

Dunnet Head Lighthouse

Light Established

1831

Engineer

Robert Stevenson

Position

Latitude 58° 40.3'N

Longitude 03° 22.4'W

Character

Flashing (4)White every 30 Secs

Elevation

105 metres

Nominal Range

23 miles

Structure

White stone tower, 20 metres high. There are 51 steps and 9 ladder steps up to top of lighthouse tower.

History

Dunnet Head Lighthouse marks the most northerly point of the Scottish mainland - being some 2.35 miles North of John O'Groats. Only 6.75 miles across the Pentland Firth lies the nearest point of the Orkney Islands. Erosion of the rock on which the original fog signal (built in 1899) stood, made it necessary to abandon it and to establish another fog signal nearer the lighthouse. A third fog signal was established in 1952, but this was discontinued in 1987.

James Smith of Inverness was the contractor responsible for the building of Dunnet Head.

All the new lighthouses, beginning with Little Ross in 1843, were lighted on the dioptric system the latter being a combination of lenses with reflectors. Dunnet Head was changed to a dioptric lens in 1852.

The Queen Mother had visited the lighthouse on several occasions, the last being on 8 October 1979 when Mr Malcolm, Principal Lightkeeper, gave a conducted tour of the station. The Queen Mother later had tea with Mr Malcolm and his wife and met the other lightkeepers and their families residing at the station.

The lighthouse was automated on 31 March 1989 and is now remotely monitored from the Northern Lighthouse Board's headquarters in Edinburgh.

It should be noted that at some sites the Northern Lighthouse Board have sold some redundant buildings within the lighthouse complex and are not responsible for the maintenance of these building.