Northern Lighthouse Board

Serving the Mariner since 1786

Journal

Winter 2025



First Visit to Muckle Flugga

POLE STAR Sea Trials

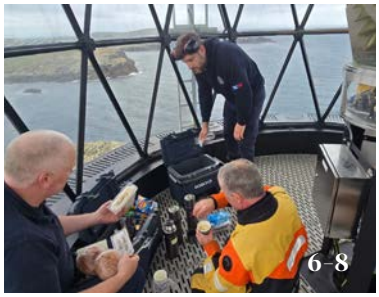
Bass Rock Refurbishment

World Marine Aids to Navigation Day

Journal

WINTER 2025 | ISSUE NUMBER 127













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Front cover image: Mull of Galloway Lighthouse by Brian Archibald, Vice Chair, Board of Commissioners.

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Welcome from Mike Bullock

CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Despite being the same every year, the deadline for Journal articles always takes me by surprise. This is probably because the end of the summer and first part of the autumn period is a whirlwind of activity to prepare the annual Corporate Plan. This is the mechanism for setting out NLB's objectives for the following five year period and the finance required to achieve this.

A huge amount of work goes into this process from across NLB to set out a coherent story. This gives decision makers in the Department for Transport the transparency they need to verify and endorse our proposals. We have some very big jobs on the horizon as we gear up to refurbish the Pillar Rock stations. The plan, which covers Financial Years 2026 to 2031, also introduces the first year of the build programme for the replacement for PHAROS. The culmination of this activity is the formal sanction letter from the Maritime Minister.

After a long, hard but ultimately hugely rewarding slog, we are rapidly approaching the end of the Vessel Replacement Project (VRP). The beautiful (and I am happy to challenge anyone who thinks otherwise) new POLE STAR will have entered service by the time you read this. I want to say a sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved.

This has truly been a team effort, from travel bookings to technical requirements, bill payment to contract and project management, visas to variation orders, Ministerial briefings to expert onsite supervision. Everyone has pulled together to turn an idea into reality. Credit must also go to our trusted contractors who have provided their legal, financial, economic and design expertise and of course to our friends at GONDAN who have built a magnificent ship for us.

We have learnt a huge amount over the last six plus years, and shared this experience with numerous organisations along the way to the benefit of other vessel projects. We have much to be proud about.

But by no means is POLE STAR the only success story. There has been considerable achievement in the delivery of lighthouse refurbishment projects and essential maintenance. Through skilful juggling of priorities to ensure the availability of ship, helicopter, zone boats, contractors and technicians coincide with suitable tides, daylight, weather and wildlife restrictions, a huge amount has been completed. We have also moved the Aviation Services Project (ASP) forward to schedule, ready to provide helicopter support to both Trinity House and NLB from December 2027.

We continue to spread the word about our work and heritage. In September we once again participated in Edinburgh's Doors Open Day with over 800 people visiting 84 George Street. It was a pleasure to share our story with everyone from deep lighthouse experts (one gentleman took a day trip from London solely to visit NLB!) to passers-by who dropped in on a whim. The feedback, as ever, was that the vast majority had no concept of our responsibilities and the enduring importance of what we do for the safety of all. We made new friends and met up with old ones too, including an eminent surgeon who spent his summer vacations from medical school with NLB including time as a Keeper on Bell Rock and a Steward onboard the tender, MV MAY.

One of the Northern Lighthouse Heritage Trust's projects over the year has been the creation of a short film called '*Seven Days A Week, Fifty Two Weeks A Year*'. It was compiled using 8mm cine film by our former Chief Engineer and Superintendent, Reg Lacon. We showed the film at Doors Open Day to great critical acclaim.

But much more importantly a couple of weeks before this we hosted Reg and other former employees for a Coffee Morning in the Stevenson Rooms, and held the world premier of his film. We do lots of joyous things at NLB, but this must count amongst the best of the best.

Over the last 15 months I've been a regular visitor to see Reg at his care home and thoroughly enjoyed getting to know him and finding out more about his early life at sea with Orient Line and subsequent 36 years with NLB. Very sadly Reg passed away in October, not long after his 97th birthday. A lovely man. Inevitably over the last six months we received other sad news which is recorded at the end of this publication.

As the year draws to a close I would like to thank all the readers of the Journal. Whether you are a user of our services, a neighbour at one of our lighthouses, an official or Minister in Douglas, Holyrood or Westminster, an employee or former employee or simply interested in our work, your support in whatever form it takes is very much appreciated. Happy Hogmanay and very best wishes for 2026.

MIKE BULLOCK

OUR MISSION:

"To deliver, in the most sustainable way practicable, a reliable, efficient and cost-effective Aids to Navigation service for the benefit and safety of all Mariners"

Northern Lighthouse Board

COMMISSIONERS OF NORTHERN LIGHTHOUSES
(As at 1 April 2025)

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Commodore Brian Archibald (Vice Chair)
Elected by the Commissioners

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Councillor David Cameron
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Councillor Bill Lobban
Convenor of Highland Council

Councillor Dougie Philand
Provost of the Council of Argyll and Bute

"In Salutem Omnium"
For the Safety of All



Hugh Shaw

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

It is a little over six months since I wrote my introductory Chair's message and since then it has been an extremely busy period.

A few weeks after the Commissioner's Annual Inspection Road trip on the East coast of Scotland it was down to London for the World Aids to Navigation Day in early July. Led by the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA), the event was supported and co-hosted by NLB and Trinity House on behalf of the Department for Transport. Its aims are to promote awareness of the importance of marine aids to navigation and the work done globally.

On 25 July, Mike Kane MP, the then Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Security visited our Oban Base, NLV PHAROS and Corran Point Lighthouse. Although time was limited, he took the opportunity to meet staff at the base and at the lighthouse as well as the Master and crew onboard the vessel. I am most grateful to the Minister for taking the time to visit us in Oban and Orkney over the last couple of years. Mike Kane has since been succeeded by Keir Mather MP as the new Maritime Minister.

The following week the DfT Maritime Director and her Deputy carried out a similar visit and included NLB HQ as part of their programme. I would like to express my thanks to everyone involved as both the Minister and the DfT Senior Officials were delighted with the welcome and professionalism shown by all. They left with a much greater impression about our vital work to keep mariners and the environment safe around the coasts of Scotland and the Isle of Man.

On 25 September, the Governance Board held its Annual Strategy meeting. This gives Commissioners an opportunity to review the Annual Report and Financial Accounts for 2024/25 and to agree our draft Corporate Plan for 2026/31.

The 2024/25 Annual Report shows a compelling narrative that highlights our challenges and achievements as NLB delivers its vital service.

Put simply, the organisation continues to protect lives, property and the marine environment and came in well within its budget allocation.

Operationally, we met the IALA Aid to Navigation (AtoN) availability requirements in full. This is due to the commitment, dedication and professionalism of everyone across the entire organisation and I pass on my appreciation and thanks to all concerned.

In addition to the day-to-day business, we have also made exceptional progress with both the Aviation Services (ASP) and Vessel Replacement (VRP) major projects. Under NLB's leadership ASP is on track to provide services to Trinity House and NLB from December 2027 onwards, and our 'new' vessel POLE STAR will be delivered in December.

The Corporate Plan is the culmination of a significant package of work by team members from across NLB. The Governance Board conducts thorough scrutiny of the proposed Revenue and Capital requirements and ensures that financial commitment is aligned with UK Government, Department for Transport and Maritime Directorate's priorities.

The bid set out in the plan is based on actual requirements and once again is submitted with the clear undertaking that NLB asks for what it needs and delivers what it promises.

The NLB Annual Board Effectiveness Evaluation has also been completed. I am delighted to report that the composition of the Board and its Committees, including the balance of skills, experience, knowledge and diversity of the Commissioners put us in good stead to support, and where necessary, challenge the Executive in the future. We are unique in having such a diverse range of Commissioners and I would like to thank them all for their contributions over the year.

HUGH SHAW

Health, Safety & Environment

Billy Byrne, HS&E Manager

In September I made the trip to Islay with Joe Jeffrey, Delivery & Planning Manager, to meet up with Retained Lightkeeper Johnnie Dobson.

The main purpose of the trip was to review health and safety implications and assess the access to Port Ellen and Ruvaal Lighthouses. The access bridge at Port Ellen had been damaged and a walk, as an alternative to zoned boat access, was being considered as an option for accessing Ruvaal.

Our trip started with the journey to the ferry terminal at Kennacraig. No day is the same with NLB and something always crops up. We had allowed sufficient time to get to Kennacraig and had even built in additional 'safety' time to allow for road works, traffic congestion en route etc... all of which happened.

On arrival at the ferry terminal we were told that the ferry had been changed to a later time. This was pretty frustrating as we'd had no prior warning. And then those words you don't want to hear 'ferry cancelled due to high winds'. Not the best start to the journey but hopefully the only hiccup.

With the cancellation of the ferry, we had to find alternative accommodation and on a positive note, this was swiftly booked for us by Ania Kwolek back at HQ. We just got the last two rooms, as we found out later. The rooms had disappeared from the owners booking screen as they were part way through the booking process for someone else. No doubt a fellow ferry passenger seeking accommodation close to the ferry terminal.

The next morning we went on the ferry as foot passengers. Leaving the car behind meant we didn't have transport to get us round the island but Johnnie very kindly took on chauffeur duty, so the trip could go ahead.

A lot of pre-planning had gone into this trip with travel and accomodation bookings, preparing a health and safety risk assessment, and an excellent tool box talk from Joe.



Pre-Planning Snapshot

- General health checks with all having undergone a medical assessment, provision of a defib and first aid kit with tick removal kit.
- Two out of the three of us were first aid trained.
- Communication and contact with the Monitor Centre prior to setting off/on return and at the lighthouse.
- Availability checks of Vatix lone worker app and mobile phones linked to different networks.
- Terrain/route to be taken with power line to the lighthouse acting as a guide.
- Weather and tide time checked in advance.
- Awareness of potential wildlife i.e. ticks, adders and deer.
- General items such as avoiding driving tired prior to/after visiting the lighthouse.
- Taking sufficient water and food.
- Personal protective equipment to be worn such as life jackets and Manta helmets at Port Ellen and walking boots and foul weather wear.

Port Ellen was sea-washed at low tide and we returned the following day. On the way we noticed that the main electric cable protection was getting damaged by the sea so contacted the Regional Electrical Supply Authority.

With the bridge damaged and not used we exercised extreme care and caution in getting to the lighthouse.



The walk out to Ruvaal was not overly strenuous but took around an hour and 45 minutes. The scenery was great. There is a new neighbour at Ruvaal who is renovating the former Keepers cottages. It was good to meet them and introduce ourselves.

On the way back we expected the walk to take roughly the same time. But no, it rained, we got soaked and it felt like it took around 4 hours. I have never been so glad to get back to the car.



Our accomodation on Islay was at Kilmeny Bed and Breakfast. It was brilliant and the rooms were fantastic. The hosts Margaret and Blair were so friendly and remembered both mine and Joe's names at breakfast the next day. A nice touch and the breakfast was very good too which was just as well...





After our 4 plus hour walk to Ruvaal and back, we were ready for our evening meal and headed to the nearest inn, a 30 minute walk away. We arrived hungry and tired only to be told they didn't have any availability and couldn't fit us in as we hadn't booked!

Schoolboy error on our part. We just didn't think we would need to book as the tourist season was drawing to a close. However, having said that we won't be thinking of booking or going back to that Inn, ever again!

We arrived back at the guest house at around 20:30. Not wanting to disturb our hosts we retired to the lounge and had a debrief of the day's events. This included a right good moan about the lack of hospitality which certainly didn't include our B&B hosts who had provided the most delicious homemade complimentary flapjacks.

Food Glorious Food!

On the day we were leaving Islay, we visited Loch Indaal lighthouse with Johnnie as he was carrying out an inspection. When there we sampled Johnnie's home made scones and hospitality. Absolutely brilliant and a big plus point.

Travelling back home via Inverary Johnnie had given us a recommendation of where to eat. We weren't disappointed which made up for the lack of an evening meal on Islay.



> *This trip gave both Joe and myself the opportunity to catch up with Johnnie and review health and safety arrangements. It was invaluable to experience the access routes first hand so that we could assess, review and do as much as we can to keep our people safe.*

First Visit to Muckle Flugga

Keith Parrish, HS&E Advisor



When the chance to visit Muckle Flugga came up, I knew it would be something special. The trip was organised to support contractor works, including the replacement of helinets and asbestos sampling and removal. Someone from the HS&E team was needed to monitor the asbestos works, scheduled to begin on 12 October. Fortunately for me, my colleagues Billy and Derek weren't available, so I was asked to attend.

The trip would involve travelling to Shetland, then helicopter transfer from the Sumburgh hotel to the PHAROS, then helicopter transfers to Muckle Flugga as required, with up to 5 nights staying onboard the ship. Now this might sound a little daft to the hardened NLB technician or other staff that undertake these sort of trips on a regular basis, but I'll admit I felt a mix of excitement and nerves.

Muckle Flugga is the most northerly lighthouse in Scotland, and not many people get the chance to visit it. I'd never stayed overnight on an NLB ship before, and I'd only flown in the helicopter a handful of times.

Various thoughts went through my head. What do I actually need to pack for a trip like this? Will it be cancelled/postponed due to bad weather? Will my flight suit fit in my bag? Will the Enterprise Car Club hire booking work? What if the sea is rough? Will I get seasick? Do I have to take may own teabags onto the ship? Who should I ask for advice on what to expect?

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DAY 1

Flew into Sumburgh airport early Saturday morning, with the airport runway suddenly appearing beneath the plane as we eventually came out of the low cloud base. Not an unusual occurrence at Sumburgh.

The following day would be the helicopter transfer to PHAROS. But before that I had arranged to go to our Shetland base to carry out some climbing kit inspections to keep "Q4" happy.

Leaving the airport terminal, my first challenge of the trip was to find my Enterprise hire car which I would need to access using my phone. As many of you know, I am not the most IT tech savvy but what could possible go wrong?

I found the Enterprise area in the car park, then tried to get into the hire car. The phone app refused to connect with the car and I was getting a little frustrated (and wet) but as I moved around the car I heard a click from a nearby vehicle. Although the car I was trying to get into was virtually identical to my actual hire car, the correct hire car was in a space further to the right. (Note: for future – double check registration of hire car before trying to get into it).

After my kit inspections at Shetland base, I returned the hire car with no further drama. I then made my way to Sumburgh hotel to check in for the night. I knew I was in the right place, as I was greeted with the sight of my next taxi ride, the PDG helicopter, silently waiting for action on the temporary grass helipad in front of the hotel.

DAY 2

The next morning at breakfast came the news from Lucy, the new PDG pilot, that there would be no flying today, due to poor visibility. This was a little frustrating, as I could clearly see PHAROS from my bedroom window for most of the day. However, Sumburgh airport had jurisdiction over the air space including Sumburgh hotel, so we ended up grounded for the day.

DAYS 3 & 4

Monday morning brought better weather, so take off was set for 08:00.

Suitably dressed in my very fetching yellow flight suit, I was offered to sit up front next to the pilot. I was however given clear instruction that on no account should I touch the big red lever on the door. Operating this lever would jettison the door!

The 25 minute flight to the PHAROS, which was now positioned next to Muckle Flugga was spectacular. But during the whole flight my eye was drawn to the big red lever.

PHAROS came into sight and I experienced my first helideck landing, all without incident, with the bonus of the helicopter door still being in place!

On board the ship we were shown to our cabins and given the required safety briefings. Once I had made up my bed and stored my luggage, I returned to the bridge.

This is where I embarrassed myself to the ships crew. As I watched the helicopter preparing for a helideck take off, with the rotors spinning faster, I shouted to Donald, the Master, a warning that the helicopter was still strapped to the ship! Donald gave me a knowing look and calmly said don't worry the straps are about to be removed.

And sure enough at that point the heliops crew appeared and removed the straps, allowing the helicopter to take off – just as the procedure says. Well at least I know now!



I shouted to Donald, the helicopter's still strapped to the ship!

A little later following a preflight briefing on the bridge, myself, Principal Mechanical Engineer Ross, Senior Technician Bonar, the heliops crew and the contractors were transferred the short hop to Muckle Flugga.

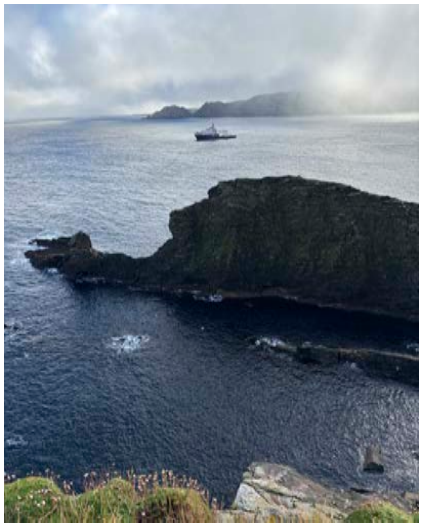
This station is NLB's most northerly station and, as many of NLB's lighthouses, is in a spectacular location. This serves as a constant reminder of the achievement of the people who originally designed and built these structures.

Once on the island, we dumped our gear in the accommodation block. But before getting to work I noticed a collection of National Geographic magazines. The one I flicked through had a current affairs article on the Vietnam War. This magazine was older than me!

During the day, we kept losing partial sight of PHAROS due to the mist rolling in and out. But luckily we didn't get stuck on site. For one thing, I really didn't like the look of the emergency rations!



Above: Heliops

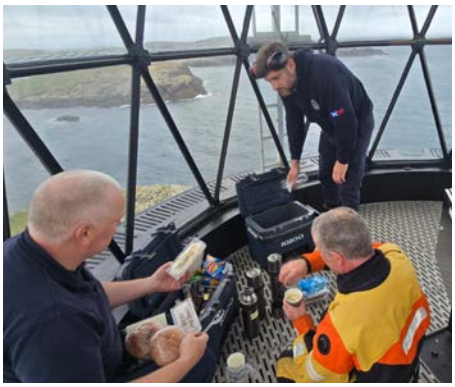


Above: PHAROS moored off Muckle Flugga

Over the following few days the helinet contractors replaced the ageing helinets, and the asbestos analyst carried out sampling.

Ross and Bonar did various checks and inspections and sorted out a control issue on one of the engines. I also witnessed the skill of the helicopter pilots working closely with our heliops crew carrying out storing operations, moving fuel and water and other materials from the PHAROS to the lighthouse, and vice versa. The care and attention by the heliops guys was second to none.

Myself, Ross and the heliops crew also managed a brief storing trip to Out Skerries on the Wednesday. For this trip the ship's catering staff had kindly supplied us with a packed lunch box full of goodies. We tucked into these at the top of the lighthouse surrounded by exceptional views.



Above: Enjoying lunch at Out Skerries
Right: Out Skerries Lighthouse

DAY 5

We departed PHAROS on Thursday afternoon via helicopter, back to Sumburgh. This was a day earlier than planned, so the flights back home had to be rescheduled to suit.

For me, this was both a brilliant and enlightening trip. I got to see some of the most remote NLB locations around Scotland. I witnessed the professionalism and friendliness of the ship's crew, the skill and care of the pilots and heliops crew working together during storing operations.

I also now appreciate the sheer complexity and difficulties encountered in pulling a trip like this together. Getting all the staff, contractors, transport and equipment together at the same time in a part of Scotland so dependant on the weather is no mean feat.

I would like to thank the ship's crew, the PDG helicopter crew, Ross and Bonar, and all the NLB staff behind the scenes that helped in the planning and organising of this memorable trip.



Bass Rock
Refurbishment Works

Paddy Wemyss, Project Leader



In October, we began essential refurbishment works at the Bass Rock. The project includes the full redecoration and electrical system upgrade of the lighthouse tower, and a number of improvements to the access and courtyard. Internally, the optic and supporting electrical system will be fully replaced and the tower redecorated. We will also add safety fall back gates at each level. Externally, the tower will be redecorated, and we will demolish a small derelict former winch-house and low wall within the courtyard. There will be a number of improvements to the existing access route, primarily involving concrete works.

Site Specific Difficulties

The works are standard for us, but the site itself makes this project particularly challenging. Bass Rock is home to 150,000 gannets between March and September, with restrictions only allowing helicopter access between October and January. The working window is short, and during the darkest and stormiest months. There is also no welfare on the island, so the Principal Contractor, Accted, will need to provide this within the already tight courtyard space.

The lighthouse itself is a listed building, and the access passes through the ruins of Bass Rock Castle, which is a scheduled ancient monument. Bass Rock also sits within both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and an Special Protected Area (SPA).

Additionally, the gannets produce a large amount of guano, and this has accumulated behind the lighthouse over the years. This is to be moved during the works to a position lower down the rock. This work will require use of specialist protective equipment to ensure the health and safety of workers is protected.

Protecting Wildlife and the Environment

Given the ecological sensitivity of Bass Rock, all works have been carefully planned in consultation with key stakeholders, including local landowners, the Marine Directorate, NatureScot, the RSPB, Historic Environment Scotland, and the local authority. The project successfully passed through the SSSI and SPA consenting process, ensuring that any potential impacts on wildlife are controlled appropriately.



In addition, the RSPB's detection dog, Reid, was on site to check cargo for any invasive species before the loads were transported by helicopter to the Bass Rock. This was a requirement of the SSSI consent and is written into our Biodiversity Action plan for works at Bass Rock. It ensures that the ground nesting birds covered by the SSSI and SPA are safe from predation by non-native animals.

"The refurbishment works are a vital part of our provision of a reliable AtoN. The lighthouse has been guiding mariners safely through Scottish waters since 1903. This work is essential to ensure the lighthouse continues to serve the mariner for many more years to come. The wider project will see removal of guano which has built up behind the lighthouse over the years, removal of some other redundant equipment, and improvements to the access to the island. These works are necessary and will have a positive impact on the environmental value of Bass Rock."

Chicken Rock Crane Installation

Neil Armstrong, Mechanical Technician

In August 2025 we installed the first of 3 cranes to our pillar rock stations. The first installation took place at Chicken Rock Lighthouse off the Isle of Man.

Standing 3.5 metres tall with a Safe Working Load (SWL) of 350kg, this lifting system was designed to handle the heaviest items on station—namely a Lister TS engine and generator—while also supporting equipment during annual inspection and maintenance trips.

This project was years in the making, and I was delighted to be involved. From design and drawing meetings to following safe systems of work practices, we also had to plan how to move equipment up the structure. Then it was assembling the crane, drilling, anchoring, torquing, double-checking every bolt and nut, pull-testing anchors, and load-testing before final sign-off.

It was a massive team effort involving our ship PHAROS, helicopter operations from PDG Aviation, and nearly every NLB team.

This wasn't a job for the faint-hearted—especially if you suffer from acrophobia or hypsophobia!







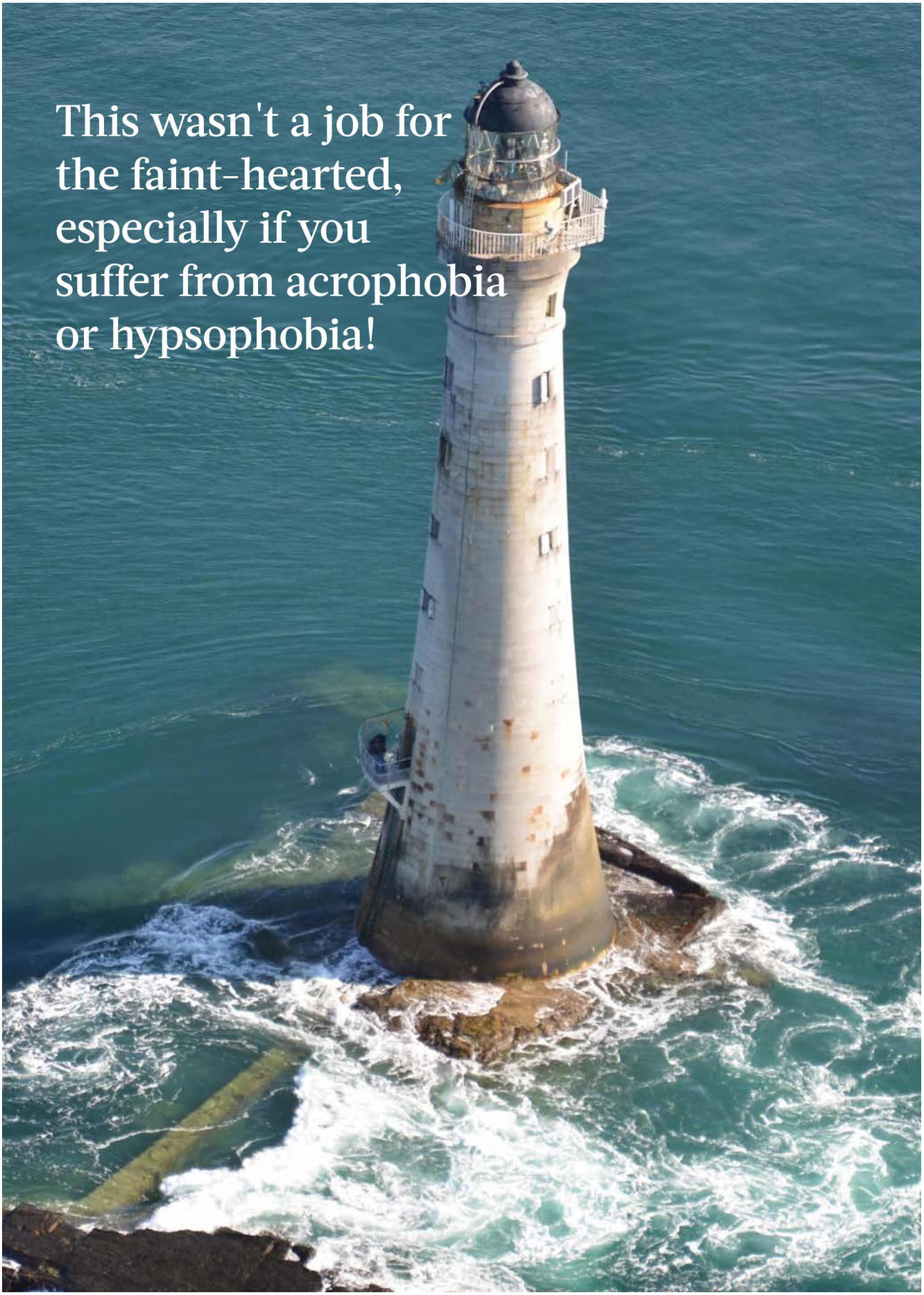






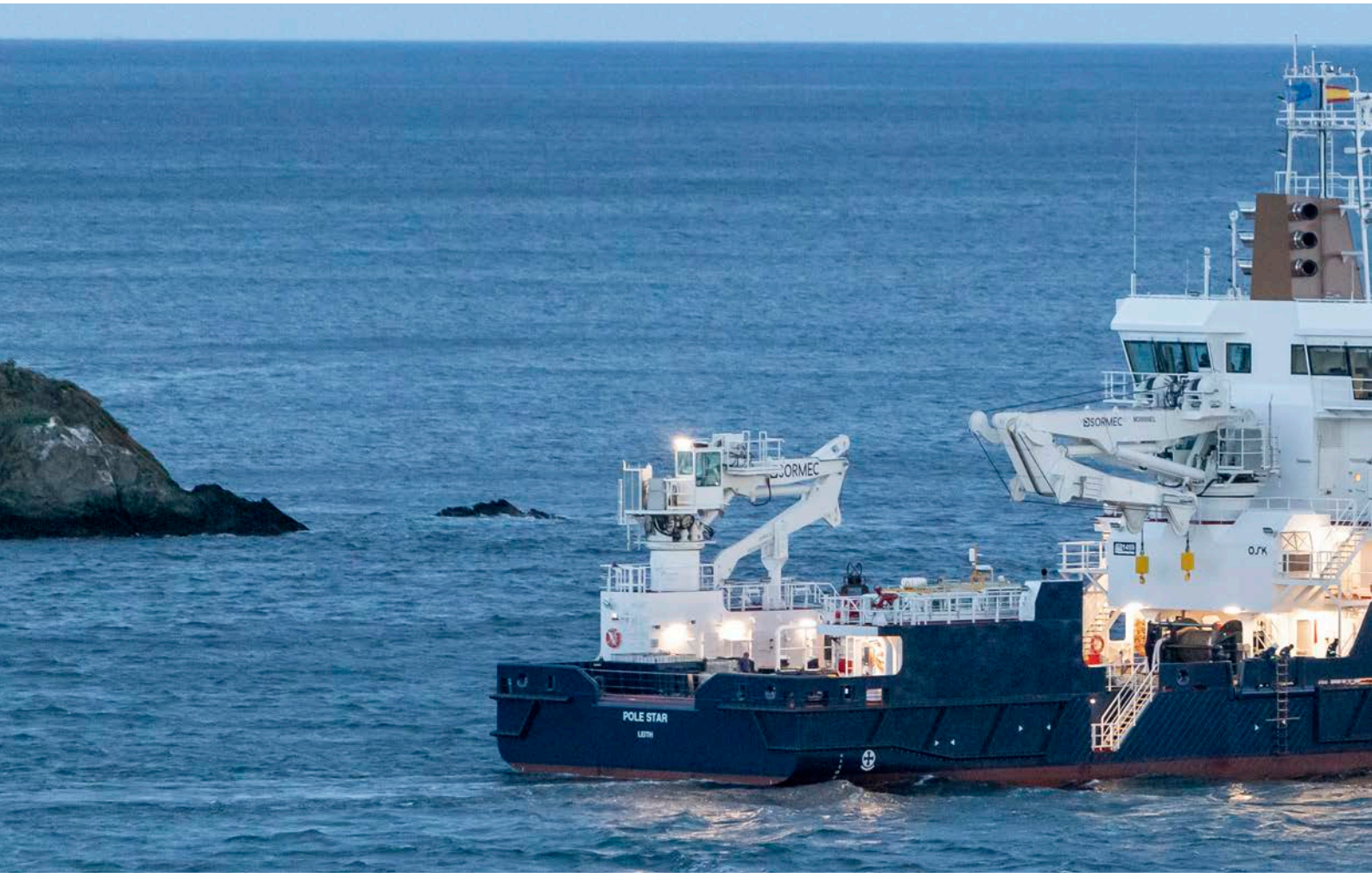
Thanks to my colleagues Ross Russell, Stuart Flett and Andy Hamilton, for putting up with me and my culinery delights for 10 days and nights.

Next up Skerryvore and Dubh Artach in the North Atlantic Ocean.


This wasn't a job for the faint-hearted, especially if you suffer from acrophobia or hypsophobia!

News from the Shipyard
A Star is Born!

In November, POLE STAR left the shipyard at GONDAN Shipbuilders and set sail for Gijón to begin sea trials. This was the vessel's final stage in which she needed to complete a comprehensive set of sea trials before being sailed by the NLB crew to Scotland.





Some of the NLB team at GONDAN



Upper deck area (fo'c'sle)



View from above during fitting out

From our departure it became evident that she is an extremely quiet vessel at sea. Throughout the accommodation you can barely tell you're on a ship. Currently she has minimal weight onboard and sitting at a draught of 3.25 metres and has the qualities of a comfortable sea boat. We had about 20 knots of wind yesterday and a long Atlantic swell rolling in at around 2.5-3 metres and she handled this well. I was suitably impressed.

We stopped for a fire drill and she provided a very stable platform on the after deck. Although still early days I am filled with confidence that she will prove to be the vessel we all hoped for. We all just want to take delivery and sail over the horizon but hands must remain in pockets for now.

Alisdair Graham, Ship's Master, on the first day of sea trials.

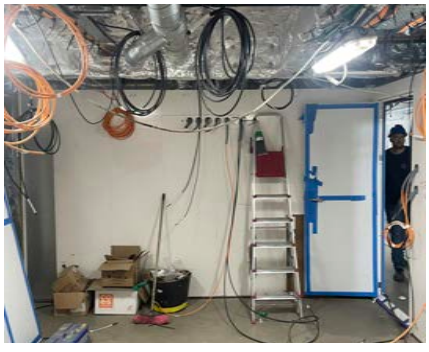




Crane being fitted



Mast fitting out



Conference Room

Vessel Replacement Project Internships

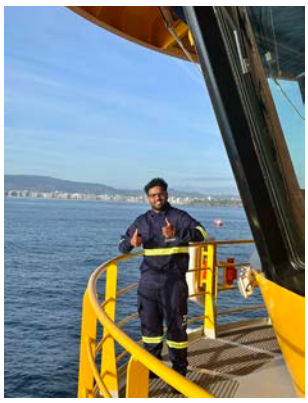
In the summer Journal we introduced you to 3 students from the University of Strathclyde who were about to take part in an internship at GONDAN Shipbuilders.

Isla, Austin and Nicholas have now completed their internships.
Find out how they got on and how they made the most of their experience.



In total, five students took part in the internships provided as part of the POLE STAR project, demonstrating social value and valuable learning and development opportunities.







Austin Mathew

Over the summer, I had the incredible opportunity to complete a three month internship at GONDAN Shipbuilders in Asturias, Spain. An experience made possible through NLB's Vessel Replacement Project for the new POLE STAR.

The new ship represents the next generation of sustainable lighthouse service vessels. Combining hybrid propulsion, advanced automation, and future ready design to support safe navigation for decades to come.

Working in the Technical Office, I was involved in the design and analysis stages of the vessel currently under construction, gaining valuable insight into the collaboration and precision that drive modern shipbuilding. My role included reviewing technical drawings, assisting with hydrodynamic and stability analyses, and learning how CAD tools are applied to real-world projects.

Beyond the desk, I also took part in a welding and fabrication course, which deepened my understanding of how theoretical design translates into practical construction.

Seeing how millimetres on a drawing become metres of steel on the workshop floor was a powerful reminder of the importance of detail, teamwork, and communication in engineering.

One of the highlights of my time in Spain was joining the sea trials of the AUSTRI ENABLER, an offshore wind support vessel designed by Salt Ship Design and built by GONDAN for Edda Wind. During the trials, I shadowed the Chief Engineer, observed the Voith propulsion system in action, and interacted with specialists from Siemens Energy, DNV, and Bureau Veritas. Witnessing cutting edge marine technology being tested at sea was both inspiring and eye-opening.

This internship not only strengthened my technical knowledge but also gave me a new appreciation for the global nature of shipbuilding. Working with colleagues from different countries and backgrounds taught me that engineering is as much about people as it is about precision.

I'm deeply grateful to NLB for supporting this opportunity, the team at GONDAN for their mentorship, and especially to Rob Chadwick for making the entire programme possible. I return to Strathclyde with renewed motivation, new skills, and a clearer sense of direction for my future in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering.







Nicholas Mulcahy

As a fourth-year Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering student at the University of Strathclyde, I've always been eager to bridge the gap between what we study in lectures and how ships are actually built and tested. Earlier this year, I was given the incredible opportunity to spend three months at GONDAN Shipbuilders in northern Spain, working on the construction of POLE STAR. This was an experience that has been transformative for my professional and personal development.

Before this internship, I had only seen vessel construction through drawings and 3D models. At GONDAN, I was immersed in every stage of the process, from steel fabrication and outfitting to onboard systems and final integration. Seeing a ship take shape before your eyes is something every naval architect should experience at least once.

Week by week, POLE STAR evolved from scaffolding and bare hull sections into a fully formed and outfitted vessel. Standing on the deck of a ship you've watched come to life is an indescribable feeling, a mix of pride, awe, and motivation to learn even more. It gave me a new appreciation for the precision and teamwork that go into every build, and for the coordination required across disciplines to bring a design to life.

A major highlight was joining the sea trials of the AUSTRI ENABLER, Being onboard during testing allowed me to witness complex propulsion and dynamic positioning systems in action and to see how design decisions translate into real-world performance.

Another unforgettable experience was working in the welding workshop alongside GONDAN's skilled fabricators. I had the chance to train hands-on with MIG, TIG, and stick welding, learning how heat, precision, and technique combine to create the foundations of every structure. Feeling the intensity of the arc and seeing molten steel take shape gave me a whole new respect for the craftsmanship that underpins marine engineering.

I'm deeply grateful to Rob Chadwick and the NLB team for making this opportunity possible and for their continued support throughout my time abroad. The experience has not only strengthened my technical understanding but also helped shape the direction of my career. Moving forward, I'm more determined than ever to pursue a future in marine manufacturing, building on the lessons and inspiration I gained from my time in Asturias.

Isla Cameron

During my two months internship with NLB at GONDAN I was presented with so many amazing experiences and opportunities. All of which allowed me to appreciate what really goes into the ship building process.

On my first day I was given a complete tour of the yard, including the steel cutting warehouse which is located outside of the main shipyard and office space. Whilst I was there, I was able to see how much precision and detail goes into cutting each piece of steel. During this tour I also got to see the welding and piping workshops.

One of the opportunities I was given was to take part in the sea trials of the newly completed AUSTRI ENABLER. I spent 9 nights on board and got to participate in the gangway and crane testing, electrical checks, tank testing and even got to see the ship set off for delivery.

My time in the Technical Department with GONDAN's Javier opened my eyes to the sheer level of detail and planning that is involved in ship design/building. I was able to work on a range of vessels; however, the majority of my work involved a new research/survey vessel. This included creating outfitting zone plans, cable trace arrangements, electrical elements and drain arrangements.

I also participated in a weeklong welding workshop where I was able to learn multiple types of welding, from semi-automatic to TIG welding. Throughout this workshop I developed a deeper understanding of the practical side of ship building and the amount of skill and effort that goes into it.

Throughout my time at GONDAN I was able to see the progression of POLE STAR as it came towards the completion of her building process. The difference in the vessel from my first tour and final week (where I was able to watch the mast installation) was impressive and showed how efficient and driven GONDAN is as a yard.

This Internship allowed me to gain so much practical skills and crucial knowledge, outside of a lecture hall. Throughout my entire time in Asturias everyone at GONDAN and NLB were so friendly and helpful, which allowed me to make the most of my internship. I would like to say a massive thank you to NLB for this incredible opportunity and continued support throughout it all!







> *This Internship allowed me to gain practical skills and crucial knowledge, outside of a lecture hall. Throughout my entire time in Asturias everyone at GONDAN and NLB were so friendly and helpful, which allowed me to make the most of my internship.*

Tall Ships Race

Pamela Cornwallis, Retained Lightkeeper

Back in 1991, I had just moved to Aberdeen when the Tall Ships race arrived in town. I had never seen anything like it – 66 traditional tall ships all around the city centre harbour that was usually busy with oil supply vessels, fishing boats and ferries. The whole town was buzzing – live music, street performers and smiling faces everywhere. I remember thinking how good it would be to sail on one of the ships.

1997 came along, the Tall Ships Race returned to Aberdeen and I finally took steps to get on board. That decision led to some brilliant times afloat, with lots of voyages short and long, including some Tall Ships Races. Particular highlights were a delivery trip from Poole in Dorset down to the Canaries across the bay of Biscay in the sunshine, sailing with young people from Norway to Scotland, and Tall Ships races from Cadiz to Bermuda, and Greenock up to Shetland amongst other trips.

I was delighted to learn that the Tall Ships Race was coming back to Aberdeen in 2025, and volunteered to get involved. This time as a volunteer Ship's Liaison Officer.

I was one of a large group of Liaison Officers. We were organised into teams each with a Team Leader and an allocated group of ships to look after. Within that, each of us was aligned to a named vessel. I was linked to Alba Explorer, a steel hulled 72 ft sloop, originally built to take part in the BT GLOBAL CHALLENGE race prior to being purchased for the charity Ocean Youth Trust Scotland in 2006 and operated by them as a sail training vessel. I had sailed on board as second mate a number of times, so was lucky to know a wee bit about the vessel and the way she ran before she arrived in Aberdeen.

We had the same routine each day. Arrive at our base near the harbour by 7:45am ready for our morning briefing. At 8am we headed to our ships to update them on what was on that day, passing on key information to the skipper and staff on board and getting information that needed to be fed back to the event organisers. We also helped with sourcing anything the ships needed. We repeated that at lunchtime, and again as needed late afternoon, enjoying the event in between.

Our team helped with all sorts of things, from getting a marine electrician to fix a generator, sourcing spare parts, sorting out replacement gas cylinders, getting boats refuelled and filled with water as safely as possible when the quayside was closed to the public, making sure deliveries got to the right vessel, and ensuring crews knew where the delivery yard was for collecting supplies.



More random requests included sourcing an iron and ironing board so that one of the skippers could get her dress ironed before the Captain's dinner, and finding a stretcher for a fancy dress outfit for the crew parade. We returned borrowed kilts to their owners and made sure crew members knew what activities were on and where to find them.

Ocean Youth Trust Scotland were at the event to raise awareness about the Youth Development voyages they offer to young people, as well as the volunteering opportunities for adults as sea staff and shore support, so there were lots of visitors to their stand and vessel. Find out more at https://oytscotland.org.uk/about-us

As well as working with our allocated vessels, there was time for fun too. Highlights for me were catching up with sailing pals, in some cases people I hadn't seen in years. I bumped into a few people I had sailed with when they were teenagers, and here they were visiting the event with children and young people of their own.

It was great to spend a few days on and around all sorts of boats. We had a really interesting tour of HMS Mersey, a Royal Navy offshore patrol vessel with a remit to support homeland security.

BAP Union, operated by the Peruvian Navy as a training vessel for Officers and Cadets was berthed next to Mersey, and when the Peruvian Navy learned that the Royal Navy had welcomed us on board, they quickly followed suit! It was quite a contrast to spend time on a traditionally rigged sailing vessel compared to the high tech spec on HMS Mersey. BAP Union was well set up for visitors as part of her role is as an ambassador ship for the Peruvian navy – she even has a museum on board!



A number of vessels had been chartered to take members of the Press and VIPs out for trips around the harbour or further out to sea. As there was extra capacity, the trips were also available for us non-VIPs, and I was lucky to get on board VOS Glory, a standby safety vessel for a trip out to the fairway buoy off Aberdeen Harbour. I got some great views of Girdle Ness, and we were joined by dolphins when we turned and headed back in. I particularly enjoyed being on the bridge while the Captain took the boat back into harbour and manoeuvred her into her berth. While it was on a totally different scale to boats I'd been on before, the berthing procedures were pretty much the same.

On the Monday, the Red Arrows were due to display off Aberdeen Beach, with Girdle Ness Lighthouse at one corner of the display area.

As Girdle Ness was in our contractor's hands, I asked for permission to be there for the Red Arrows display. While the haar was around further along the beach and the display was ultimately cut short, the sky was clear at Girdle Ness and the view of the Red Arrows from there was spectacular! A couple of times when they turned, they were aiming right at the lighthouse, headlights blazing. This was unlike any other time I've been out on the balcony for sure!

Overall, it was a fantastic few days – exhausting, surprising and a lot of fun. It has been reported that nearly 500,000 people visited Aberdeen city centre and £32 million was generated for the local economy. Being a tiny part of that was a real pleasure.

If you ever get the opportunity to volunteer as part of a Tall Ships Race event, go for it!







For more information see the following websites:

Tall Ships Aberdeen 2025:
www.tallshipsaberdeen.com

Tall Ships Races:
www.sailtraininginternational.org

Ocean Youth Trust Scotland:
www.oytscotland.org.uk

Global Maritime Experts come to UK for World Marine Aids to Navigation Day 2025

On 1 July, each year, the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA) leads the celebrations for World Marine Aids to Navigation Day (WAtoN Day).

This year, we were delighted to host the main international event in London with Trinity House and the UK Department for Transport (DfT).

The 3 day celebration kicked off with an evening reception on the River Thames. The following day Trinity House opened the doors of its impressive Grade 1 listed headquarters to 120 representatives from 19 nations. Guest of honour was Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Mike Kane MP, the then Maritime Minister.

The day consisted of two fascinating panel discusions. One focussing on the future seascape, maritime resilience and security, while the other looked at physical aids to navigation services in a digital world.

The following day delegates visited Trinity House's Harwich Depot where they went onboard THV Galatea and visited the Planning Centre, Buoy Yard and GRAD laboratories. GRAD is the General Lighthouse Authorities' Research & Development team.

One of the key moments of the celebrations was the announcement of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department for Transport, IALA's World-Wide Academy, NLB and Trinity House.

The MoU represents a renewed commitment from NLB and Trinity House to provide expert tutors to IALA's World-Wide academy, and reinforces the shared mission to enhance maritime safety globally. In addition, the agreement came with a grant of £200,000 from the Department for Transport. Very welcome indeed!

The aim of WAtoN Day is to promote awareness of the importance of marine aids to navigation and the role of IALA's work to improve and harmonise standards worldwide for the efficiency of navigation and protection of the environment.



Signing the Memorandum of Understanding



HRH The Princess Royal meets Trinity House cadets







Merchant Navy Medal for our Director of Operations

On Merchant Navy Day, we were delighted to announce that Captain Phil Day, our Director of Operations, had been awarded the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service. This is a massive achievement which is worthy recognition of what Phil does for NLB, the safety of mariners in our waters and his amazing contribution to the work of IALA, which helps keep mariners safe across the globe.

Phil was presented with his medal by our Patron HRH The Princess Royal at an awards ceremony at Trinity House.

Congratulations Phil!





Phil celebrates with family



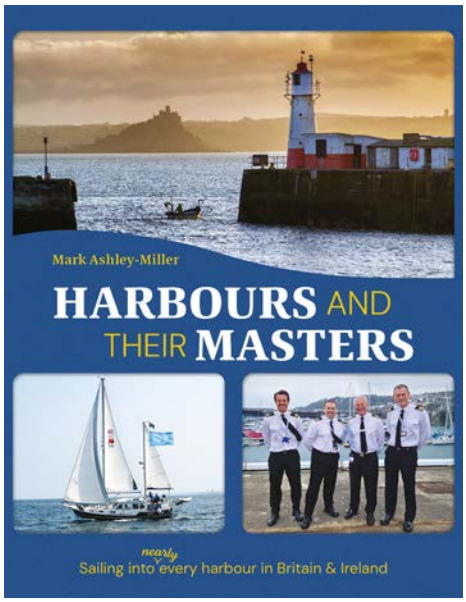
HRH The Princess Royal presents Phil with his medal

Eligibility for the Medal is limited to those who have served in the Merchant Navy or Fishing Fleets of the United Kingdom, Isle of Man, Channel Islands and the British Overseas Territories. Candidates must have shown devotion to duty and exemplary service, which has been of particular value and had constituted an outstanding example to others.

Book Reviews

HARBOURS and their MASTERS

Mark Ashley-Miller
Fernhurst Books



https://www.amazon.co.uk/Harbours-Their-Masters-Sailing-Harbour/dp/1912621800

Order a signed copy at: https://www.harbourmastersailingchallenge.co.uk/buy-book/

For five years, Mark Ashley-Miller set out on an extraordinary voyage, navigating 9,000 nautical miles to visit every corner of the British Isles. His mission? To uncover the hidden world of our harbours and Harbour Masters – those dedicated professionals who safeguard our ports and keep maritime trade flowing.

In this captivating book, you'll join Mark as he visits 310 harbours and meets 256 Harbour Masters. Through carefully recorded interviews they reveal to him their unique challenges, stories and traditions. From ancient 'Haveners' to modern-day CEOs, their role has evolved over centuries, yet their influence remains as vital as ever. Whether they're handling burning container ships, managing storm-ravaged harbour walls or juggling the ever-changing demands of commercial shipping, these unsung heroes work tirelessly behind the scenes.

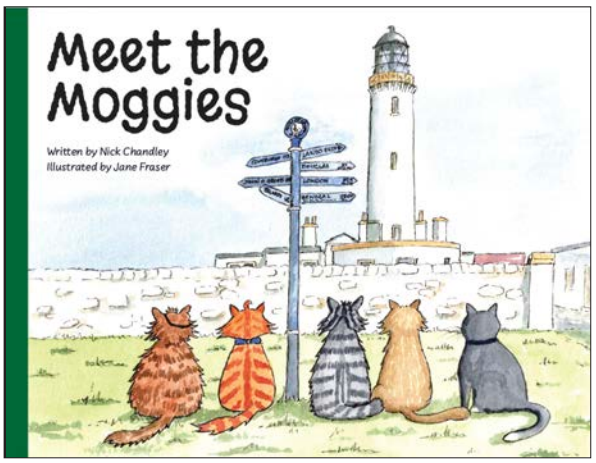
Mark's challenge has so far raised £30,000 for the Seafarers' Charity and all author royalties from the book will go to this charity.

Perfect for sailors, history lovers and maritime professionals, the book is a treasure trove of insights into Britain and Ireland's harbours. It's a detailed account of a journey describing intimate encounters, unexpected adventures and an inside look at how harbours shape our maritime heritage.

Meet the Moggies

Written by Nick Chandley
Illustrated by Jane Fraser

Meet the Moggies is the first book of a series, each of which is based in the Rhins of Galloway. Bosun, Bonnie, Morag, Dusty and Ted are five cat friends who live in the South Rhins, in and around the village of Drummore, close to the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse. This first book outlines who the cats are, where they live, what they do and how their adventures begin. It also gives readers an impression of the beauty of the area in which they live, stunningly brought to life by local artist Jane Fraser.

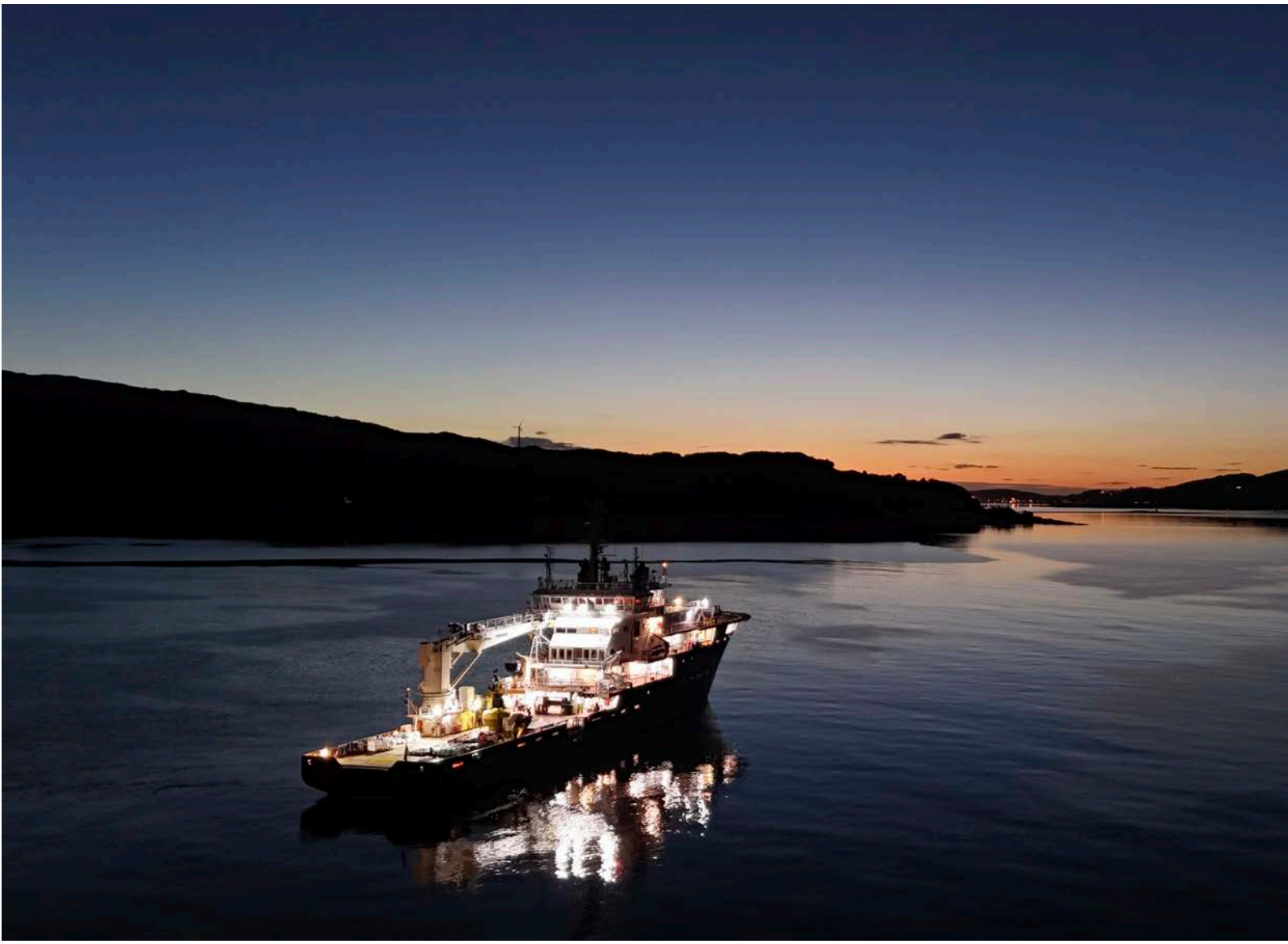


Collectively called the Moggies, future books will see the cats launched back in time and into adventures that celebrate the rich heritage and folklore of the area. Each book has been written to encourage discussion beyond the stories with suggestions for discussions and activities. Find out more at https://pfsbooks.co.uk/

PHAROS

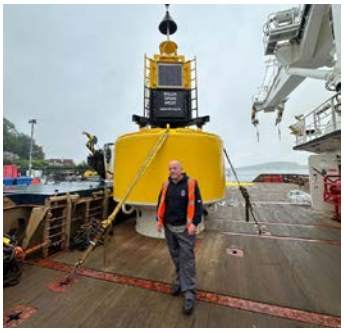
While new POLE STAR is getting a lot of attention, PHAROS and crew are quietly getting on with the day job.

Main image: PHAROS near Campbeltown.
Below from left to right: Exercise with HM Coastguard, PHAROS & buoys, the then Maritime Minister, Mike Kane MP onboard PHAROS.









Northern Lighthouse Heritage Trust

Alastair Beveridge, Chair of the Heritage Trust

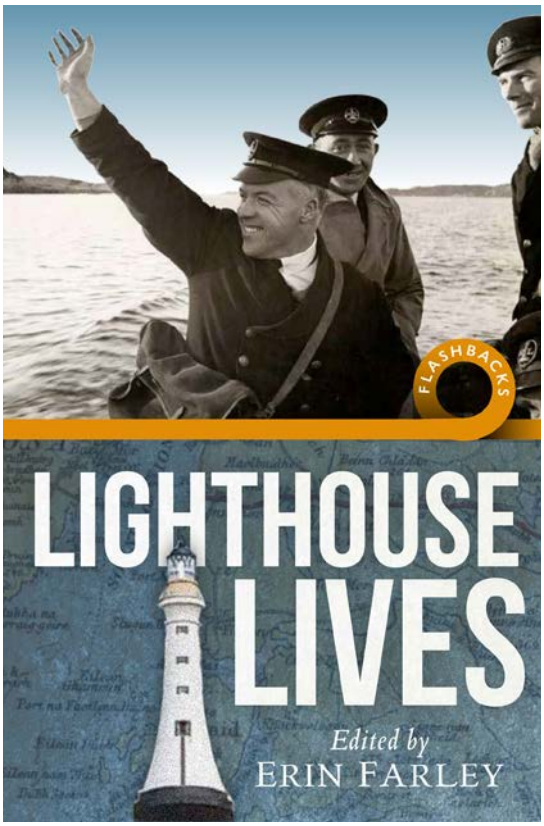
Lighthouse Lives Book to launch in Spring 2026

This excellent book follows on from the successful tour of the film 'Lighthouse Lives' in 2023.

Both the film and book are underpinned by the book's editor, Erin Farley's in depth oral history project. The project recorded the lived experiences of the Keepers, Mariners, their families and office staff who worked for NLB through a time of transition from manned to automated lighthouses.

The book offers a chance to hear the voices and stories of the people at the heart of a unique and fascinating way of life. Beautifully illustrated with photographs and maps, it will appeal to lighthouse enthusiasts and anyone with an interest in history and heritage.

We can't wait to see it in print!



Since its early days, the Trust has been involved with a wide range of projects. Some quite substantial and requiring significant funding and others less so but just as valuable in meeting the Trust's objectives. Here are some of our smaller but equally rewarding projects that we have helped over the last six months.

Pairc School

As part of their course work, pupils at Pairc School on the Isle of Lewis have been learning about the 'Mystery of the Flannan Isles". The school successfully applied to the Heritage Trust for funding which enabled them to hire a minibus to take the seven P2 to P7 pupils to the Flannan Isle Exhibition at the Breasclete Community Centre.

The children had the opportunity to meet the museum guide and look through the artifacts and photos related to the disappearance of the three lighthouse Keepers. They also saw the maps of the weather forecast relating to that fateful day on 15 December 1900.

After seeing part of a brass railing of the vessel the 'Hesperus' and learning about the fate of the pony who fell into the sea, they then drove to the Shore Base and to the Breaking Wave Memorial. What a fantasic learning experience!

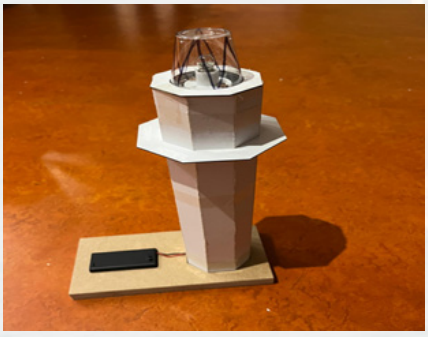
Craft Workshops

Earlier this year we received an application from Newhaven Coastal Rowing Club for £150 to fund a creative project for children.

The project was part of Edinburgh 900 celebrations, and involved the children building a model of Newhaven Lighthouse from recycled materials with a flashing bulb.

Two craft workshops were held, each welcoming 20 enthusiastic young participants. Using recycled materials, the children constructed the lighthouse body from white card and added a clear plastic shot glass to form the lens. The highlight of the project was a small electronic circuit that powered a flashing light, set to the original Newhaven Lighthouse characteristic of 0.5 seconds every 6 seconds.





Above: Lighthouse craft workshops

Seven Days a Week

Reg Lacon's films, that he donated to the Heritage Trust in 2024, have been digitised and produced into a short film by Filmmakers Martine Robertson and Colin Gately.

Back in the 1950s, Reg who initially worked on NLB ships took up ciné film as a hobby, with an 8mm camera. He took this to sea and recorded many hours of footage of NLB ships and crews in action.

Reg sadly passed away quite recently but not before he had seen the final version of the film at a special event with NLB retired staff. Reg's daughter said the creation of the new short film and its showings gave Reg purpose and great happiness in the last year of his life. And it has proved an unexpected 'hit', being shown to eager audiences in various venues. Reg himself delighted in showing it to visitors and fellow housemates in his care home. You can watch the film on our YouTube channel https://youtu.be/wFUXSYmyNR4

Applications for support continue to arrive on a regular basis. We aim to support as many projects as possible that meet our criteria and are affordable.

A couple of recent examples are help to procure a commemorative plaque on Ornsay as part of the 200 year celebrations of Rhinns of Islay Lighthouse. Two other interesting but separate educational projects are based around Gridle Ness Lighthouse. Each uses the history and purpose of the light as an outreach project to local schools using a lighthouse as a metaphor for collaborative working and contributing to the common good. I'll keep you posted on both these projects as they progress.

My best wishes to you and yours for 2026.









Right: NLB retired staff at the premiere of Seven Days a Week, with Reg at the front.

Rhinns of Islay Lighthouse Bicentennial Celebrations

Johnnie Dobson, Retained Lightkeeper

The festival kicked off on the Friday night with a traditional family ceilidh. Featuring local singers and musicians, over 250 people danced and sung their way through the night.

On Saturday, the Lighthouse Exhibition opened in the Rhinns Hall. The 500 plus visitors were treated to a stunning exhibition featuring artefacts and historical documents. As well as prizewinning artwork by local children, short stories, drone footage of the lighthouse and Orsay Island, there was a documentary capturing the memories of local residents who once lived and worked in the lighthouse.

The NLB lighthouse map was on display and I was on hand to answer the numerous questions about the lighthouse and NLB.

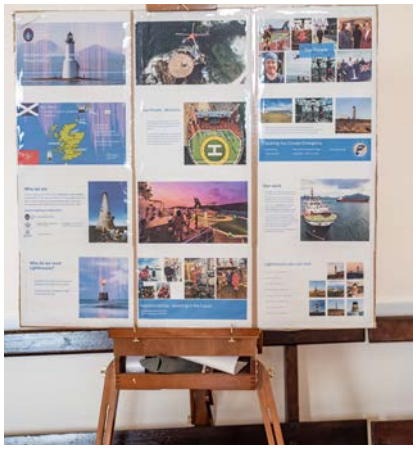
On Sunday the Festival Committe organised a street party, with live music by a local band and food and drink stalls. The plaque honouring the bicentennial was unveiled by myself and the great, great, great, granddaughter of the first Lightkeeper, assisted by three local children.

Thank you to the Northern Lighthouse Heritage Trust for funding the plaque.

With around 1000 people attending the celebrations over the weekend, the success of the festival was neatly summed up by Fergus Speight, Chair of the Festival Committee:

"When we came together as a committee less than a year ago, we had no idea how the event would pan out, so we're delighted – and maybe even a wee bit amazed – at how successful it's been. We wouldn't have been able to do this without the community's amazing support, and the willingness of different organisations to work together."



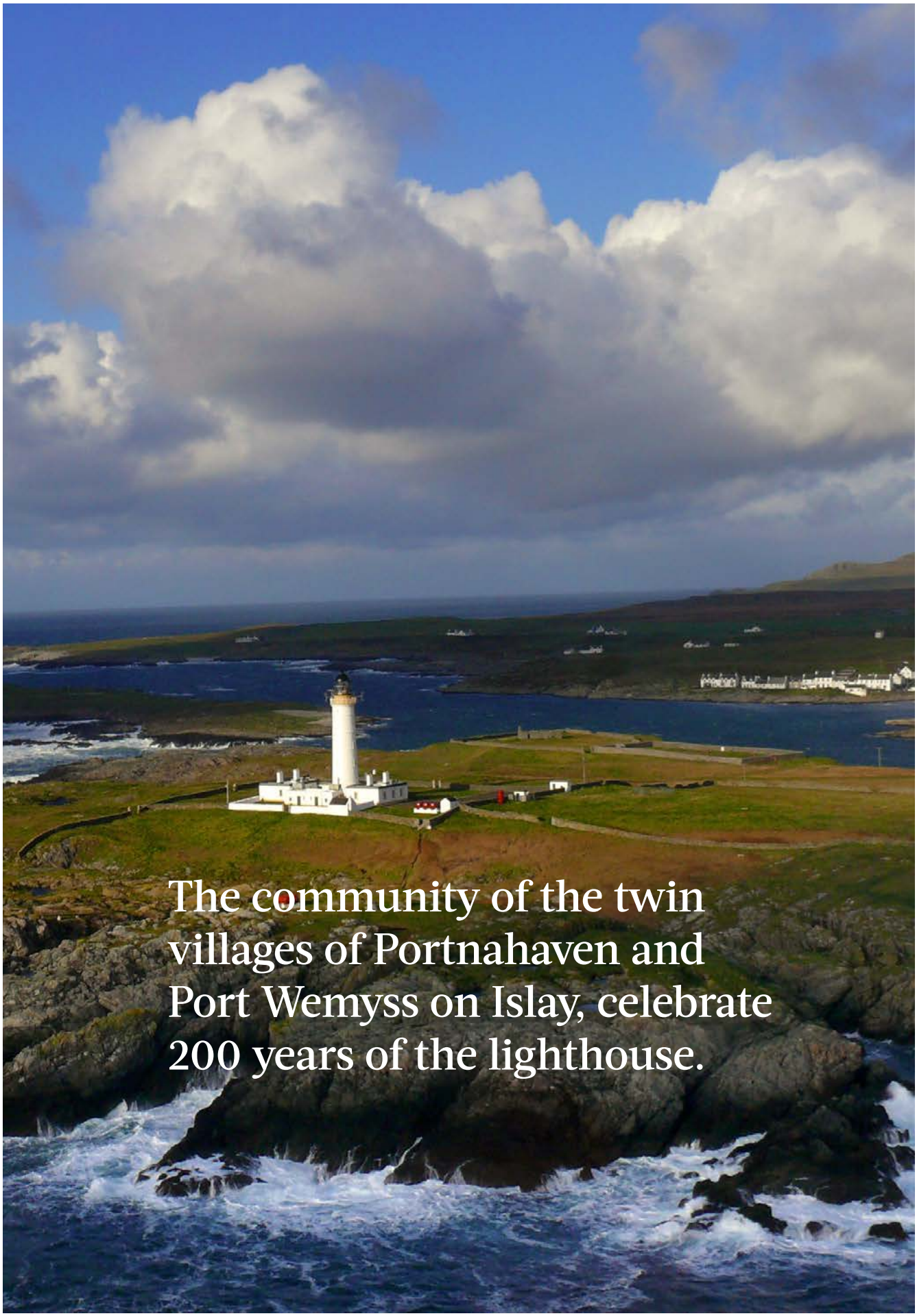


Above: RLK Johnnie Dobson with Fergus Speight.
All images on this page by Ben Shakespeare
https://benshakespeare.com








The community of the twin villages of Portnahaven and Port Wemyss on Islay, celebrate 200 years of the lighthouse.

Museum of Scottish Lighthouses

Museum Management Team

Kinnaird Head Castle and Lighthouse and the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses is now entering the chilly but beautiful winter season here in the far north. It has been a busy year with many visitors from all around the world - more than forty countries at the last count!

Our exhibitions have been popular and we're now laying out plans for 2026. The most exciting news is that we are finally progressing with work on the new Fresnel lens gallery. This gallery has been in the planning since the roof blew off during storm Arwen in November 2021. The design is complete, survey carried out, most of the money raised and building warrant submitted. Once that is processed we can move to the next phase of tendering for the works.

The biggest problem we have had in the planning of this gallery is the sheer combined weight of the Fresnel lenses we intend to display.



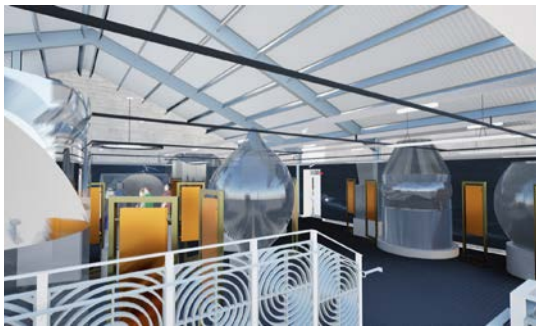
With so many tonnes of beautiful metal and glass sitting on the floor it had better be up to the challenge. So, on the advice of the structural engineer, we are taking up the current floor slab. As we have to lift the floor it seemed sensible to insulate it and then repour a new slab and install a heat pump. This will make the gallery more sustainable and environmentally friendly. We will also take this opportunity to install a ramp to improve accessibility.

The design for the ramp railings reflect the bull's eyes on our wonderful historic lenses. The Rhinns of Islay bull's eyes that currently grace our entrance hallway will move to the wall beside the new ramp bringing a sense of unity between the design and the objects in our collection.

Finding the right way to display the lenses in the new gallery was a challenge but we have finally decided that displaying them geographically would be an exciting option.

We will lay a floor that has a map of Scotland on it. The lenses will then be placed and linked to their correct geographic position. This will instantly allow visitors a complete understanding of the relationship lenses have with the coastline and the sea.







The design will also include beautiful graphics which will inspire the feeling of a lighthouse site. Add in specialist lighting and the sound of crashing waves and the gallery will be a 'wrap around' lighthouse experience.

These elements are really important if we are to create the right atmosphere in the gallery. We do a lot of third sector work and have many school groups and organisations visiting the museum. With this in mind the gallery will be completely adjustable in terms of sound and lighting so that it will work for every group including our neurotypical and neurodiverse visitors.

This project is Phase 1 of the museum refurbishment. During Phase 2, the three large lenses, Neist Point from Skye, Dunnet Head from Caithness and Fair Isle South from Shetland, currently displayed in the main gallery, will move to the new gallery.



In the initial build of the gallery we will leave the space for those lenses. Hoxa Head Lighthouse is also up for a makeover as it will stay in situ in the new gallery.

This is a very exciting time for the museum and we hope work will begin in February 2026, with the main part of the build taking around four months.



Once the building work is completed, it will be the very challenging process of constructing the Fresnel Lenses. In most cases this is a wee bit of an unknown quantity as they have been stored in boxes for decades.

We will build a team of experienced volunteers to help us with the process. This will include staff from NLB, members of the Association of Lighthouse Keepers (ALK) as well as stonemasons from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) who helped us to dismantle the lenses after Storm Arwen.

Occasionally, the Keepers had to find ways of removing lenses from the lighthouse towers and this sometimes involved an angle grinder. So, we might have some fabrication to do in order to see them shine once more.



Following the passing of our dear friend Ian Duff, the Museum Manager travelled to Oban to assist with the remarkable lighthouse collection Ian left behind. Part of this now forms the *Ian Duff Collection* here at the museum, while much of the remainder is entering the archives of ALK. The museum and ALK have worked closely to record and preserve this extraordinary legacy. We are especially grateful to NLB for their kind assistance in collecting several boxes from Oban and delivering them to us in Fraserburgh. We really appreciate all the help NLB gives us.



The museum has also been the very lucky recipient of a donation from the Northern Lighthouse Heritage Trust (NLHT), of a huge collection of silver tableware which was in service for many years in the historic vessels POLE STAR and PHAROS. We love it.

Our collections assistant Anna has really enjoyed the cataloguing of this wonderful collection which will hopefully be on show in the coming year.



Other acquisitions include two wonderful large scale models of Pharos and Pole Star made by Lachie Stewart, model maker. We also had the donation of a bedding chest made at Kinnaird Head by Keeper James Crawford in 1936, a fantastic addition to the collection.



As you can see it's been a busy year at the museum with the new gallery. Much work has continued on a day to day level too and all our staff have worked hard across all areas of the museum and we thank them all for doing such a great job. We will keep you updated on our progress in the next journal and we hope you can visit us in the coming year. Have a wonderful Christmas and a great New Year.

Stay at a Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage

Many of our former Lighthouse Keeper's cottages are now privately owned or managed by charities and trusts and are run as holiday properties. Contact the individual websites for further information and to make a booking.

North Ronaldsay Lighthouse, Orkney



Situated on the remote and beautiful northern shore of North Ronaldsay, the former Lighthouse Keepers' cottages offer visitors self-catering accommodation throughout the year. The North Ronaldsay Trust led a ten-year refurbishment project following the decommissioning of the cottages and the automation of the Lighthouse.

For more information and to make a booking visit https://northronaldsaytrust.com/2017/06/21/lighthousekeepers-cottages/

Noss Head Lighthouse, Wick



The self-catering cottage at Noss Head is just outside Wick on the North Coast 500 route. The former home of the Principal Lightkeeper and his family, the Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage now has Four Stars from Visit Scotland, and a Gold Award for Green Tourism. The light and cosy cottage sleeps six people in three bedrooms and is perfect for romantic getaways, or for family adventures with the dog exploring this little-known part of Scotland.

For more information and to make a booking visit https://www.lighthousekeeperscottage.co.uk/



Ornsay Lighthouse, Skye

A warm welcome awaits you at Eilean Sionnach Lighthouse Cottage. The Gaelic name means the Island of the Fox and this unique self-catering cottage is situated right next to Ornsay Lighthouse, on a private island just off the rugged Isle of Skye.

For more information and to book visit https://eileansionnach.com/

Rubha nan Gall Lighthouse, Isle of Mull



Stay in the former Keeper's cottage in a spectacular remote location on the Isle of Mull, a Hebridean Island off Scotland's West Coast. The cottage offers total peace and tranquillity in a stunning setting.

For more information and to make a booking visit https://rubhanangall.com/

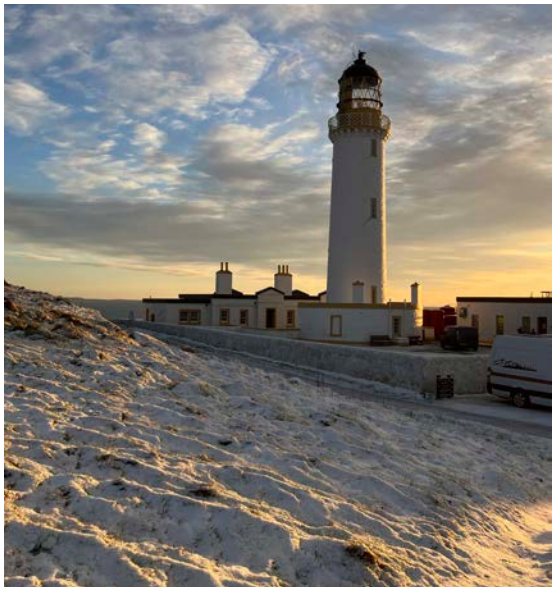
Rua Reidh Lighthouse, Gairloch



Rua Reidh Lighthouse, near Gairloch in Wester Ross, stands at the entrance to Loch Ewe, at one of the most dramatic and remote locations on the north–west coast of Scotland. Stay in the former Principal Keeper's House, the First Officer's Quarters or the Hide situated in the courtyard.

For more information and to make a booking visit https://stayatalighthouse.co.uk/

Contact the individual properties directly for further information and to make a booking.



Mull of Galloway Lighthouse welcomes over 10,000 visitors!

Congratulations to everyone at the Mull of Galloway Trust. By the end of October 2025, the Trust who run tours of the lighthouse had welcomed over 10,000 visitors to Scotland's most southerly lighthouse. A remarkable achievement!

Spotlight on our Staff



Congratulations to Bruce Aitken, Procurement & Stores Officer and his wife Alison who married at Inglewood House, Alloa on 8 February 2025.



Retained Lightkeeper Billy Muir and his wife Isobel celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary in October. Congratulations Billy and Isobel! The happy couple are pictured at Lynnfield Hotel with the family.



Congratulations to Fraser Byers, Senior Technician, who became a Grandad to Finlay on 12 August 2025.



Joe Hothersall, Asset Manager with baby Erin. Erin was born on 15 May 2025. Congratulations Joe!



Jonathan Stewart, 2nd Engineer didn't have a wedding or birth to celebrate but he did get a new puppy. That's Roman on the right!

Golfing Days 2025 Winners



April
The Stevenson Trophy won by Graeme Macdonald at Dunbar Winterfield



May
The Ailsa Trophy won by Billy Nixon at Lenzie



June
The Siemens Trophy won by Neil Armstrong at Kingsknowe



September
The Sheriff Lillie Trophy won by Colin McDonell at Kinross (Montgomerie Course)

All our outings are handicap competitions so open to all abilities. If you're a current or former member of staff and fancy joining the golf outings in 2026, please get in touch with Graeme.Macdonald@nlb.org.uk

It's not all about the winning of course... Playing golf offers numerous benefits, including physical fitness, social interaction, mental challenges, and the opportunity to enjoy beautiful outdoor settings.

Merchant Navy Association

Edinburgh and Forth Branch

The Merchant Navy Association was launched in 1989 for the purpose of raising awareness of the role merchant seafarers played during wartime and the sacrifices endured. We still try to promote that commitment today as representatives of the 'Fourth Service', striving to raise awareness of our maritime heritage and the contributions of merchant seamen and fishermen alike.

The Edinburgh and Forth Branch of the Merchant Navy Association was inaugurated in November 2022, at NLB's Headquarters in Edinburgh.

We are a group of seafarers, both retired and currently serving, who come together locally on a monthly basis to socialise, support and help each other, recognise achievements, mentor those earlier in their careers, raise public awareness of our industry and promote a career in the Merchant Navy.

These are all charitable aims of the Merchant Navy Association but we can apply them at a local level too. We have an active social aspect to the group, with occasional outings to various places of interest. These include ship visits, with recent visits to the Royal Yacht Britannia and the SS Explorer.

There is a branch committee which is currently made up of a Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Social Secretary, who organise the routine running of the branch and events, however at each monthly meeting, members are free to raise anything they wish to discuss.

Votes are frequently held by all in attendance and at the AGM more formal matters are voted on, including the election of committee members.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact:

Ned Kelly, Chair
mna.edinburgh@gmail.com
Edinburgh1345@gmail.com

NLB Online Shop

From teddy bears, ties and tote bags to mugs, umbrellas and our 2026 calendar, we're sure there will be a lighthouse inspired gift for you. Take a look at the shop on our website to see the full range of items. This is just a selection.

















Order from our online shop at https://www.nlb.org.uk/shop/

APPOINTMENTS



Roy Tweedie
Civil Project Engineer

I joined NLB in July. After achieving a Masters degree in Civil Engineering, I spent 8 years working on bridges structural maintenance projects within the trunk roads of Scotland.

Having come from an engineering background, being able to maintain some of these historic feats of engineering was a big pull to the role. I am looking forward to getting involved with the projects and learning about these wonderful structures.

Outside work, the majority of my spare time is spent with my two kids and fiancé who never fail to keep me busy!

When I do manage to get some "me time", I am usually out running, watching sports or catching up with friends and family.

APPOINTMENTS



Maddie Burnett
Project Support Officer

I joined NLB in October as Project Support Officer working in Edinburgh.

I previously worked for the government, NHS, and various art organisations. I often wonder how I ended up with the work experience I have, with my degrees in Art & Filmaking and a master's in Creative Writing, but I guess we all end up where we're meant to be!

I was so excited to be able to accept this opportunity with NLB as it gives me a chance to work within a field of personal interest (who doesn't love a lighthouse!) and further specialise in project support.

It's been a joy to join a friendly team and be welcomed by everyone in NLB, I look forward to learning more about project management and contributing to the organisation.

Outside the office, I am often found swimming in a loch, painting and trying to complete the book I've been writing for several years. I live in Edinburgh with my partner and my large orange cat, Mango.



Jenny Elder
Civil Project Engineer

I grew up in Newcastle and studied Civil Engineering at the University of Edinburgh. While studying I completed a summer placement with Morgan Sindall at the Northumberland Line Project, which has now reopened a passenger line that closed in the 1960s.

Participating in STEM education activities with young people during this time influenced my dissertation, about how to maximise the benefit of Social Value activities in the construction industry. After graduating I spent 2 years as a Graduate Rail Civil Engineer at AECOM in Manchester.

I hoped to escape the Mancunian tower blocks and return to Edinburgh, and was looking for more opportunities to develop as an engineer. Joining NLB has given me the chance to do just that, with the very happy side effect of getting to see beautiful scenery and nature (and lighthouses).

During the weekend I can often be found halfway across the country visiting family and friends– you can take the engineer out of the rail sector but can't stop her from getting on a train! I always have a book with me and go on lots of walks and hikes (usually with tea and cake at the end). I enjoy listening to and playing music.



Jen Matthews
Coastal Inspector

The past few months have been a whirlwind, I feel like I've hit the jackpot, not only with my role, but also with the Navigation Team. Peter, Gillian, Adam and Karl have been so welcoming and helpful. I couldn't have asked for more! I'm enjoying the variety in my job, but the highlights so far have been visiting lighthouses and meeting new people, both within NLB and at the various sites and events I've attended.

I'm from a small fishing village on the Northumbrian coast. I studied Marine Resource Management, Coastal Planning and Surveying at university, before joining my first survey vessel in the Gulf of Mexico. Over 10 years, my role took me to almost every continent (Antarctica remains on my bucket list!). My favourite is Asia. I loved the weather, culture and the food! I later moved to a position onshore in Norway, before returning to the UK to sail, where I achieved a long–held ambition and earned my Yachtmaster Offshore certification. Latterly, I worked in maritime publishing, creating content to support safe navigation.

I love to travel and dream of revisiting far flung Pacific islands. I also enjoy making jewellery which often has a nautical influence. I'm never happier than when I'm on or by the water, nothing beats a secluded anchorage with a west coast sunset or a stroll along a beach.

APPOINTMENTS

Bruce Turnbull
2nd Engineer

Jen Matthews
Coastal Inspector

Calum Mackay
3rd Engineer

Brian Farries
3rd Engineer

Roy Tweedie
Civil Project Engineer

Jenny Elder
Civil Project Engineer

Cameron Crowe
Electrical Apprentice

Mckenzie Johnson
Electrical Apprentice

Allan MacNeil
Deck Apprentice

Adam Scowcroft
Deck Apprentice

Hannah Bleck
Applications Developer

Maddie Burnett
Project Support Officer

James Rooney
Electrical Project Engineer

PROMOTIONS

Morgan Dennison
ERT

Ross Russell
Principal Mechanical Engineer

Jack Buchanan
Chief Officer

RETIREMENTS

Andrew Stevenson
Asset Manager

LEAVERS

Ian Sadler
RLK

DEATHS

It is with sadness we have to report the following deaths:

Anne England
Widow of the late Ernst England, former Lightkeeper

Alexander James Frain Smith
Former Lightkeeper

Lily Shanks
Widow of the late Jimmy Shanks, former Lightkeeper

James Hardie
Former Lightkeeper

Mike Close
Former Commissioner and Chair of the Board of Commissioners

Reg Lacon
Former Superintendent

OBITUARIES

Alexander James Frain Smith

Alexander James Frain Smith served as an Assistant Lightkeeper from 1970 to 1998. He was stationed at Cape Wrath, Duncansby Head, Dunnet Head, Inchkeith, Pladda and St Abbs Head Lights.

James Hardie

James Hardie served with NLB from 1956 to 1990. He was stationed at several lighthouses including Ardnamurchan, Cape Wrath, Copinsay, Girdle Ness, Holy Island, Muckle Flugga, Out Skerries, Strathy Point, Stroma and Sumburgh Head Lights.

Reg Lacon

Reginald Lacon was born in the Scottish Borders in the late 1920s. He joined the Northern Lighthouse Board in November 1958, becoming Third Engineer on the MV May, based in Granton Harbour. From there he worked his way steadily upward, moving to the MV 'Hesperus' and then the 'Pharos', as 1st, 2nd then Chief Engineer.

After many years at sea Reg came ashore into the Superintendant's Department first as Assistant and then, finally, as Superintendant. He retired in 1991.

Reg is survived by his daughter, Mrs Ruth Lewis.



Northern Lighthouse Board

MarineServices

Over 200 years of service to the mariner

Our primary function is to carry out our statutory duties providing Aids to Navigation (AtoN) for the safety of the mariner. When we have spare capacity in our statutory programme, the Merchant Shipping and Maritime Security Act 1997, allows us to offer marine support services to clients. As the most experienced provider of AtoN services in Scottish and Manx waters, find out how we could support you.

Vessel Hire

Equipped to levels normally only found in much larger vessels, NLV PHAROS provides a versatile platform for buoy handling, marine research, sea trials, hydrographic surveying and other marine support services.

Buoy Services

Whether you need to mark a port approach, marine renewable energy site or a decommissioned oil rig, we can provide a temporary or permanent AtoN solution. Our commercial buoy services include rental, inspections, maintenance and refurbishment. NLV PHAROS can also assist with deployment and removal.

Marine Base Support

NLB Oban offers full marine base support facilities, including berthing services, buoyage preparation and supply, and workshop services.

The Northern Lighthouse Board is Certificated to:

- BS ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health and Safety Management System
- BS EN ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System
- BS EN ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management System
- BS EN ISO/IEC 27001:2022 Information Security Management System





Northern Lighthouse Board, Gallanach Road, Oban PA34 4LS | 0131 473 3100 | enquiries@nlb.org.uk
www.nlb.org.uk

The Northern Lighthouse Board is the General Lighthouse Authority responsible for Scotland and the Isle of Man.

PATRON:
Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal

Chair: Hugh Shaw
Vice Chair: Brian Archibald
Chief Executive: Mike Bullock
Director Of Operations: Phil Day
Director Of Business Services: Mairi Rae

Journal produced by Fiona Holmes,
Communications Officer

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NORTHERN LIGHTHOUSE BOARD
84 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3DA

Telephone: 0131 473 3100
Email: enquiries@nlb.org.uk
Website: www.nlb.org.uk
@northernlighthouseboard
@nlb_uk

"In Salutem Omnium"
For the Safety of All