

LIGHT HOUSES OF NEW ZEALAND

CASTLE POINT K3994



Latitude: 40°54' South
Longitude: 176° 14' East

The light was lit for the first time on 12 January 1913, and the keepers withdrawn in 1988. In 1954 the light was converted from oil illumination to electricity from a diesel generator, before being connected to the country's main electric power supply in 1961. The light shines from a 23 metre-high white iron tower, and is 52 metres above sea level. Its white light flashes three times every 30 seconds, and can be seen for 26 nautical miles (48 kilometres).

Castle Point lighthouse is situated on the Wairarapa Coast, east of Masterton. Built upon a prominent cliff - Captain Cook observed that it looked like an old medieval stronghold - it is an impressive sight for ships sailing towards Wellington from America and Panama. The beauty of the area is not only admired from the sea.

Castle Point beach is popular with holiday makers and the lighthouse increased the popularity of the beach, providing visitors with an added attraction. In 1913, when the lighthouse was first lit, the township had already been established - making life at this lighthouse different from any other in the country - and it became known as the 'holiday light'.

At this station children could attend the nearby school, the shops provided regular groceries, and there was even a hotel where friends and family could stay. No wonder an early Marine Department brochure described it as "one of the most popular lights for keepers".

In 1922, one unfortunate visitor touring the lighthouse found the body of the principal keeper who had fallen from the 23 metre-high tower while fixing the telephone wire. In the years that followed, it was said his ghost continued to live on - by all accounts quite peacefully - in the principal keeper's house at the station. Castle Point Lighthouse was one of the last watched stations to be built in New Zealand, and the iron tower was the last to be constructed in England and brought to New Zealand in sections. These were landed at a nearby beach prior to final construction.

In 1988 the light was automated and the keepers withdrawn. The light is now monitored by computer from Wellington.