

# **Eshaness Lighthouse**

## **Light Established**

1929

## **Engineer**

David A & Charles Stevenson

## **Position**

Latitude 60° 29.3'N

Longitude 01° 37.6'W

## **Character**

Flashing White every 12 secs

## **Elevation**

61 metres

## **Nominal Range**

25 nautical miles

## **Structure**

White square tower 12 metres high.

## **History**

This is an extract from the book *Scottish Lighthouses* by Sharma Krauskopf, owner of the former keepers cottage at Esha Ness Lighthouse. You can visit Sharma's website at [www.scottishradiance.com](http://www.scottishradiance.com) A temporary light powerful enough to give warning of the Ve Skerries eight and half miles offshore was erected in 1915 on the Eshaness peninsula on the north-west coast of mainland Shetland. The light was an iron tower, containing a lantern, machinery and an acetylene generating plant, and was constructed in about two months. The building materials reached the remote location by pony and cart once they arrived on the Shetland Islands. The temporary light was torn down after World War One.

The current Eshaness Lighthouse was built in 1929. (Position on the Nautical Chart is 60° 29.3'N, 1° 37.6'W.). It was the last Northern Lighthouse Board manned facility designed by a member of the Stevenson family, David A. Stevenson being the engineer for the station.

The 37 foot square tower sits on top of a 200 foot cliff. The beacon flashes white every 12 seconds and in 1974 the candlepower was increased to 46, 500 to give the light a nominal range of 25 miles. The small house was home to only one keeper, which was unusual in that most manned facilities had three keepers.

At Stenness, the site of a former fishing station sheltered by Stenness Isle, is a stone cross erected by the Commissioners for Northern Lighthouses in 1927, to mark the spot where supplies for the Eshaness Lighthouse were landed.

Eshaness did not prove to be totally effective in keeping ships away from the Ve Skerries. The Aberdeen trawler Ben Doran was wrecked in the area soon after the lighthouse was built and all hands were lost. Due to heavy oil-tanker traffic bound to and from Sullom Voe, a lighthouse was built on the Ve Skerries in 1979. Eshaness was used as the construction site for the Ve Skerries light.

The station was automated in 1974 and sold to a private owner. It has been sold twice since then and my husband and I bought Eshaness in 1999. Our house was completely renovated by the previous owners to match the style of the original lighthouse keeper's accommodation. The house looks much like it would have when David A. Stevenson built it, with the exception of the kitchen which has all modern appliances.

The question everyone seems to ask is: "What is it like to live in a Scottish lighthouse accommodation?" My first response is that it feels safe with 3-foot-thick walls and shutters on both the inside and the outside windows to protect us from the violent storms which plague the area. One of the biggest challenges of living at Eshaness is trying to keep up with the weather as a single day can present all seasons. We have come to cherish calm days, as Eshaness is a windy place most of the time.

If there is a disadvantage to living in this historical building it is tourists. Our "backyard" is the world-famous Eshaness Cliffs, which have been designated a national seashore area, so we have many visitors. Most of them just take a picture of the cliffs and lighthouse and leave, which is fine. Some, however, do not respect our "Private House" sign. We will find them wandering inside our fence or looking in the window. There is so much to see in the area that if they went for a walk, within a short distance they would find puffins, seals, red-throated divers, Arctic terns, gannets and many wild flowers.

The big advantage to living at a Scottish lighthouse station today is that the tower is maintained and kept operational. Like all of the Northern Lighthouse Board automated facilities, we have an attendant who makes sure the light sweeps by our windows every night right on schedule.