

## LIGHT HOUSES OF NEW ZEALAND

# CAPE PALLISER K4000



**Latitude: 41°37' South**  
**Longitude: 175° 17' East**

The light was lit for the first time on 27 October 1897, and the keepers were withdrawn in December 1986. The light shines from an 18 metre-high white metal tower painted with distinctive red bands, and is 78 metres above sea level. It flashes twice every 20 seconds, and can be seen for 26 nautical miles (48 kilometres).

Cape Palliser Lighthouse stands on the south eastern tip of the North Island, adding to an area already rich in history. Cape Palliser features prominently in Maori history and the legends of Kupe. The area also features in the colonisation of New Zealand - the rugged coast and notorious Cook Strait gales contributing to many early shipwrecks. Only six months before the light was lit in 1897, a ship was wrecked within 4 miles of the new tower and 12 of the 21 crew drowned. While a light on the cape reduced the number of shipwrecks, the area still remained hazardous for the

unwary. Loading stores from ship to shore proved a harrowing experience at times. The Cape Palliser letter book is filled with countless tales of stores being lost. For example, in 1912:

"All the oats and one bag of chaff were destroyed. We have spread the oats on the oil and dry stores floors to dry, and are turning them over several times a day, but still they do not seem to dry properly, and have a rusty smell about them." Stores were delivered to the station every three months.

When the lighthouse was eventually connected to the nearby settlements by road, keepers would collect their mail and supplies once a week from Pirinoa. Today, the station is only a couple of hours drive away from Wellington.

The light was automated in 1986 and the keepers withdrawn. It is now monitored electronically from Wellington.



At Cape Palliser the storage buildings and keepers' homes were at sea level, making the unloading easier than at many other stations, where goods had to be hauled up cliffs using a trolley on rails. If the seas were too rough, the stores could be landed at the more sheltered Kawakawa Bay, some 6 kilometres away.

Before steps were built in 1912, the keepers would have to walk up the 58 metre diffusing an old dirt track - a dangerous task, especially in stormy weather. Oil and kerosene were hauled up the cliff face to the light station on a railway using a hand winch.

In 1954 the light was converted from oil to diesel-generated electricity, and in 1967 it was connected to mains electricity. There is a diesel-electric generator for standby emergency power.