



ROCK LIGHTHOUSES OF BRITAIN

by Christopher Nicholson

Patrick Stephens, Ltd., Bar Hill,
Cambridge, England CB3 8EL, 1983
Available in USA and Canada from:

Borogrove Bookroom, #11
5803 Bow Crescent NW

Calgary, Alberta, Canada T3B 2B6

217 pages, 6" x 9",

127 illustrations, all black and white

While we tend to think of the earliest age of American lighthouses in terms of the establishment of Boston Light in 1716, by this date there were already a number of private beacons in the British Isles. Trinity House, founded in 1514 as a mariners guild, gained the authorization to build and administer lighthouses in 1566 and to place buoys in 1594. Their authority covers the waters of England and Wales, while the later organized (1786) Northern Lighthouse Board governs the lights of Scotland and the Isle of Man. The first chapter of the book covers the histories of these organizations briefly, then subsequent chapters cover 12 of the most significant rock lighthouses in much greater detail.

The justly famous Eddystone Light comes first, as the chapters on each light are arranged roughly chronologically by the age of the light. Eddystone rates 31 pages, and while it has been covered by numerous books, this account seemed to the

reviewer to have a better grasp of the details than other accounts. Following Eddystone, first lighted in 1698, are chapters on The Skerries (1717), The Smalls (1776), Longships (1795), Longstone (1826), Bell Rock (1811), Skerryvore (1844), Bishop Rock (1849), Wolf Rock (1870), Dubh Artach (1872), Chicken Rock (1874), and Flannan Isles (1899).

Each light is located for the reader and the reason for its existence detailed. The construction period is detailed, along with personal items on several of the great lighthouse engineers of the Stevenson and Douglass families. Much attention is given to the incredibly bad weather at these exposed stations and the extreme hardships suffered by the builders. Numerous photos showing white water reaching halfway up towers over 125 feet high are provided to back up the claims regarding the weather. A number of accounts of awesome storm damage are re-

lated, all well documented but nonetheless difficult to comprehend.

A final chapter examines the future for the classic lighthouse in the face of ever more sophisticated electronics and such advances as satellite navigation. The decline in importance of the lighthouse per se is not exclusive to the United States. One trend in British rock lights is the erection of a helicopter deck atop the lantern structure. This does wonders for access to wave-swept locations but has a very negative effect on the classic appearance of the structure.

A final chapter gives the technical details of all major British rock lights, followed by a bibliography and index.

Printing, binding, and photo reproduction are of high quality. The volume is highly recommended to anyone interested specifically in the British rock lights or in the technical side of lighthouse construction in general.



Longships Lighthouse, Wales.

(Photo by Paul Campbell.)