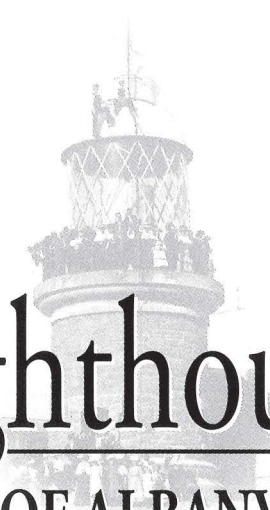


Lighthouses

OF ALBANY

STAN AUSTIN

LIGHTHOUSES OF ALBANY



Lighthouses

OF ALBANY

STAN AUSTIN

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
muSeum
ALBANY

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TRIBUTE

Dedicated to the masters and seamen of the vessels who landed the gear and materials, in adverse conditions, to build the lighthouses and accommodation, as well as to the riggers and construction teams who assisted them. Dedicated also to the keepers and their families who braved the rough trips by small boats to lead the isolated island life.

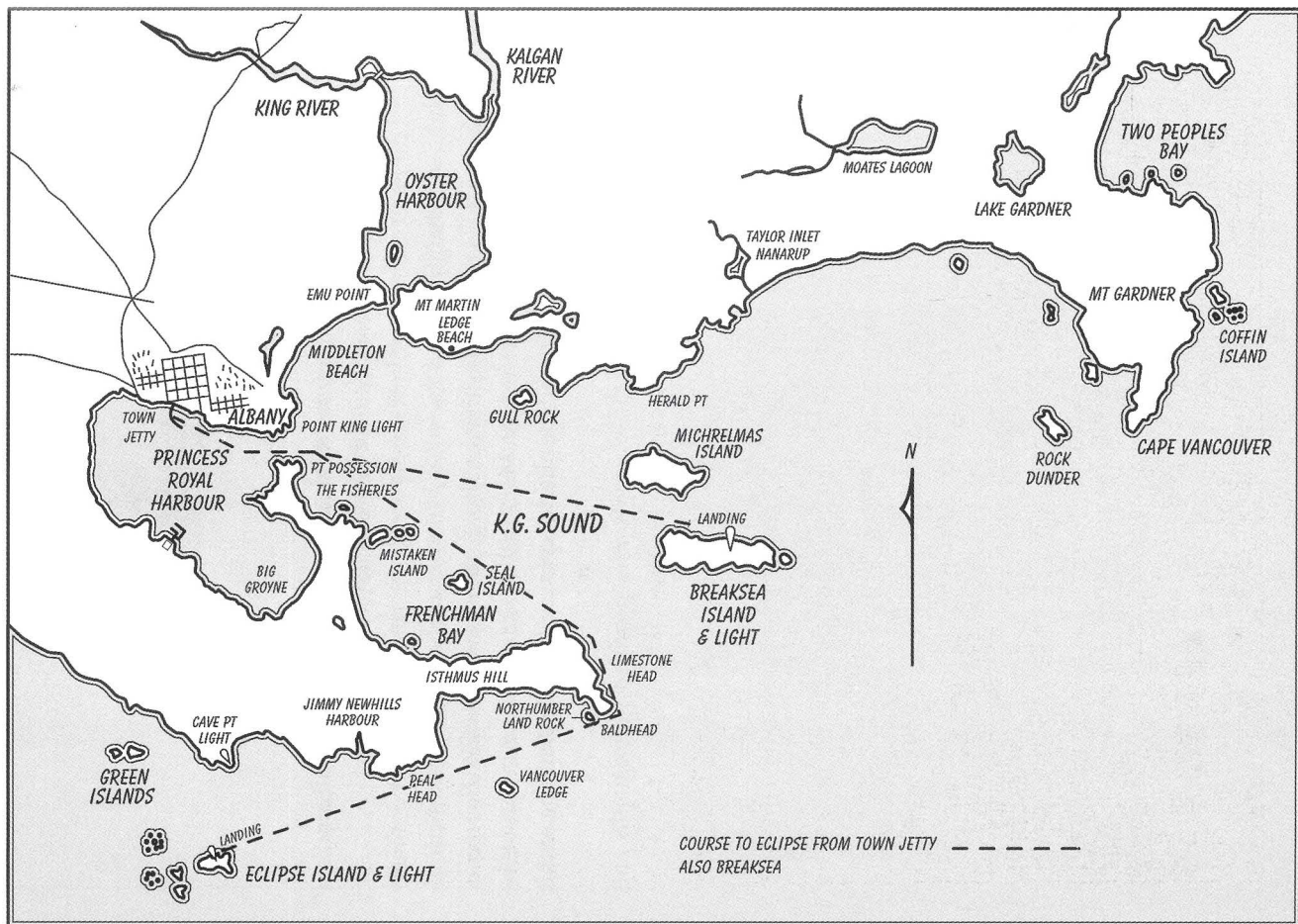


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Valerie Milne, curator of the Western Australian Museum – Albany, and staff for their great encouragement and assistance.

I cannot speak too highly of Amelia Moir, who before her sad and untimely death, so willingly assisted my wife, Marie, in converting my handwritten work onto the computer. My thanks, also, go to my son-in-law, Ian Spurgeon, for his invaluable assistance to both Marie and myself with the many problems arising from the computer and the photographs used in the compiling of this work.

A special thanks to all those people who provided photographs and information on the lighthouses and the keepers.



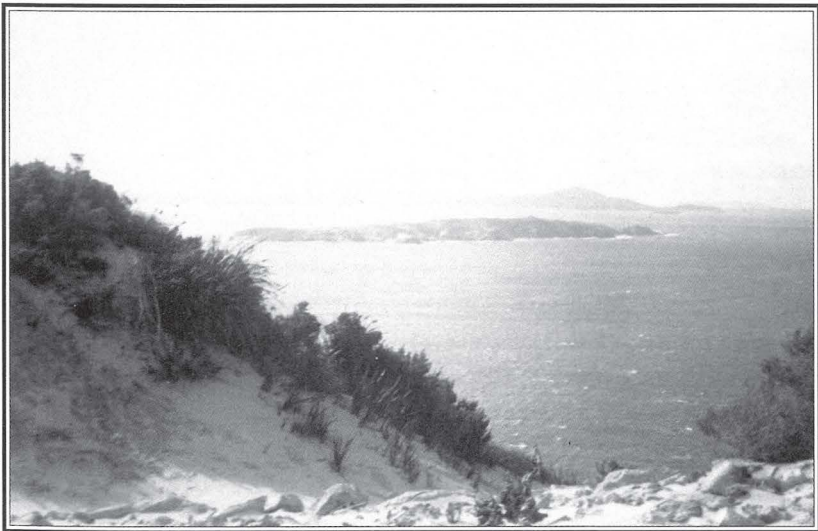
Map showing course to Eclipse and Breaksea Lighthouses from the Albany Town Jetty.



BREAKSEA ISLAND

Until 1926, the only lights to guide shipping into King George Sound and Princess Royal Harbour, Albany, were those situated on Breaksea Island and Point King, with some channel lights on small beacons. These lights had been established in 1858, with two keepers and their families, on Breaksea and one keeper on Point King. A cable, from Breaksea to Herald Bay then Albany, via Emu Point, to the mainland, was of great value. However this cable later collapsed, leaving semaphore and morse code, plus a collection of balls on a timber frame, as the only communication to the shore for many years, until the introduction of radio.

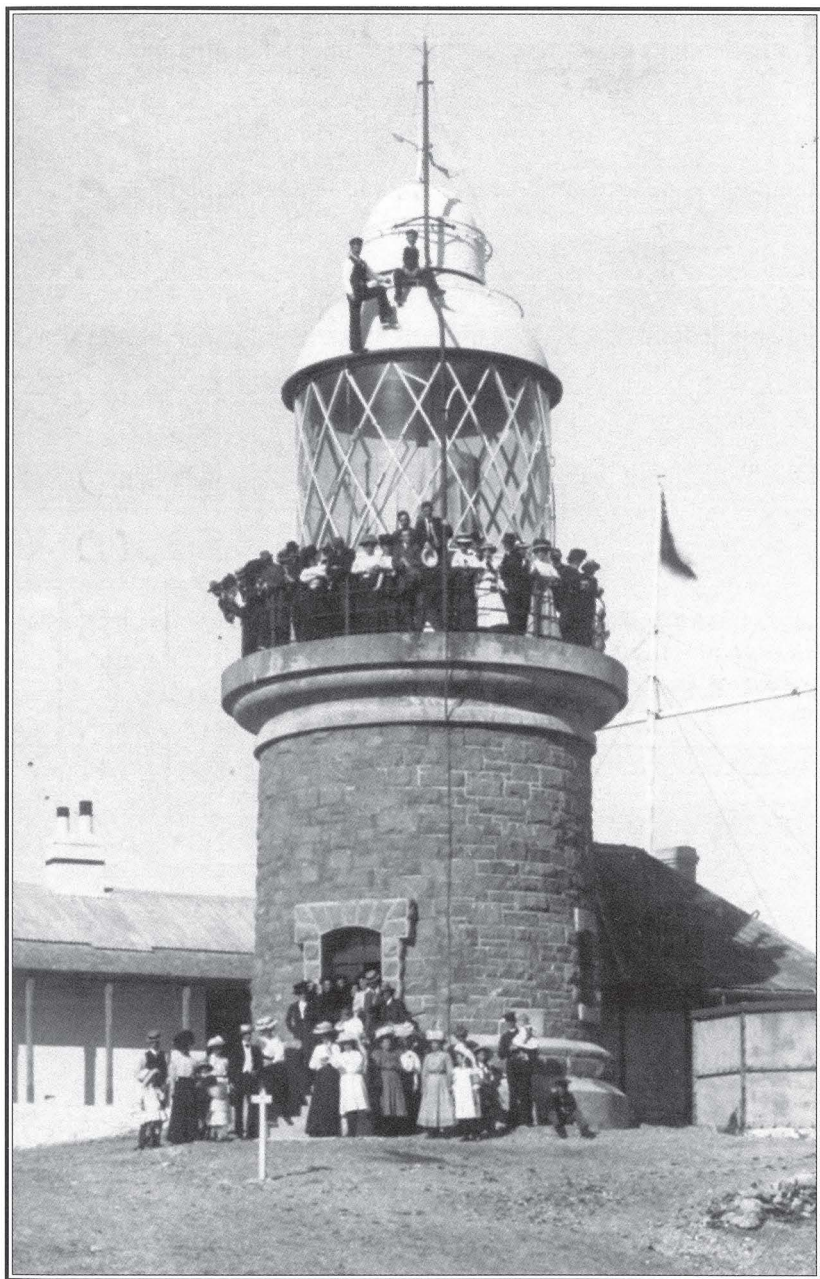
Semaphore Point, at the Pilot Station, was the receival point for the signals. From 1898, a flag was hoisted at the Court House, when semaphore signals



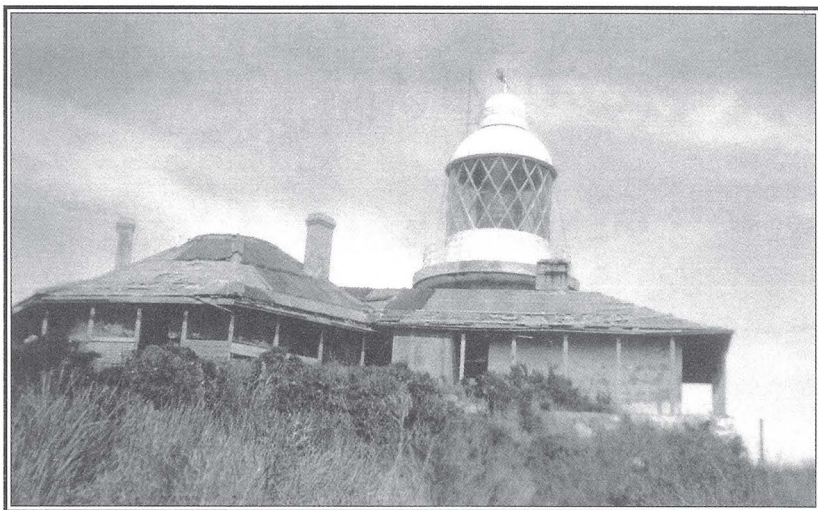
Breaksea Island.



Princess Royal Harbour, Albany.

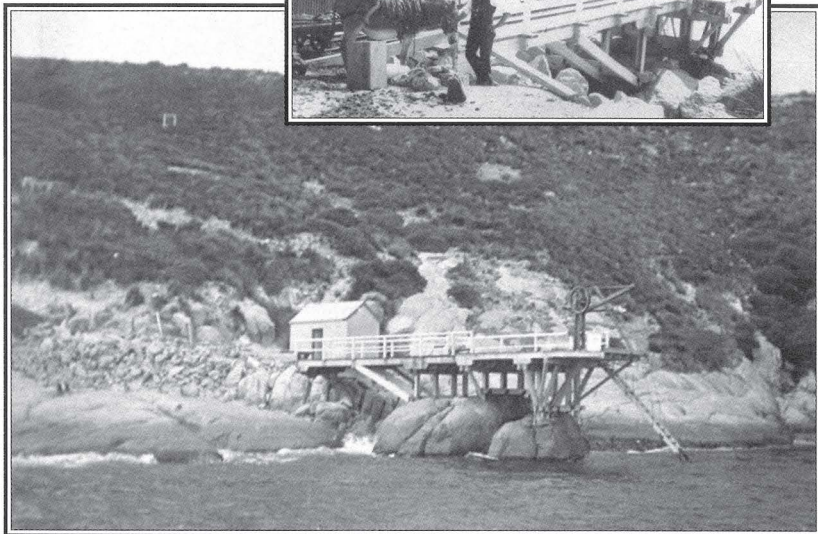


Breaksea Lighthouse and keepers quarters.



Original lighthouse surrounded by dwelling on Breaksea.

Breaksea landing with its suspended jetty. The donkey was used to carry supplies to the lighthouse keeper and family.



Breaksea landing showing the ladder to be used to get onto the jetty.



Donkeys which were used to carry supplies, Breaksea Island. (Photograph courtesy Don Phillips)

from Breaksea Island indicated the approach of a vessel. The coal hulk, *Larkins*, also acted as a relay signal station.

In 1858 the first light on Breaksea was built by Royal Engineer, Captain R.E. Wray, at a cost of 637 pounds 15 shillings and 6 pence. Building materials were transported by the schooner *Prince of Wales* and workmen included twelve convicts and two overseers, with Sergeant Joe Nelson, in charge. The light was surrounded by a timber structure to house the keepers and their families. A suspended jetty was built out from a small cove on the north-western end of the island, which was used in conjunction with hanging ladders, plus a winch, for lifting stores and gear from the supply boat. These supplies were transported to the lighthouse by donkeys, up a zigzag track. The last of these donkeys were probably transported in 1920 and 1921 to Breaksea Island; After that time servicing of the island was by a small boat.

The little cove was open to winds and seas from any northerly points of the compass but fortunately the holding ground for an anchor was very good, being firm sand. The early lighthouse keepers were James Hannay, N. Gamble, W.H. Hill and J.E. Miller; and they were paid six-eight pounds a year. The

regular provedore in the early days was Alex Moir. The light was fuelled by colza oil and kerosene when the keepers inhabited the island.

The following notice to mariners was issued on the 24 February 1858:

"A lighthouse has been erected on Breaksea Island with the light exhibited from sunset to sunrise - A good catadioptric of second order 2000 C.P. - fixed white and 383 feet above sea level- visible in clear weather at approx. 27 miles from an elevation of 12 feet above the water." The octagonal iron tower was 43 feet high (nearly 14 metres).

Like many of the small islands, fresh water was a problem and the only supply was collected in rainwater tanks from the roofs of the buildings and the salt spray from the south side of the island was a nuisance. As time went by improvements were made with cottages built of stone and galvanized iron roofing in conjunction with wooden shingles, built to the east of the early housing.

Supplementary food was often obtained from rabbits, which were plentiful on the island, having been introduced by sealers or whalers and also the natural mutton birds living in burrows, the latter often not as popular as the flesh was considered too greasy. There was also plentiful fish. This extra food source complemented the usual stores provided. A source of interest to the keepers and their families was the varied bird life on the island that included the Fairy Penguins, which would shelter under rock crevices and nest in burrows around Albany.

In 1868 Breaksea had some unexpected visitors. The *Northumberland*, a coal carrying ship from Newcastle, U.K., was sinking south west of Bald Head. The crew took to the small boats and rowed to Breaksea. The Harbour Master at Albany, Captain G.T. Butcher, arranged to have the crew picked up and brought into port.

It is said that the *Northumberland* sailed between a rock, later named "Northumberland Rock" after the ship and Bald Head, unattended, through the very narrow passage, approximately 150 yards (137 metres). This has been disputed and the theory is that she scraped her port side against the rock, then rounded Bald Head and sank on a line between Breaksea and Cape Vancouver.

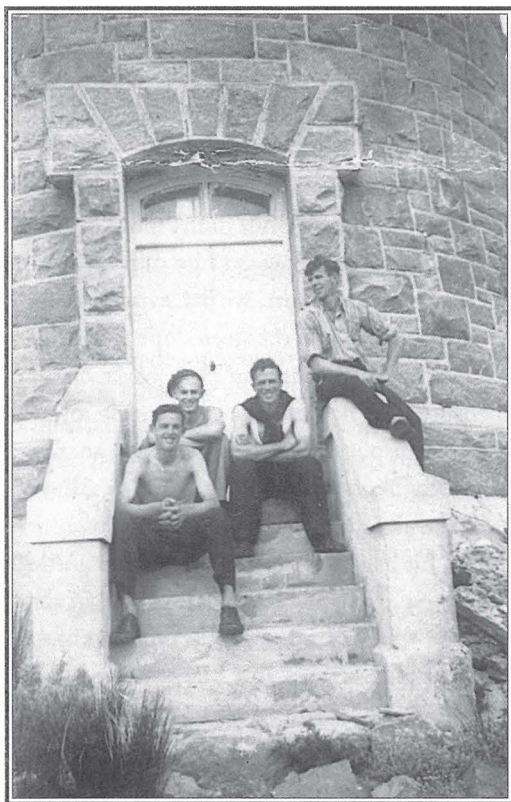
In 1901 a contractor, Mr Harrison, built a more substantial lighthouse of stone, for £2,700. The tower was the same height as the original one with the

stone being quarried on the island, under the supervision of monumental stonemason, Jack Hartman, of Albany, after the contractor encountered some difficulty.

In 1926 a new lighthouse was constructed on Eclipse Island and the Keepers were transferred from Breaksea to the newly installed Eclipse light. The light on Breaksea was converted so it operated automatically, using acetylene gas. The acetylene bottles were attached to the new automatic lamp that was tuned to operate in the hours of darkness or on very dull days. Initially the gas was dragged up on a cart, from the landing to the summit, by seamen from the tenders, *Kyogle*, *Cape Otway* and *Cape Don*; later a jeep was used to carry out this heavy work. In 1942, on the entry of Japan into World War II, we received orders from the Department of the Navy for local electrical contractor, Keith Collins, to extinguish the light at Breaksea Island. At two o'clock in the

*Maintenance day on
Breaksea, 1946.*

*Left to right: Kevin
McGuckin, Bill Groves,
Stan Austin and George
Brown, sitting on the steps
of the lighthouse.*



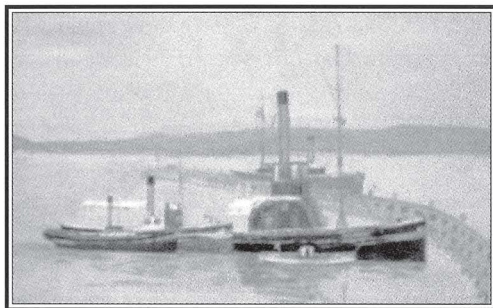
morning my father and I set off with Keith to the Island. The landing was very dark but the seas were smooth. It took twenty five minutes to reach the light which was doused by simply turning off the acetylene bottles.

My father, Lionel Rosser Austin, 1888-1968, was born in Bunbury. He worked for a short time with his father in Adelaide until the family shifted to Albany. He worked at blacksmithing, coach building, fishing, mill machining, motor mechanic, boat and house building, and shipping interests with launches and I became a partner in his business. He was also an area skipper in the local waters, in charge of the Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve (Naval Auxiliary Patrol) during World War II. I skippered *Kestrel*, which was one of the naval patrol boats. This led us to taking on the contract to supply stores to Eclipse Island and service Breaksea Island Lighthouse from 1939 to 1952.

In 1939 we gained a contract from the Department of Lighthouses and Navigation, Fremantle, to land a mechanic, quarterly, to check the light and clean the lenses.

The first trip occurred on an extremely rough day. It was impossible to land the mechanic, Mr Johnson, at the usual cove so we steered the launch further to the east below the lighthouse and anchored. We then rowed Mr Johnson in the dinghy to a rock that remained dry in between waves. He stepped onto the dry rock but didn't move quickly enough. In a few seconds an incoming wave had covered him and his bag of tools to the waistline in water. He was a good sport, with a sense of humour and took it all in good fun. We then climbed up the steep slope to the lighthouse, where a temporary cap was placed on the tubular glass cover of the light to cut out daylight, which ensured the flashes were correct. My job was to clean the lenses.

We also transported another mechanic, an older man named Harry Wiess. Harry usually alighted from the Perth to Albany train that arrived in the morning and then he would go straight down the Town Jetty and into our boat. From his bag of tools would emerge a bottle described as the only 'cure for sea sickness'. I was about to advise him that alcohol would only exacerbate the problem - when I discovered the contents of the bottle was Worcestershire Sauce. A couple of swigs and Harry retired to the cabin bunk to gain an hour's sleep after the thirteen hours of rocking on the Albany Express. I don't think Harry was capable of giving in to the motion of the sea but the thought was in his mind. Both mechanics became good friends, as did another good



*Armstrong and Waters fleet
used for transporting stores,
The Bruce with launch
Dorothy (painted by Stan
Austin).*

man, Mr Douglas, Head Engineer for the Navigation and Lighthouse, who was always sympathetic to any requests for improvements to the service.

One of the light keepers, Henry K. Toll, had a dispute with Alex Armstrong, the owner of the supply vessel *Loch Lomond* and the following letters written in all seriousness, make an amusing story.

Breaksea Island Lighthouse
Nov. 15th 1886
From Henry K. Toll
Lightkeeper
Breaksea.

To Mr Alex Armstrong, owner of steam launch "Loch Lomond".

It has come to my knowledge that a theft was committed on the night 2nd Sept. by one of the lighter crew, of some sugar sent over and landed from the steam launch. In the hurry it was left in the shed at the landing place and was in a paper parcel which was noticed by my assistant George Powney the next morning to have been opened and some taken away or in other words stolen. The above occurred before I told Alex he might take some flour or potatoes out of the shed but I would let him have the tea and sugar he wanted from the house.

I do not know whether Alex and the others became "accessory" to the act by using the same knowing it to have been stolen that I leave for you to enquire about and to request you will send me the result of your enquiries. I am informed that Doggett and John Keays know all about it and I am prepared to prove all that I have stated-

HENRY K. TOLL

Beaksea Island Light House *
Nov. 15th 1886.

"Memo"

From Henry K. Toll Lt. Keeper

To Mr Alex Armstrong owner launch "Loch Lomond"

Your son "Alec", who is in charge of your little steamer somewhat startled me by presenting me on the 11th inst. with the enclosed bill for six pounds ten shillings. You certainly must have misunderstood the transaction or I am sure you would never have sent such an unjust demand. To avoid unpleasantness I will narrate the facts of the case which are as follows.

Your son Alec in charge of said steam launch towing a lighter of firewood with three other men arrived at Breaksea landing place at 10-30 am on the 2nd inst. and being anxious to get my letters to my wife and family sent by the bush postman leaving that forenoon I solicited Alec to turn round with launch and take them to Albany saying if he got there by noon it would do. At first he made little demur whilst urging him but I recollect amongst other things he said. "It had nothing to do with Mr Butcher" and mentioned about expense of coals whereof I offered to pay and the sum of 10/- was agreed to and at the same time I offered to assist with myself and assistant to unload the lighter

I then walked up to the lighthouse for the purpose of telephoning to Post Office that my letters were en route leaving my assistant G. Powney to get lighter in, then all went to dinner. After dinner self & G. Powney went to jetty and commenced to unload and after 3 hours absence the steam launch returned, we then all hands turned to with a will discharging until 4pm when I left to see about "lighting up" telling Alec I would do this duty myself and leave my ass't there with him to assist the required till the crew knocked off for tea. George Powney came to L'house for his tea and on returning found the lighter had hauled off it having come on to blow and it blew a gale all night.

The next day the remainder was landed by boat my ass't George Poowney being there to assist.

Your son Alec came up to the L'house in the afternoon and whilst at tea I got up saying "I would never pay him the 10/-" but said "I had only 9/- change" at which Alec replied "Oh never mind Mr Toll, I won't charge you anything if Mr Butcher pays me for a Return Trip"

Both George Powney and my daughter with myself are prepared to swear to this if necessary You will therefore understand that it was entirely a business transaction and”in the presence of witnesses acknowledged as such.

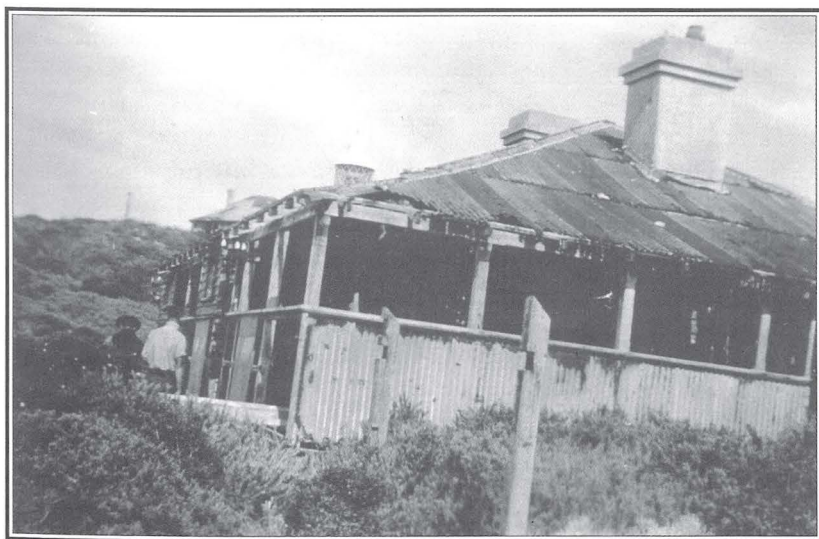
Doubtless you are aware that at present I am only receiving a labourers wage but in order to avoid litigation will give you 20/- instead of 10/- and promise to render assistance in stacking the firewood from off the jetty but this of course without prejudice just to avoid giving you or the government any further trouble or offence in the matter.

Trusting for all concerned that you will concede to this.

YOURS TR.

HENRY K. TOLL¹

In recent years there has been a movement to restore the Breaksea Island buildings and the island has been placed on the heritage list. Some repairs have been done by high school students on one lighthouse keeper's house, stopping a small water tank from leaking and placing a downpipe from the roof to collect rain water. There are no soaks on Breaksea.



Lighthouse keepers dwellings, Breaksea Island, badly in need of repair. (Photograph by J Fugill)



Breaksea Landing 1946. Making the dinghy fast to end of beam to clear rocks.

experiences. All enjoyed themselves thoroughly until it was time to board the boat for home. Conditions had changed for the worst and it was found too risky for the boat to pick them up so they were forced to spend more time on the island than had been anticipated. Dwindling supplies of rations had to be

Fred Bairstow in his 45 foot(13.8 metres) work boat *Avon* landed a party of North Albany High School students with provisions and bedding onto the island by way of a hanging ladder, which is difficult to negotiate. My granddaughter, Leila Spurgeon, was one of the students, so I obtained first hand knowledge of their experiences. Though at first dismayed at their plight, they admitted, after being rescued, that it was all a great experience.

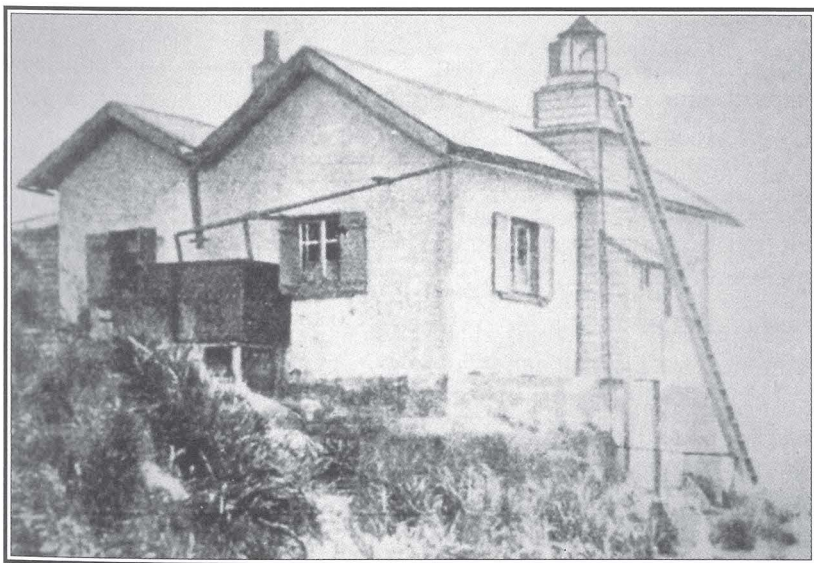


Gravestone in corner of old cemetery, Albany of Grace Mary Hansen and baby, who died during childbirth. Erected by her husband Lighthouse keeper C.J. Hansen in 2002.

POINT KING LIGHTHOUSE

1858

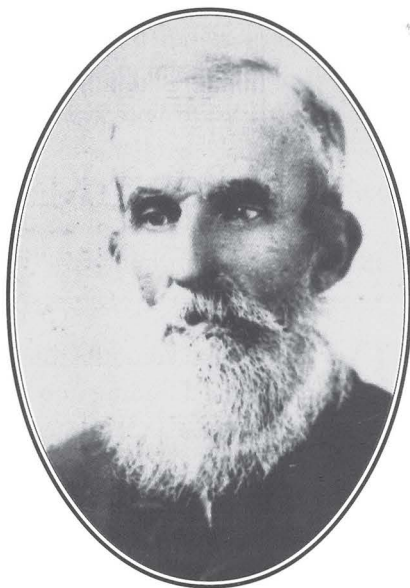
Point King, also known as King Point, lies at the north eastern extremity of the channel leading into Princess Royal Harbour. In 1858 a lighthouse was built close to the water. A cottage, large enough to house a family, partly surrounding the light, was constructed by a local contractor Alex Moir. The initial light keeper was Sergeant Nelson, who lived there till 1867 with his wife and four children. It is said that the second occupant, Samuel Mitchell, gained the position through the influence of Bishop Hale. Mitchell and his wife, Mary Anne, raised a family of eight children almost on the edge of the water without any mishaps by drowning. With no fencing it must have been a constant worry to the parents.



The original lighthouse.



Sergeant Joseph Nelson, first lighthouse keeper, Point King.

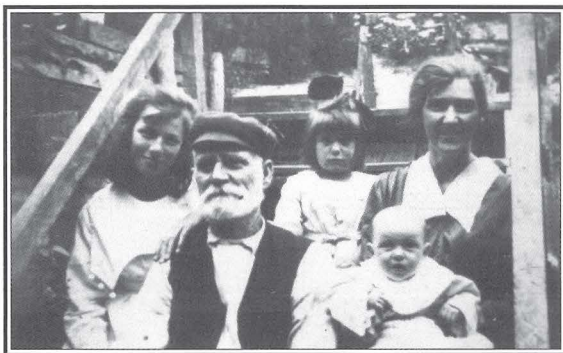


Samuel Mitchell, lighthouse keeper in 1867.

There were no roads to the point and getting the children to school and bringing in provisions on the awkward tracks must have been very hard for the two families. There was a suggestion that boat owner Alex Moir, who supplied stores to Breaksea in the early days, might have been able to land their provisions by sea but this would have been very difficult.

In 1903 John Reddin with his wife and nine children took over the position. One of the children named Frank became a regular member of the Princess Royal Yacht Club and although a generation older we had some good sailing days, racing our boats for many years. After surviving his early years on Point King, Frank was killed by a car on the Albany Port Road in his 70s on his way home from work as a night watchman on a merchant ship in the port.

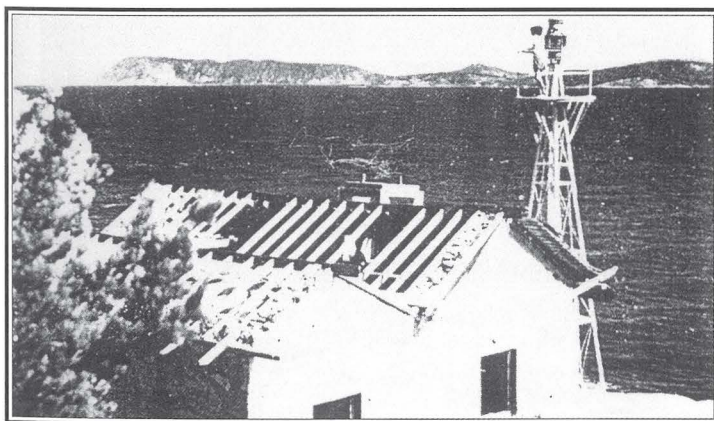
Later the light was built separately from the quarters. At first the separated light was close to the water but later was moved further up the hill to give extra visibility at sea and easier access for maintenance. Later this light was replaced with a modern solar powered structure.



John Reddin with daughter Olive and family.



Partly restored light keepers quarters, 2000. (Photograph Marie Austin)



Light separated from the building.



Present King Point Lighthouse, now solar energy.

ECLIPSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

Eclipse Island was officially recorded by Captain George Vancouver Master of H.M.S. *Discovery* accompanied by naval escort H.M.S. *Chatham*, on a voyage of discovery on 28 December 1791. When he first sighted the island there was an eclipse of the sun, hence the name, Eclipse Island. The Island's latitude, 35degrees 11 south and longitude 117degrees 53 east, lies a little over three miles (4.8km) from the nearest part of the Western Australian coast line at Cave Point. The approximate length of the Island is 1.3 miles (1.48km) and about half a mile (.8km) wide. The height of the original light, 1926 to 1976, was 119 metres above sea level. The distance from the Town Jetty of Albany to the landing at the Island by sea is 19 miles (30 kms).

From 1858 to 1926, Breaksea Island Lighthouse had served shipping approaching from the Eastern States of Australia well. However the light was not visible to ships arriving from Europe or the North when travelling in an easterly direction. There were many small rocks and reefs to negotiate before

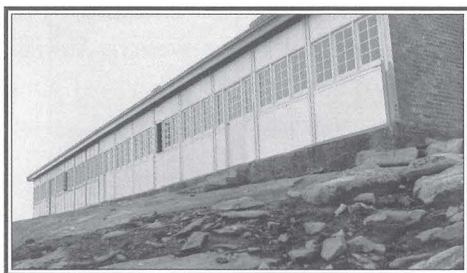


Eclipse Island taken from M.V. Kybra.

rounding Bald Head and entering King George Sound. Included in these were Passage Reef, Maude Reef, Northwest Rock, Stony Island, Vancouver Ledge and Eclipse Island itself.

Apparently Eclipse Island was a hunting ground in the 1800s for Sealers (mostly American). In January 1827 Major Lockyer had occasion to send a boat to the Island, having heard of an Aboriginal woman being kept there in almost slave conditions. A Sealer, Samuel Bailey, was apprehended and dealt with. The woman arrived back in Albany in a pitiful condition with evidence of brutal treatment.

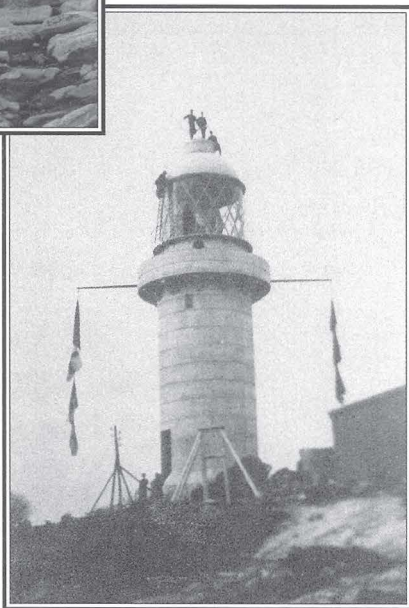
In the early 1900s, thought was given by the Lighthouse and Navigation Department to erecting a light on Eclipse Island, but it was not until 1926 that this actually took place.



Houses on bleak weather side facing south, on Breaksea Island.



*Construction of light tower.
(Photograph courtesy Norm and Lorna Young)*



Completed Eclipse Light. (Photograph courtesy Lorna Young, daughter of Queenie and Bill McColl, keepers, 1926)

Book: Six. FOLIO NOS. 24.

NAME OF SHIP: "GOVERNOR MUSGRAVE". OFFICIAL NO. 131688.

No. & Year of Reg: 5/1916. Previously No. & Year of : at Port:

type: Steam screw Built where: Sydney, N.S.W. Year: 1874

Built By: MORTS DOCK, Sydney NSW.

No. Dks: two; Masts: two; Rigged: Fore & Aft, Stern: Build: outside & plate

Head: straight, Hull: Iron, Bulkheads: three.

Measurements: 130.0' x 21.0' x 13.8'

Tonnages:- 266.08 ton, 140.71 ton.

Machinery:- Type 1 compound Surface Condensing, British built, 1881.
 } ENGINE Grey Bros, Port Adelaide, Sth Aust.
 } Builders: Grey Bros, Port Adelaide, Sth Aust.

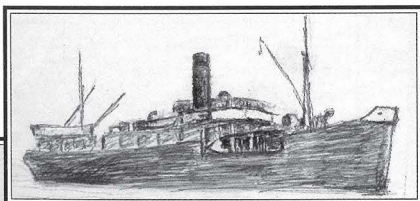
Cylinders 21" x 38" x 24" = 63nhp = 250 Ihp. = 10 Knots.

Boilers: Builder & Year one, Built by Grey Bros. Port Adelaide, Sth Aust.

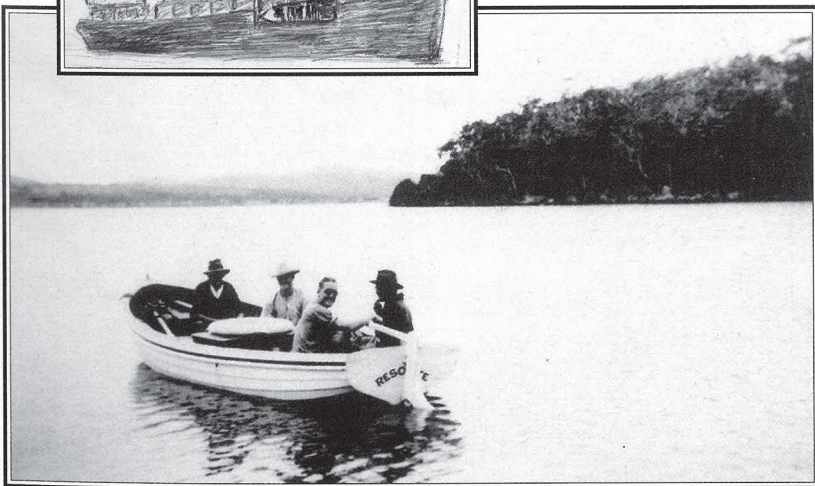
Date 1st Registered:- 28/7/1916. at Port of Fremantle. W.A.

1st Owner(s) Name HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

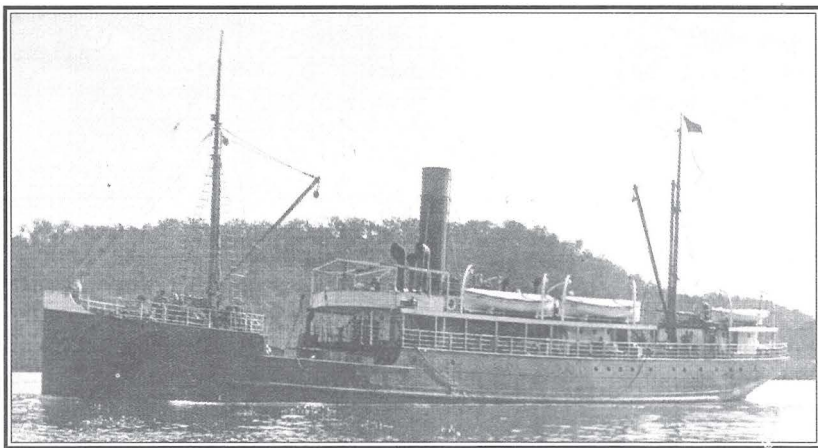
Certificate of Governor Musgrave.



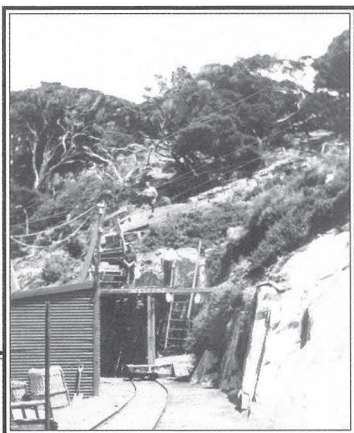
Inset: Drawing of ship Governor Musgrave.



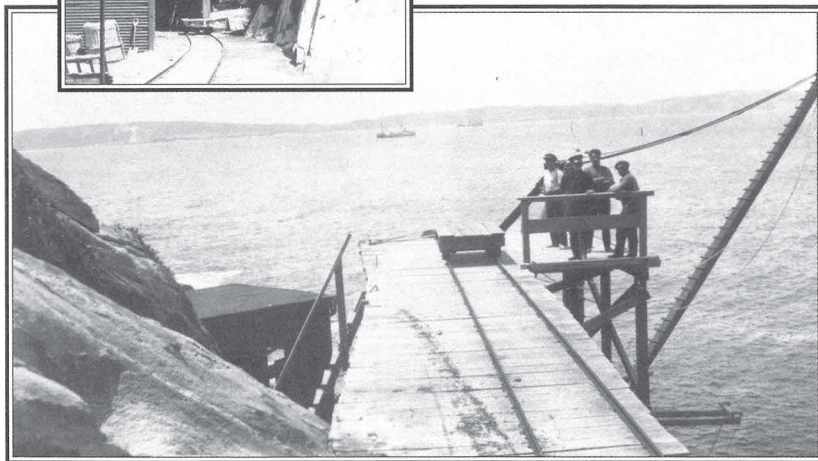
Work launch from S.S. Kyogle bought by Tom Swarbrick and renamed "Resolute". Used for fishing parties. Left: Fred and Tom Swarbrick. (Photograph Harley Swarbrick)



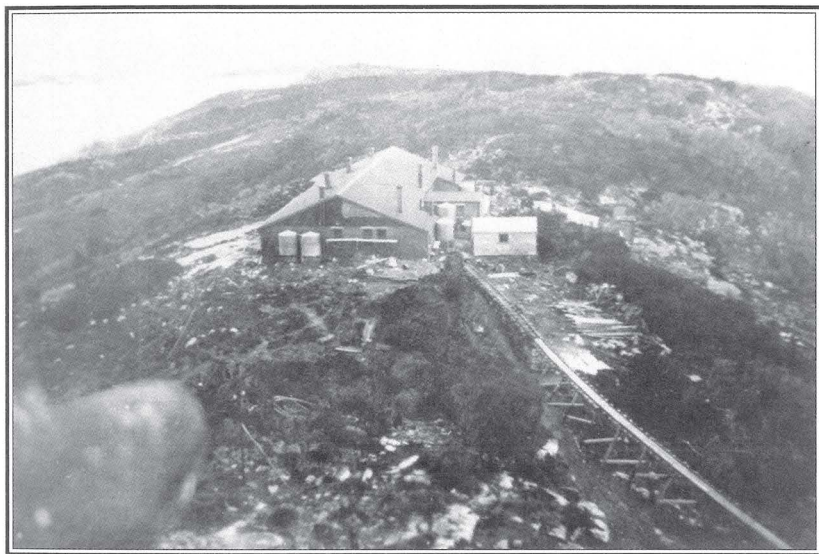
*Ship Kyogle on the Clarence River
near Maclean, circa 1912.
(Photograph courtesy O. Notley)*



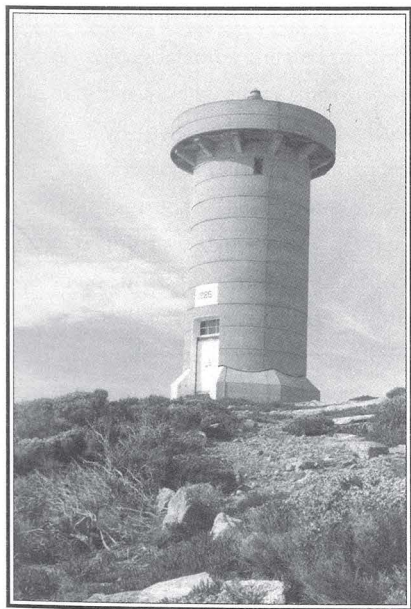
*Eclipse store shed at landing
and rail to derrick and
winch. (Photograph courtesy
H. Malacari)*



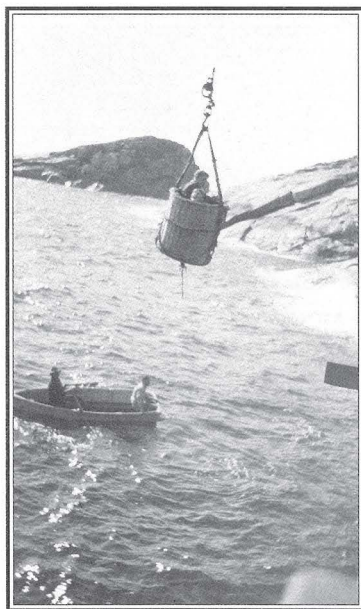
Eclipse landing, with wood derrick and winch house. Kybra in the distance.



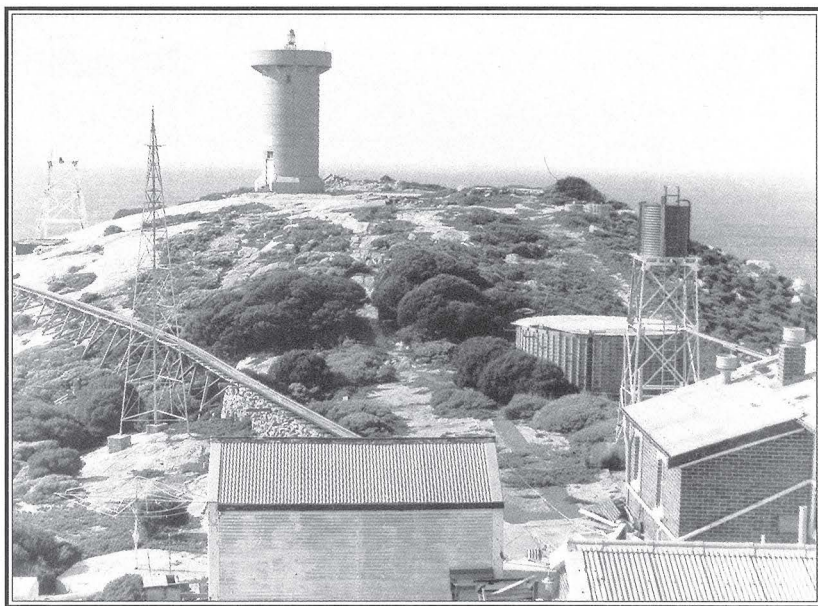
Triplex housing with a Flying fox connecting railway and houses. (Photograph courtesy Lorna Young)



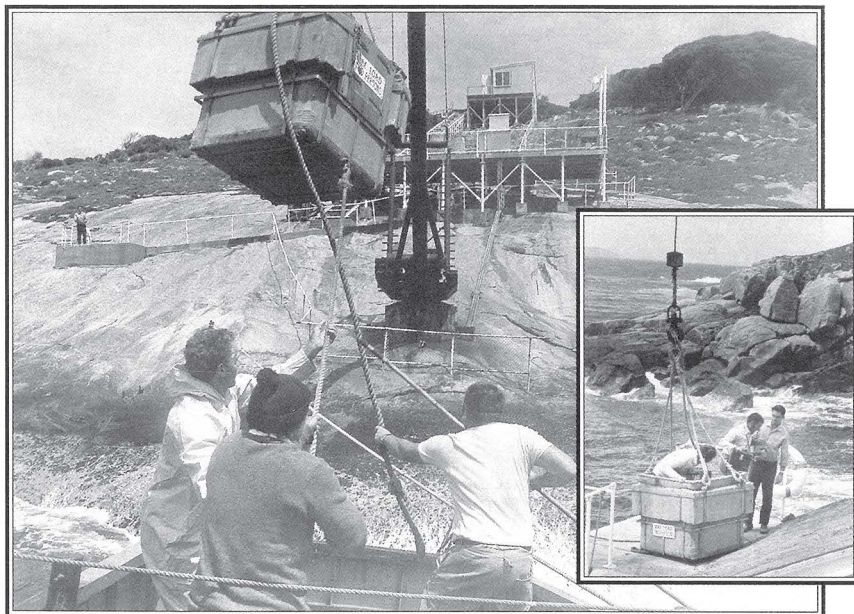
New automatic light, 1976, after the removal of the original light.



The old round basket used to carry passengers to and from the Austin's dinghy.



Eclipse Island lighthouse and supporting buildings.



The difficult task of landing supplies on the island, often in rough conditions.



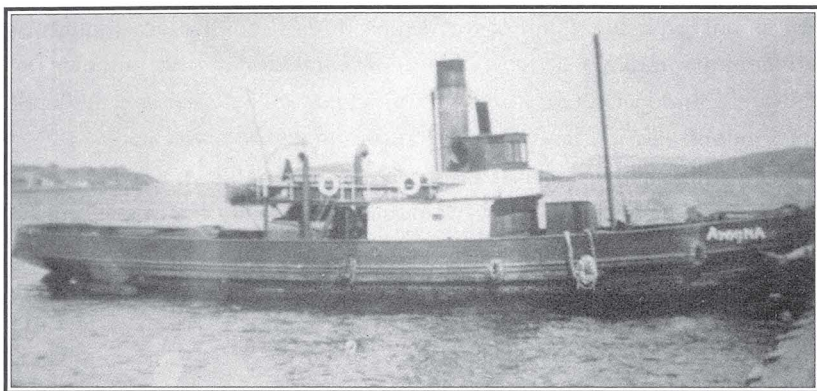
Queenie going ashore in the basket.

Two small steamers, *Governor Musgrave* and *Kyogle*, both government lighthouse vessels, were in charge of the personnel and materials which were to erect the landing, derrick, flying fox and steps. These were also to construct housing for three families plus large water tanks and the lighthouse itself. This was a major project in a difficult situation. Some of the workmen working on the project were Charles Jackman, Norm Young, George Killick, Arthur (Snowy) Harrison –bricklayer and Jack Newman –carpenter.

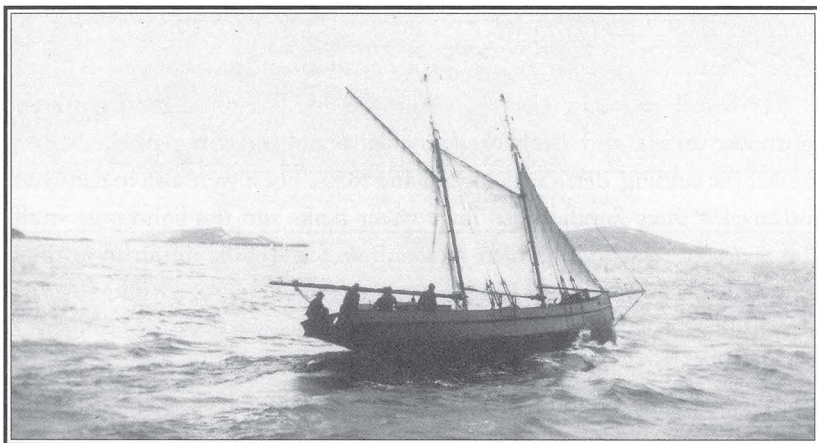
The three families were to live in triplex housing, built of bricks, with several water tanks that were barely able to cope with their needs. It is a credit to the keepers and their families that they were able to exist in harmony in such isolation.

The island was however, superior to many of those on other parts of the Australian coast. Maatsuyker, off the south coast of Tasmania is in a bleak location with a climate vastly inferior to that of Eclipse Island. The three families stationed there had to endure severe winters. Their only contact with civilisation would have been with the boat delivering stores and bi-annual maintenance ships that included the *Cape Pillar*. Passing ships to and from Hobart would have been a welcome sight and contacts by signals sent to the lighthouse would vary their daily routine.

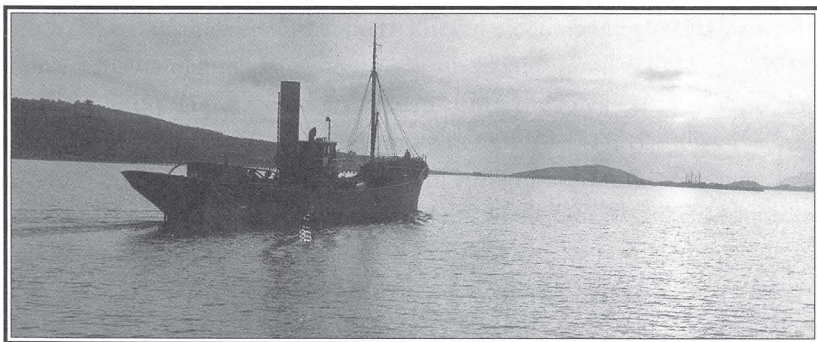
When the light first shone out from Eclipse Island, it caused much confusion among the bird life nesting there. Hundreds of mutton birds and



Awhina



Waratah



Bonthorpe

others, dashed themselves to death against the glass or mesh protecting the lenses. The survivors must have learned their lesson as this unwitting suicide ceased after a fairly short period.

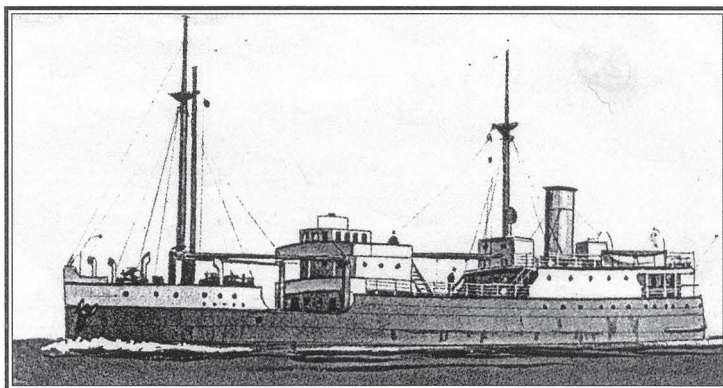
For a number of years the *Awhina*, owned by Armstrong and Waters, was responsible for servicing the Eclipse and Breaksea Light houses. Following her demise, the schooner *Waratah*, 50 feet long (15.2 m), built in Tasmania, gained the contract. Owned by ex-coastal mariner, Vivian Vernon Farley, she had been in use as a pilot boat.

After the *Waratah*, the *Bonthorpe* gained the contract. The *Bonthorpe* was a converted fishing trawler and came to Albany in 1928, to operate the seas east and west of Albany. Although a few good catches were obtained, the cost of coal and lack of refrigeration forced the owners to close down operations. She lay idle, or at anchor, at the town jetty until the *Awhina* was found unseaworthy and was scuttled and burnt at Gull Rock Beach in 1936.

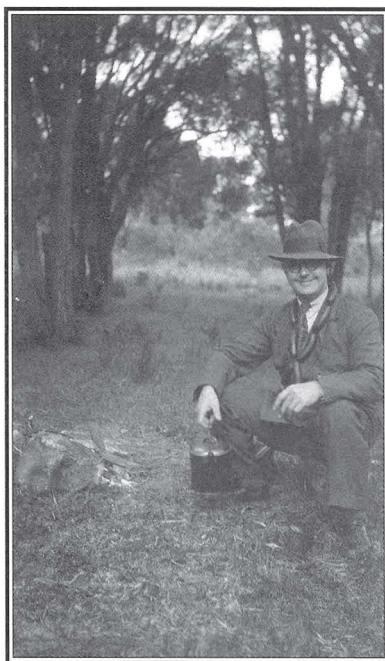
Following a fair bit of correspondence between the Western Australian Government and local tug owner skipper, Clem Douglas, the hull of the *Bonthorpe* was purchased in 1933, for the sum of 200 pounds. The new owners known as, the Albany Tug Company, were Clem Douglas, master, Frank Elliott, local stevedore and Alex (Black Alec) Armstrong, engineer. Their first job, after the acquisition, was to recover some items that had disappeared while *Bonthorpe* lay idle. The dynamo was found intact, on a Kalgan farm and some gear, including a tow hook and strong backs, were taken from the old *Awhina* and fitted abaft the funnel. Later, Clem Douglas left the company, leaving Elliott and Armstrong as owners.

The onset of World War II was to see the loss of Port of Albany's only tug. *Bonthorpe's* contract for the islands was due to expire in December 1939 and her owners had one trip to Eclipse Island to complete the agreement. By coincidence, the State coastal vessel M.V. *Kybra*, with Captain Griffiths, was due in port and so it was arranged for her to deliver the stores. Meanwhile Captain Elliott, of the soon to be defunct Albany Tug Company, had approached my father with the suggestion that he tender, as a replacement of the *Bonthorpe*, to supply Eclipse Island and service Breaksea Island. At the time I had almost completed the building of my 30 ft (9.15 m) auxiliary keelboat, *Kestrel*. She would not be finished for several months but we were offered the use of George Pannett Junior's boat, *Dauntless*. We put in a tender

and Captain Griffiths agreed to take me, with two of *Bonthorpe's* crew, Dick Johnson and Stan Williams, on the final island delivery on *Kybra*.



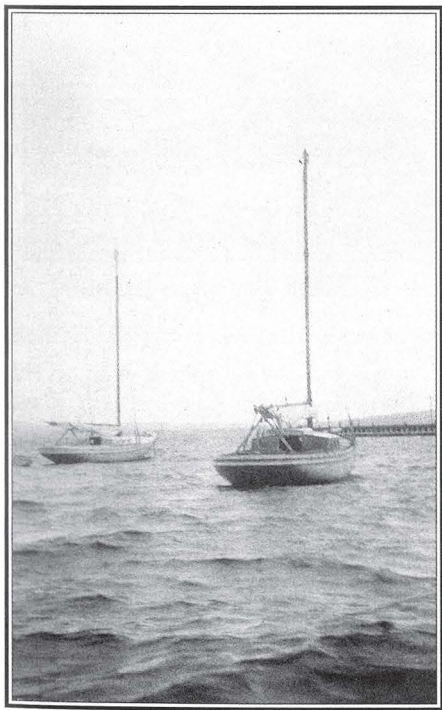
State coastal motor vehicle Kybra.



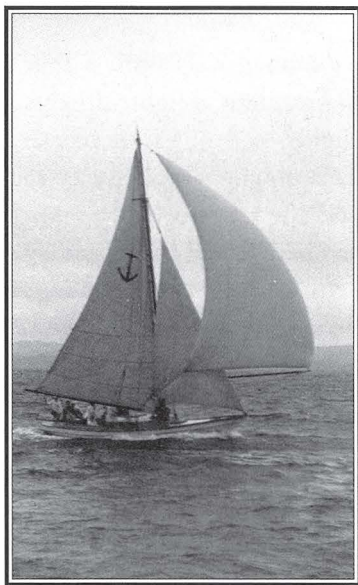
*Mrs Pearl Cole on Bonthorpe 1936, right: husband Jeff Cole of Pearl Photos, Albany.
(Photographs courtesy Pearl Photos)*

The coxswain aboard *Kybra*, was Jack Wheeler of Albany, late of the Isle of Wight, U.K. Jack's principal job was taking charge of the ship's boat when landing stores and farm produce, such as wool, from the many small beaches along the south coast. This could often be very difficult on a lee shore, or with heavy surf running, especially with bales of wool. Jack's brother, Ted, a cook, also worked on the small coastal ships. Their father was known in Albany as "Isle of Wight Jack".

It was a fine day when we set off and I was anticipating a short healthy dash to the island. However, the skipper hove to, almost a mile off, leaving Stan Williams and myself to row the balance of the way to the landing. Fortunately, the dinghy was large enough to take the stores in one load. Then Captain Griffiths gradually closed the gap to the landing for our return.

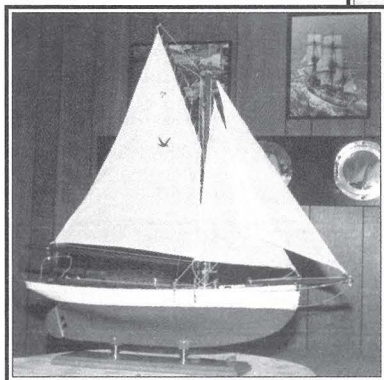


Dauntless and Kestrel on moorings Town Jetty.

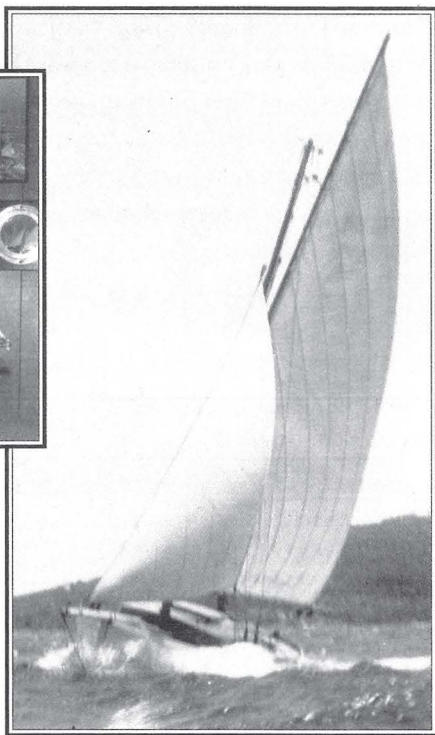


Dauntless under sail.

Following the signing of the contract for monthly services for the next year, with the Commonwealth Department of Lighthouses and Navigation,



*Model of Kestrel by Don Emery
(early rig).*



Kestrel under sail 1940.

we immediately built a four metre, light weight, dinghy, clinker built of Pacific maple. This dinghy was necessary to take the stores from *Dauntless* and later *Kestrel*, to the landing

derrick. Shallow rocks prevented the larger boats access under the derrick. Because of the rocky bottom, we had to use a grappling anchor, with several light prongs, which can be broken out when caught in foul ground. We fashioned a special net for the stores, to be placed in the dinghy. A long platform approximately 40ft (20m), had been built above sea level. On the outer end of this was a winding engine; a Kelly and Lewis petrol motor. The wire hoist ran from the drum to a derrick, with a very heavy steel hook, on the outer end. On the inner end of the platform was a small shed that housed a flying fox and this carried goods to and from the summit. Alongside the fox were many steps which were quite an effort to climb up and down but a good way of keeping fit for the inhabitants. At the summit was a small railway.

Qualifications were needed to transport passengers to and from the Island. My father and I had certificates, allowing us to operate harbour and river steamers in Albany waters, to a line from Bald Head across Breaksea Island to



Lionel Austin

Government of Western Australia
Harbour and Light Department

FORM M.A. 12

Certificate of Competency. No. 11

MASTER.

OF A HARBOUR AND RIVERSHIP

TO LIONEL ROSSER AUSTIN

Whereas it has been reported to me that you have been found duly qualified to fulfil the duties of a Master of a Harbour and River Ship,
I do hereby in pursuance of the Western Australian Marine Act, 1948,
grant you this Certificate of Competency, limited to

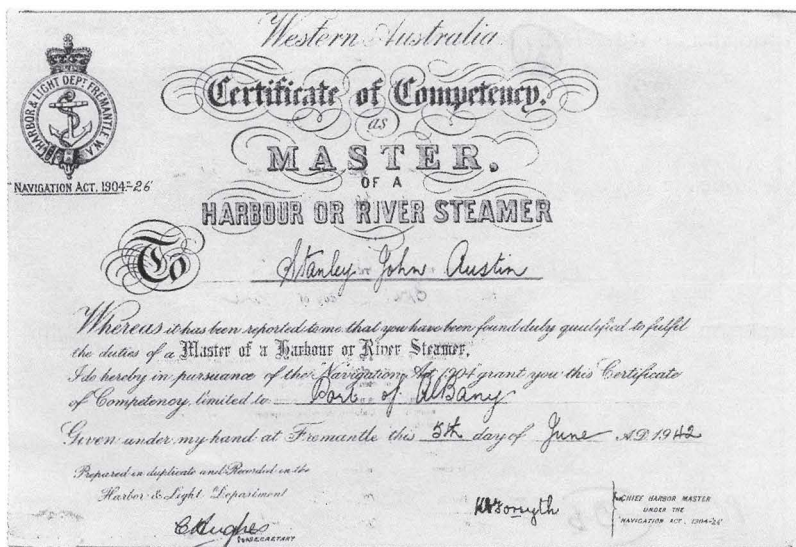
THE PORT OF ALBANY

Given under my hand at Fremantle this 9th day of August, 1951.

Prepared in duplicate and Recorded in the
Harbour & Light Department.

H. R. Smith MANAGER

Certificate of Lionel Austin.



Certificate of Stanley J. Austin.

Herald Bay. We also had a ticket of competency to run a petrol, kerosene and diesel engines up to 150 hp To enable us to venture beyond this limit, Master Mariner and friend, Vernon Farley, (known as Charlie) offered his services on our first trip, in an honorary capacity, as he had been in charge of coastal steamers on the Fremantle to Esperance run. He had also serviced the Island with the ex-pilot schooner, *Waratah*, for a couple of years in the 1930s.

Our first attempt to deliver goods and personnel was a failure. On the 22 January 1940, stores, mainly from Allen and Jean Hill, Grocers, of Peel Place, had been loaded on board *Dauntless*. The mail was collected from the Customs House, in the lower section of the Old Post Office. Captain Moore and Captain Head were the West Australian heads of the Federal Customs department at the time and Keith Forsythe, the secretary. Keith was an Albany born lad, the son of local boat builder, Bill Forsythe.

The next day we collected the meat from Reg Hill, a butcher of lower York Street.

We set sail at 6 in the morning, in *Dauntless* with owner, George Pannett, Junior, Captain Farley, my father, my younger brother Geoff, who later left us to join R.A.A.F., and myself.

We also had on board lighthouse keeper, Hubert Kitson and his wife Gwen, (formally Lewis) plus the wife and child of lighthouse keeper, Paddy Connolly, who were returning to the Island after a spell ashore the mainland. Before reaching Limestone Head, Captain Farley, who had been watching the seas violently attacking Breaksea Island, expressed his opinion that if we reached Eclipse Island, it would be impossible to land the personnel and stores and so we reluctantly returned to base.

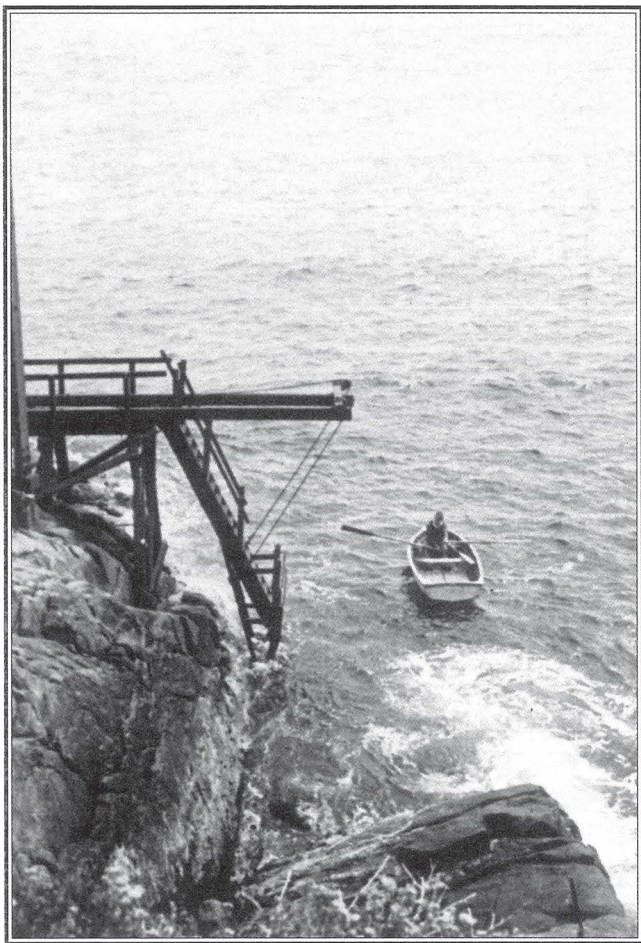


Geoff Austin

The following day the weather outlook appeared brighter and with the party in good cheer we again departed the Town Jetty under sail and a 6 hp Grey Marine petrol engine. There was much chatter until we rounded Bald Head and met a head wind from the southwest. The engine was not sufficient to push into the wind, so we had to beat all the way to the landing under sail and motor. It was a rough trip and an ominous silence descended on the four passengers, who retired to the cabin below, with Bert handing round a bucket to those who had succumbed to seasickness. After three hours much relief was felt by all, when we arrived at the cove at the northeast end of the Island.

Conditions were reasonable at this anchorage in strong southwest or southerly winds. Landing passengers could be accomplished by lowering a timber ladder by a winch, to alongside the small cliff. However, this was seldom used, except for the agile, and it was dangerous for the dinghy, which could be caught underneath and swamped and damaged, by a swell rolling in. The alternative was to use a large cane basket lowered from the derrick. This also had its problems, as climbing into it wasn't easy. In later years, after my time, firstly a canvas net and then a basket with a door, was a vast improvement. The heavy hook on the derrick hoist was something that had to be dodged, as it could give one a nasty blow. One day when rowing in I met the full force of this hook on my head. Though the dinghy seemed to half fill with my blood, the wound didn't appear to affect me too much.

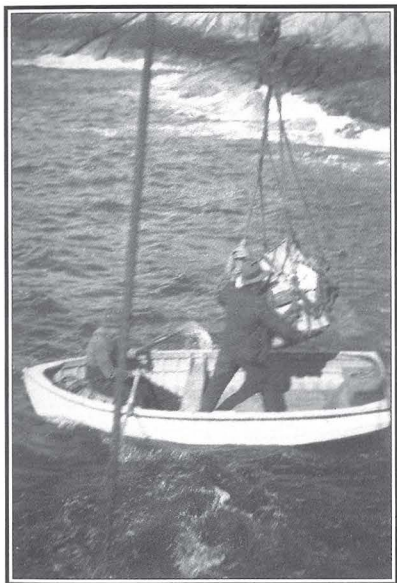
The dinghy played an important part in the landing of stores and personnel. It was impossible for a boat, with a mast, to lay under the derrick. When it was fully swung out, there was only a couple of feet (.6 metres) of water over



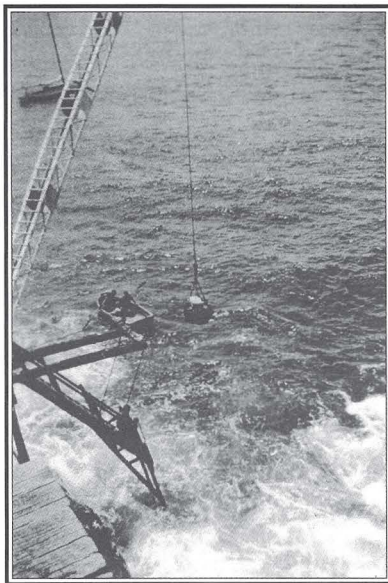
Stan Austin in dinghy approaching the ladder.

the submerged rock, so our boat had to anchor fifty metres or more off the island. The load from the yacht, transferred into a net and then into the dinghy, was often a difficult job, as both boats were moving up and down with the movement of the sea. Our normal procedure was for one man to row in and one to hook on.

We only lost one article during our thirteen-year contract; that was a small box of anchors which keeper, George Dittmer, had procured from the island.



Lionel and Stan Austin delivering stores.



1949/50: A new steel derrick replaced the oregon spar. Keven McGucken and Stan Austin in the dinghy.



Steel Derrick, landing ladder, flying fox and trestles from timber platform to summit on a calm day. (Photograph Syd O'Neill)

George packed the anchors in a small box and lowered it into our net. Whilst transferring the box from the dinghy to *Kestrel* my mate, Ron Plester Jones and I were taken by surprise with the weight of the box and after a sudden lurch, we both let go. They must still be there today after fifty years or more, “a rare treasure chest” about fifty metres from the derrick.

The anchors had been left on the island from the early days, when the Islanders had been allowed to have a dinghy for fishing. The authorities decided it was too dangerous for them to use, so it was sold to fisherman, Charles Westerberg Senior. His family named the dinghy, *Tingle*, because of the large number of buttstraps or butt blocks needed to make the boat seaworthy; tingles are used to cover the joints where two plank ends meet.

There were a number of mishaps over our thirteen years at the Island landing and George Dittmer features in more than one of them. One time he was having trouble with the winding engine (a Kelly and Lewis petrol motor) - the starting handle had fallen apart, so he grabbed what he thought was a short length of rope and made it fast to the side of the flywheel. With one turn it started, but, unfortunately, the short piece of rope turned out to be a full coil and caused some panic by lashing around the small shed until George managed to reach the shut-off mechanism.

On another occasion, keeper Hubert Kitson and wife Gwen, had received notice of to transfer to Cape Naturaliste Light House. Much of their belongings were packed in large tea chests, too big to fit in *Kestrel*, so we used our work boat, *Kia Kia* (30ft; 9.15m). Not being blessed with a surplus of cash, we had installed a second-hand, 30 hp kerosene/ petrol Cletrac engine, with magneto ignition. It was difficult to start when hot, so we left it running during the removal process. My mate, Fred Bairstow, was in the dinghy with me and we had just put one load on board and were rowing in for a second, when a tea chest fell against the gear lever, causing pandemonium. *Kia Kia*, in head gear, lifted the grappling anchor and headed to the lifting ladder, on the western corner of the cove. Missing that, when the sea subsided, it crashed onto a rock, suffering a bad leak.

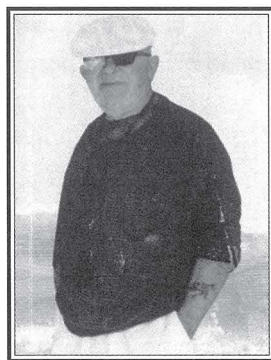
Fortunately our dinghy had no load aboard, so with myself rowing and Freddie sculling with the spare oar, we chased after the launch, just missing it when a wave lifted her off the rock. The anchor gripped, slewing her around and she headed eastward to the seal island across the cove. We were fairly

flying in her wake, but to no avail. Then luck stepped in and the anchor caught again and she swung around and headed for the mainland, about three miles away (about 5 kilometres). Had the engine been a diesel she would probably have careered on to eventually finish in “Davy Jones Locker”. The petrol engine, being soaked from water thrown up by the fast submerging flywheel, gave up and stopped. With great relief, an exhausted Fred and I clambered aboard to man the substantial two-cylinder, 4 inch (100m) bore, hand pump. This was just a little more than equal to the leak.

Unknown to us, keeper George Dittmer had stripped off and dived in to help us catch the run-away launch. By the time we noticed him in the water he, too, was thoroughly exhausted, as we dragged him on board. We might have lost the launch but there was never any danger for Fred and myself, because if necessary we - and the dinghy - could have been hoisted up onto the island, to await rescue. George soon recovered enough to man the pump for us, while we dried off the motor and persuaded it back into life. This incident was very serious at the time and it was not until later that we could see the funny side – the makings of a successful– Keystone Cops or a Charlie Chaplin comedy.

Once the leak was partly under control, George, with much appreciation and thanks bestowed upon him, was rowed back to the landing and was hoisted ashore. We were again in luck as the island was in radio with the harbour master in Albany and he was able to make arrangements to have the slipway ready to take the leaking boat when it returned. Another keeper, Bill McAuliffe, agreed to come with us, to take a turn on the pump. A hurried decision was made for the Kitsons and the rest of their gear, to stay on the island and I would return the next day in *Kestrel* with neighbour, Jack Fugill senior, to assist me.

“Taffy” Davies, was a great friend of George Dittmer and family, and his self-built house, “Linga - Longa”, in Campbell Road, was the Dittmer’s holiday home. Jack remembers the trouble we had when the very poor, reverse gear caused the Rugby to slip into action and wind up the anchor rope during a trip he took with us to the Island.



Taffy Davies

My first experience of a fog at sea occurred on one of our trips to the Island. When Fred Bairstow and I departed, early in the morning, from the Town Jetty the weather was calm and fine but the port of Albany and surrounding area was covered in thick fog. Usually fog lifts when the sun rises, or a slight breeze comes up, but this time it was different. We had a police constable on board, whose duty was to serve a summons, in person, to one of the lighthouse keepers. I had no trouble finding my way around the harbour on very dark nights or blackout during the War, but the fog thickly blanketed everything. Expecting it to clear gradually, as it usually does, we made our way to our first known object, the westerly arm (or new arm) of the deep water jetty. We were on the north side, so we had to follow it around to make the channel to the Sound. From Point Possession, with difficulty, we managed to clear the Sisters, off Mistaken Island and thought we were heading for Limestone Head. However our landfall was Flat Rock, just off present-day Whale World

As it was a calm sea, we were able to follow the coast closely, which we see from a distance of a few metres (approx. 100m) rounding Bald Head and on to Peak Head, where we hoped to set off from the mainland and head for Eclipse Island. We started off and much to our surprise there appeared in the distance, a large ghost-like object, resembling an iceberg. This turned out to be Vancouver Ledge, which had an eerie appearance with the spray from the surrounding reefs. Once more, with empirical guesswork, we set off to find Peak Head in fog that showed no sign of lifting. At this stage a slight breeze came in from the nor'west. I gauged the direction from the nearby headland and we hoisted the mainsail set off again, for where I thought our landfall would be. With a beam wind and the sail set so it just luffed, we steered an accurate course, hoping that the breeze wouldn't let us down by changing direction. The landing was sighted dead on.

The people on the Island were a little worried when we arrived later than usual, thinking we may have engine trouble and were relieved to see the sail emerging out of the haze. Our constable had succumbed to the very slight roll of *Kestrel* and had retired to a bunk below, unaware of his somewhat convoluted passage. *Kestrel* was a very basic yacht, as far as equipment was concerned, with no radio, compass, or self-draining cockpit and a motor which was a converted Rugby car engine and Invincible Marine gear box.

However this was a good reliable power unit and with the arrival of the wind the fog cleared and we had an uneventful trip back, though a trifle later than expected.

We transported several people to and from Eclipse Island and their reaction, to the often unpleasant conditions, varied greatly. The two sons of Harbour Master, Hubert Griffiths, Peter and his younger brother, Owen, both reacted differently to expectation. Peter, who hoped to join the merchant navy, had a heavy bout of seasickness and Owen, who was a good sailor, went on the land. Peter still stuck to his ambition and eventually gained a Masters Certificate and later, became Harbour Master and pilot in Albany, like his father. Peter is now retired and with his wife, lives in his home town of Albany.

I remember a Mrs Powell, a middle aged woman from the country, who did the crossing with us to holiday with some lighthouse keeper friends. She arrived at the landing in a very weak state but managed, with extreme effort, to disembark and gain the comfort of solid land. The poor woman's holiday was marred by the thought of the return journey to the mainland. Faring no better on the trip back, she had to be lifted onto the hand trolley pushed along the jetty. From there she was taken by car to the Mount Boarding House, Brunswick Road (now the Stirling Club), at about one o'clock in the afternoon. When we asked for a cup of tea for the still ailing woman we were told "we don't serve tea until three o'clock." - what hospitality!

Local electricians were transported to the Island at various times, to repair radio equipment. One of these contractors was Keith Collins. Despite the sea being smooth, Keith was beginning to feel squeamish by the time we reached Limestone Head. Hoping to take his mind off his condition, we handed him the tiller to steer the boat but as we rounded Bald Head he almost touched the rocks and we thought he was determined to leave us, to get onto the shore. However he handed over command, hurriedly removed his dentures and made for the side of the cockpit, for temporary relief. On landing ashore on the Island, Keith recovered enough to carry out the radio repairs but after that trip, decided to send one of his staff for future visits.

Norm Lee, the son of Albany Fire Chief, was the next victim. Norm lasted about an hour before spending the rest of the passage, in a listless huddle, under one of the cockpit benches. We managed to hoist ashore him where for a couple of hours he struggled to carry out his job, but "never again" said he to me.

The third time was lucky, with employee Murray Smith, who had no trouble with the motion of the ocean. Murray had sailed with me to and from Fremantle, on working and pleasure trips, so any jobs to Eclipse Island were his, if needed. After working with Keith Collins, Murray graduated to various managerial positions with the State Electricity Commission. Finally, he became Superintendent of the Albany District. It was a sad day, when still quite young, Murray was struck down with a terminal illness, leaving his wife, Dot and family.

Seasickness is partly to do with the balance in the ears. Many cures have been prescribed but most have little effect. In my case, after about a day and a half at sea, I become adjusted for a few weeks but I nearly always felt squeamish, in varying degrees, on the Island run. I remember one moderate day when two of my mates, George Pannett and Arthur "Blondie" Hatch and I were on the lee side of the cockpit, unhappily relieved of our breakfast, whilst on the other side, George's wife Molly, her sister Margaret Currie and Alma Deere were laughing at our predicament.

Amongst our travellers that day, was George Pannett's boss in the building trade, Neville Reeves. Neville was a tall thin man and he suffered badly with an ulcerated stomach which had been operated on during the war. He thought he was going to die during this operation: "I could see two thin lines, one coming up and the other going down and reckoned I would be finished if they met." Despite his poor stomach, he didn't turn a hair out at sea, when nearly all around him had succumbed to seasickness,.

For many years, on a regular annual basis, we were hosts to parties of half a dozen or so Christian Brothers, visiting Albany. They stayed with Jean and Allen Hill, in their large, ramshackle home, overlooking the old coal jetty, below the present day Port Authority building. The Hills, who were the main suppliers of the stores, referred them to my father and me for the trip to the Island. The Brothers had no problems with seasickness - they must have been in God's care. On arrival at the Island, it was usual for them to be hoisted to the landing, where they would converse and share a drink or two with the Island folk.

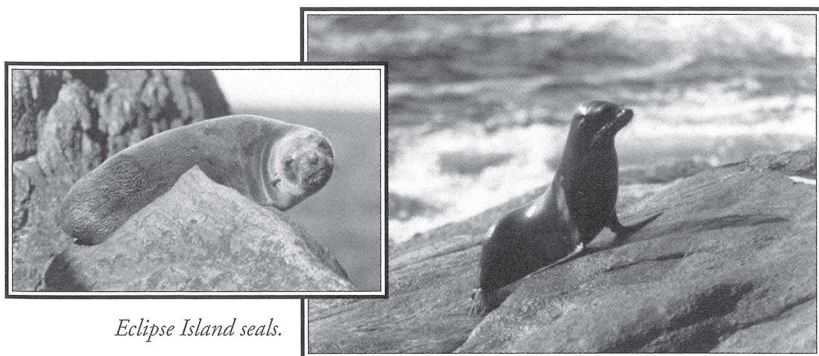
Even animals suffer from seasickness. On one trip our cargo included a goat, some poultry and a dog. The poultry crowed cheerfully until we reached Bald Head but the open sea became too much for them and their combs

began to droop and they huddled together listlessly until they reached their destination. The dog threw-up into the cockpit. Fortunately, one of the passengers, Bill Whinnerah, a relieving lighthouse keeper and a farmer from Redmond was untroubled and promptly cleaned up the mess. On the other hand I was close to copying the dog. The goat was tough and showed no reaction at all.



Bill Whinnerah and his wife Nellie.

A party of nursing sisters from the Government Maternity Hospital, including Pat Cooke and Pam Stubbs, were keen to make the trip. They were quite upset when we had to cancel the trip one blustery morning. The cancellation followed a radio message from the Island stating that the landing was unapproachable. Pat, originally from New Zealand, married Bill Hassell, of the well-known coastal farming property 'Warriups.'



Eclipse Island seals.



Pam Stubbs with Seal Rookery in background on the Island at the approximate position of future derrick. (Photograph courtesy Pat Hassell)

On one occasion an attempt made to convey the stores to the Island in a local ferry turned into a disaster. Local electrician, Alan Kitcher, owner of the converted river pleasure boat, *Temeraire*, asked if he could take us to the Island for the experience. I suspected that he was competing for the Island run contract. We agreed to go, so Fred Bairstow, Alan and I set out one rather nasty southwest morning. Off Limestone Head the G.M. 2 cylinder diesel failed. Alan, the skipper, diagnosed that there was a rope around the propeller and told us to get out the storm anchor. This turned out to be only large enough for an eighteen-footer with the anchor line comprised of ten lengths of small ropes, knotted together. While Alan was disrobing, intending to dive under the stern to free the prop, Fred and I discovered an air leak in the fuel system. *Temeraire* was a very high wooded launch, particularly in the for'd sections. In 1948 I had the job of bringing her down by sea from Perth waters, for Vic Turner and Max Chester. On that passage we also had problems with stoppage through air in the fuel system.

With the fuel system repaired, Alan took off at full throttle, rounded Bald Head and was met by mountainous seas, right on the bow. The skipper appeared determined to make up lost time, why I didn't know and did not decrease his speed. Before I had time to get to the throttle, the cabin was strewn with debris including broken crockery, a barometer and a clock. With

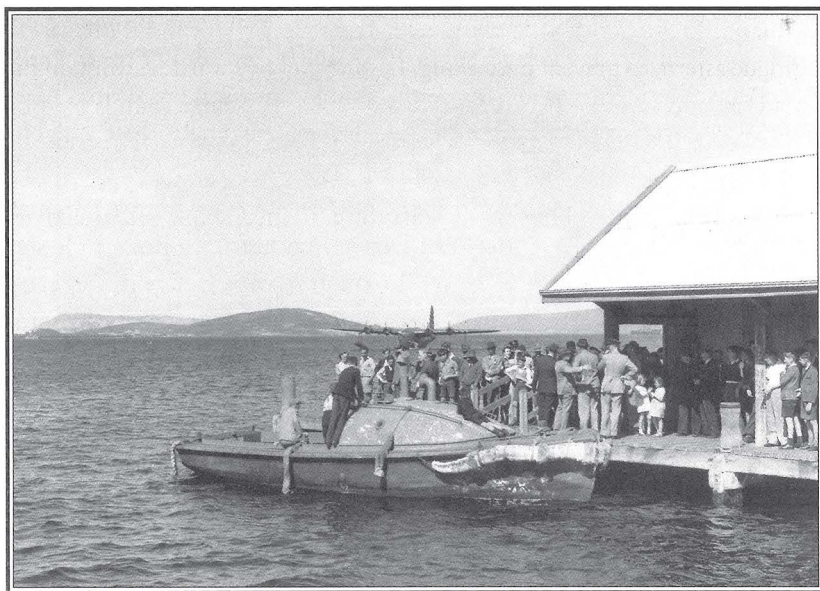
easing speed, we eventually made the Island, with much heavy thumping up and down. However at the landing the *Temeraire* became out of control and we were forced to return home. From then on no more was heard from Alan about competing for the contract and he left for Fremantle to start a highly profitable launch run to Rottnest Island.

During the war, the lighthouse tender *Cape Don* was taken from her normal duties to work for the Department of Defence up north. In peace time she made annual visits to all the lights on the coast, to carry out general repairs and supply such necessities as firewood. It fell to us to convey one season's supply of wood. This was a very arduous task and necessitated taking two boats, the *Kestrel* and our shipping launch *Kia Kia*. My father took the latter, with an extra dinghy borrowed from the Pilot Station. He had with him Bert (Nobby) Jennings, the driver of the pilot launch *Pelican*, a bit of a character, long time resident of Albany and a good friend. I had Ron Jones (Jonesie) and young Eric Coles, with me. There were thirty-two dinghy loads of wood thrown or passed into a net or basket. The last was followed by an exhausted cheer and then 'Home Sweet Home'. At a later date, wood was replaced by medium sized bottles of gas.

During our contract, the authorities decided that the galvanized iron on the Island house roofs were due for replacement. The lighthouse tender delivered the cladding and a local builder, Ernie Tompkins, won the contract to carry out the work. Ernie and his crew camped on the Island and thoroughly enjoyed their stay, learning how to manufacture illicit liquor with the aid of Keeper George Dittmer and associates.

The replaced iron was put up for tender and relieving keeper, Jack Wheeler, and I offered one shilling (10 cents) a sheet. There wasn't much competition, as we had the means of cheap transport. We won the tender and the iron was taken ashore on a return stores trip in *Kia Kia* with her Plimsoll line disappearing under the weight of the full cargo. It was a good investment; Jack and I built large sheds on our properties and as the iron was twenty-four gauge and well galvanized it is still in reasonably good condition today, sixty years later.

In 1944 the Oregon derrick was replaced with one of fabricated steel. Keeper Norman (Nobby) Pannett, claimed ownership of the cast-off spar. Nobby, a life long friend of mine, also had no worries about transport to the



Kia Kia used with Kestrel for wood supplies.



Nobby Pannet and wife Glad

mainland. This lengthy piece of timber had to be towed behind Kestrel, with a drogue astern, to prevent overtaking. During Nobby's wartime work on the Island he, and head keeper, Alf Newman, reported strange sounds coming from the area off West Cape Howe some five miles west of Eclipse. The Islanders thought this could have been enemy submarines refuelling at night. This was never proven but very little has been written about enemy activity on the south coast.

During our time on the Island run, apart from deliveries and transporting essential maintenance personnel, we were also required to attend urgent medical calls when transport was needed. One keeper, Guil Castle, required a doctor so Fred Bairstow and I set off in the *Kestrel* but upon reaching Limestone Head we met a Commonwealth Fisheries Research vessel of some 40 metres in length, *The Warreen*. I spoke to the skipper and he agreed to take me, with the dinghy, aboard to pick up the patient, as the vessel was much faster and more comfortable for the sick man. Fred returned home with *Kestrel*. In appreciation for the favour, my father lent our car to the skipper so he could tour the Southwest whilst the vessel was based in Albany. *The Warreen* was there to research mulies in our waters as she was normally based on the east coast. Other research was also conducted by Clive Wirrell, from the Western Australian University, to test the life and temperature of the sea off Bald Head. Clive and wife Win have been friends of mine ever since and eventually retired to run a hostel at Denmark.

Amongst the relieving keepers was a lovable, ex naval diver, Charles Chapman. Charles suffered with claustrophobia, probably due to being left undersea, one time, for too long. As a consequence one of his obsessions was to fill his rooms with clocks of all description but all showing the correct time. Charles also had a passionate dislike of draughts and stuffed newspaper into every little crack or opening.

One day, we had to make an emergency dash to transport Charles, who was very ill, to Albany. There was a fresh nor'wester blowing and it was growing dark. Once around Bald Head, a reasonably smooth sea accompanies this breeze. However, this is not the case at the landing, with a lee shore. My companion, Eric Downes, an ex farmer from Youngs Siding, was employed at our works in town and his seamanship had not been tested so I was pleased that he did not suffer from seasickness. This was good because at the landing

we encountered difficulty transferring the patient to the *Kestrel*. It was to no avail, as Charlie died from pneumonia, three weeks later, aged fifty-two on 28 June 1942 at Albany Hospital.

Another emergency case was that of Keeper Harold Howe, who was stricken with a stroke, while serving on the Island in 1945. We made a special trip to bring him to hospital and though he survived the stroke, died shortly after. Several members of the Howe family were associated with both Breaksea and Eclipse lighthouses.

It is rather remarkable that the families living on the Island managed to live most of the time in harmony, as the three houses were joined together and the Island was not very large - but occasionally there were problems. At one time a department head crossed in one of our scheduled trips to settle an argument. Sometimes just a casual comment could cause a rift. Mrs Connolly's young daughter was often entertained by neighbour, Gwen Kitson. On one occasion Gwen complained to the little girl of the attacks on her legs by 'March' flies and the child relayed this to her mother. Her mother replied: "they shouldn't have much effect on those tough old pegs" which, again, was promptly relayed to Gwen, who being a good sport just laughed it off. This could have turned into a bitter incident with someone not as tolerant.

Amusements on Eclipse Island were limited. What a blessing television would have been! Radio kept the inhabitants in contact with the outside world as did reading matter such as newspapers and mail from the supply boat. The mail was always landed first to give the recipients some time to reply with return mail on the same day. Some of our crew members would stay in the boat and fish during the wait, but I preferred to land and have a yarn with the lighthouse people. Sometimes the wait was longer, when we had to land



Hubert Kitson and wife Gwen.

an electrician to repair radio faults. During the war, R.A.A.F. planes would occasionally drop newspapers and magazines onto the Island. Sing-a-longs was another form of entertainment. Lightkeeper Hewitt played an accordion and Harry Holmyard played guitar – at one stage, during the 1970s, Harry Holmyard tried, unsuccessfully, to catch rabbits with a boomerang!

I read an article in a Government Gazette stating that livestock were permitted on lighthouse areas. A lighthouse keeper was allowed 150 sheep, other keepers, twenty-three cows, three calves and a horse, in 1917. Imagine transporting them to Eclipse Island! The act was probably repealed many years ago, though there may have been exceptions for main land-based lights. There were no snakes on the Island but rabbits were probably introduced in the early days by sealers.

Georgie Otter who was only a boy in the 1940s, when his father, Horrie, was a lighthouse keeper on Eclipse Island. We were reminiscing about the day when the lighthouse was struck by lightning and severing the copper conductor where it entered the sea. A considerable amount of damage was caused to the concrete portion of the building, sending fragments hurtling in all directions. Georgie was very young when he and his sisters, Pearl (Mary) and Hillary, had their Island experiences. Georgie remembered the day, when returning to the Island from holidays, he was steering our launch and almost ran onto a reef not far from the landing and to port of the of the course. I had been dragging some of the supplies from the cabin, in readiness for unloading and I handed him the wheel for a moment. His vision was suddenly blocked by a small sail, used only in a following breeze and his lack of height added to the problem. Luckily I was checking on his progress at that moment and a quick change of course averted running onto the reef. This had been witnessed by Georgie's father, whose shouting and gesticulating was to no avail, as he was also hidden by the sail.

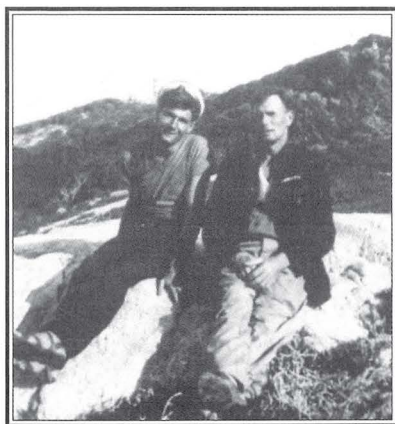
In 1937 lighthouse keeper, Hubert Kitson, reported a break on the ocean surface. Following an investigation by Captain Moore, of the Lighthouse and Navigation Department, a shoal, approximately five fathoms in depth, was located a few nautical miles from the landing at Eclipse Island. This was very close to a line from Bald Head to the landing and was noted as a danger to shipping. From Cave Point, on the mainland, I have only seen it break once, in heavy conditions. However on supply trips to the Island I have seen and



Mrs Otter with daughters Pearl and Hillary.

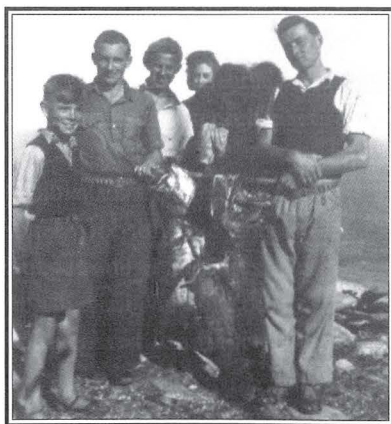


Hillary and her father Horrie Otter.



Harry Otter and his father Horrie.

(Photographs courtesy A.Keightley)



*George Otter, his friend Joe, Mr Collett,
Beryl Whinnerah and Horrie Otter.*

felt the surface “boiling” under the boat on several occasions. This shoal is known locally as Kitsons Reef. The only obstruction on our usual course from Bald Head is Vancouver Ledge. This, however, was not a problem, as it

breaks regularly and is exposed to a short height. It would only be a worry if sailing at night against a head wind.

There were many who think that the lives of lighthouse keepers and their wives were just one peaceful holiday with little work. This is not so, of course. The keepers were constantly carrying out maintenance on the gear at the landing. The derrick had to be painted annually, each time a different colour, to prove it had been done. The lenses and glass covering of the light had to be regularly cleaned. Also as a meteorological station, records had to be kept and forwarded on. At night, the keepers on continuous shift had to wind by hand, the mechanism that revolved the very valuable lenses around a sophisticated stationary kerosene lamp. A watch had to be maintained for passing ships, which under international law, were subject to fees for lighthouses in their area.



*George Dittmer, Guil Castle
and Lance Bird in the railway
truck.*



Women winding up landing ladder. (Photographs courtesy Alice Dittmer)

Communication, initially, was by means of a telephone cable on the seabed to Cable Beach, close by the well-known Gap and natural bridge on the mainland. This parted, for unknown reasons, between the Island and the mainland. On the rocks at Cable Beach an iron fitting can still be seen just above the water line. From there, a smaller cable ran up the hill and along a sandy track, by way of small poles, to the Albany Post Office in Stirling Terrace.



Wendy and Marie Austin on "Cable Beach".

Parents on the Island had to cope with the education and amusement of the young children. Those of school age were mostly boarded on shore. Their school holidays were usually spent on the Island, which meant travelling to and fro on the store boat.

Despite the steep slopes on the Island there were some pleasant activities. On the south side, there was a natural rock swimming pool, which gave much pleasure. However it could be dangerous in heavy seas and there was the steep walk up to the houses afterwards. This also applied to the many good fishing spots but effort was rewarded by the good catch of fish, which was often sent ashore to friends. Some residents enjoyed bird watching and the many seals and sea lions on the semi island to the east of the landing were of great interest. On several occasions pups were taken to Albany to be sent to the Perth Zoo.



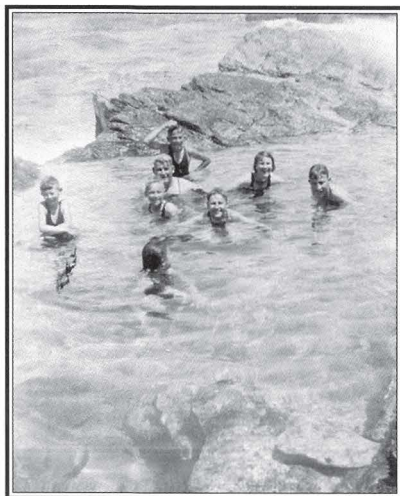
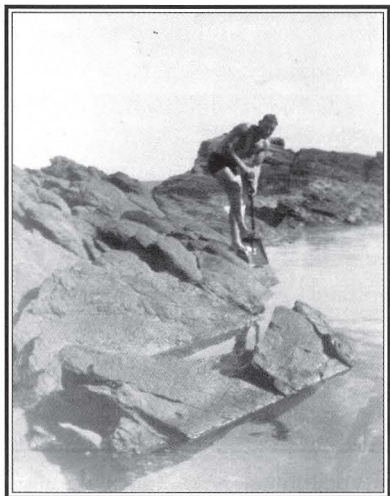
*Judy Dittmer, daughter
of Keeper George at pool
playing with model boat.*



Judy with goat.

*Bottom left: George
scraping barnacles near
pool.*

*Below: Kitsons and others
enjoying a swim in the
pool.*



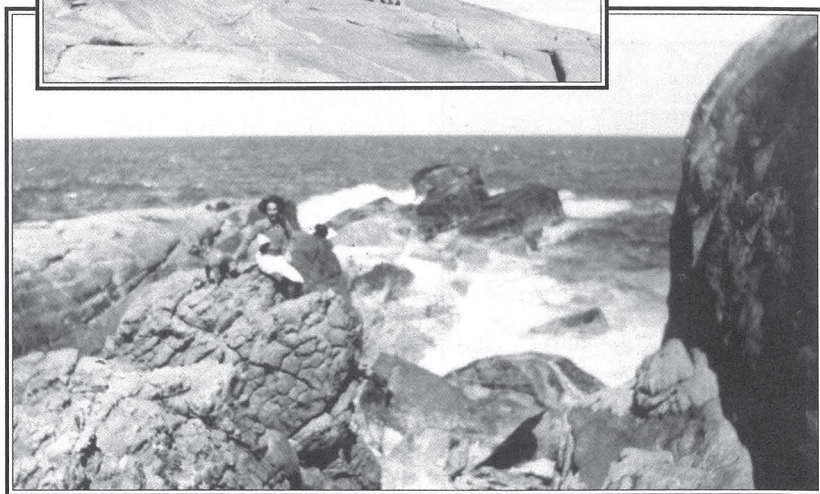


Emily Malacari and Vivien Empsal, Bert Kitsen with Peter on back

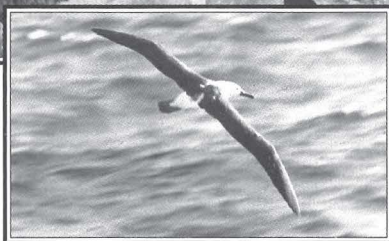


Bert Kitson with family and friends at Cliff Head.

(Photographs courtesy H. Malacari)



Emily near Cliff Head on S.E of Island.



Emily, Peter and Vivian with Fairy Penguins. (Photograph courtesy H. Malacari)

Pacific Gulls on island.



Alice Dittmer with the tanks used as vegetable gardens.



Left to right: Lynett, Mrs Collett, George Otter, Beryl Whinnerah and Mr Collett.

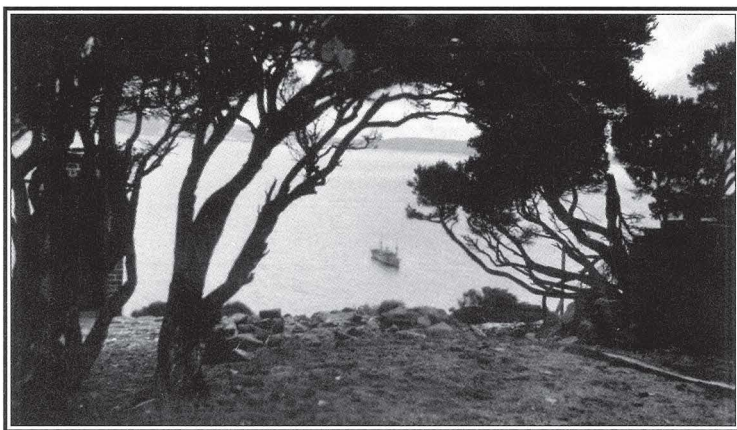
During the early 1930s, I remember being shown a number of seal pups on the enclosed verandah at Dick McBride's home, above the old coal jetty, near the present day grain silos. I think they were brought ashore by Dick and fisherman, Teddy Davies, in the yacht *Margaret*. About the same time, Hazel Flugge, younger daughter of tug master and owner, Clem Douglas, told me of seals at the Douglas home, in Grey Street east. One pup escaped and wandered as far as Spencer Street but was found unharmed.

Fresh water was always a problem on the Island, the only supply coming from rainwater on the house roofs into rainwater tanks. At one stage, the lighthouse tender had to bring a supply of water that needed a strong pump to take it from the landing up to the summit.

The dinghy, used for the trips to Eclipse Island, was of light construction so that in extreme circumstances she could be lifted on board *Dauntless* or *Kestrel*. This rarely occurred, as space was limited on both yachts. When relinquishing the contract in 1952, I converted the dinghy to a sailboat, with

a centreboard and to this day she is still watertight. I have had her for sixty-three years and she now lies in a small harbour, in the reeds, at the foot of our house at Big Grove.

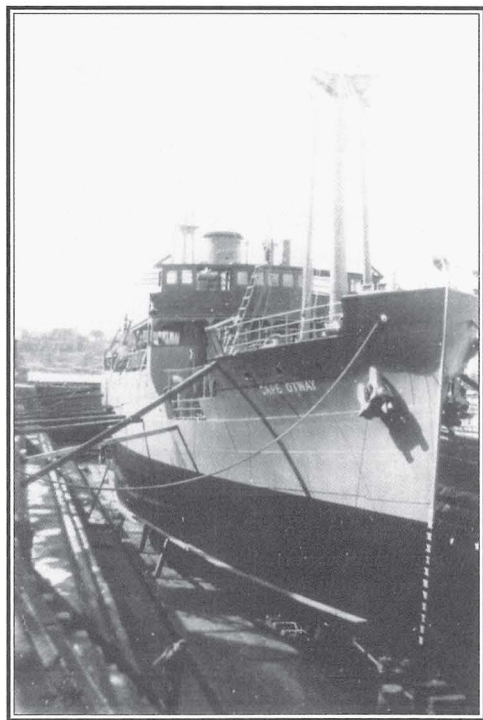
In 1952 it was with some reluctance that my father and I decided we would not tender for the Island's contract. Father had not been actively engaged in that part of our mixed business for a good many years and crews were not always easy to find. Also the contract required a larger boat for the heavier



Cape Otway anchored off Eclipse Island.



Cape Otway's boats with a repair crew under the derrick.

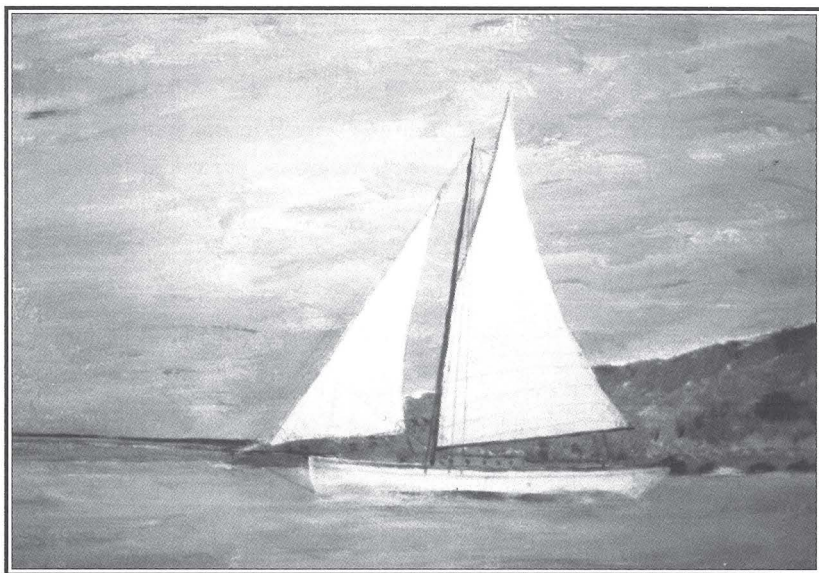


Cape Otway on slipway, 1931.

loads that previously had been handled before the war, annually, by the *Cape Otway* and *Cape Don*. I shudder today at the thought of rising at 5 am, rain, hail, gale and cold, twice monthly, on the dates designated by the Department of Lighthouses and Navigation.

One of the best passages I made to Eclipse was in the 36-foot (11 metre) yacht *Ariel*. It was built for Swarbrick and Sons, in 1945, for fishing and appeared like an enlarged *Kestrel*. I was recovering from some affliction and Alf and Fred Swarbrick offered to take me in the *Ariel* and what a difference! Only 6 foot (1.82 metres) longer, but much more space and a larger engine, with a couple of first-class yarn spinners to cheer me up.

One of the worst experiences I had was on a return trip from the Island in a howling south-westerly gale. This was recorded by the light keepers as sixty-nine miles per hour. Having lifted the anchor in the shelter of the cove, I moved the Rugby engine into head gear. At this the coupling fell apart on the



Ariel (painting by Stan Austin).

propeller shaft. This could not be repaired at sea, so the mainsail was fully reefed and smartly hoisted with a small jib from our smaller yacht

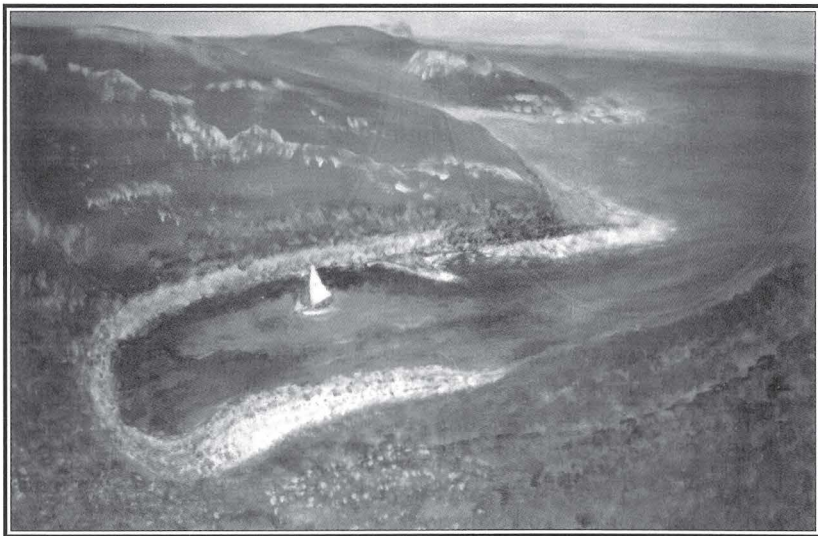
Swift, being two metres luff by one metre foot in size. Once clear of the shelter, *Kestrel* took off downwind at a frightening pace, with the dinghy behind having trouble, though towing a ropedrogue. The mainsail and the storm jib were lowered and it was necessary to drag the 4 metre dinghy aboard. With a very small crew this was difficult but after a struggle we managed to lay her across the cockpit, just abaft the cabin, leaving barely enough room to use the tiller.

I find it better with a heavy weight boat to lessen speed, in hard conditions, down wind but today with the lighter boats it appears that the idea is to endeavour to keep pace with the wind and sea.

We ran very fast under bare poles or should I say pole, as *Kestrel* is a sloop. On rounding Bald Head and into smoother waters under Limestone Head, conditions improved somewhat. However in a southwester it is not pleasant under sail, as the wind sweeps down in all directions, so only the jib was used to get us into clear water. The mainsail was then hoisted to cross the sound and as the breeze moderated we made the Town Jetty in what was our record

time to and from Eclipse. ‘Snapper’ Charles Westerberg one of the crew that day, often talked of this run home.

Charles and his brothers, Gordon ‘Jack or Gardie’ and Neil known as ‘Bill’, with relatives George ‘Scotty’ Birss and sons, Ron and Stan and stepson, Percy Wheatcroft, were responsible for starting the Cheynes Beach Whaling station at Frenchman Bay in 1952.



“Jimmy Newhills Harbour” photo of painting by S. Austin.

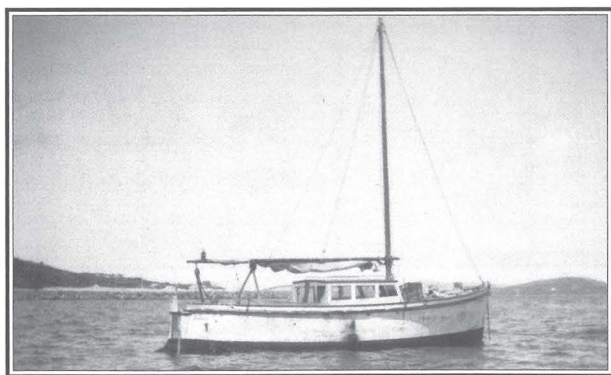
One of the more pleasant experiences was returning from Eclipse with suitable weather conditions; we were able to poke *Kestrel’s* nose into Jimmy Newhills Harbour, on the South Coast. It is not an all-weather anchorage, being susceptible to winds and seas from south east to south west. In 1942 we found conditions very smooth and sailed in for a look and to please one of our passengers, Billy Smith, brother of Frank and Eddie, all big time farmers in Bruce Rock and later Kendenup. It is a beautiful spot, with a fresh water stream at one end and a sandy beach and a small limestone cave on the western side. Access by land is restricted by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, erosion was taking place with so many people climbing down the steep slope. The second occasion we went into the harbour was in 1944 when George Pannett, who was crewing with us, had to get back to

work on Stony Hill, where he was foreman for builder Neville Reeves, who undertaking construction work on the R.A.A.F. Radar Station. George decided he could land at the eastern side of Jimmy Newhills Harbour and climb the slope, saving him several hours. It was a daunting task on the steep and rough terrain but George was a very determined man and accomplished the feat.

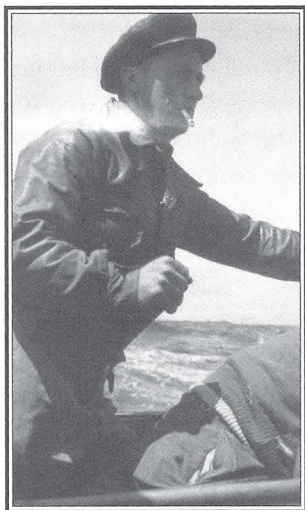
Unknown to me at that time, Stony Hill Naval Station and the Eclipse Light keepers had considerable contact by Aldis lamp, some radio, if deemed safe from the enemy; also by Heliograph though there was a fair amount of trouble making contact with that method. The information passed was about any passing ships, submarines or aircraft.

Some of the gear we had to transport was very awkward. On one occasion it was returning a sewing machine to Albany. Jonesie and I had a terrible struggle pulling the machine aboard from the dinghy to *Kestrel*. A fair swell was running that day and we were hoping to parbuckle the awkward and heavy machine from the dinghy, which was jumping all over the place, to *Kestrel*, which was rolling with the swell. After a few tries we started to laugh, which didn't help, but eventually we managed to get the machine to safety.

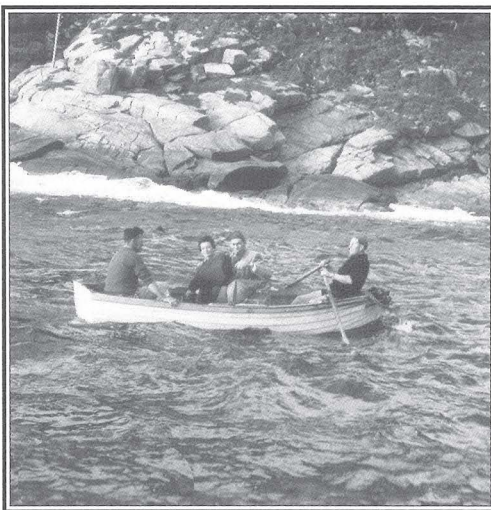
Our replacement, on the contract run, for the next seventeen years was Arthur Bentley, with his boat the *Warrior*, which originally came from South Africa. The *Warrior* was much larger tonnage than *Kestrel* and two feet longer, with a thirty-two foot waterline and full bodied hull overall, with ample freeboard, beam and depth of hull. She was also equipped with a powerful Ruston Hornsby diesel motor, plus a small mast and sail for emergencies.



Warrior.



Arthur Bentley



Arthur Bentley and Doug Moody taking passengers in from Warrior



Arthur Bentley and Doug Moody taking stores and gas bottles from Warrior.

When Arthur took over in 1952, we endeavoured to show him the ropes, as they say, in what we thought was to be our last supply run to Eclipse.

However, this turned out to be one of three occasions that we didn't make in our thirteen years. Fred Bairstow, Arthur and I set out for the Island but just before Bald Head we were met by tremendous south-east rollers that nearly swamped *Kestrel*, so we had to turn back. We later learnt from the lighthouse keepers that the landing was impossible. The next day we were able to say goodbye to the three families on that lonely outpost.

Arthur told me of some of his experiences whilst on the Island run. On one occasion he had to take out a relieving keeper, Fred Thorne. Fred had been a sort-after hotel cook until grog got the better of him. When Arthur knew him he had spent most of his time as a shearers' cook. He normally boarded with Mrs Allen Hill when he was in Albany and that was where Arthur had to pick him up to take him to Eclipse Island. Arriving at 5.30 am there was no sign of Fred so Arthur, knowing where his room was, went looking for him and found him, fully dressed, snoring on his bed – after quite a few hours spent in the Royal George Hotel the night before. After Arthur had shaken him awake, Fred started searching under the bed, unsuccessfully, for his false teeth. The teeth were eventually found against a hole in the skirting board. Apparently a rat had picked them up during the night and tried to take them through the hole. Having sobered up a little, he eventually made it to the Island.

Fred had a lucky escape from near drowning when he was on Eclipse Island. Whilst fishing from his favourite spot he was caught by an enormous sea and washed off the rocks. Luckily, another wave washed him back again, minus his hat, glasses and false teeth. Badly bruised and shaken he managed to get his fingers into a crack in the rocks and hang on till the water receded.

On another occasion Arthur had a call from the Harbour Master, reporting that a wife of one of the keepers was suffering from acute appendicitis and had to come ashore. By the time the *Warrior* was fuelled and Arthur's off sider located, the weather was coming in hard from the southwest. It was a rough passage out, but fine at the landing, for getting the woman aboard. After a hectic run back to Bald Head they arrived back at the Town Jetty at about 8 pm. Arthur asked the patient if he could run her up to the hospital but to his surprise she declined, as she was going to be operated on by her doctor in Geraldton. Arthur was requested to take her to the Royal George Hotel for the night. She was to catch the train to Perth the next day and then the bus to

Geraldton the day after, a total of five days before she had the operation. When the Department received the bill for the special trip, which incidently, was only two days before the normal store trip and they discovered the woman had travelled to Geraldton, they were not happy and there was some talk of making the husband pay for the extra trip.

It was a rule that expectant mothers had to leave the Island when seven months pregnant. On one trip, the wife of a keeper had to be brought ashore, having been on the Island six or seven months prior to the husband getting the job. They had been living, unemployed, in Fremantle and had very little money and no friends in Albany, so they decided to stay on the Island until the baby was almost due. On the boat trip back to Albany, the woman started to worry about what to do if she started to give birth. Arthur wasn't looking forward to trying his hand at midwifery but, in the hope of putting her mind at rest, reassured her that he had considerable experience in pulling calves from cows and he didn't think a baby would be much different. She promptly crossed her legs and kept them that way till they reached the jetty. There was no way she was going to have her baby at sea, aided by a cattle farmer.

Arthur remembered some of the keepers and their wives who were on the Island during his time on the Island's run and they included Guil and Grace Castle, brother in law Bill McAuliffe and Betty, Colin and Naomi Bishop. I knew the first four who were there in my time. After giving up the contract in 1969, Arthur concentrated on cattle breeding and then retired to Safety Bay.

Although 1952 was officially the climax of our association with Eclipse Island we still played a small part in the rescue of a couple of dinghies. Our successor, Arthur Bentley, had anchored his boat *Warrior* at the landing and with his mate Doug Moody, was in the process of rowing in, to hook a dinghy load of stores on to the derrick, when a rogue wave came aboard and swamped them. Arthur and Doug somehow gained the Island by scrambling into the net meant for the stores. This left the two with no way of reaching the *Warrior*. The dinghy was partly submerged and I believe they were both non-swimmers.

A radio message was sent to the Harbour Master and Fred and I were preparing to leave when we came across friends tidying their old fishing boat, *Estelle Star*. The skipper offered to help us out with their boat, which had extra length and speed. *Estelle Star* had been brought over from Sydney, where she had worked for many years as a harbour ferry. Being very low wooded she

did not appeal as a sea boat but managed surprisingly well. Approximately ninety minutes later we were at the Island landing. Much to our surprise, Arthur's dinghy had barely shifted position and was surrounded by floating cabbages and other stores. We towed Arthur's dinghy with our dinghy to the *Star*, then we picked up the marooned mariners and ferried them to the *Warrior*. We set off home in the *Estelle Star*, which had to be nursed a little, against a steep easterly sea, being of shallow draught and inclined to pound heavily.

On another occasion Arthur again lost his dinghy when it was being towed behind *Warrior*, on a rather boisterous return passage from Eclipse Island. The dinghy broke loose and drifted ashore to a heavy surf beach on the outside coast near to and west of Bald Head. Thinking the dinghy was irretrievably lost Arthur borrowed our dinghy for his next scheduled trip. On his return, a dark object was seen on the rough beach and a look through the binoculars confirmed it to be the lost dinghy. Leaving *Warrior* anchored off shore, Arthur, crew man Vern (Chippy) Bevilaqua and a visiting policeman friend, set off in our dinghy to retrieve the one on shore, but they had vastly underestimated the surf and were thrown out as the dinghy filled with water. Arthur, unable to swim, was picked up by the policeman who was six foot seven inches tall and could stand up in the surf and was able to drag Arthur to safety. That now left both dinghies on the shore and the *Warrior* anchored at sea, with Lighthouse keeper, Jack Jacobs and his family, suffering from acute seasickness below deck. The castaways on the shore had to climb the steep bushy slopes to the Frenchman Bay Hostel. From there I received a phone call to rescue *Warrior*.

On arrival at the anchored yacht we found that the starter motor would not operate and *Warrior* had to be towed back to town. We had to wait a week or more before any attempt could be made to salvage the boats on the beach. The rough and steep terrain made it impossible to retrieve them from the land side.

On a fine day, with a northerly offshore breeze and a smooth sea, Arthur set off to the scene of the disaster with a drifter friend, Jack Williams. In tow they had another dinghy, borrowed from ex-farmer Merv Abernethy. *Warrior* was anchored outside the surf and as close as possible to a small point of rock separating the West and East beaches. Jack rowed dinghy number three, *Rover*, near enough to throw the tail of a very lengthy set line to Chippy Bevilaqua

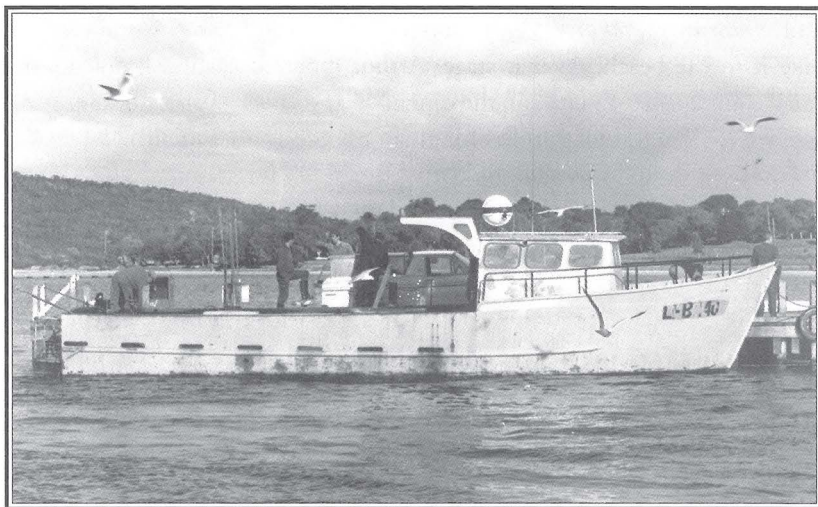
and me on shore. We managed to flip it over outstanding rocks and reefs and take it to the beach. At that stage, Arthur motored eastward, outside the rollers and anchored opposite the dinghies, which were a short distance east of the small rocky headland. Chippy and I hauled in sufficient line, with some guess work, to send out one boat and retain the rest for the other. Our dinghy was hauled to *Warrior*. Arthur's dinghy started well but was swamped in the outside breaker. However she eventually made it and was baled out. Most of the gear was recovered on the beach and sent out in the dinghies. There were then two happy parties - one on the sea and the other on land. Chippy and I made our way around the rocks and the western beach via 'the goat track', to our vehicle on the west side of Mount Misery. Dinghies can be a nuisance but were essential on the Island trips in those days.

Later there were considerable improvements made at the landing. Shortly after Arthur Bentley relinquished his contract, in 1969, the derrick was relocated approximately 70 metres to the east, towards the seal island. A large buoy, with ring attached, was moored at a distance from the rocks to allow the supply boats to pass a line through the ring and back on board. On the land side, the stern could be moored to a line attached to the rock. With this method the cargo net could be lifted in and out of the launch with no need for a dinghy.

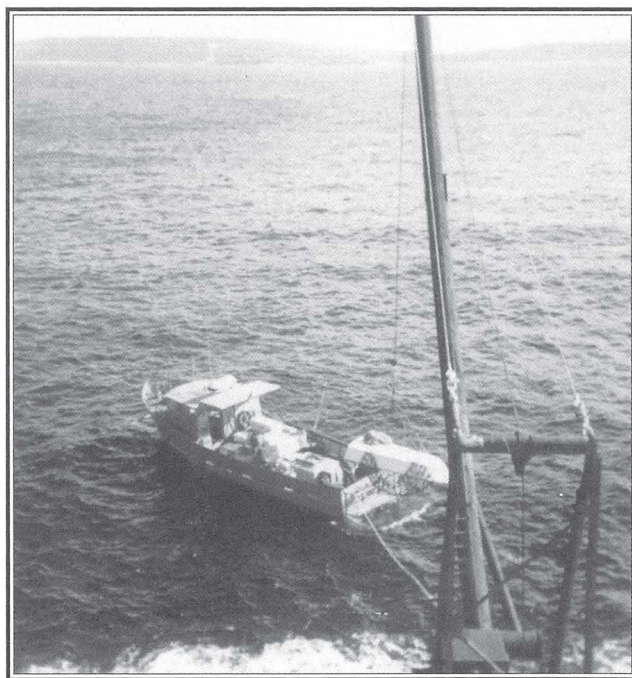
One often hears tales of the height of waves at sea. I could not even venture a guess with anything up to twenty metres. A novel estimate was made by a local solicitor, Les Seymour, during a trip in the *Kestrel* with my father, Geoff Wilson and Snow Day on a return passage from Waychinicup encountering heavy south easterly seas. "This is the only time I have had to look thirty feet in the air to see dolphins swimming" said Les.

When Arthur Bentley decided to give away the Eclipse Island run in 1969, he handed over to local fishermen, the Augustson family, with their 35 foot (10.7 metres) Randell designed fast chine launch, named *Peters Hope*.

The Augustson family spent twelve months on the Eclipse Island run and then the contract was taken up by fisherman, Don Pearson, who had just built a 42 foot (12.8 metres) steel launch *Leah*. With twin diesel engine, a large cockpit and a cabin to shelter passengers, she was ideal for the job and had a good turn of speed, which was a bonus. With the new equipment at the landing, there was no need for a dinghy, as the boat did not have a mast. A dinghy was built by George Thomas, on Eclipse Island, for use at Cape Leveque.

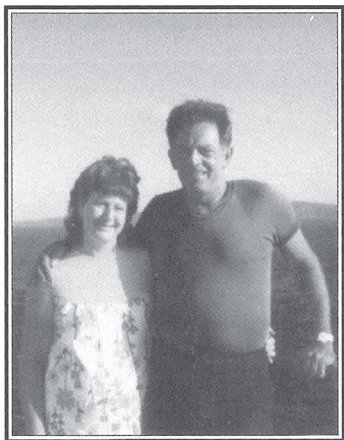


Fishing boat Leah – last boat service.

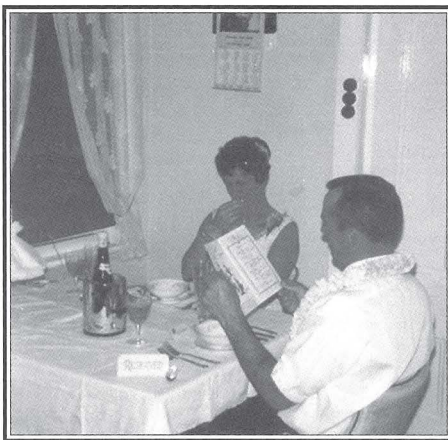


Leah at the newly positioned derrick and loading dinghy built on Eclipse Island. (Photograph courtesy Aub. Keightley)

A tragedy occurred in 1970 during the relocation of the landing gear. During the process of lifting the gear two workers from the *Cape Don*, the lighthouse tender, were badly injured, one fatally, when the derrick whip slipped out of position and the two men fell a considerable distance to the rocks below. Both the families on Eclipse Island and the crew of the lighthouse tender were badly affected by the news.

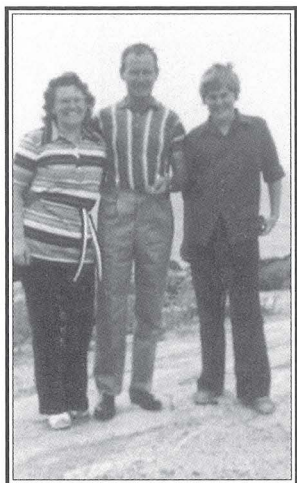


Beryl and George Thomas Light house keepers (1972-74).

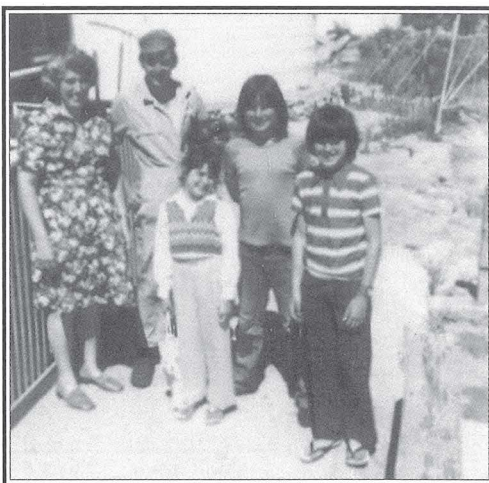


Doreen and Jim Robinson.

(Photographs courtesy A. Keightley)



Audrey and Ian White and Chris.

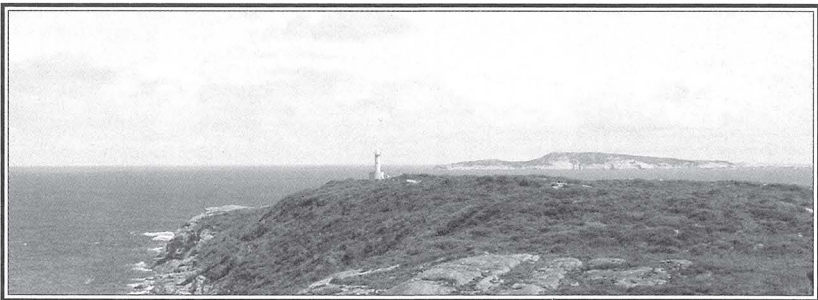


Eileen and Bill, Denray, Christopher and Johann.

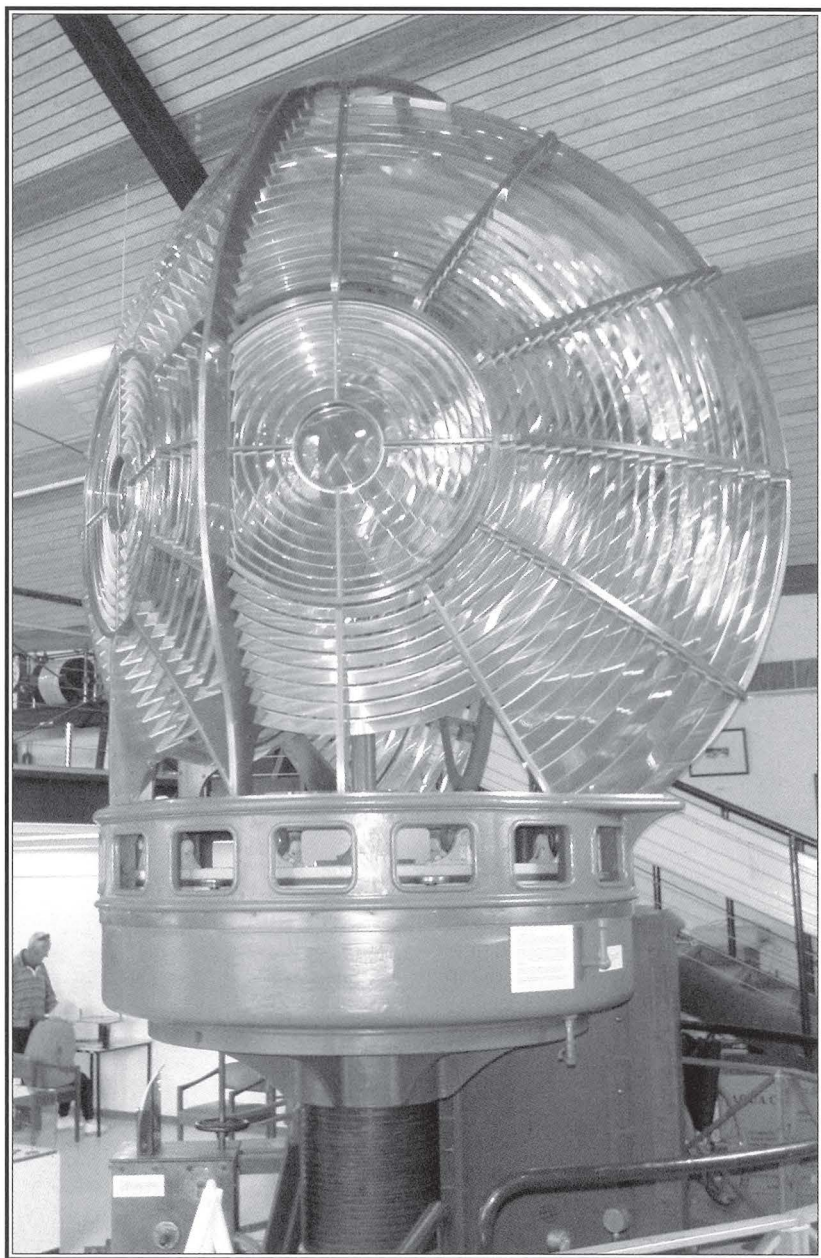
Don Pearson's contract lasted five years, until the department decided to build a lighthouse at Cave Point, on the mainland, which was completed in 1976. The tower was built by Albany contractor, Peter Cooper, from a well-known cricket and football family. The light was powered by State electricity whilst, at the same time, the Eclipse light was automatically driven by acetyline gas and later solar, as the light on Breaksea Island.



Cave Point Lighthouse.



Cave Point Lighthouse with Eclipse Island in distance.



Eclipse Light in the Western Australian Museum - Albany.

Later, visits by gas workers, mechanics and inspectors, to service the light on the Island, were made by Bell Brothers Helicopter. A helipad was constructed close to the auto light. The original light was donated to the Albany Residency Museum and was restored by Aubrey Keightley. It now stands in the Eclipse Building, Western Australian Museum, Albany, powered by electricity and is a great tourist and local attraction. Around the walls are paintings of Eclipse Island by artists, Drefus and Chelinary Gates, who were given permission to camp on the island while they completed several paintings, which were later bought by collector Michael Jardine. These paintings are now on a semi-permanent loan to the Museum. The cane basket, with a door in one side, used to land passengers, is also on display as well as many photos and memorabilia associated with the lighthouses.

Roving photographer, Ed Smidt, also spent some time on Eclipse Island. Alone, with provisions and photographic gear, he was several weeks on the Island. His return was overdue, as his small boat was unable to handle the bad weather. His friends ashore thought he might be low on rations, so I was asked to check, taking the Sea Rescue launch accompanied by young Colin



Michael Jardine and Valerie Milne with a painting by Drefus and Chelinary Gates.



The flat bottomed boat. (Photograph courtesy Ed. Smidt)

Bairstow. We arrived at the cove, to see Ed on the rocks, looking fit and well, but conditions were too poor to enable us to take his valuable equipment on board, so Ed decided to stay and live on fish for a few more days. Expecting him to be coming back with us we had not take provisions for him and the only food we had on board was a bread and honey sandwich, which we tossed to him in a monkey's fist, on a heaving line. Ed was picked up, with gear, several days later, none the worst for the delay. Whilst on the island, Ed discovered an old flat bottomed boat in the scrub, apparently built by one of the early light keepers.

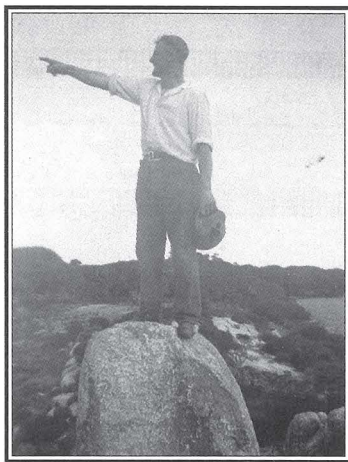
Today the Cave Point light is not used but still standing and the automatic lights at Eclipse and Breaksea Islands are still showing, though the current satellite navigation gives very accurate position.

A SHORT HISTORY OF MY CREW MEMBERS

Crews for the Eclipse run were mainly chosen for their experience with boats or the sea.

During the first few years of our contract, my father and I had the company of George Pannett, the son of old George 'Cock' Pannett. George was a tower of strength and a great companion in our sailing days. His neighbour, Arthur

'Blondie' Hatch, joined us when he was not working as an engineer at the local power station in York and Collie Streets. George and Arthur had sailed with me on a passage to Fremantle in the *Kestrel*. George would not accept payment for his time with us on the Eclipse run, so we made him a gift of a fifty acre block of land, east of Little Grove, which we had bought by paying over due rates, for the sum of five pounds and sixteen shillings (about eleven dollars). George installed a caravan park on the block naming it 'Panorama', taking the first three letters



George Pannett

from his surname. George had to give up the Eclipse trips when his boss, Neville Reeves, a builder, joined the army in World War II and George took over the business as manager. I crewed with George in his 18-foot boat, (5.4 metre) *Pal-O-Mine* and later raced against his 28-foot (8.5 metre) *Dauntless* with my boat, *Kestrel*. Born in 1907 he passed away at the age of 75 years.

George Brown, a lifelong mate of mine, assisted my father and I for a couple of years on the Eclipse Island run. During the years before World War II, when *Kestrel* was being built, we had romantic ideas of sailing to the many islands in the Pacific, after reading books about people who had done these voyages. We were gradually gathering nautical instruments together, when we saw an advertisement in the local paper "sextant for sale." We went to the house, which was next to the then army drill hall (now R.A.A.F cadets), in upper Spencer Street and knocked on the door. Both being shy we were stunned when a good-looking girl answered and were completely demolished when she told us the price. Her father was Captain Lomax and her name was Betty. We never made it to the islands in the Pacific but used to talk often about "the sextant girl". We found out later that she worked at Drew Robinson's department store and later, married Teddy Riggs, a fisherman and saxophone player. Ted's brother, Harry, a farmer from Napier, was for many years president of the Albany Shire Council.



Marjorie, George and Marie, 1944.

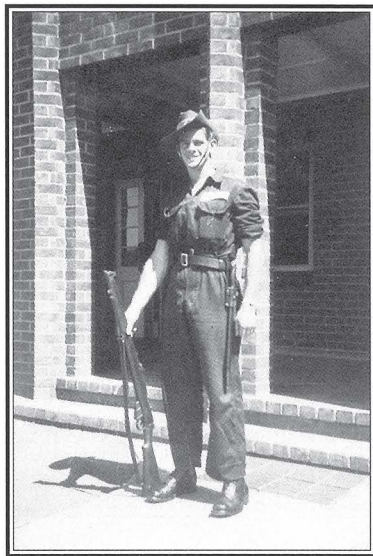
In the early 1940s we were both attracted to the daughter of the head keeper at Eclipse. Her name was Ailsa Newman and we named her "The Bell of the Isle." She didn't know about our attraction and we didn't make any approaches to her - so she probably had a lucky escape. Her mother knitted me a woollen jumper - she must have thought I looked miserable and cold on my trips to Eclipse.

A couple of years later, two girls from Fremantle came to holiday in Albany. One, Marie Jackson, worked for the Navy Victualling Yard and the other, Marjorie Dykes, worked at the Fremantle Court House. Marjorie had an invitation to meet my sister, Beryl, who worked at the Albany Courthouse. George and I were "forced!" to help entertain the attractive girls with outings in our yachts *Swift* and *Kestrel*. We must have made a good impression. Marie and I were married in 1946 and had three daughters. Four years later Marjorie and George were married and had one daughter and four sons. We all remained good friends, including the children and had happy times together. George and Marjorie were sadly missed when they both passed on in 1999. We still often think of them with fond memories.

George Brown and George Pannett had completed a couple of trips with me, to Fremantle and back, by boat. On one occasion, when bringing the *Temeraire* back to Albany for use as a pleasure boat, George wrote a poem

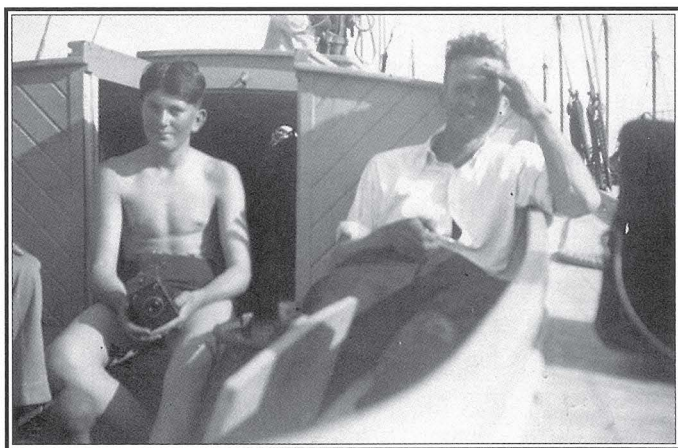
called 'Spewin round the Leeuwin' which aptly expressed his feelings at the time. George had to give up crewing for me when he had to take over from his father's carrying business, Bishop and Reeves (J.A. Williamson)

Warren Frederick 'Snow' Day stepped into the breach for a short time until his father, Harold, offered him a partnership in the bakery. The bakery was named H.L. Day and Sons, the latter being Snow and his brother Lindsay. Snow, on retirement, has taken up amateur boat building and has built more launches than any local professional. They are all chine designs in plywood.



Snow Day

After a good showing in seamanship by sixteen-year-old Ronald Plester Jones, on a passage to and from Fremantle in 1944, I induced my father to offer him a job. We had a varied business, consisting of anything from boat repairs, boat building, launch hire, attending ships, building jetties, mechanical



Ron Jones

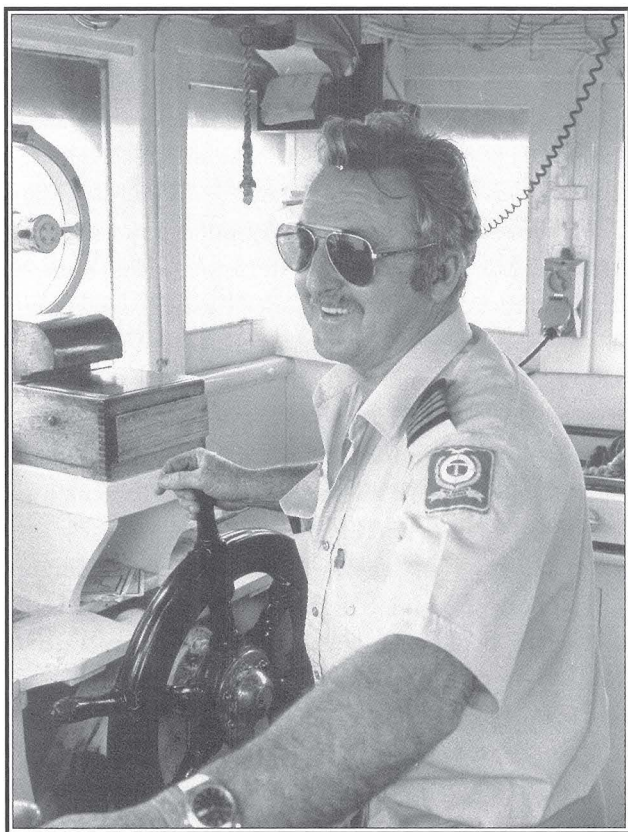
work, petrol installations and even building a wool store, built opposite Peter Grahams Store in Carlyle Street and much more. Poor Jonesie developed tuberculosis at an early age and passed away in his home town Albany, spending time in the sanatorium at Wooroloo, in the Darling Ranges, near Perth

It was a very sad day when I attended his funeral with his family and a large gathering of friends. One of eight children, he was idolised by his siblings. His parents, Mr and Mrs Hughie Jones, were potato farmers in the Grassmere district. They retired to Albany during the War where they ran a popular small sandwich bar and tea shop near the present-day post office in York Street.

Another member of my sailing crew was young Kevin McGuckin. Kevin was one of a family of ten. Their father, Jack and his wife, brought them up in a government railway house, opposite the station. Jack was Inspector of the Permanent Way. Apart from the fortnightly run to Eclipse Island and quarterly visits to Breaksea, Kevin worked in our general business with the danger of becoming a 'Jack of all Trades'. However he was saved from this possibility by accepting a job with the State Electricity Commission. He eventually moved further afield, after marrying a local girl. He finally moved to Collie.

After Kevin left, young Freddie Bairstow saved the day. He also was involved in sailing and boating generally, in the Town Jetty area and the roll, jump and pitch on small boats at sea didn't seem to upset his stomach at all. Fred was from a family of seven, with four girls and three boys and their mother, Rose and father, Walter. They are a very musical family, playing a variety of instruments and singing both solo and harmony, which they appeared to enjoy very much. Makes me envious! Whenever I have a telephone call or a chat with Fred we always seem to end up laughing, recalling the good and bad old days we have spent together over the years.

Arthur, like ourselves, also had a variety of crew members. Nomad Jack Williams, who slept in the sailing club shed on the town jetty, during his stay in Albany. In those days the shed was rather decrepit, with a hole in the floor for the toilet. Others were Doug Moody, a town councillor, Chippy Bevilaqua and Len Mellowship. Chippy, a school mate of mine, belonged to a well-known Albany family who were the proprietors of the Middleton Beach Tearooms in the 1920s. They used to hire out bathers for a small cost, stretchy, one-piece cotton costumes, made to fit all sizes. Chippy spent a good part of



Fred Bairstow

his life as a Waterside Union member. He also employed in lime burning, at Big Grove, assisting Denis

'Alf' O'Keefe. Len Mellowship left the farming area just out of Albany, to retire locally. His boating experience was gained after purchasing the port's oldest fishing boat *Ada*. This double-ender arrived in Albany by steamship from Adelaide, in the late 1890s, to be used for professional fishing. After *Ada* had a long period of inactivity Fred Bairstow restored her, minus the centre case. She now lies moored at the sailing club in Little Grove.

PEOPLE CONNECTED WITH THE ISLAND STORES

I have admiration for Allen and Jean Hill, who supplied the stores for the families on Eclipse Island, from their small and untidy shop in Peel's Place, York Street, Albany. They not only supplied the stores but also gifts of chocolate for the kids and flowers for the wives. I doubt if Jean and Allen Hill made any money. I don't know much of Allen's background but a little more about Jean. The Hills lived on a large block on the lower side of Brunswick Road, where the offices of the Albany Port Authority, Customs and Harbour Master now stands. The block belonged to Jean's father, Tom Wilson. Near the road were a number of stables, as Tom was a great horse lover. On the lower slopes there is a large, balancing, boulder, known as the Mass Rock. This apparently was the site where a priest conducted the first service on the South Coast.

Tom, during his working life with the Railway Department, was in charge of all the cargo handled on and off the Port's jetties. This was before the formation of the Albany Harbour Board (now Albany Port Authority). Tom had to pass a colour test for his job directing railway trucks and engines. The test was pointing out the different hues in a ball of multicoloured wool. Tom placed his hand on the ball and came out thus. "Wed, Boo, Gween, Yellow by 'bugga damn' you can't twick me." Whether he was colour blind or not I don't know, but he must have been given the benefit of the doubt. Tom also had a 100-acre property on the Albany side of Little Grove. He built a fairly good weekender there called 'Over Yonder' and travelled to and from home by horse and cart. On his death the block passed to his daughter and then to Horace Otter, where the family lived for some time on his retirement from Eclipse Lighthouse. George Otter, who runs a service station near Busselton, recently sent me a drawing of the dwelling, with a sketch of a frame on a hillock, nearby, above the house line. Tom would light a hurricane lamp and hang it on the frame on arrival from the Brunswick road home to inform his wife that he had arrived safely. Panic set in one night when no signal appeared and Mrs Wilson sent well-known horseman, Ralph Mason, to investigate. He found that Tom had fallen off the cart on the bumpy track and had broken his arm.

Reg Hill, of Copley's Butchery, owned by Reg and his father Alf, was also very obliging in making the large supply of meat available in the very early

hours of the morning for departure to Eclipse. We could not load the fresh meat supplies the day before as there was no freezer aboard *Kestrel*.

It was sometime after 1940 that I took Hubert and Gwen Kitson to Eclipse Island. I had the pleasure of meeting them at a later date on a mainland station at the Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse in the Busselton/Dunsborough area. I was riding a push bike from Perth to Albany via the south west and a visit to the lighthouse was a priority. I knocked on the door of one of the keeper's houses and was pleasantly surprised when it was opened by Gwen Kitson. Her offer to stay the night was eagerly accepted. Gwen, formerly Lewis, was a sister of Albany hairdresser and cricketer, Vin Lewis. She had looked after our family when my mother was in hospital giving birth to one of my younger sisters. A sister, Mrs Malacari, had gone to Eclipse with us a couple of times to spend a holiday. Their father Louie, a colourful Italian, worked with my father on the reconstruction of the semi-derelict pilot schooner 'Waratah', for owner Vern Farley.

BREAKSEA ISLAND KEEPERS

The following record is incomplete.

1858		JAMES HANNAY OR HARNEY
1858		ROBERT GAMBLE
1858		WILLIAM HILL
1858		JAMES MILLER
1870	1872	MORRIS (MOSES) O'KEEFE
1870		MICHAEL LITHORNE
1870	1883	GEORGE TURNER
1870	1884	R TURNER
1883	1884	W LINDFIELD
1883	1884	CHAS E REDDIN
1883	1884	RICHARD NESBITT
1885	1886	HENRY K TOLL
1885	1888	GEORGE POWNEY
1886	1887	W LINDFIELD
		ROBERT & FAY HOWE
1887	1891	A ROBINSON
1887	1890	JOB (JOE) SYMONDS
1888	1888	W SMITH DIED 1/2/90

1890	1891	W PARKER
1891	1894	FRED OR BERT "CHOOKY" FOWLES W ELET
1893	1896	G WATERS
1894	1897	HA COOPER
1897	1899	S ELLIOTT
1895	1897	JJ LYONS
1894	1896	JA TATTERSALL
1896	1903	GEORGE NELSON
1900	1903	JOHN HOWE FROM PILOT CREW
1900	1902	JOHN McCOURT
1902	1904	JOHN CARL HANSEN
1903	????	ROBERT WILKINSON HOWE
1903	1903	THOMAS ANDERSON SMITH
1903	1904	HERMAN PINN
1904		WILLIAM CHESHIRE
1904		FREDERICK RAY
1904	1906	FRED FARMER
1905		EDWARD JAMES CUNNINGHAM
1909	1910	ALEXANDER DICK McEACHERN
1910	1912	HARRY JOHN POWELL
1912		ARTHUR GREENWOOD
1917	1919	RW HOWE
		EJ WITHNELL
1917		GEORGE MAINLAND
1917	1919	B BISHOP
1919	1922	W CHESHIRE
1919	1922	H HANSON
1920		LARSEN
1920		BILL AND QUEENIE McCOLL
1920		GEORGE ANDERS
1920	1924	W E CHESTER AND MURIEL
1920'S		N B DRUMMOND
		JOHN TURNER
		H NUDDLE
		J CARLEY
		L C JACOBS

ECLIPSE KEEPERS

1926	1928	HORACE EDWARD VAILLANT
1926		T E WINTER
1926	1929	D MINER
1929	1931	KE DAVIDSON
1926	1939	TED CUNNINGHAM
1929		MILLER
1929		MCCOLL BILL & QUEENIE
1929		SCALES (RELIEF)
1929		G WILLIS
1929	1930	DAVIDSON
1929	1930	CG JOHNSON
1930	1935	GVK KNIGHT
1932	1934	JE CHAMBERLAIN
1937	1939	B BISHOP
193?	19??	H KITSON & GWEN
1930	1935	SHAVE
1937	1939	C CHAPMAN
1937	1939	AO BLYTHE
1939		GJC CUNNINGHAM
1939		BADMAN
1940	1950	STROSHER
1940	1950	BISHOP COLIN & NAOMI
19??	19??	CONNOLLY HENRY M WIFE & DAUGHTER
1941	1945	ALF NEWMAN & WIFE & AILSA
1942		HOWE HAROLD (DIED ASHORE STROKE)
1942	1944	NOBBY & GLAD PANNETT & BRIAN
1942	1950	BLAIR
1942	1950	COLLETTE
1942	1950	AOBLYTHE
1942	1950	JACK JACOBS
1946	1955	HORRIE OTTER
1940'S		LANCE BIRD (RELIEF) CASUAL
		BILL WHINNERAH “
		BILL DEERE “
		JOHN WHEELER “
		WARD “
		FRED THORNE “
1955		GUILDFORD CASTLE
1955		W MCAULIFFE

1955		GEORGE DITTMER
1955		I HOLLINGS
1957		R GODLING
1960		F NEWCOMBE
1960		G N GUNTER
1960		CHRIS HOLDEN
1962		B W GATES
1964		W L HILLS
1964		J E NOBBS
1967	1968	HORRACE HEWITT
1967		MICHAEL HOLPER
1967		HARRY HOLMYARD
1968		TAYLOR
1970	1971	JOHN PILLOCK
1972	1974	BILL DENRAY
1972	1974	JAMES ROBINSON
1972	1974	IAN WHITE
1973	1976	KING
1972	1974	GEORGE THOMAS
1974	1976	MICHAEL KERROD
1974	1976	DESMOND MARTIN

HEADS OF DEPARTMENT OF LIGHTHOUSES AND NAVIGATION

1940'S	CAPT. MOORE
1950'S	CAPT. HEAD
	ENGINEERS
1940'S	MR DOUGLAS
1948-1949	C.CONWAY
	MR BADMAN
	MR GARRICK
DISTRICT OFFICER	MR J.J. AIREY
DISTRICT ENGINEER	G.R.HUNTER 1917
	MECHANICS
	HARRY WEISS
	JOHNSON
	ARDALL
	THOMPSON
	TOMS
	DAVIDSON

1934	A.C. CHAPMAN
1937	CAIRNS
RIGGER	B. THORPE
	MR BLACK

LIGHTHOUSE TENDERS

1925-1930	'GOVERNOR MUSGRAVE'
	'KYOGLER'
1931-1943'	'CAPE OTWAY'
1943-	'CAPE DON'

WITH THANKS

I have endeavoured to collect the names of as many of the lighthouse keepers, mechanics, engineers and heads of the Department of Lighthouses and Navigation, who have been involved with the lighthouses of the Albany area. An advertisement in *The West Australian* in the 'Can You Help' column is collated by Jenny Kohlen, an ex Albany girl, daughter of Mavis Verscheur, who was well known locally for her radio talks, under the name 'Mavis'. This yielded a great response from some keepers alive today and their descendants including Doug Guildersleeve from South Lake, whose grandfather, Robert Howe was on Breaksea pre 1900 and later on Rottneest Island. Doug's father had been a crew member on *Kjogle* and *Cape Otway* from 1924 to 1940, when he was killed. Robert and daughter, Fay Howe, were on Breaksea in 1914. Fay, an expert in morse code, signalled farewell to a large convoy of troop ships and escorts, departing for service in Europe. Fay was able to take messages from some of the troops and pass them on to relatives and friends ashore.

Lorna and Norm Young of Albany provided photographs of Lorna's parents, Billy and Queenie McColl, who were on Eclipse prior to 1939.

Lorna Bishop, now Mrs Willock, of Geraldton, father was head keeper at Eclipse in the late 1930s.

Andrew and Colin Pinnock's father, Raymond William John Pinnock, was a keeper from 1970 – 1971 on Eclipse and 1971—1978 at Leeuwin.

BILL CHESHIRE – Phoned re John Turner and possibly Larson Breaksea 1920s

MARGARET DAVIDSON – Light keeper Davidson Eclipse 1929-1930

MRS BILL HARRIGAN (aged 80 years) Nedlands

A phone call to say her Grandfather Robinson was on Breaksea 1887. She mentioned children were transported to mainland by boat, when staying in town to attend school. Also referred to the Gormans of Mount Barker who were associated with transport to the Island.

BERYL OLIVER (Whinnerah) – Photos and names provided.

Phone call stating lighthouse keepers John Turner and George Anders at Breaksea in 1920.

COLLEEN GIMM 42 Echo Road Mt. Masure – Provided names of Fred Farmer and Frederick Ray. Breaksea 1904 and 1906

MRS GRACE CAMPBELL (nee Hansen. 21 Morden Street Wembley Downs.

Sent a letter to say her paternal Grandfather Carl Johan Hansen was a keeper at Breaksea 1902- 1904, then Cape Naturaliste. His wife Grace was taken off Breaksea to have her first child Carl Edward in June 1902 and then twins in November 1904. One twin

died but the other survived and became the father of Grace. Her mother and the baby are buried in the Pioneer Cemetery Albany.

ALEC FOWLES Canning Highway W. Attadale

Gave me the name of Fred (Chooky) Fowles lighthouse keeper

LAURA PLAYER 36 Salween Place Beechboro 6063

Keeper Job (Joe) Symonds Breaksea 1891 –1904. Also assistant keeper Sept/Oct. 1888

AILSA ELSEGOOD 10 Napier Close Halls Head Mandura 6210

Her parents Mr and Mrs Alf Newman keepers on Eclipse in 1940's. Alf and daughter Ailsa were both interested in the breeding of mutton birds doing much research in this area as well as other wild life such as lizards and insects for curator Mr Glauert of W.A. State Museum. I located Ailsa through the efforts of my Perth 'agent' Bob Wittenoom who had made a number of passages with me to Eclipse in Kestrel in his early days in Albany. The sister of Alf Newman married Doctor Arthur Vivian who had two sons. Harley, one of the sons, moved to Perth and renewed his friendship with Bob. Harley, a cousin to Ailsa and Bob were able to track down Ailsa and I received a very welcome letter with the above information.

My young grand-daughter, Bian Hawkhead, also provided quite a lot of information by researching sources on lighthouses.

Married 1946 to Marie Jackson of Fremantle. Have three daughters Valerie (Shanti) Janet and Wendy. Lived in Albany all working life and now retired.



Marie and Stan Austin in dinghy used to take stores from Kestrel, Dauntless and Kia Kia to Eclipse Island. (Converted to sail for recreational purposes) 2001

End note

1. Original letters (courtesy of Don Phillips.)



Author Stan Austin spent thirteen years, during and after World War II, carrying supplies in his 30ft yacht *Kestrel* to the people who lived on the lighthouse island of Eclipse and also to Breaksea Island.

He retired from the run in the 1950s and still lives in Albany with his wife, Marie.

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