

LIGHT HOUSES OF NEW ZEALAND

CAPE CAMPBELL K4274



Latitude: 41°44' South
Longitude: 174° 17' East

The light was lit for the first time on 1 August 1870, and the keepers were withdrawn in 1986. The light shines from a 22 metre-high cast iron tower painted with broad black and white stripes, and is 47 metres above sea level. Its white light flashes once every 15 seconds, and can be seen for 19 nautical miles (35 kilometres).

Cape Campbell Lighthouse is situated on the eastern coast of the South Island and marks the southern approaches to Cook Strait. The cape has contributed to the wreck of many ships. It was after the wreck of the Alexander in 1858, in which one person was drowned, that Cape Campbell was chosen as a suitable site for a lighthouse. However, it was another 10 years before one was built. The light was finally lit on 1 August 1870. Two years later faults were found in the tower's construction, and it had to be wedged up and the timbers refastened throughout. In 1898 the hardwood was found to be decaying and it was decided

to replace the tower with a new one made of cast iron.

In October 1905 the light began operating from its new site alongside the old tower, which was demolished shortly afterwards. To make the lighthouse stand out from the white hills behind it, the tower was painted with black and white stripes. There are only two other lighthouses in New Zealand that are not just plain white - Dog Island which looks similar to Cape Campbell, and Cape Palliser which has red and white stripes. In July 1938 the light was converted from oil illumination to electric power supplied by diesel generators. Later, in the 1960s, it was converted to mains electricity. Life, particularly domestic life, at the lighthouse at Cape Campbell changed very little over the years for the keepers and their families. Despite the station's proximity to Blenheim, about 50 kilometres away, cows were kept to supply fresh milk and bread was baked at the station each day until the 1960s.



In 1986 the light was automated and the last keeper withdrawn. The light is now monitored electronically from Wellington.