



18 December 1816

Gentlemen,

I should consider myself extremely remiss and insensible to every feeling of humanity were I longer to delay representing to you the importance of a light, to warn ships of their danger, being placed in the south-west part of this island, the height of Pleimont, the nearest headland to the Hanois Rocks.

Besides vessels at former periods, the Boreas sloop of war, amongst others that have been wrecked on the part named, the misfortune has happened to three within the last month; the first vessel was lost in a storm early in the morning of the 12th ultimo, and the last two during the night of the 10th and 12 instant; out of the two latter ones, only one man was saved; and it is supposed, by the one wrecked on the 10th, The Sampson, of London, full of passengers, that nearly 100 persons must have perished. Had there been any beacon to have given the mariner a knowledge of being near land, probably the melancholy catastrophe would not have occurred.

Being well aware of the liberal and humane sentiments of the directors of the Trinity House, I make this appeal to their feelings, with the greatest confidence of the representation meeting their earliest attention . . .

I have, etc.

H. Bayley

Major-general & Lt. Governor, Guernsey

To the members of the
Corporation of Trinity House

Apparently, this letter had little effect on the Corporation known as Trinity House, or the Brethren, as no lighthouse was erected on Guernsey in that era, and the wrecks continued.

Thirty years after Major-general Bayley's letter, a tenacious mariner out of Stonehouse, England, named Captain William Sadler, broached the subject again. Captain Sadler wouldn't let go until the situation was remedied.

A Lighthouse for the Isle of Guernsey



People often say that 'It's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease.' The squeaky wheel on the Isle of Guernsey in the year

of 1846 was one Captain W. Sadler of the steam packet *Sir Francis Drake*. This tenacious mariner was adamant for the need of a lighthouse on the island of Guernsey and in his fervor proved a Royal thorn in the side of Trinity House, the organization charged with the responsibility of British lighthouses.

Guernsey is one of the Channel Islands belonging to Great Britain but located close to France rather than near the English coast. It is second in size to Jersey, 74 miles from Portland, England and 30 miles from France. The principal town is St. Peter Port, located on the east coast. For administrative purposes Guernsey is united with Alderney, Sark, Herm and adjacent islets to form the bailiwick of Guernsey, separate from Jersey. In 1846 there were only two navigation lights in the Channel Islands. A major triple light had been erected on a small islet 14 miles NNE of Guernsey called the Caskets (or Casquets) in 1723, and a small entrance light was established in 1832 at St. Peter Port, Guernsey.

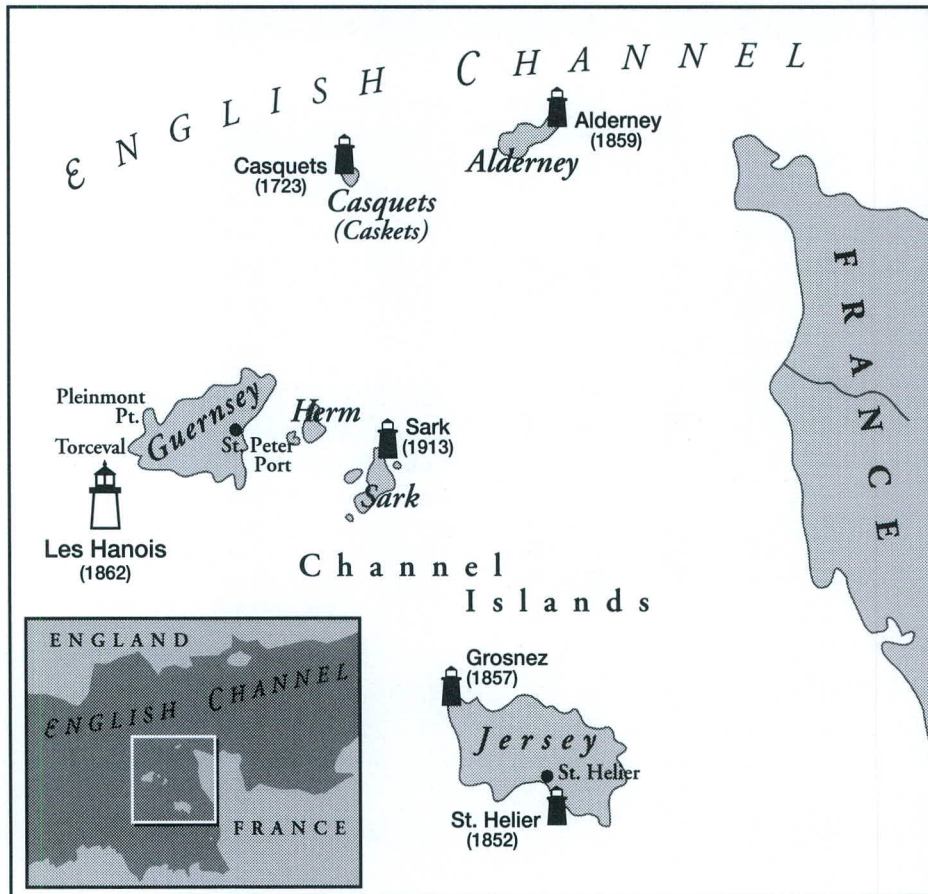
On January 20, 1846 Captain Sadler wrote to Trinity House from Devon, Guernsey —

"Sir, I MUST Apologize for troubling you upon a subject that, I am told, has often been brought before the Trinity Board without any beneficial results; that is the placing of a light upon the south-western end of the island of Guernsey. I have been now

four years running the Sir Francis Drake steam packet between Plymouth and the Channel Islands, and the oftener I go there tends only to confirm my opinion of the absolute necessity of a light being put there. During the time I have been in the Sir Francis Drake I have had opportunities of mentioning the subject to a great many ship owners, ship-masters, pilots and fishermen belonging to both islands, and they all, without any exception, agree with me as to the great necessity of there being a light placed at Torveval Point; in fact, I have often heard fishermen and pilots declare that they would willingly submit to a reasonable tax upon their boats if they

could have the desired light placed as above described; and I have no hesitation in stating that if a light had been placed there 20 or 30 years ago, hundreds of lives and much valuable property would have been saved.

There are almost, every winter, cases of ships striking upon the rocks on the north side of Guernsey, in which case no person is left to tell the tale, and the only information is fragments of the wreck picked up by the islanders. . . . I could quote a number of cases of wreck that have happened within the last 20 years, but I shall confine my information to a few cases of recent occur-





rence that have come within my knowledge. A ship from St. John's, New Brunswick, running up channel in the night, made the land, fancying himself on the English coast, hauled off to the southward, and before daylight was wrecked on the north side of Jersey.

In the spring of last year a Swedish brig ran up on the south side of Guernsey, struck upon a rock (no fog), without ever having seen the land; she came off and sunk in deep water; the crew had but just time to cut the boat's lashings, in which they saved their lives . . . and for a more recent case . . . I beg to refer you to . . . the *Shipping Gazette* of Friday last, where it would appear there have been wrecks and no person left to tell the tale.

I beg further to remark, that a light would be of the greatest use to vessels coming up from the westward, bound to either of the islands [Jersey or Guernsey], for they endeavour to sight Guernsey first, and for

want of a light there they are very seldom [able] to do so in the night . . . And further, I beg to observe, it would be of very great use to steam-vessels, of which there are not a few passing between the islands in the night; and last, though not least, the trade generally between the west of England and those islands would gladly submit to a fair and reasonable tax for the cost of keeping such a light . . . With those remarks, I beg of you to lay this letter before the Honourable Trinity Board for their consideration, and shall be happy to hear from you their opinion upon the subject.

I remain, etc.
William Sadler
Commander, Sir Francis Drake

Mr J. Herbert of Trinity House responded that they had received the letter and would consider placing a light on the island when the local trade expressed their desire for the light and agreed to contribute toward its establishment and maintenance.

Sadler replied that he had related the events to date to the Chamber of Commerce along with a petition for them to sign. However, the chamber balked at signing it and in a letter from Sadler back to Trinity House he said, ". . . there appears to be hesitation about signing the petition . . . until they know how the toll . . . is to be collected, or whether it will subject vessels belonging to the island to any expense for lights to which they are not now subject. There appears to be no objection to pay a fair toll for the light itself." He requested an explanation to the concerns of the local mariners regarding a toll.

However, Sadler hadn't really

approached the Chamber which had, however, received a copy of Trinity House's letter to Sadler's request.

The Chamber wrote Trinity House regarding their letter to Sadler and Sadler's statements: . . . "I am instructed, in reply, to express the astonishment of the Committee at the statements contained in Captain Sadler's letter, both as to the necessity of the light in question, and the desire of the ship-owners, masters, etc., for its erection, which, had such been the case, would have come to the knowledge of the committee, who had heard nothing whatever on the subject till the above papers were submitted to its consideration. The Committee equally repudiates the dreadful picture drawn by Captain Sadler as to the annual losses to shipping through the want of his projected lighthouse.

"With regard to the assumed readiness of the ship-owners to tax their shipping towards [building a lighthouse], requested by Captain Sadler, and probably by him alone, the very reverse is the fact, and he had not the shadow of an authority to make the assertion." [Signed — John Valrent] President, Chamber of Commerce.

An agent for the ship owners of Guernsey also wrote the corporation forwarding a resolution of the members that stated a lighthouse on Torteval Point was ". . . unnecessary, and moreover regret to find . . . he [made comments] he was not authorized to [make], that the trade generally would support such a measure, or allow their ships to be taxed [to erect and maintain a lighthouse]."

The letter from the Chamber of Commerce on Guernsey and the local Mutual Insurance Society for Shipping completely obliterated Sadler's credibility and Trinity House sent Captain Sadler a terse letter stating . . . "it is not the intention of this corporation to take any farther steps in relation to the proposed lighthouse at the present time." [signed — J. Herbert]

Sadler was not in the least embarrassed by this turn of events and immediately wrote back to the Corporation (Trinity House) that a light was, nevertheless needed, and the real reason that the local mariners didn't want the light was, "All vessels belonging to the

islands, coming from foreign ports, now evade the payment of the Channel lights [light dues], and they are afraid that the Trinity Board would place a collector of lights on the island, and that such a course would cause them to pay for lights they now evade."

In another letter to Trinity House in March of 1846 he stated, ". . . I must say I am sorry, nay, truly sorry, to find such a spirit amongst a Christian community." He went on to say he was only looking out for the public good and that the board's objection ". . . arises from a jealousy from not having applied to the island authorities previous to my representing the great necessity of the thing itself . . ." And in this lengthy letter continued to press for the necessity of a lighthouse. He waxed poetic about the loss of the HMS Boreas in 1805 when ". . . 150 souls met a watery grave" and, had a light been erected the accident may not have happened. He went on, "Go, sir, into St. Saviour's churchyard, and there read (which I have no doubt but you have done), and if there is one spark of humanity existing in your breast, you must shudder at the representation there shown, of 11 unfortunate females buried in one grave, who left Jersey only a few hours before in a passenger-vessel bound to Plymouth." He recounted the story of that sinking as well as the wreck of the *Mary Sampson* (30 lives lost), *George and William* (numerous lives lost) and several of H.M. brigs. One went aground on the north shore, barely missing rocks and fortunately striking a sandy beach. ". . . if a man-of-war, with so many officers and men to look out, cannot see that they are approaching danger, how, sir, can you expect a small merchant vessel, coming up Channel in the depth of winter, whose crew were a few months before burning under a tropical sun [to see the danger]?"

Captain Sadler remarked that he was representing public opinion and that he had, on his own, polled many mariners as to the need for the lighthouse during the past three years.

In May, Sadler forwarded a copy of a letter from the Rector of Torteval who stated that he thought many of his parish would support a light but were

afraid that the tax might be too much; he offered to circulate a petition and if that failed he had a steeple on his church, which was located high on a hill, that might suffice. Rector Dobre offered, "The steeple of Torteval church is every way calculated for such a purpose; a small spiral staircase inside from the turrets is all that is required; the top is already off, and the pinnacle built so strong with granite as to be easily capable of supporting the lantern, which would not weigh so much as the stone globe and weathercock which were there before.

"I think I can secure the acquiescence of the Bishop, as well as of the parish . . . as the steeple is separate from the body of the church.

"The expense of erection I calculate at 100£ . . . the annual cost of maintenance would not be more than . . . 50£ per annum . . . the States of both islands would no doubt . . . contribute to this . . . particularly as a new harbour is on the tapis [carpet]."

Trinity House acknowledged the letter, but declined to consider the matter.

Editorial — Guernsey Comet,
8 October 1846

WRECK

Last night, at about eight o'clock, the French schooner *Union* . . . with a general cargo bound to Brest from Rouen, consisting of oil, soap, iron, & was driven on the island of Lihou during a heavy gale from the westward; fortunately it was high water at the time, and the vessel passed over a number of rocks, which at low water astonished the spectators, and drifted in a small bay on the shingles [ed. slate outcroppings], in which she is now embedded. The crew are all saved. The vessel is much injured and will probably become a total wreck. The cargo, saturated with water, is being landed with every dispatch . . .

This newspaper item was, of course, forwarded to Trinity House by the good captain.

Over the winter Captain Sadler was busy with a new petition on which he gathered the signatures of 39 ship owners and masters who called on the islands from England and 64 Jersey ship owners. In April of 1847 he forwarded the petition with 13 letters supporting his claim to Trinity House. One of the enclosed letters was from the Guernsey Chamber of Commerce, now supporting the lighthouse but stating that the ship owners of the island could not pay a tax on any erected. The Mutual Insurance Society for Shipping wrote a similar letter. Other letters of support were signed by the consuls of Denmark, Belgium, Portugal and the Empire of Brazil. Captain Sadler had even managed to enlist the support of the Royal Western Yacht Club, whose members occasionally sailed to the Channel Islands.

That April, Sadler also wrote directly to the Duke of Wellington (who was head of the Trinity House Board) iterating the tragic loss of life and the need for the aid to navigation. Wellington replied "Although I am the Master of the Corporation of the Trinity House, it is not in my power, and it is my duty to avoid to interference in the affairs under the direction and control of the Corporation . . .", and kicked the letter 'down stairs.'

The following September, Captain Sadler sent another petition to the Corporation with the names of 55 merchants, ship owners, masters, pilots and fishermen who were mainly located in England, but engaged in trade with the Channel Islands; they 'prayed' that the good board would establish said light on Guernsey.

Trinity House acknowledged the letter, but stated that the elder Brethren on Guernsey still entertained doubts. Still, in September, Sadler fired back a letter stating he had received their correspondence, and when he was leaving St. Peter Port on Guernsey recently a large amount of debris was seen floating about. The general opinion was that a large vessel had struck the north side of the island Friday during a storm and ". . . all hands met a watery grave; as it is certain that such occurrences as these are frequent during the dark nights of win-

Editorial — Guernsey Sun,
4 March 1848

WRECK

The brig stranded on the Virun Rocks, to the westward of Lihou, proves to be the Five Sisters, of Glasgow, instead of the Three Sisters, as stated in our last number. Up to Saturday morning five of the bodies have been picked up in a dreadfully mutilated state; one is suppose to be that of the mate. By the log-slate it appears that the ship's reckoning was made up to two o'clock Friday morning, when the vessel was going six knots. The vessel was laden with salt and cork, and now lies bottom upward on the beach. We shall speak more fully on this subject in our next [edition], urging again the necessity of a light on Pleinmont. We went on Saturday to view the wreck and the bodies, and a more melancholy spectacle we have scarcely ever seen. The Captain and three hands are still missing.

ter, that life and property are being continually sacrificed."

In February, he wrote of the loss of the *Emmanuel*, which struck the Guernsey and sank in ten minutes. Fortunately for the crew she was timber laden. A statement from the master indicated they had seen the Caskets Light a few minutes before they struck and, thinking it was, ". . . Portland, they very naturally kept the ship away a Channel course, never dreaming that they had passed the west end of Guernsey four or five miles without ever seeing it."

However, after the two latest wrecks both the Chamber of Commerce and the Marine Insurance Society for Shipping came to the conclusion that a light on the southwest point of the island would not have been of help to the two vessels, and a light could be quite misleading to other ships in other circumstances. But their real fear was having to pay a tax for the maintenance of the new light, and with that precedence, a tax levied against them on all Channel lights.

In April an Indian ship ran aground on the north east part of the island with the loss of thirteen and the local paper remarked ". . . Do not these frequent losses of life and property loudly call on the friends of humanity to come forward and waive all personal pique, and unite heart and hand to do all that is in their power to prevent these dreadful shipwrecks?"





"The crew abandoned the vessel in two boats . . ."

Also in April, the Captain of the vessel *Cuckoo* sent a letter to Trinity House stating,

"Sir, I have the honour to report to you . . . that the barque *Nabob*, of Liverpool . . . during the thick weather on Thursday night, struck on a reef of the eastward of this island [Jersey] . . . filled, and sank in deep water. The crew abandoned the vessel in two boats, one of which became entangled with the sinking ship, and went down with her, by which circumstance 11 of her crew drowned . . . [signed Henry Dumaresq, Commander.]

Finally in May, Trinity House Secretary J. Herbert wrote the Lieutenant Governor of Guernsey, C.B. Bell, addressing the ". . . great loss of life and property which takes place in the vicinity of the Channel Islands" and suggesting that a lighthouse might assist the mariner and, ". . . this Board . . . are ready to erect and maintain a lighthouse . . . provided the trade of the Channel Islands will consent to contribute the moderate rate of toll which will be required of them." The letter went on to allay any fears about the vessels having to pay dues for lights which they presently did not have to pay for, only for the new lighthouse.

The Lieutenant Governor immediately contacted the Chamber and the

Society. Both continued to maintain they opposed the lighthouse, ". . . on the great principles of humanity, and not on pecuniary grounds, as alleged . . . it being [our] considerate and decided opinion that such a light would be the cause of a vast amount of evil, much beyond any good that might be contemplated from it, by simply mistaking it for one on the English coast, and which mistakes would unquestionably be of frequent occurrence." This long letter went back over the various wrecks, often disproving that a light as proposed would have made a difference. The letter mentioned that the vessel which wrecked upon the jetty was departing the island with one of the best pilots on board and the acting Captain wouldn't follow the advice of the pilot. The letter ended with, "I narrate these facts, because Mr. Sadler lays great stress on these disasters to favour his views." [signed — John Valrent, President, Government of Guernsey]

In June, Sadler again wrote the Board denouncing the vote of the Chamber and the Society, stating that they are incorrect and, anyway, why should so small a number of people hold in their hands the fate of so many?, and begged the board to construct a lighthouse anyway. He sent this letter with several letters of support.

Later that month, Sadler sent statistics on the number of French vessels sailing in the vicinity which would have to pay dues, and talked the rector into repeating his offer for a light in the steeple and offering a house free of rent for any light keeper assigned.

The governor of the island wrote to Trinity House confirming their thoughts that the vessel owners probably wanted a lighthouse but were fearful of having to pay English and Irish light tolls from which they were, at that time, exempt.

On June 23, 1848 the Chamber of Commerce resolved, "That in the opinion of the Chamber, a lighthouse and light on the southwestern coast of the island of Guernsey would be of utility." Further, the Chamber allowed that the masters of vessels would not object to paying a modest toll for the upkeep of the aid to navigation, ". . . provided it did not subject them to the payment of tolls for English and Irish lights . . ."

In August, Captain Sadler sent another letter to the Board, the pith of which pits the vote of 21 people to keep the island dark as opposed to the number of people, ships and tons that enter and depart the port who desired the lighthouse. Inbound in 1847, 2,392 ships, 159,462 tons, manned with 14,206 men, with similar numbers for ships departing. He tried everything in the book at this point.

Sadler wrote again in October and November, bombarding the Board with logic and reports of new shipwrecks, ". . . These wrecks will not cease to be until there is a light to warn the mariner of his approaches to these dangers, invisible to human sight, during the dark nights of winter."

Trinity House responded that their consul ruled "the Corporation of Trinity House has not, under its present powers, the right of erecting and maintaining lighthouses or beacons on the Channel Islands."

This new twist of events, no doubt designed to extricate Trinity House from the messy fray, must have sent the good Captain Sadler right up the main mast.

His reply to this letter, a scant six days after, was dripping with sarcasm.

“Sir,

Your favour of the 17th instant has come duly to hand, for which I beg to return you my best thanks for the explanation given; at the same time I am truly sorry to hear that the Corporation of Trinity House have not the power to erect beacons or lighthouses in the Channel Islands.

My ideas were, that the same Board which had power to erect a lighthouse upon the Casket (it being piece and parcel of the Channel Islands) could have extended that power to any other of those islands that were equally dangerous, which the immense loss of life and property within the last half century proves beyond contradiction to be the western end of Guernsey . . . I beg to apologize to the Elder Brethren for troubling them again on this important question; but knowing, as I do, the great utility it would be to the general navigation of the English Channel . . . I do hope, if the Corporation of Trinity House have not power to do anything, that they will endeavour to influence those who have. [signed — William Sadler]”

On November 24, 1848 a brig grounded with more loss of life, and Sadler forwarded the news to the Brethren stating “. . . this makes the fifth ship in this memorable 1848.” On December 28, the *Sea Witch* sank, but the crew of 18 were spared.

In the spring of 1849 the Royal Treasury got into the act, sending letters to the Brethren and the governor of Guernsey, asking them to look into the matter. The Lt. Governor of Guernsey, John Bell, replied he could not form an opinion, and that even all the marine interests concerned couldn't “. . . properly form an opinion in this matter. It is a question that may be debated till doomsday; for, after all, it can only be a matter of opinion. One party maintains that wrecks which have taken place on this coast would have been prevented by a light; another, that if there had been a light, many more wrecks would have happened. It is impossible to prove or refute either assertion.”

Mr. Bell did go on to say it appeared the majority favored a light, but that

Editorial — Guernsey Sun, September 14, 1849

The equinoctial gales are approaching. Wednesday night sounded in our ears its warning note to be prepared; and what has been done? What precautions have we taken? Have the sad wrecks of last year awakened us from our fatal slumbers? Have the feelings of humanity and policy led us to the erection of a lighthouse, or even the laying of a foundation stone? Alas! our reply must be “No, no.” Again and again, our western coast may be strewn with the timbers of some wrecked vessel, and the stiffened limbs of its crew once more exhibit the heart-rendering spectacle of the sad effects of procrastination and inhuman indifference to the preservation of life and property. Thus it is “that matters of great pith and moment lose the name of action.” And how can our authorities answer for this culpable delay? An awful monument of which has so lately been erected. They doubtless merit our thanks for the measures they at length have taken for the preservation of public health; for forwarding the erection of a vegetable market, and the improvement of our drainage, etc., etc. Let, then, our States at their next meeting, crown their laudable acts by bringing this all-important subject before them, and no longer be chargeable with woeful delay, when so great interests are at stake.

there were not sufficient funds on the island to erect and maintain an aid to navigation. After a lot of ‘backing and filling’ he finished with:

“In conclusion I may add, from my own observation, that the west end, north western side, and north end of this island, are full of danger to vessels bound up Channel, that may, whether from bad reckoning, thick weather . . . have lost their Channel course. The island is out of the proper and usual course, so that vessels may be said rather to stumble upon than try to make it; those bound for these islands excepted. I cannot see that a light would increase the danger, unless vessels come to look for it, which no seaman in his senses, unless he meant to pass to the southward of it, will ever think of doing; nor can I believe that there is anything so very peculiar in these seas as to render darkness safe and light dangerous.

“Still these are crude opinions, which are not entitled to any weight in the decision of this question.” [Ed. — talk about covering your bases!]

Having been thwarted by the Brethren, Captain William Sadler turned to the Board of Trade and provided them with a pithy outline of what had transpired to date, ending it with a P.S. “The property sacrificed through the want of a light on Guernsey last year would have sufficed to erect a lighthouse, and maintain it forever.”

Throughout the spring and summer of 1849, Captain Sadler kept the pressure on and the elder Brethren secretary busy — answering the correspondence which Sadler and all those whom he had asked to write the Board had generated.

Then, Trinity House, in an abrupt about face, sent their yacht *Beacon* to Guernsey to locate the best site for a lighthouse. Captain Sadler was invited aboard and asked his opinion, which he gladly gave. He continued to maintain that the southwesterly point of the island was the best location for a number of navigation reasons, and the soil was not fit for cultivation (cost of acquiring it would thus be inexpensive) and it consisted of a great deal of granite which could be used in the construction of the tower.

However, nothing occurred other than a few letters between various government agencies.

In November the French vessel *L'Europe* wrecked on Guernsey with a loss of 26 people. This information was conveyed to the Brethren in a caustic letter from a resident of Guernsey who stated, “. . . I have heard again and again, *ad nauseam*, the arguments against a light being shown on Guernsey, that it might be mistaken for Scilly, or the Longships . . . But I have confidence . . . that you could and would make a difference in the appearance of the Guernsey light from any other . . . these vessels *Sea Witch*, *Five Sisters*, *Ancona* and *L'Europe* might have been afloat now; at any rate they would not have layed their bones on Guernsey, had there been a light there.” [signed — J. Waring]

It is interesting to note this was the first time that anyone mentioned that a distinct characteristic might be used. The French Fresnel rotating lens was invented back in 1822 and was in use in many areas of the world by this time, including England. Revolving reflector systems had been around since 1800. In some locations, prior to rotating optics, governments had erected multiple towers to provide a characteristic of sorts,

Editorial — Guernsey Sun,
October, 1849

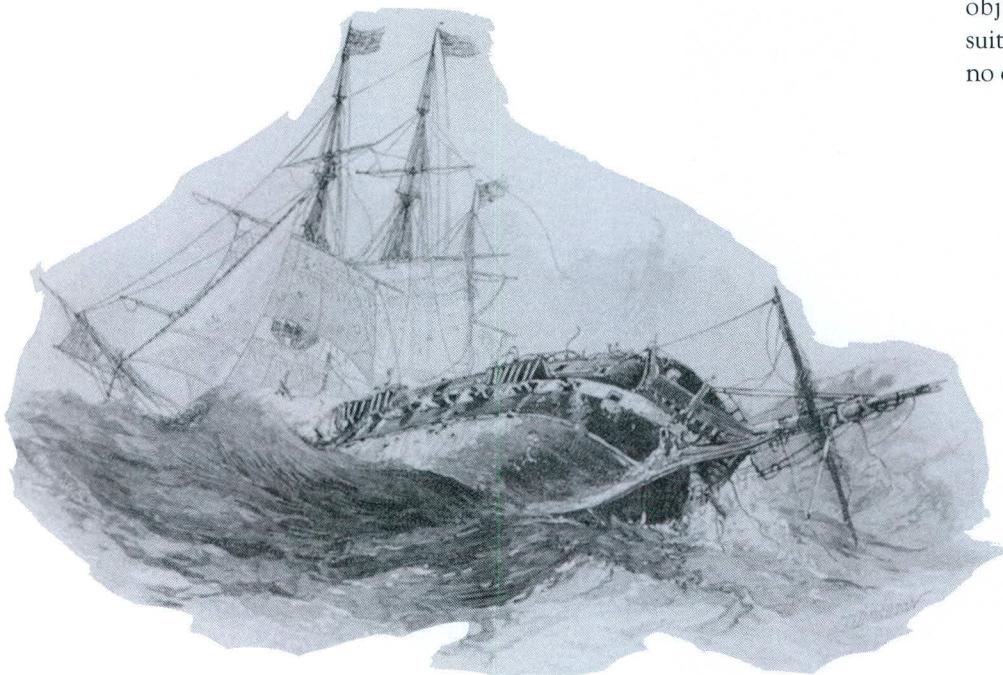
*Through the merciful interposition of Divine Providence we have been spared from recording another wreck on our western coast, before the grave of the unfortunate crew of the **L'Europe** was closed, or even all the bodies found. At dawn of day on Monday, a large schooner, bound up Channel, was described entangled amongst those dangerous rocks, called *Les Grunes*, which stand about a league to the westward of the place where the unfortunate crew of the above vessel met with their watery graves; but, providentially, daylight broke upon them, and the weather being moderate, their imminent danger burst on their view in time to heave the vessel in stays and avoid the threatened danger. A few short minutes more of darkness, and another calamity would have been added to the fearful list, which the apathy of our authorities have allowed to swell to an amount, the recollection of which sickens the soul.*

including the nearby Caskets which had three lights. Why someone, especially Captain William Sadler, hadn't broached this when the naysayers brought up the potential for confusion between fixed lights is amazing.

The Brethren responded to Mr. Waring and asked him the location of the four wrecks which he mentioned in his letter. And he responded with a map of the island showing the locations.

In December 1849, the Governor requested a guarantee that light dues other than those for a new lighthouse would not be imposed on the vessel owners and Trinity House responded that they still didn't have the authority to construct a lighthouse on the island, but they had been in contact with Her Majesty's Government about the subject. The Brethren also answered the governor that light dues, other than any for Guernsey, would not be imposed on the island vessels; however, they couldn't guarantee so at some future date.

The Guernsey governor wrote to Trinity House in December requesting an estimate of cost to construct and maintain a lighthouse. He felt somehow the cost might be collected between the two major ports on Guernsey and Jersey. He further added that although all active opposition to the light had ceased, there were a few objections and doubts as to the most suitable location and, of course, he had no opinion on the matter.



25 December 1849

Sir,

Your favour of yesterday came duly to hand this morning. I am very sorry to hear that the Trinity Board are not yet empowered to erect this lighthouse; of course, ere this you must be aware that since the loss of **Europe**, there have been two total wrecks upon Guernsey through the want of it; viz, the schooner **Little Britain**, from St. Michael's, fruit laden, struck upon one of the outer rocks, and sank in deep water; the crew escaped in the boat; and on Wednesday morning last, the American packet ship **Oneida**, 790 tons, from New York to Havre, laden with 1,950 bales of cotton and sundry other cargo, struck also on some of the outer rocks, and now lies a total wreck in La Perelle Bay, and with much difficulty the crew and passengers escaped with their lives. Such disasters as those, continually taking place, ought to convince even landmen that something ought to be done to warn strangers of their approach to this horrible nest of rocks.

William Sadler
Captain, Sir Francis Drake

In December of 1849 and January of 1850, a flurry of letters, spurred by Captain Sadler, passed between Governor Bell of Guernsey, the Brethren, the Board of Trade and the Admiralty. All seem to agree that a light was needed and that opposition was slight and more concerned with dues than the light being misleading. Lord W.A.B. Hamilton of the Admiralty wrote:

January 15, 1850

Sir,

. . . I am commanded by their Lordships to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords of the Treasury, that they are decidedly of opinion that a sea-light on that island would be of very great benefit to navigation; and their Lordships consider that the Great Hanois Rock, lying off Pleinmont Point, is the most eligible site for the lighthouse, as combining the most advantages. That rock rises to the height of 30 feet above high water, and 60 feet above low water, with a table platform of

32 feet in extent on a lower level; and a lighthouse of 100 feet in height could be erected there with great facility, as it is protected from the break of the sea by its own elevated back, and from the swell by a barrier of outer rocks . . .

W.A.B. Hamilton

The Admiralty's opinion was based on a letter from Commander Brock, Royal Navy, who stated, ". . . the Hanois are situated at the western extreme of the island, and ships making the light (if placed there) would, even if very close, have time to haul clear of the rocks. Secondly, the light would be seen equally in the direction of Alderney and Jersey, and of great use to the fishermen of those islands. Thirdly, one-third of the wrecks which have occurred in these islands

have been on Jersey; the light would, therefore, be of good service to ships which might find themselves to the southward of Guernsey in their passage up the Channel. The reasons I gave against Pleinmont as a site were, that in thick or foggy weather, high land is always liable to be enveloped in mist or fog, whilst the low land is comparatively clear . . ."

A 100 foot tall granite tower was erected on the Hanois in 1862 at a cost of over 25,000£. Its size and cost make it one of the major rock lighthouses of England. Originally it displayed a flashing red light every 45 seconds, and a fog bell was rung every 15 seconds in thick weather. Captain Sadler had, finally, prevailed.



The Hanois Lighthouse in 1988. A helicopter landing platform has been placed on the lantern room. Photo by Keeper John Mobs.

St. Peters Port

One of the two lights that preceded Les Hanois Lighthouse in the Channel Islands was the small entrance light at St. Peters Port on the Isle of Guernsey. The stone tower was erected in 1832 and modified in 1867. It served as an entrance light and did come into play for vessels navigating far off shore or on the more heavily traveled west coast of the islands.



Casquets Lighthouse

About 1722, the owners of ships that passed the dangerous Casketts Rocks, off Alderney in the Channel Isles, applied to Thomas Le Cocq, the proprietor of the Rocks, to build a lighthouse and offered him $\frac{1}{2}$ per ton when vessels passed the light. Le Cocq was awarded a patent to construct the lighthouse in 1723.

Trinity House directed that a distinctive light characteristic be employed to avoid confusion with nearby single lights on the coast of France and England. Three separate towers in a triangle were constructed, each originally burning an open coal fire. The three towers were named, St. Peter, St. Thomas and Dungeon and their lights were first exhibited on October 30, 1724. In 1790 lanterns with reflector systems were placed on each tower. In 1818 a revolving reflector system was installed and in 1854 the three towers were raised in height by 30 feet.

The three original towers are still in use, although only the 75 foot high northwest tower exhibits a light. The East Tower contains fog signal equipment and the third tower a radiobeacon and has a helicopter pad on top.

Les Hanois

Captain Sadler's efforts resulted in the Les Hanois Lighthouse being constructed in 1862 on a reef on the southwest side of the Island of Guernsey. The construction of this 90 foot high tower was an important development in lighthouse engineering as all the stones in each course, and all courses were dovetailed together to form a solid mass. Various methods of jointing the stones in rock towers had been employed prior to this. Smeaton developed the use of granite blocks in rock towers, and he connected them together with metal pins and marble dowels in his Eddystone tower. Alan Stevenson used a similar method in his Skerryvore Lighthouse, while his father, Robert, dovetailed the stones of each course and then pinned the courses together to form a solid mass. But it was James Douglass, when he was chief engineer for Trinity House, who suggested that the stones might be dovetailed together both laterally and vertically. The cement mortar in the joint, formed between the faces, so locked the dovetails that the stones cannot be separated without being broken. This method was first employed in the Les Hanois Lighthouse, and became a pattern for all sea rock towers. The Les Hanois station is manned by three keepers, on duty for a period of 28 days followed by 28 days of leave ashore. The helicopter pad was constructed in 1979. The station is scheduled for automation in 1995.

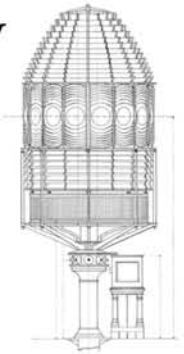
Much of the historical information used in this article was derived from an 1850 Trinity House report and from Trinity House information sheets.

Above – The St. Peters Port breakwater light. The only light on Guernsey during Captain Sadler's campaign.

Left – The Casquets light station. Originally this station had three towers, each exhibiting a fixed light. The bottom of one of the towers (top of the photo) is presently the fog signal building. The other no longer used tower is at right with a helicopter pad on the top. Photos courtesy of Trinity House.



Join the U.S. Lighthouse Society Today or Give the Gift of Membership!



Restoration & Preservation



Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse, MD

The U.S. Lighthouse Society has donated to many lighthouse preservation projects throughout the U.S. Most recently we were honored by being presented with the Preserve America Stewardship Award from The White House for our restoration work at Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse.

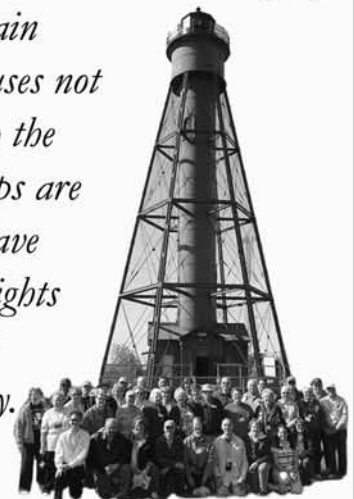
Help Support Our Important Mission!

Education



The Keeper's Log magazine is the only one of its kind and has been published quarterly since 1984. Receive this award-winning publication as a benefit of membership.

The Society organizes domestic and international lighthouse tours. Many of our excursions gain access to lighthouses not normally open to the public. These trips are a great way to have fun, see lots of lights and learn about lighthouse history.



Tincum Lighthouse, NJ

*To learn more visit
www.uslhs.org
or
call Headquarters at
415-362-7255*