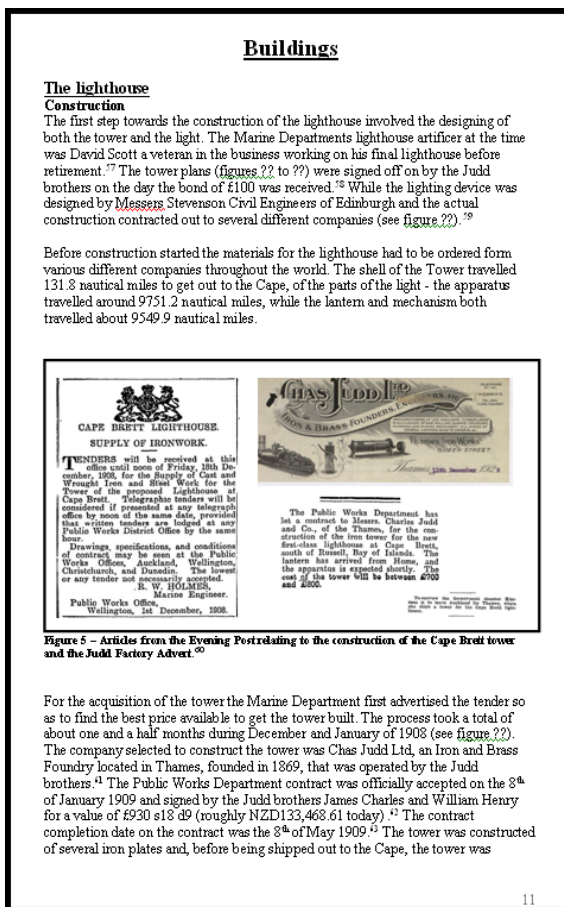


An Update from DOC

Over the past four months work has continued on the Cape Brett project with several exciting developments.

The History Book

The book will be the first complete history of a lighthouse settlement in New Zealand and will form the basis of our future interpretation. The current word count (as at 07/07/08) is approximately 30,000 words and over 170 pages.



One of the pages from the book.

The Newsletter

After the first issue was distributed we received a letter from the National Library of New Zealand assigning the newsletter with an International Standard Serial Number (see the top of the front page under the title). These numbers are issued to any serial publication such as a newsletter, but we are extremely happy to have a number. ☺ ☺ ☺

Other Office Work

We have had several contributions from people associated with the lighthouse in the past few months in the form of photos, films and drawings. We received:

- A DVD from John Murray, an ex-keeper, from Auckland.
- The US 'Historic Lighthouse Preservation Handbook' from OPUS archaeologist Cathy Barr.
- A box of Cape Brett sketches from Bill Kemp.
- Photos from Rod James (grandfather was a keeper) and Colin Blow (ex-Navy).
- A visit and photos from Mr and Mrs Charles Webley (whose father was a keeper).
- Photos from Eric Shepherd (grandson of John Clark one of the builders from 1909).
- Information and photos from Stanley Emmens on/of some of the keepers.

We are extremely grateful to all for their contributions, and appreciate any items people may be willing to share or allow us to copy.

Registration

We are also working towards having the lighthouse registered by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT). The lighthouse at Cape Brett is significant as one of the only lights that still has most of its original workings. and it was the first lighthouse in the country to utilise mercury bath technology. For the registration process we will be working closely with Stuart Park, Area Manager of the Northland office of HPT.



The Murray DVD

'The Murray Family Home Movies' DVD sent to us by John Murray in late March has a series of wonderful clips including the crane under operation and some of the children playing, giving an insight into different elements of life at Cape Brett.





Photos above are screen captures produced from the Murray DVD and show the crane in action.



The Keeper Chronology

The keeper chronology has come to a point where we believe we have all the principal keepers and the majority of the assistant keepers accounted for. This has been compiled from the info gathered from national archive files, national library and various other sources, then compared with a list that Stanley Emmens (whose father was a keeper during the late 1930s) has been working on.



Harold McKinna (2nd assistant keeper) sitting at centre other two unidentified keepers.

The following is simply a list of names and we would appreciate any information you may have about their families (for example, names of their wives and children) and/or photos of these men, for the history book (contributions will be acknowledged in the book). In the case of the assistant keepers, we would love confirmation of their ranks (eg First or Second Assistant).

Principal Keepers:

Robert McIver
 George William Thwaites
 Henry Harvey
 Charles Riesop
 William Knight Cleverley
 Alfred Herbert Sanders
 Charles Arthur Moeller
 Robert Henry Leighton
 Albert Victor Pearce (also as an assistant)
 Robert Stephen Wilson
 George Sinclair
 Percy Edwin White
 Joshua Stuart Roberts
 Hugh Barbour Jamieson
 Eric I. Bowley
 Jack Sheppard
 Cecil Olsen
 Thomas Robert (Bob) Welch
 Ronald Downie
 James Hector Sutherland
 Kenneth Frank Valentine

Raymond James Johnson
 Brian Frederick Mason
 Ronald Sears
 Peter John Rodda
 Noel Probestal

Assistant Keepers:

Frances (Frank) Earnest Lee
 Arthur W. Page
 S. William Creamer
 Donald Cameron
 Harold McKinna
 Thomas Cairns
 Charles William Davis
 Douglas James Grindlay
 Alfred Walter Young
 Erick Harold Tarlton
 Oscar D. McFarlane
 Reginald Shearwood
 Alfred E. Carter
 Alfred G. Hodge
 Ernest (EH) Sandley Graham
 W.J. Leighton
 Samuel Budd
 H. W. Gausel
 Charles E. Grey
 A. Pullen
 Charles C. Emmens
 Fleetwood R. Tennent
 Kenneth Webley
 William Tait
 Mawhataio Todd
 Robert J. Naulls
 Ray H. Batemen
 N.F. Jennings
 William Joseph Johnson
 L. Carlise
 Colin P. Gallop
 A.J. Wareing
 Rod McIntosh
 James R.J. Smith
 Jack Shepherd
 F.W. Roe
 J.H. Akula
 Michael W. Lloyd
 I.A. Harris
 Bryan M. Richards
 John R Murray
 Bill Chee
 Barry Skinner
 Steve O'Neill
 Ron Allen
 J. Scapens



The First Letter

We have found what we believe to be the first mail call at Cape Brett, a postcard sent to one of the builders in April 1909. The postcard shows the bakery and post office of the city of Bakewell, England. Bakewell was John Clark's home town.



The Webley Album

Fabulous family photo albums are adding touches of colour to the Cape Brett Lighthouse Settlement research.

Many of the photos are in black and white, but they still colour in the human aspect of life at the Cape and provide details that don't always appear in letters or diaries, or which memories may have forgotten.

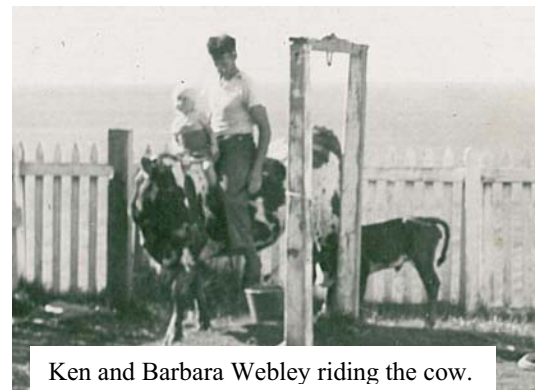
We have been lucky enough to see and record one such treasure in the Webley family album, brought to the Bay of Islands in March by Devonport boat builder Charlie Webley, son of ex-keeper Kenneth Webley.

Ken, a trained naval reserve, was the second assistant keeper from August 1937 to March 1941 and also worked at Cuvier Island before serving in World War 2.

Charlie was born after the family left Cape Brett, but photos include a number with his sister Barbara – aged about two – as a model for the various means of transport at the settlement. As well as perching on top of the family cow while dad did the milking, Barbara is shown being led on horseback, rowed by her father in a paper boat which he built, and enjoying the view from on top of a box of Oak tinned tomatoes which dad was delivering via a flat-decked wooden barrow.

The 70-odd pages – which Charlie kindly allowed us to add to our database – also gave us a first: a photo of the lighthouse, with the light on.

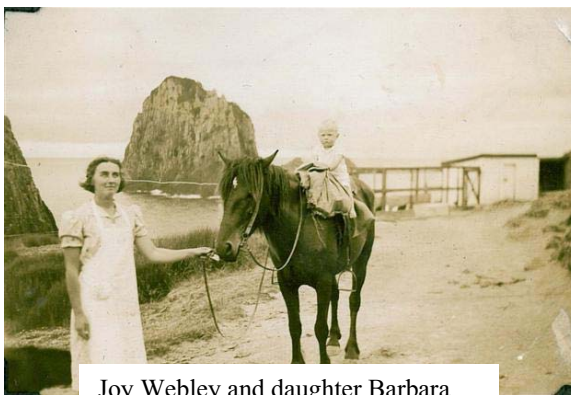
We are very grateful to the Webleys for bringing the album to Kerikeri, and for sharing the photos.



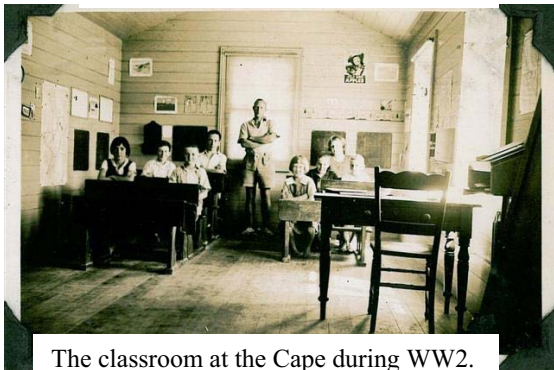
Ken and Barbara Webley riding the cow.



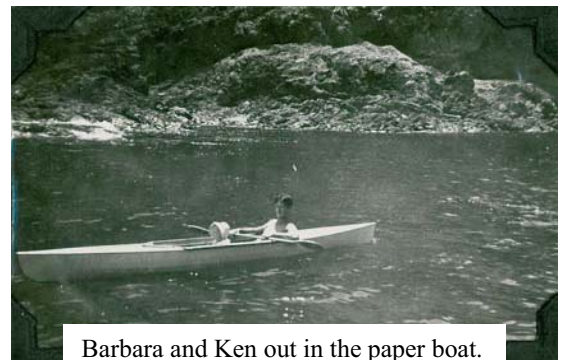
The Webleys and teacher Mr Spittal picnicking.



Joy Webley and daughter Barbara



The classroom at the Cape during WW2.



Barbara and Ken out in the paper boat.



Playing 'shop' in the classroom.



The scow Owahiti passing the Cape.



Auckland Archives

The trip to the Auckland branch of the New Zealand National Archives took place in early May. Both Andrew Blanshard and I (Christen) spent three days going through the numerous files stored at the archive in Manukau. Amongst the collection we found some of Cape Brett's great little gems such as the school files and a large selection of Customs Department memos.

The school files found related to the time when Cape Brett had its own school and includes records such as:

- The attendance register
- The corporal punishment register
- The Examination register
- The pupils' progress cards from December 1935
- Files on the staff and the school committee.

The Customs Department's memos mostly discussed issues relating to the construction of the station, the movement of keepers and workers' payment options.

Overall this was an extremely successful trip with a total of 3,432 file pages being photographed for later analysis.



Track Reinstatement

Over many years erosion has degraded the original track between the lighthouse and the hut (the one that drops down from in front of the tower and joins to the middle of the tramway) to a point where another was needed. It was decided that the best option was to reinstate the well-graded track that connects the site of principal keeper's house with the tower.

So in mid-May both the Kerikeri and Russell DOC recreation and historic assets teams headed to the Cape to reinstate the old keepers' track. The team was joined by the Conservation Corps, a group of trainee conservation workers from the Kerikeri campus of North Tec who assist local organisations in exchange for job experience.

At the end of the three days the team had managed to clear the blanket of very dense kikuyu, cut back the thick manuka/kanuka scrub and remove a kilometre of fencing wire, the accompanying battens and a gate. Other kikuyu clearing that was also carried out while the machinery was onsite was around:

- The middle section of tramway,
- The hut,
- The remains of the principal keeper's hut,
- And the power house's concrete pad.



Rough guide to old/new track layout.



The Conservation Corp Group on the track.

Once the areas around the houses were cleared Christen and Helena White (one of Kerikeri rec team members) drew plans of the first and third house sites to record what is on the ground now. These two plan drawings will be used in the future management of the site.





The reinstated track offering a “new” view of the lighthouse.



The cleared area around the first house and power house.



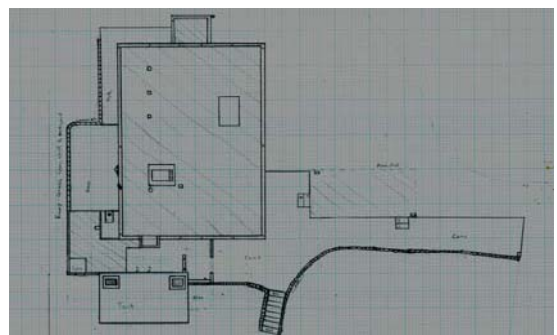
Just one of the awesome sunsets enjoyed during the group’s stay.



The tunnel cleared through the scrub.



The track as viewed from the lighthouse.



Archaeological plan of House One.

Future Plans

Open Days

Are still being planned, though dates are yet to be set.

Newsletters

Will continue, with your input.

The Lighthouse Interior

Will be cleaned in the coming months, though this is heavily dependant on the weather.



Future Newsletters

Could we please have your email addresses so we can send the newsletter electronically – Thanks. ☺
We would love to receive input from you for future newsletters – so send in anything you wish to share about the Cape Brett Lighthouse, it could be photos, stories. – we don't mind
Send your contributions to Christen at the address below. ☺

Credits



The view down to the landing.

Written by Christen McAlpine

Modern photos taken by Andrew Blanshard

Photo of keepers and goat from Ron James (pg3).

Postcard Pics obtained from Eric Shepherd (pg4).

Track photos taken by Christen McAlpine (pg6-7).

Original aerial from wikimapia.org (pg6).



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