

*The life of the Light-keeper,
Held on high in the blackness
In the burning kernel of the night,
The seaman sees and blesses him...*

Extract from poem
"The Lightkeeper"
by Robert Louis Stevenson



North Ronaldsay LIGHTHOUSE

Lighthouse Tours

Why not climb to the top of the lighthouse? Tours of the lighthouse are organised through the North Ronaldsay Trust and are available on Sundays (when there is a ferry crossing), June to August, 12 noon - 4.00pm (approx) and at other times by arrangement, Tel: Mr W Muir 01857 633257 or mobile 07703 112224. There is a small charge to help maintain this facility. On days when essential maintenance is taking place the lighthouse will be closed to visitors. The opening of the North Ronaldsay Lighthouse is a joint venture between the Northern Lighthouse Board and the North Ronaldsay Trust.

■ North Ronaldsay



How to get there

There are return flights to North Ronaldsay from Kirkwall Airport, contact Loganair Tel: 01856 872494 or www.loganair.co.uk for details. For Sunday sailings June-August contact Orkney Ferries (01856 872044).

*LATITUDE: 59° 23.36' N
LONGITUDE: 02° 22.89' W*

North Ronaldsay

North Ronaldsay is the most northerly island in Orkney and only measures around three miles by one. A unique feature of the island is the drystone sheep dyke that surrounds it. The dyke was built to keep North Ronaldsay's unique seaweed-eating sheep on the narrow strip of beach and foreshore and off the agricultural land. Some of the buildings by the lighthouse have been converted to provide a workshop to process the wool of the sheep, an interpretation centre with café and shop. There are also two self catering cottages, bookings through the National Trust for Scotland. Cycle hire is also available on the island.

Acknowledgment of Images © Robert Stevenson, Scottish National Portrait Gallery. New Light, dial and lens by Ian Cowe, Old beacon by Kimberly Fahlen.

The Northern Lighthouse Board was established in 1786 and is now responsible for a network of over 200 lighthouses around the coasts and islands of Scotland and the Isle of Man.

"In Salutem Omnium"
For the Safety of All

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North Ronaldsay LIGHTHOUSE



More than Lighthouses
www.nlb.org.uk

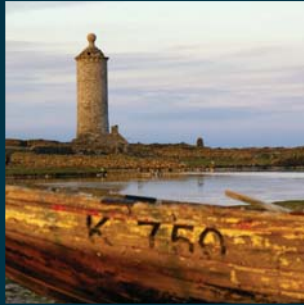
BEACONS OF THE SEA

North Ronaldsay lighthouse is one of over 200 located around Scotland's wild coastline operated and maintained by the Northern Lighthouse Board.

One of the First

The original beacon on North Ronaldsay was the third lighthouse built in Scotland by the Northern Lighthouse Board. It was constructed by stonemasons from Leith, Edinburgh and was first lit on 10 October 1789. Thomas Smith, an Edinburgh Lamplighter, was the engineer for the light, his stepson Robert Stevenson assisted him.

When a new lighthouse was built at Start Point on the neighbouring island of Sanday in 1806 the old lighthouse beacon at North Ronaldsay became redundant. However, as years passed it became obvious that North Ronaldsay required its own light and Alan Stevenson, son of Robert, set about the task of building Britain's tallest land-based lighthouse. The new light was first lit on 1 September 1854. The new light cost £6,181 to build, some £6.2 million in today's terms.



The Sensational Stevensons

For over one hundred and fifty years Robert Stevenson and his descendants designed most of Scotland's Lighthouses. Battling against the odds and the elements - the Stevensons constructed wonders of engineering that have withstood the test of time, an amazing historical achievement. Robert Stevenson's talented family also included the famous writer Robert Louis Stevenson (his grandson). Visits with his family to remote lighthouses are thought to have inspired his books *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*.



Standing Tall

Soaring to 139ft (42m), the new lighthouse is the tallest (land-based) in the British Isles. Shining over seas littered with dangerous shoals and reefs, the light's extreme height gives ships an early warning of the approaches to Orkney. In 1889 the red brick tower was painted with 2 white bands to help it be seen during the day.



Lightkeeping - end of an era

All Scottish lighthouses now operate automatically. The last Scottish lighthouse to be automated was Fair Isle South in 1998. Now, when daylight falls and rises between set levels, a light sensor switches the light on and off.

Prior to the automation of North Ronaldsay in 1998 a Principal Lightkeeper and two Assistants, with their families, lived at the light. As the Station had a fog signal a Local Assistant Keeper was also appointed to assist with extra duties. The families were almost self sufficient and would have grown their own vegetables and kept some livestock at the Station.

Lightkeeping was a remote, lonely and hard existence. At night each keeper was required to keep a watch in the lightroom to ensure that the light flashed correctly to character. During daytime keepers were engaged in cleaning, painting if necessary, and generally keeping the premises clean and tidy. At the time of building the lighthouse, in 1854, the Principal Lightkeeper was paid £45 per year!



Standing Tall

The Sensational Stevensons

French Crystal

Brick Built

Planning the construction of North Ronaldsay lighthouse was not an easy task. There was no local stone and all construction materials had to be brought in by boat. A dangerous anchorage, difficult landing conditions and a need to haul all material up a long, steep path made matters even worse.

Estimates began to exceed the budget so Alan Stevenson consequently chose to build the tower from bricks, which were much easier to transport than large blocks of stone. Even then a new stone built landing jetty had to be built before any material could be landed.



French Crystal

North Ronaldsay still has its magnificent original lens, which is a Fresnel lens, so named after its French inventor, Augustin Fresnel. The lens is made from a series of perfectly polished crystal glass lenses set into a bronze structure.



Illuminating Facts

North Ronaldsay

Light established: 1854

Engineer: Alan Stevenson

Height of tower: 42 metres

Range of light: 24 nautical miles

Elevation: 43 metres (above sea level)

Character: Flashing White every 10 seconds

Position: Latitude 59° 23.36'N Longitude 02° 22.89'W