

## LIGHT HOUSES OF NEW ZEALAND

# CAPE EGMONT K4088



**Latitude: 39° 17' South**  
**Longitude: 173°45' East**

The Cape Egmont light was first lit on 1 August 1881, and the keepers withdrawn in 1986. The light shines from a 20 metre high white cast iron tower, situated 33 metres above sea level. Its white light flashes every 8 seconds and can be seen for 19 nautical miles (35 kilometres).

The lighthouse on Cape Egmont was first built in 1865 on Mana Island, near Cook Strait. Unfortunately, the Mana Island light was often confused with the Pencarrow light, so it was dismantled and taken to Cape Egmont in 1877. The Government had decided to build a light on Cape Egmont in the 1860s, but the work was delayed because of the Taranaki Wars. In August 1881 the light shone for the first time, but troops remained stationed on the first floor of the lighthouse until mid-February the following year.

The lighthouse keepers, however, seem to have been more concerned about the army stationed in the tower than any local troubles. The letter books are full of complaints to the Secretary of Marine regarding the

armed guests. After several letters of complaint the Secretary wrote back: "It is considered necessary for the men to occupy the ground floor of the lighthouse for the present and I trust you will exert yourself to get on amicably with the force and not let me have further complaints of that trivial nature of those now made by you." The lighthouse service was based on a strict hierarchy to avoid disputes, although not always with total success.

Several of the keepers on the station were either dismissed or fined for refusing to take orders from their superior keeper.

All the tasks to be carried out by keepers (and their wives) were clearly stated in the handbook, Instructions to Lighthouse Keepers. Any changes from the specified routine had to be checked and cleared with the Marine Department - everything from going to the doctor to having guests to stay.

In 1951 the lighthouse was electrified by power from diesel generators, and later connected to the mains electric power supply. It had been intended that a keeper would remain on the station to maintain the property and provide weather reports, but owing to staff shortages the keeper was transferred to another station. On 14 July 1956 the vessel *Calm* grounded off the cape during a gale. As a result of an inquiry, a permanent keeper was placed back on the station, until the light was automated in 1986.

The light is now monitored electronically from Wellington.