

A Keeper's Life

The lighthouse keepers had a long list of duties to undertake and rules to abide by - in 1903 there were 52 rules and regulations applying to officers of the Lighthouse Service of NSW, however these did become much less prescriptive in later years.



First Keeper William Parker

The lighthouse keeper and assistant keepers had quite varied duties, working 24-hour shifts, on call, outside their normal working day. Their regular duties started at 6am, from which time they took meteorological readings every 3 hours until 9pm. Grounds and general building maintenance duties were also the keepers' responsibility, as well as lighting and extinguishing the light every dusk and dawn, and keeping the light operating - a much harder task in the old days when the light was a kerosene lantern lit by a blow torch, and the weights and clockwork drive which enabled the lens to rotate required winding every 45 minutes. Later, keepers only needed to ensure that the light always shone by maintaining electrical power generation and changing a light bulb when required. By day the curtains needed to be drawn to protect the light source from damage by the sun.

Maintenance of the light and lighthouse included keeping the glass prisms sparkling and all the brasswork polished. Lighthouse keepers touched the brasswork in the tower as little as possible because of the hard work involved in polishing it. They secretly cursed visitors who touched it, leaving their handprints all over it!



Keepers' duties also included the regular reporting of all shipping movements and most keepers developed a keen ability to identify all the different types of vessels they observed.

Significant dates:

1898 - Construction of Point Perpendicular Lightstation commenced.

May 1899 - Light first exhibited, intensity 100,000 candelas, produced by concentric oil wick burners.

1909 - Light upgraded to 220,000 candelas with the introduction of a vapourised kerosene mantle.

1923 - Light further upgraded to 316,000 candelas using an Australian-made Ford Schmidt burner.

1915 - Lightstation taken over by the Commonwealth after establishment of the *Commonwealth Lighthouse Service*.

1964 - Light converted to electricity with the installation of twin diesel alternators in the former stables. This enabled the light to be increased to 1,200,000 candelas, generated by a single 1000 watt halogen bulb, with a range of 26 nautical miles.

With electrification, the number of lightkeepers was reduced to two.

1993 - The Australian Maritime Safety Authority erected a steel frame tower with an unmanned, automatic, solar-powered light to replace the original lighthouse. The last lightkeeper left, and the lighthouse reserve was subsequently transferred to the Department of Defence.

PRESENT:

The original lighthouse is operated annually to celebrate *International Lights & Lightships Weekend*.

THE FUTURE:

Structural repairs and renovation of the lighthouse and its associated buildings are currently planned. The installation of a new walking path, viewing platform and fencing, to assist visitors to interpret the precinct's heritage values is also anticipated.

Longer-term plans include the possible recommissioning of the original light.

BEECROFT WEAPONS RANGE

POINT PERPENDICULAR LIGHTSTATION

Located on spectacular sandstone cliffs on the northern headland of Jervis Bay, Point Perpendicular and its lighthouse are one of Jervis Bay's most powerful and iconic landmarks, held in high regard by the local community.

The entire Lightstation precinct is listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List for its significant historic values as a relatively intact group of lighthouse buildings, keepers' quarters and associated infrastructure, important to Australia's cultural history, and reflecting the importance of navigational aids for coastal trade and shipping, and for the naval presence in Jervis Bay, which commenced in the 1890s.

All heritage places located on the Defence Estate are protected under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*.

Visiting Point Perpendicular Lighthouse

In 1995 the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) handed over management of the Point Perpendicular Lightstation to the Department of Defence, enabling the Lighthouse and grounds to be managed as part of the Beecroft Weapons Range (BWR).

The lighthouse is located approximately 10km from the BWR entrance gate, on Lighthouse Rd, Currarong, NSW. Access is permitted to the lighthouse grounds during business hours seven days a week, subject to Defence range closures.

Public access into the lighthouse itself and the associated buildings is not currently available.

The sheer cliffs and splendid views from Point Perpendicular draw many visitors. The high vantage point (75metres above sea level) offers great opportunities for whale watching over the winter months when Humpback and Southern Right Whales may be seen on their annual migrations to and from their breeding grounds to the north.

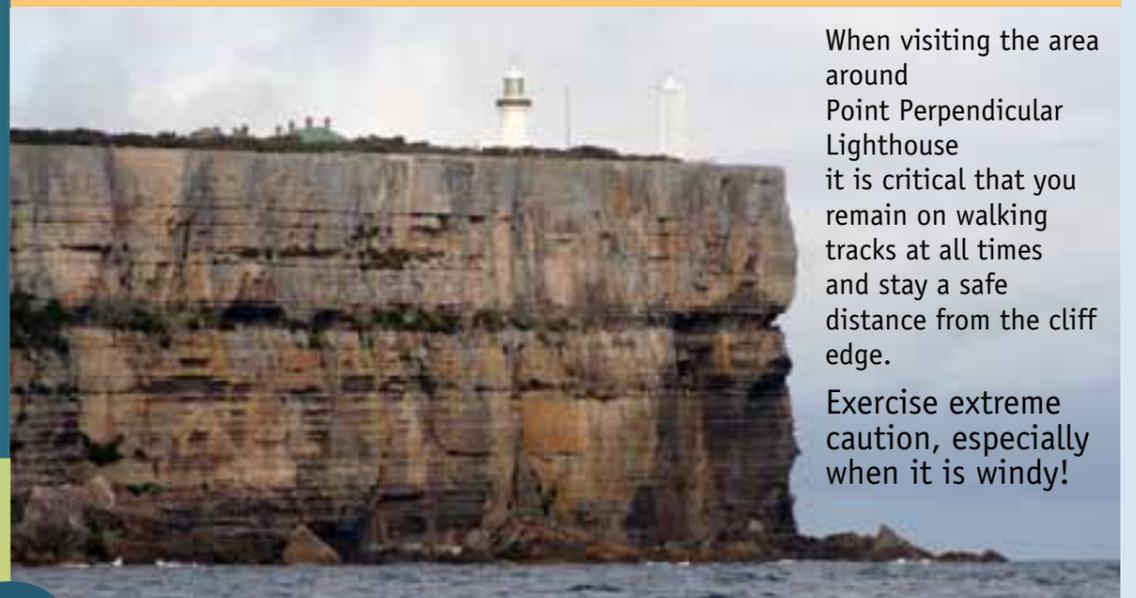
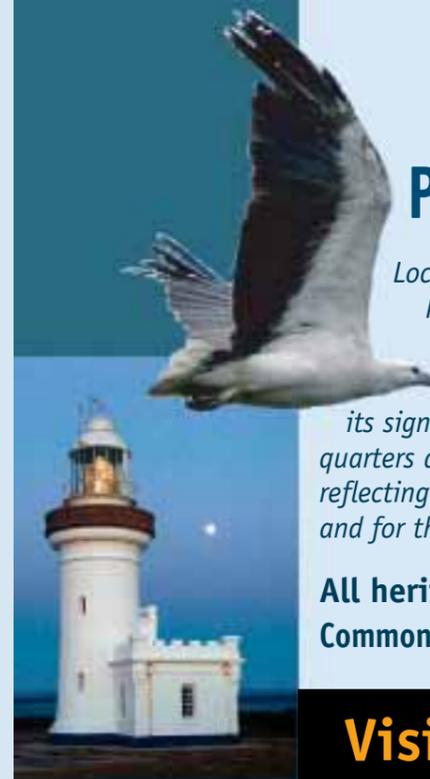
When visiting the area around Point Perpendicular Lighthouse it is critical that you remain on walking tracks at all times and stay a safe distance from the cliff edge.

Exercise extreme caution, especially when it is windy!

All visitors should remain behind safety fences, where provided, and always make sure that a responsible adult supervises children at all times.

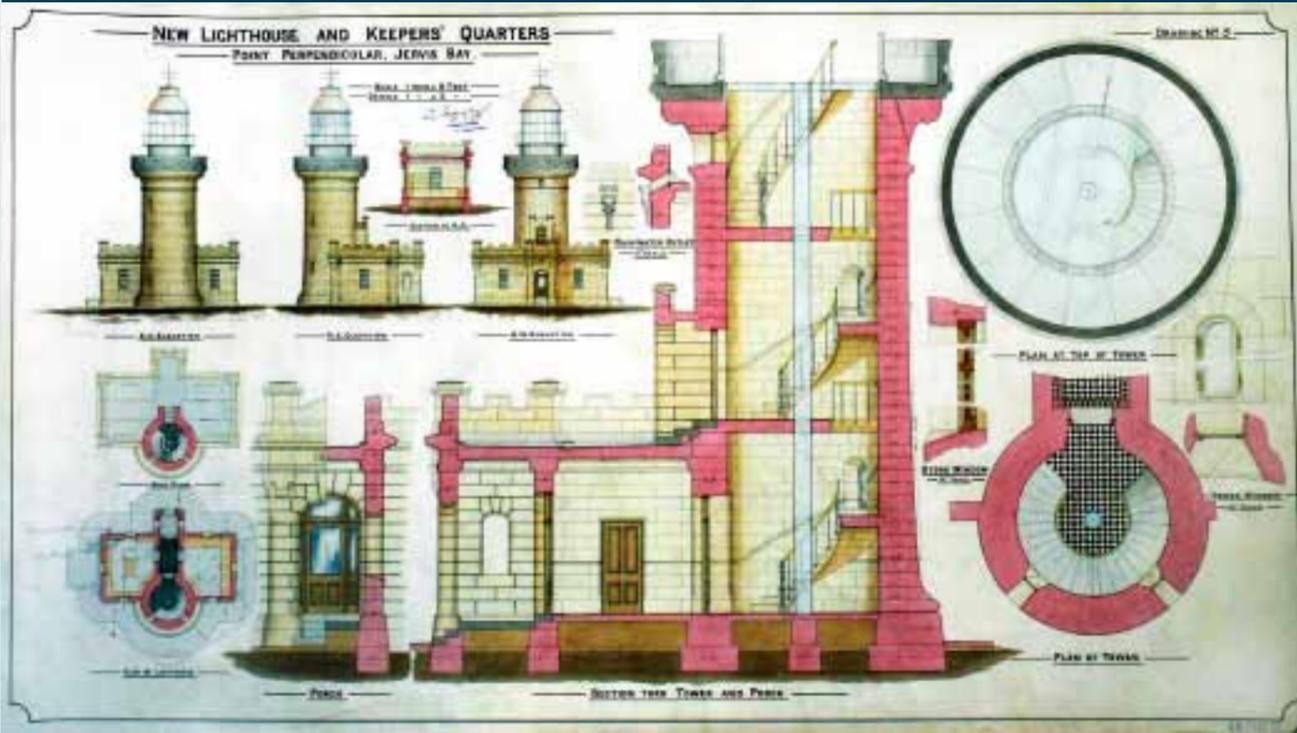
Rock climbing at BWR should only be undertaken by very experienced rock climbers, using appropriate safety equipment.

defence heritage
.....sustaining defence capability



• Lighthouse History

The first Jervis Bay lighthouse was erected at Cape St George on the bay's southern side, commencing operation in 1860. It was incorrectly sited and presented a hazard to shipping, so would only operate on a temporary basis until a replacement could be built. It took until 1883 for the site of the Point Perpendicular Lighthouse to be selected, with its construction completed in 1898.



Bindijine Jetty, near Honeymoon Bay, is the site of the original landing where stores and supplies for the lighthouse were delivered by boat.

The original Jetty was built around 1889 from turpentine piles with hardwood girders and decking. It was 200 feet long (approximately 61 m) and 12 feet wide (approximately 3.7m).

The existing jetty was rebuilt in 1982. The foundations of the original storage shed, made of sandstone, remain visible within the Bindijine Campground picnic shelter.



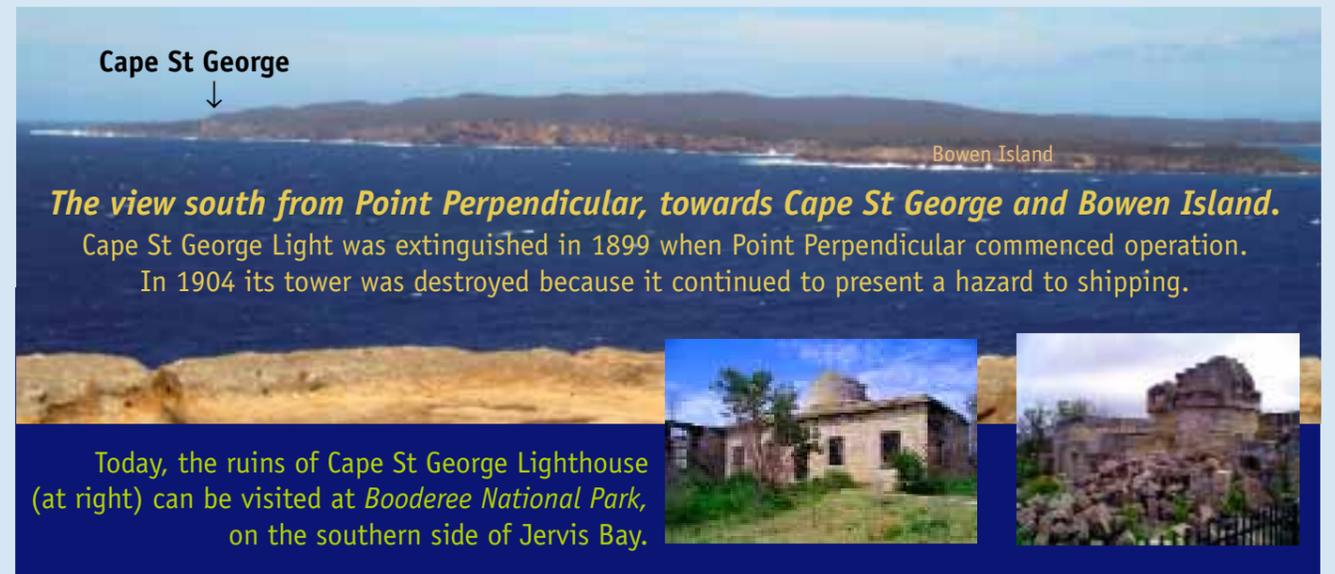
The Point Perpendicular Lightstation was designed by Charles Assinder Harding, architect of the Harbour and River Navigation Branch of the NSW Department of Public Works, however the drawings were signed by his superior, Chief Engineer, Cecil Darley.

The lighthouse was constructed of pre-cast concrete blocks using aggregate of local stone. It was the first lighthouse constructed in NSW using this method. The tender cost for construction of all the buildings and associated structures was £20,280 17s.

The completed lightstation included the lighthouse, head keeper's residence, duplex cottage for assistant keepers, signal house, flagstaff, post office, stables and outbuildings, a jetty and a fuel store. Archaeological remains of the former post office (removed in the 1960s), the jetty (replaced in 1982) and its storage shed (since removed) are aspects of the Lightstation Precinct as a whole.

The keepers' houses are solid, Victorian, single-story dwellings with low hipped roofs, (originally terracotta tiles), cast iron verandah columns and underground rainwater tanks.

The formal Victorian buildings and their spectacular setting atop the cliffs creates a dramatic contrast. Point Perpendicular has been the subject of artists since the 1860s and continues to be depicted in paintings and photographs.



The view south from Point Perpendicular, towards Cape St George and Bowen Island.

Cape St George Light was extinguished in 1899 when Point Perpendicular commenced operation. In 1904 its tower was destroyed because it continued to present a hazard to shipping.

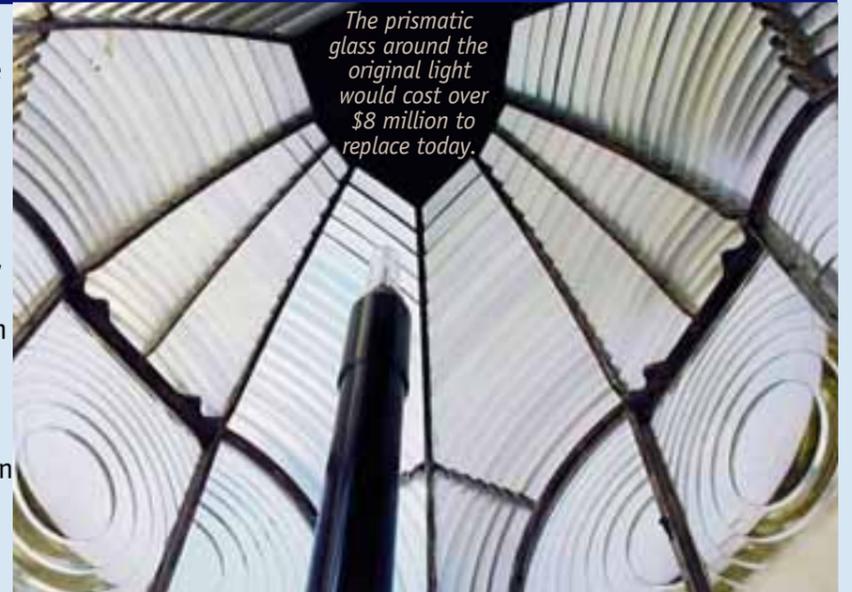
Today, the ruins of Cape St George Lighthouse (at right) can be visited at Booderee National Park, on the southern side of Jervis Bay.



On 1 May 1899, a triple-flashing 100,000 candelas (candle power) white light, powered by oil wick burners, shone from the new circular tower of Point Perpendicular Lighthouse, 93 metres above sea level.

The original light, visible from 24 nautical miles to sea, was progressively modified with its intensity increased in 1909 to 222,000 candelas, and again in 1923 to 316,000 candelas using an Australian-made Ford Schmidt burner.

In 1964 the light was converted to electrical operation with the installation of two diesel alternators, increasing its output to 1,200,000 candelas and its range to 26 nautical miles.



The prismatic glass around the original light would cost over \$8 million to replace today.

The lighthouse and associated buildings are constructed of pre-cast concrete blocks.

Stone used to make the blocks was transported to the lighthouse construction site from a quarry near Boat Harbour on the western side of the Peninsula. Blocks were then cast in moulds and stacked until ready for use.

The blocks were laid using cement mortar with painters putty placed on the edges to minimise disfiguring cracks caused by shrinkage.

In 1993 the original lighthouse at Point Perpendicular was decommissioned and replaced by a new, automated, solar-powered light on a steel lattice tower.

The original lighthouse is still operational, and is re-lit each year on *International Light & Lightships Weekend*.

