

# Copinsay Lighthouse

## Light Established

1915

## Engineer

David A Stevenson

## Position

Latitude 58° 53.8'N

Longitude 02° 40.2'W

## Character

Flashing (5) White every 30 Secs

## Elevation

79 metres

## Nominal Range

21 miles

## Structure

White tower 16 metres high. There are 41 steps to the top of tower

## History

The name Copinsay was originally Kobeinn's Island, Kolbeinnsey. The apparatus was a Stevenson equiangular refractor showing a group flashing white light, five flashes every thirty seconds, the lamp was a petroleum vapour burner using paraffin on the tilley light principle made by Chance Brothers. The lantern and parapet were made by the Edinburgh firm James Milne & Son costing £1,263, they also made the revolving machine, carriage and mercury trough at a cost of £465.

The old fog horn was operated by compressed air powered by three Kelvin Diesel Engines, the character was 4 blasts, each of 2½ seconds duration every 60 seconds. This character was achieved by means of a clock which opened and shut the valves as required. These were made by A C Westwood at a cost of £2,299. The total cost of the lighthouse and buildings was £13,400.

Two different contractors were responsible for the building work carried out. The first was Mr McDougall who built 30ft of the tower and then was taken over by Mr Harry Ramsey Taylor an Edinburgh architect who finished the remaining 23 feet.

The light was first exhibited on 8 November 1915 and the first principal lightkeeper was Charles J McNeish.

The island of Copinsay to the East of the Orkney Mainland, has itself in recent years become a bird sanctuary but in the 1930's it was farmed by Mr Groat who had 13 children and between them and the lightkeepers children they had a resident teacher on the island. One of the rooms in the farm house was the class room.

There is a group of three islands off the west side of Copinsay which are accessible at low water. Ward Holm, Corn Holm, and Black Holm. The bow of the trawler "Prince Deluge", which ran around and sank on the Black a number of years ago has been washed back up and is now lying high and dry on the Corn Holm.

During the Second World War a British aircraft crash landed on Copinsay just below the lighthouse but it was dismantled and carted away.

The Light was automated in 1991 and is now remotely monitored from the Northern Lighthouse Board's offices in Edinburgh.