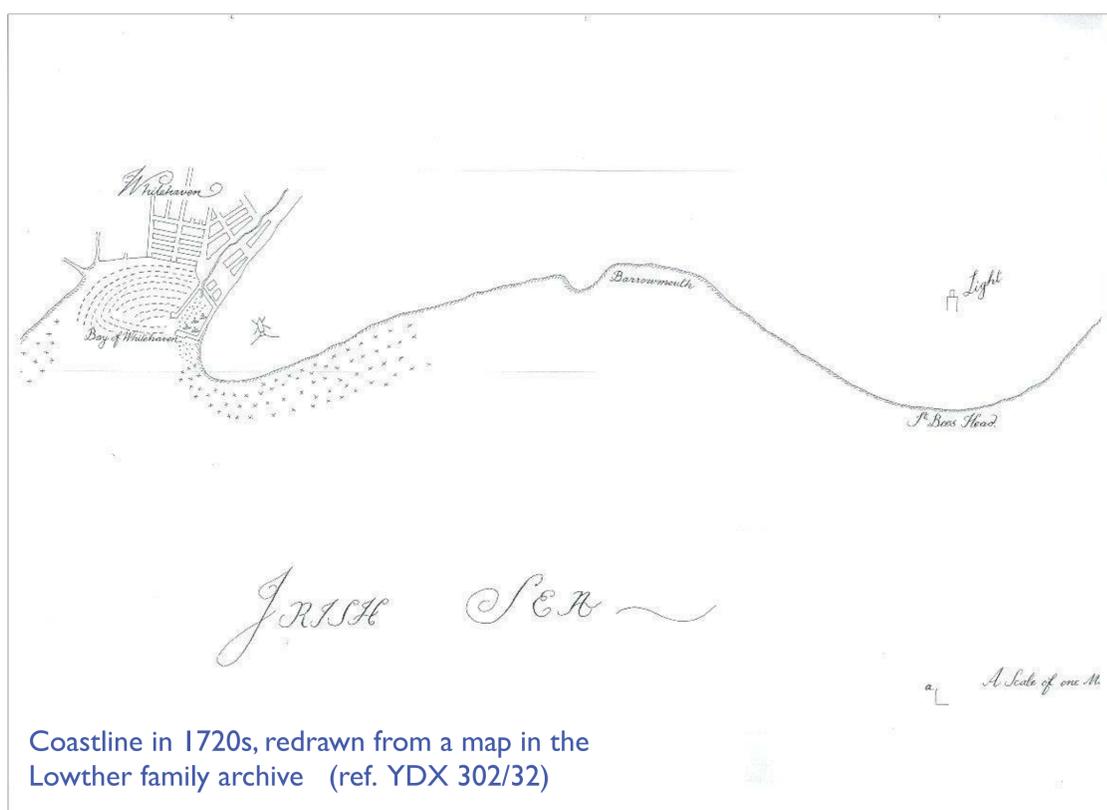


# Maritime Lights

Lighthouses have been a constant guide and a warning of danger to seafarers, in all weathers, over the centuries.

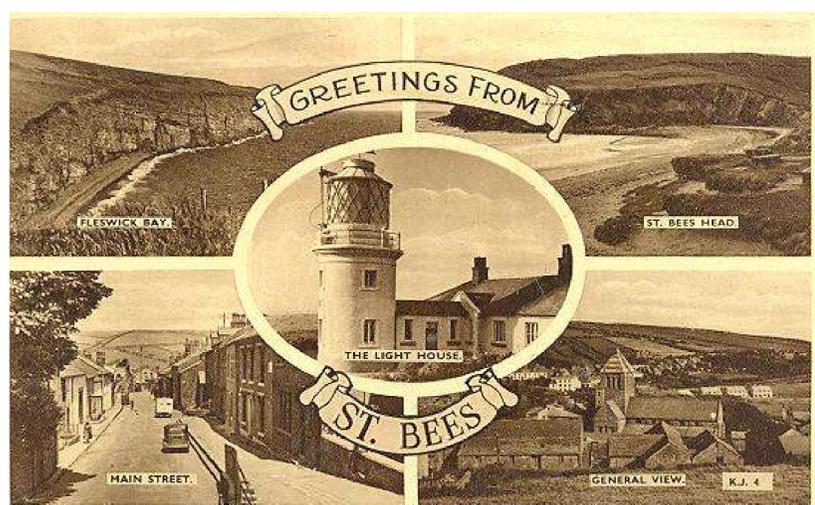
Trinity House is the general lighthouse authority for England, Wales, the Channel Islands and Gibraltar.

It was created on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1514 when Henry VIII granted a royal charter authorising 'our true and faithful subjects, Shipmen and Mariners of this our Realm of England' to establish a guild with general powers to regulate pilotage. In 1566 an Act of Parliament gave Trinity House powers to set up 'so many beacons, marks and signs for the sea... whereby the dangers may be avoided and escaped and the ships the better come unto their ports without peril'.

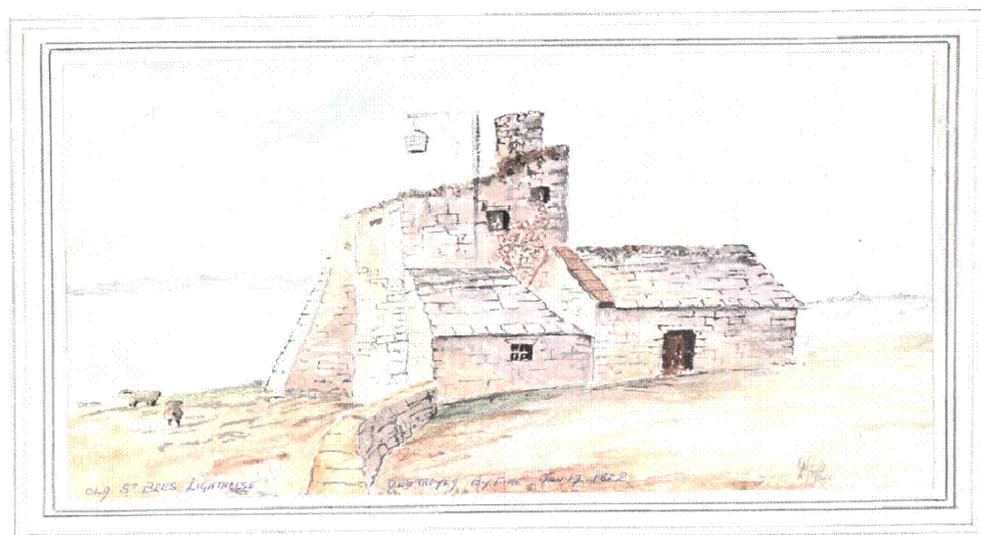


The first lighthouse to be built by Trinity House was Lowestoft in 1609. However there was a lengthy delay before the corporation became responsible for the management of all lighthouses as it was common practice for the crown to issue patents and grants to private individuals. In 1836 Trinity House was given compulsory powers to maintain the lights itself at a cost of £1,200,000.

One of these maintained by Trinity House is St Bees Lighthouse. The cliffs around St Bees Head were a danger to the coastal vessels trading between the ports of Wales and the Solway Firth, with the busy ports of Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport.



View of St Bees lighthouse in the past (refs. PH)



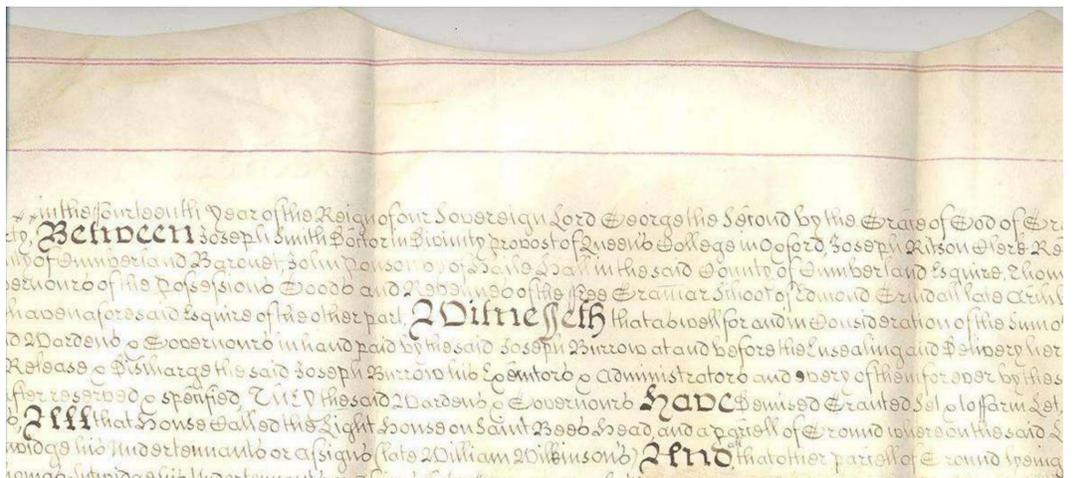
# Maritime Lights

## St Bees Lighthouse

A patent was obtained for the building of a lighthouse on St Bees Head in 1718 by Trinity House.

This was leased to Thomas Lutwidge for 99 years at £20 per year. He undertook to build the tower and maintain the light at his own expense. Dues were levied at the neighbouring ports of Whitehaven, Maryport and Workington to provide him with an income.

He built a strong round tower of 9 metres high and 5 metres in diameter of local sandstone. On top of this was a large metal grate into which the keepers poured coal.



Counterpart of lease dated 10<sup>th</sup> October 1740 from the Governors of St Bees School to Joseph Burrow of Whitehaven of the lighthouse at St Bees Head, with adjoining parcels of land, at 1 shilling annual rent. (ref.YDS 60/74/7)

*Melancholy Event.*—On Saturday last, Inquests were held before PETER HODGSON, Esq. Coroner, at Tarnflat, in Sandwith, on the bodies of Mary Clark and her five children, who were found dead the preceding evening in the Light House, on St. Bees Head, and the Jury returned verdicts—“Died by Suffocation.” It appeared in evidence that the bed and bed-cloths in which the mother and four of the children were lying were on fire, and the smoke arising from the fire filling that apartment, and ascending to the room above it, where another child was sleeping, had occasioned the death of these unfortunate individuals. The father of the family was found lying upon the floor, alive, but in so precarious a state that his life is despaired of. It is conjectured, that owing to the current of air under the door circulating more freely where he was found, than where his unfortunate family slept, he was preserved from sharing their immediate fate.—It did not appear in what manner the bed and bed-cloths had caught fire, nor is it ascertained at what hour the fatality took place. The cause of this disastrous catastrophe seems to be inadequate to its effect—the flame had not burst forth, the curtains surrounding the bed were not burnt, and only one of the children had any marks of fire upon its body!—The father remains insensible, consequently can give no information how this awful occurrence which has deprived his wife and all his children of their lives originated, but it appears that all the family must have been asleep, or one member of it would have aroused and saved the whole.—St. Bees Light House is situate on one of the boldest and loftiest eminences bordering this channel, and its inhabitants in their domicile are separated from almost all intercourse with man; the only visible neighbour from it is the newly erected farm building at Tarnflat. The tenant of this estate and his servants observing on Friday night that the light was not apparent as usual, went to the Light House, and the accident was thus discovered.

William Clark, the only survivor of the family who suffered at the St. Bees light house, is, contrary to expectation, recovering. He recollects some of the children being sick, probably occasioned by the smoke, but can give no account how the bed and bed clothes caught fire.

However there were often complaints from ship-owners because the light was variable in intensity and often produced a thick smoke depending on wind conditions.

These working conditions came with their dangers, not just to seamen, and in 1822 the tower, which was the last coal burning lighthouse in Britain, was destroyed by fire killing a family of 6.

Cumberland Pacquet  
28<sup>th</sup> January 1822

Many lighthouses keepers and their families made St Bees their home across the centuries, as detailed in the census.

Township of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Hamlet or Tything, &c., of	Electoral District of
St. Bees						

Here we meet the residents in 1861 and 1911: above was George Gould, the 47 year old lighthouse keeper from the Isle of Wight, with his wife Mary from Wales, and children George Ray and Sarah, both born in St Bees. By 1911, Alfred Grigg was keeper, living with his wife and nephew.

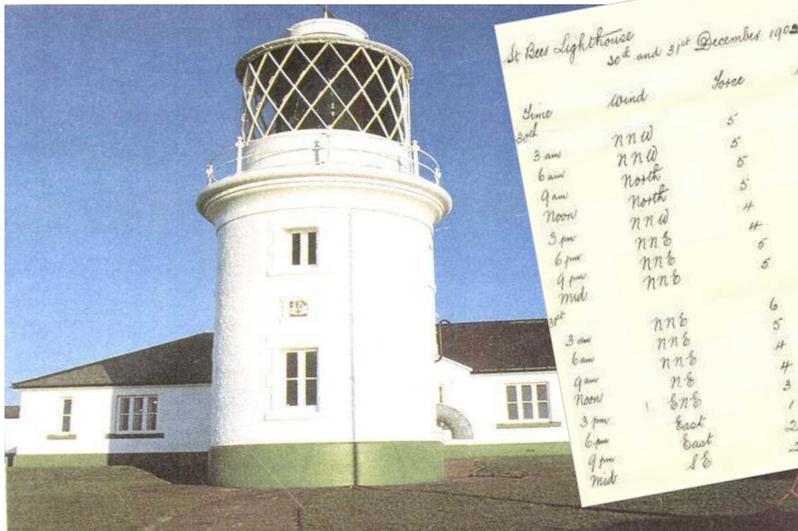
CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1861										
Household No.	Name	Age	Sex	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Married	Single	Widow	Orphan	Other
1	George Gould	47	M	Lighthouse Keeper	Isle of Wight					
1	Mary Gould	45	F	Wife of George Gould	Wales					
1	George Ray	12	M	Son of George Gould	St Bees					
1	Sarah Gould	10	F	Daughter of George Gould	St Bees					

Cumberland Pacquet 21<sup>st</sup> January 1822

# Maritime Lights

## St Bees Lighthouse

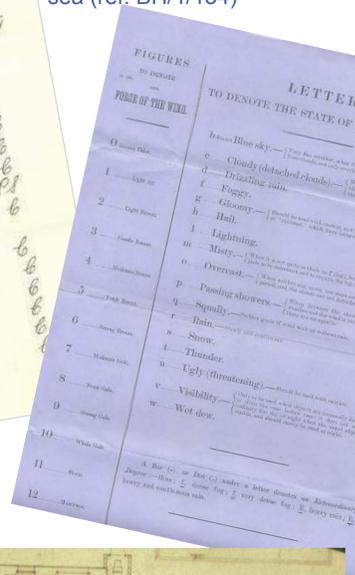
A pair of parabola reflectors powered by oil on a 27ft high building replaced the original lighthouse. This in turn was replaced by a higher round tower in 1865 with two new dwelling houses for the keepers. In recent times, like many others, St Bees lighthouse became automated with the last keeper leaving in 1986.



St Bees Lighthouse  
24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December 1902

Time	Wind	Force	Weather
24 <sup>th</sup> 3 am	NNW	5	b
6 am	NNW	5	b
9 am	North	5	b
Noon	NNW	4	b
3 pm	NNW	5	b
6 pm	NNW	5	b
9 pm	NNW	5	b
Midnight	NNW	5	b
25 <sup>th</sup> 3 am	NNW	6	b
6 am	NNW	5	b
9 am	NNW	4	b
Noon	NNW	3	b
3 pm	East	2	b
6 pm	East	2	b
9 pm	East	2	b
Midnight	SE	2	b

Weather readings from the lighthouse, used as evidence in a court case about a salvage at sea (ref. BH/1/134)

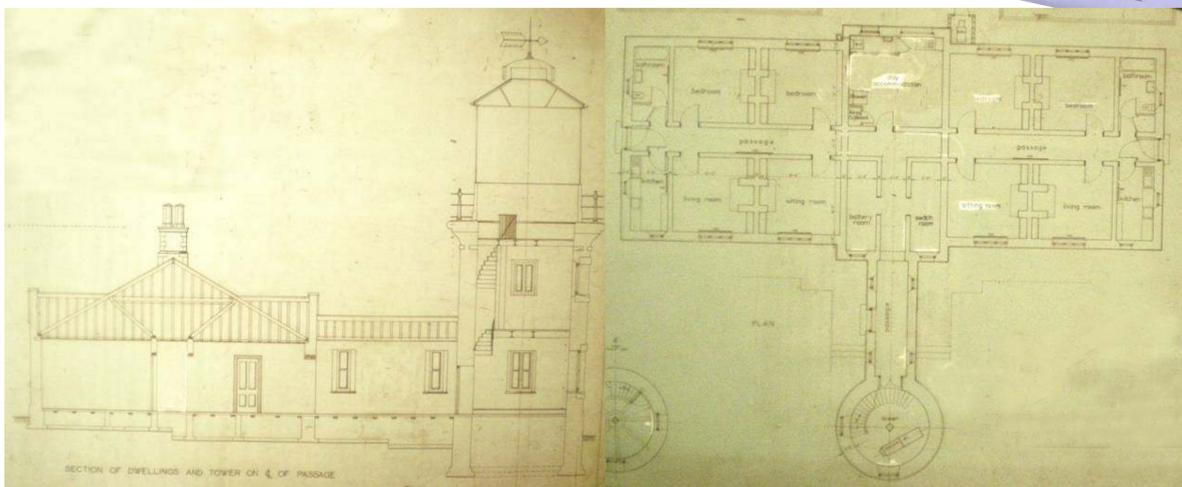


**ST. BEES NEW LIGHTHOUSE.**

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new light-house at St. Bees Head was performed on Wednesday last. The old apparatus, which consisted of a pair of parabola reflectors, was considered by the Hon. Board of Trinity House insufficient to supply an adequate light, and it was determined to substitute for it a catadioptric light of the first order. To do so it was found necessary to build a new circular tower of a greater height than the old structure. The first Pharos at St. Bees' Heads was erected in 1718, and was lighted with coals up till within the remembrance of some of the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The coals were carted to the place during the summer months; and the fire was attended by a man appointed for the purpose, whose principal duty was to stir it up with a long poker. Some 50 years ago the original edifice was burned to the ground, the keeper's wife and family falling victims to the flames, and the keeper himself barely escaping with his life. After that the present lighthouse was built. The building itself is about 27 feet high, and the new lighthouse will be some 10 feet higher. The present light is capable of being seen some 30 miles off; and although the new light will not be distinguishable at any greater distance, yet the illuminating power will be much more intense and effective. The new lantern was originally intended for Gibraltar, and Mr. Norris, the resident engineer, who has the superintendence of the work for Trinity House, says that it is one of the clearest and most perfect pieces of mechanism he ever saw in his life. It will be lighted by one lamp, instead of fifteen, as the present one is. The lamp will be supplied by Messrs. W. Wilkins and Co., of Longacre. The new tower will be built of the red sandstone of the neighbourhood, and surmounted by a lantern upon a new and improved principle, twice the height of the present one. Mr. John Glaister, of Whitehaven, is the builder, and there is no doubt the work will be turned out to the satisfaction of the engineer. Besides the new tower, two new and very substantial dwelling houses are being erected for the keepers.

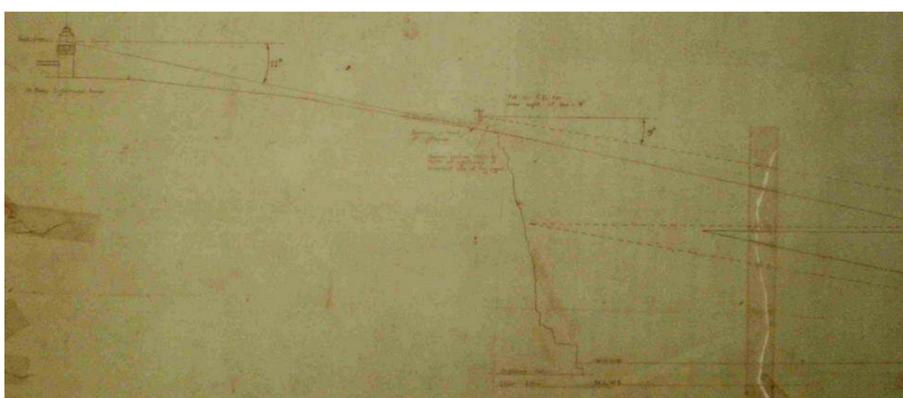
The laying of the foundation stone was fixed for four o'clock; and about that time a select company of gentlemen having arrived, the ceremony was commenced by the workmen placing the foundation stone, or rather the key-stone, in its position. The Rev. Joshua Tyson, curate, Distington, then offered up the following prayer:

"We humbly acknowledge, most gracious Lord, that the works and intents of men are vain and fruitless, unless they be sustained and hallowed by Thine aid and benediction. Grant that this work which is now begun may be continued and ended in Thy name. May the light which shall henceforth guide the benighted mariners to the haven where they would be, hailed by thousands and tens of thousands of all people, nations and languages, as the emblem—feeble



St Bees lighthouse in more modern times, on plans dating from 1989 (above) and cross section of cliff showing proposed site of fog signal in 1960s (ref. YGLA/1/1)

Cumberland Packet 16<sup>th</sup> May 1865

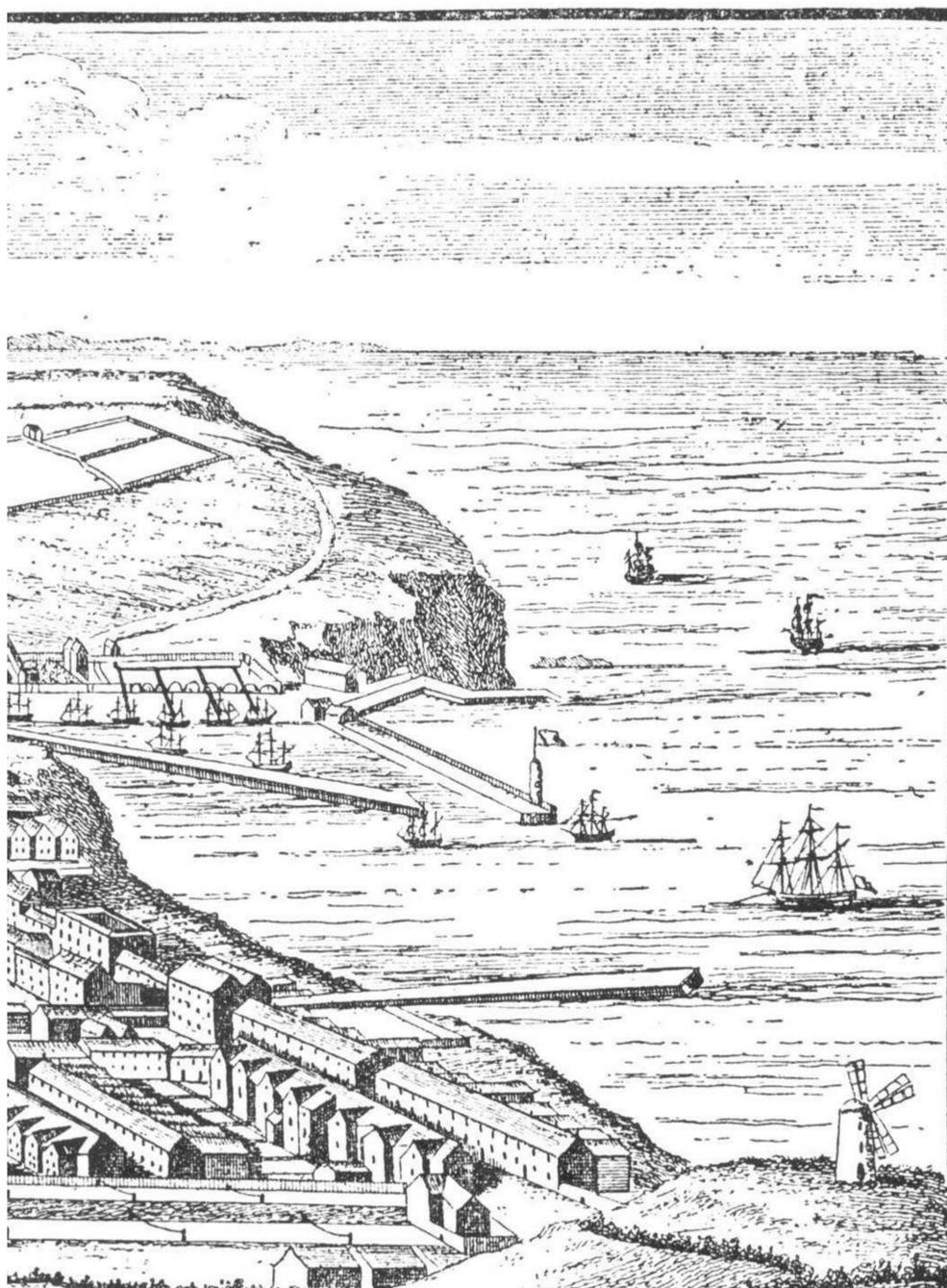


Rev Joshua Tyson of Distington offered the following prayer as the key-stone to the new lighthouse was laid:

May the light which shall henceforth guide the benighted mariners to the haven where they would be, hailed by thousands and tens of thousands of all people, nations and languages, as the emblem - feeble and faint indeed, but still the emblem of that glorious light, which yet shineth in darkness to direct the steps of those who wander on in heedless or hopeless course, towards Thee, the only source of spiritual light and safety. Amen

# Maritime Lights

## Whitehaven Harbour



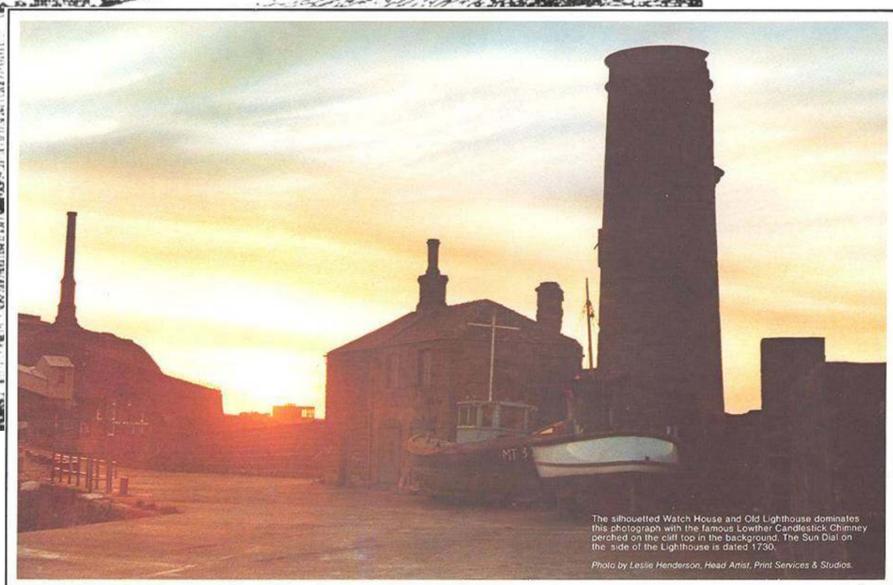
The lighthouse on the old quay was probably built as a tidal light sometime between 1710 and 1727. The sundial on the side dates from 1730.

By 1785 an oil burning reflector had been fitted to the lighthouse, which was upgraded to gas by 1864. Later in 1903 a window was cut out 7 feet below the light so that a red light could be shown when it was necessary to block entrance during the night. During the day red flags were flown from the flagstaff above the lighthouse to prohibit entrance by day.

A light was established on a mast at the end of the old quay in 1902 and the light from the old lighthouse was later discontinued.

Views of Whitehaven

(refs. DH 359/37 (left),  
*Lighthouses* by Hague  
and Christie (1975)  
(right) and  
PH/1579/6 (below)



The silhouetted Watch House and Old Lighthouse dominates this photograph with the famous Lowther Candlestick Chimney perched on the cliff top in the background. The Sun Dial on the side of the Lighthouse is dated 1730.  
Photo by Leslie Henderson, Head Artist, Print Services & Studios.

