

Duncansby Head Lighthouse

Light Established

1924

Engineer

David A Stevenson

Position

Latitude 58° 38.6'N

Longitude 03° 01.4'W

Character

Flashing White every 12 Secs

Elevation

67 metres

Candlepower

596,000

Nominal Range

24 miles

Structure

White tower 11 metres high. There are 31 steps to the top of the tower

History

The tidal streams flowing through the Pentland Firth earned it the title of hell's mouth in the days of sail, and it is still a place where unwary ships can become the plaything of the sea. As the waters of the wide Atlantic flow into the North sea and ebb in the opposite direction, they set in motion a welter of eddies, races and overfalls, and in the neighbourhood of the Pentland Skerries they run at a speed of ten knots. So dramatic are the effects that each of these tide races has been given a name - the Swilkie, the Bore of Huna, the wells of Tuftalie, the Duncansby Bore, and the Merry Men of May. In 1914 during the first World War a temporary fog signal was provided at Duncansby Head close to John O'Groats to be replaced by a permanent fog signal after the war.

The traditional round tower has been abandoned and (curved walls require interior fittings made to match) even the concrete lantern tower is square.

During the second World War, and on the eve of the invasion of Norway, Duncansby Head Lighthouse was machine-gunned by a German bomber, but fortunately no one was injured and no damage caused.

In 1968 a high power racon (radar beacon) was installed. It has now been replaced by a low-power self operating type, which can be particularly useful as a warning where the coastline is not conspicuous on a radar display.

Duncansby Head was automated in 1997.