



New Brighton (Perch Rock) Lighthouse (New Brighton, Wirral Peninsula, Merseyside)



History

Construction began in 1827. Since 1 October 1973 it has not been in use as a lighthouse, having been superseded by modern navigational technology. The lighthouse is maintained by the Kingham family.

The Original Perch Rock

Perch Rock, New Brighton Lighthouse, sits next to the fort, it was originally, a wooden "Perch", hence its name. A large post held a light on top and was supported by a sort of tripod. It was erected on the Black Rock in 1683 by the Liverpool Corporation.

When foreign ships, passed the old perch, they were charged sixpence for its respect and to keep it in repair. But it was often washed away and a boat had to be launched to recover it from Bootle Bay. In February 1821, the pilot boat "Liver" crashed into the perch and carried it away. It has been said that it was washed away in March 1824 and not recovered until the December.



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However the cost of replacing it all the time grew too expensive and it was decided to build a new one.

Construction of the Lighthouse

The foundation stone of the new lighthouse was laid on 8th June 1827 by Thomas Littledale, Mayor of Liverpool. It was designed on the lines of Eddystone by Mr. Foster and built of marble rock from Anglesey by Tomkinson & Company. It rises 90 feet above the rocks and is considered to be a masterpiece of craftsmanship. The granite cost 1/6d a cubic foot.

Each piece of stone is interlocked into the next. The whole stonework, when finished, was coated with what is known as "Puzzellani" a volcanic substance from Mount Etna which, with age, becomes rock hard. The first 45 feet is solid. A spiral staircase leads to where the keeper lived and then on to the lantern house. The revolving light was said to be the first in the country. It cost £27,500 to construct.

The Lighthouse In Use

Work was only possible at low tide and it was not completed until 1830. Its first light shone on the 1st March of that year and consisted of two white flashes, followed by one red, with a range of 14 miles. The light was 77 feet above the half-tide level. It was eventually electrically connected to the mainland.

The Lighthouse last shone its light on 1st October 1973 as it was no longer needed on account of the radar system operating in the River.

The Lighthouse Now

A local architect purchased the lighthouse for £100 on condition he maintained the construction, he tried to restore the lantern again but the river authorities thought it might cause confusion to local shipping. So he refurbished it so that anyone could stay there for a short holiday. Indeed, it was their idea to attract newly married couples to spend part of their honeymoon there at a cost of £50 a day, with champagne and flowers thrown in.

With electricity being introduced, the old lighthouse has a galley with cooker and refrigerator and, on the first floor, a bathroom with shower. There is a living room and a bedroom on the next two floors. The lighthouse even has a television, just in case one gets bored with looking at the sea. A ladder has to be obtained from the fort to gain the necessary height to reach the 15 iron rungs of the lighthouse as the door is 25 feet from the base.



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Location

