

The Great Orme Lighthouse Bed & Breakfast

by Marie Martin

We were in the midst of a very "poor man's tour" of Britain. For two nights, we had, in fact, slept in our tiny rented car to keep from paying exorbitant Bed and Breakfast bills. The time had come for a real bed and a hot shower.

Now we were on our way to Holyhead to take the Irish ferry to Dun Lagohaire (which is pronounced DunLairy — the Irish are very poor, why do they waste letters so?) Speaking of letters, we were passing through Wales. Their road signs are in both Welsh and English. No, that's not true . . . their road signs are actually half Welsh and half English. We kept seeing signs like "EK LLEWNDIN R LUB IS AGAINST THE LAW!" Never could figure out what we were, or were not, supposed to be doing.

Driving past the resort town of Llandudno, I noticed on the map that we were near the Great Orme Lighthouse. My long-suffering Significant Other, DEM, sighed and said we might as well divert to see the lighthouse and then find a Bed and Breakfast for the night.

We started up the west side of the loop road shown on the map to encircle the mighty rock outcropping called Great Orme. The road narrowed, and finally stopped dead against a wall of granite. While we were trying to turn the car around without going over the cliff, a local came along. In answer to our perplexity about the dead-end road and the elusive lighthouse, he told us that we needed to go back to town and take the east loop, but the light station is no longer active, it's a Bed and Breakfast now.

DEM said he figured he knew where we'd be spending the night.



Marie Martin and friend at Great Orme. Note the lantern room at left at ground level. There is a sheer cliff directly behind the lantern. Photo courtesy of Marie Martin.

The east road proved to be equally hairy, winding tenuously up the side of the rock. Only DEM's fighter-pilot eyesight and reflexes enabled us first to find, and then actually turn onto, the driveway to the light station. It is guarded by fancy iron gates bearing the legend FFORDD BRIEFAT TR GOLEUDY YN UNIG. Which either means "Private Road to Lighthouse," or "You Are About To Drive Into The North Atlantic."

The driveway's narrowness was exceeded only by its steepness. In the dusk, it was a real E-ticket ride. The clincher was the structure at the end of it, which looks like the offspring of a castle,

raped by a lighthouse. We both gasped at the gray stone fortress, festooned with inglenooks and topped with crenellations.

The host, Mr. John Callin, assured us that a room was available, and while DEM was attempting to shoe-horn the car into one of the minuscule parking spots, I was dragging luggage up to our lair. Mr. Callin's gracious welcome was augmented by that of his lovely, friendly, dog, Ben.

Talk about romantic! There was an iron-grated fireplace, flowery wallpaper, and a frilly coverlet, all dreamily lit by antique lamps. And talk about a view! We caught the last of the sunset from a deep-set shuttered window, hundreds of feet above the Irish Sea.

Talk about cold! Despite castle walls almost 18 inches thick, the room was chilly, and the horrendous winds outside howled and moaned in the chimney. All this just made snuggling under the covers even more delicious.

Now, at any Bed and Breakfast, one expects to have to go "down the hall" for the bathroom. Here, however, one needed to go down the hall, down a winding staircase, across the echoing dark-paneled lobby, through the dimly lit kitchen (complete with medieval gaping brick cooking hearth), across another freezing cold hall, and into the bathroom at last. All this was somewhat mitigated by the gentle, wagging presence of the dog, Ben. Nonetheless, I would have peed in my hat before I'd have gone down there alone at night.

Next morning, we headed towards the aforementioned bathroom, intending to fill the Olympic-sized, claw-footed tub with steaming water, and wash away the accumulated road grime of the previous two

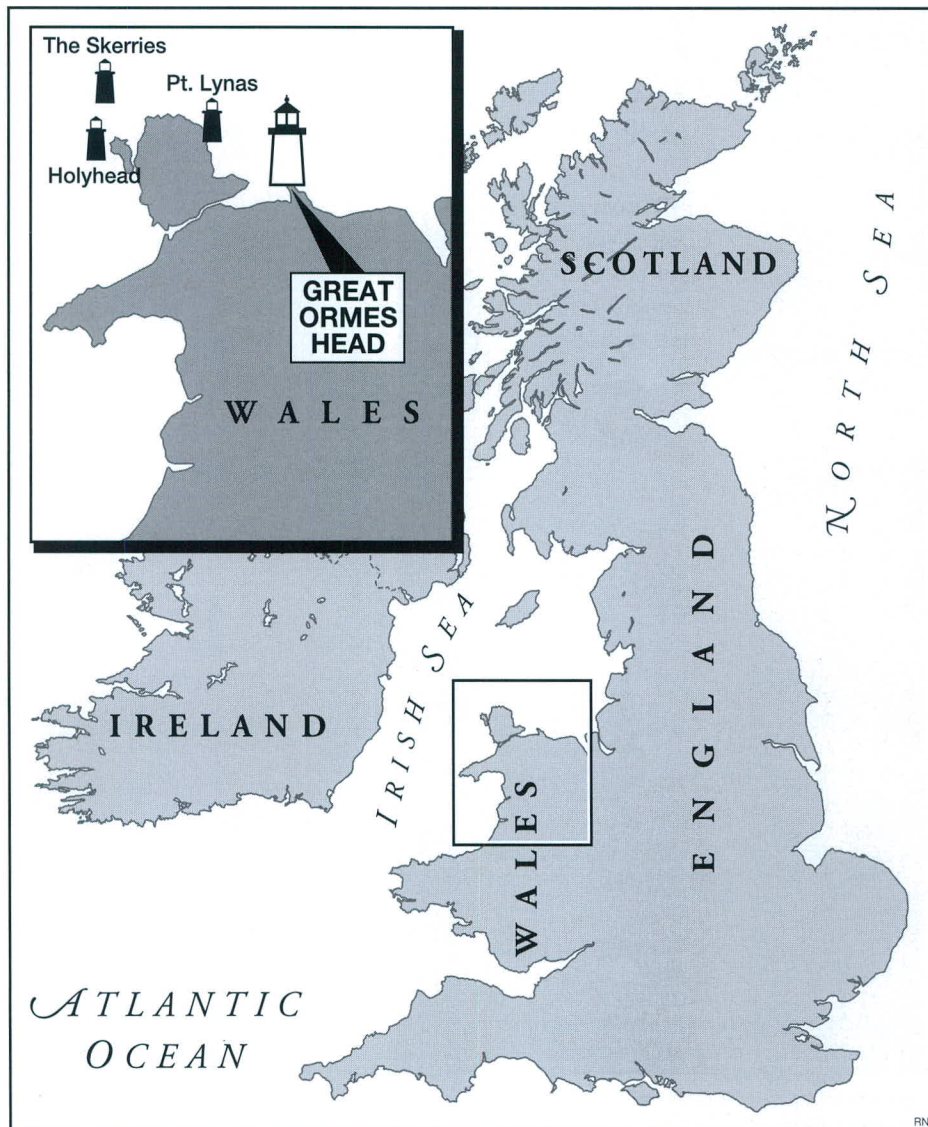
nights . . . NOT! The room was clammy, and the tub yielded a trickle of icy water the same temperature as the grim gray seas outside the window (... had us thinking pure thoughts for days afterwards).

Breakfast was in a Victorian dining room, beautifully decorated in turn-of-the-century antiques. It was the traditional English breakfast of fried bread, fried bangers, fried mushrooms, fried tomatoes, and fried eggs. The only thing they didn't fry was the tea, which was served in an elegant Victorian teapot and accompanied by real cream. Needless to say, you would not gain weight eating like that everyday ... because you would die of arteriosclerosis long before you got fat.

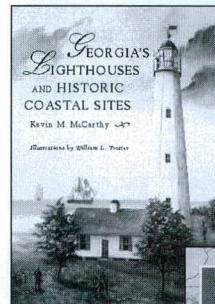
Mr. Callin showed us the prize room of them all, the "Lantern Room" which is the

actual lighthouse lantern room with the optics removed, of course. There are no words in the English language to describe the view. (There may be such words in the Welsh language, but you would have to learn how to hiss to pronounce them, and you'd never learn how they're spelled.)

I've been irreverently kidding about the place in this article, but the truth is we had the time of our lives staying there, had to tear ourselves away, and can't wait to go back again. Mr. Callin, his wife, and Ben are the most gracious of hosts, and the lighthouse is somewhere beyond awesome. If you love the unique, if you love beauty, if your spirit needs lifting, if you love romance, and if you love lighthouses, then Great Orme is not to be missed!

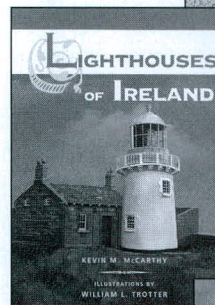
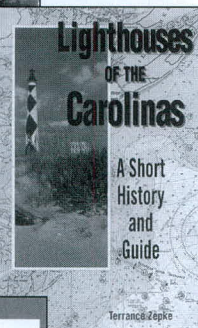


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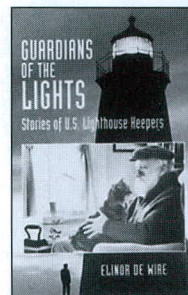
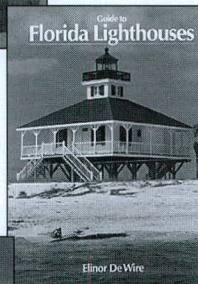
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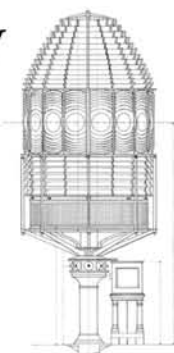
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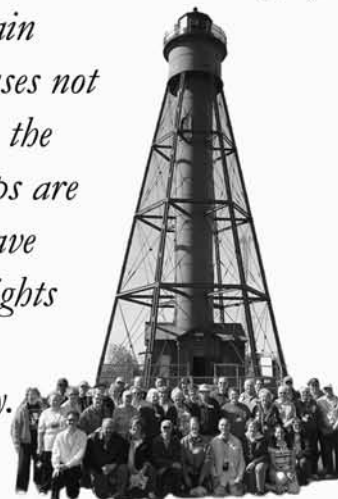
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