

Point of Ayre Lighthouse

Light Established

1818

Engineer

Robert Stevenson

Position

Latitude 54° 24.9'N

Longitude 04° 22.1'W

Character

Flashing (4) White every 20 secs

Elevation

32 metres

Nominal Range

19 miles

Structure

White tower with 2 red bands, 30 metres in height. There are 124 steps to top of tower.

History

At a meeting of the Commissioners in 1815, Sheriff Rae pointed out that representations had been received from the Chief Magistrate of Greenock and from various trading bodies in the Firth of Clyde, that a light should be erected on the Point of Ayre to make the west coast channel completely safe. As this area was out of the Commissioners' jurisdiction in those days, it was suggested the 'Sheriff Rae should write to the Duke of Atholl and ascertain if he had any objections to the establishment. The Light Committee then recommended that the Commissioners should apply to Parliament for power to erect a lighthouse on the Isle of Man. The Bill was passed in July 1815. Soon thereafter, a party representing the Commissioners went to Liverpool to attempt to obtain a loan from the trade associations. The loan was necessary as the Commissioners had become liable for a large sum to liquidate the payment of the purchase money of the private right of the Portland family to the duties of the Light of May. They were also involved in the building of the Bell Rock Lighthouse. Loans amounting to £1,500 were obtained from the West India Association, and the Shipowners Association of Liverpool. Further loans were obtained from the Trade Association of the Clyde who would also benefit from the establishment of the light. The work commenced late in 1815, but lack of sufficient funds made progress slow. A further cause for delay was that the position of the light had to be altered from the

original plan as it was found that the sea was eroding the coast at the rate of 7ft per year.

The lighthouse tower was 70ft high and a circular design. The actual date when the light was first exhibited cannot be accurately fixed, but it is known to have been between December 1818 and February 1819.

The main light at Point of Ayre was established in 1818, but some 70 years later it was found necessary to build an additional small light tower some 250 yards seaward from the main tower. Due to continuous gravel build-up, this tower moved a further 250ft seaward in 1951, and now stands out on the gravel bank.

Point of Ayre is lighted by the dioptric (refraction) method. The light revolves on roller bearings driven by a clock-work mechanism operated by a weight lowered to the base of the tower. In all but the most sophisticated lighthouse, this has to be rewound manually, the diuturnity governed by the revolution of the optic and the height of the tower. This varies from 45 minutes at Maughold Head, 77 ft high and turning every 30 seconds, to 90 minutes at the Point of Ayre which has an eight minute revolution.

In favourable wind conditions, the fog horn can be heard at the Mull of Galloway, 26 miles away. Powered by Kelvin engines, the siren uses an intermittent escape of compressed air through a shutter to give a periodic blast from the large horns facing seawards.

Thirteen selected lighthouses send regular reports to the Meteorological Office as many of the stations are vanguards to the Atlantic weather system. Point of Ayre submits 3 hourly reports to the Met Office at Ronaldsway, and these are incorporated in the international broadcasts.

The name Point of Ayre comes from Norse, Eyrr, gravelly beach, or Eriball, and Ayre Point of Raasay.

Point of Ayre lighthouse was automated in 1993.

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.