

Tarbat Ness Lighthouse

Light Established

1830

Engineer

Robert Stevenson

Position

Latitude 57° 51.9'N

Longitude 03° 46.5'W

Character

Flashing (4) White every 30 secs

Elevation

53 metres

Nominal Range

24 miles

Structure

White tower 41 metres high with two red bands. There are 37 steps to the top of tower

History

The loss of sixteen vessels in the Moray Firth storm in November 1826 brought many applications for lights on Tarbat Ness or Covesea Skerries, and the former was given priority as it had been named in 1814, and was regarded by the Caledonian Canal Commissioners as important to that undertaking. Tarbat Ness Lighthouse was engineered by Robert Stevenson and the light was first exhibited on 26 January 1830. James Smith of Inverness was the contractor responsible for the building of the lighthouse. The lighthouse tower is the third tallest in Scotland (North Ronaldsay and Skerryvore being taller) and bears two distinguishing broad red bands.

The navigation light was an Argand Paraffin Lamp with 4 burner until 1907 when it was changed to an incandescent pressurised lamp with 55mm mantles. The lightroom machine in use at the present time was installed in 1892 and remained in use until the automation in 1985. The lens and machine are now on show in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Earthquake shocks were sometimes reported and Tarbat Ness once shook so that the shades and lamp glasses rattled.

Most of the Tarbat Ness peninsula is farmland, but it remains an attractive amenity area, and an asset of East Ross. It has geological and ornithological significance. The geological interest lies chiefly within the foreshore stretch between Rockfield and the lighthouse, especially east of Wilkhaven Farm. The sedimentary structures in the Upper Old Red Sandstone, intertidal weathering in calciferous rock and deeply weathered rock are well displayed here. There are also Jurassic outliers on the shore. Oyster plants and other interesting coastal plants occur. Tarbat Ness is the stopping-off point for migratory birds during the autumn migration. It is of special interest for the observation of seabird passage through the Moray Firth, and Manx and Sooty shearwaters, great arctic and pomarine skuas as well as other seabirds may be seen. There are also considerable falls of Scandinavian migrants, including redwing, meadow pipit and wheatear.

According to Highland folklore the site of the lighthouse was used as a meeting place for witches covens and prior to that it used to be a Roman Fort.

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.