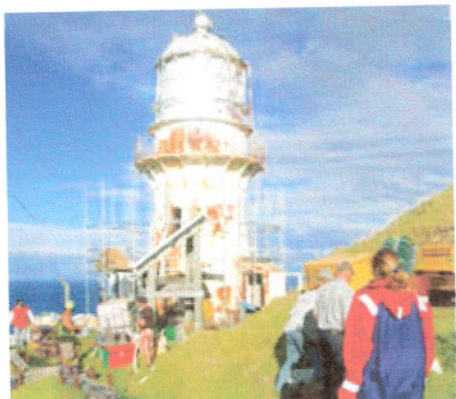


Date: 02 April 2007

A major facelift for the Bay of Islands' 98-year-old Cape Brett lighthouse has begun.

Nearly 50 tonnes of equipment was barged out to the Cape by Fullers' Okiato yesterday (Sunday 1 April) to begin the external restoration of the 11 metre high cast-iron lighthouse.



Cape Brett Lighthouse

Painting Contractor

Rudolphs.

"Now we're hoping for six weeks of fair weather so that the project can be completed before winter," said the Department of Conservation's Bay of Islands area office archaeologist Andrew Blanshard, responsible for overseeing the project.

A team of 12 - plus a Skyworks helicopter and crew - helped with the transporting of scaffolding, compressors, generators, water, diesel and the four tonnes of granite to be used to blast off the old paint.

A weather station was also taken, to provide the restoration crew with accurate humidity and dew readings, essential to ensure correct timing of the application and curing of the six different layers of paint.

"The guys are going to be there over the Easter break, so a few fishing rods and a television went out too."

The gear was helicoptered from the barge to the Cape Brett trampers' hut and the lighthouse, with a 30m strop carrying loads of up to 850kg over a period of nearly five hours.

Once the scaffolding is in place the lighthouse will be wrapped in scrim so that the lead-based paint can be safely removed and disposed of. As well as the repainting, restoration will include the refurbishing of the copper dome by hand, replacement of the triangular glass at the top of the lighthouse, two windows and two exterior doors, and the fitting of new stainless steel painted ladders.

The project is being undertaken by C W Rudolphs of Whangarei who have previously restored the Cape Reinga lighthouse. A team of about six will be working on the lighthouse, with contractors visiting when required.

The Cape Brett lighthouse - the first in the country where the light revolved in a bath of mercury - was first lit on February 21, 1910. It was manned by three keepers, who lived on-site with their families, until a small automated light was introduced in 1978.

Those working on the project will stay in the hut Cape Brett Hut - the surviving cottage of the dwellings at the settlement - which DOC now manages as a trampers hut.