

Waypoints of a Previous Age

Lighthouses have always had a very special place in the hearts and minds of seamen, specially those of the navigating kind. We plotted our courses between them and anxiously strained our eyes through the rain and the murk to identify their characteristic flash. Many a time you could pick up their loom long before they popped above the horizon and you would climb up to the monkey island, counting the seconds under your breath (one ... AND ... two ... AND ... three ... AND ... four ... AND ... five ...) to confirm their interval and to take a bearing. Many a ships master has been comforted during a sleepless night when the whistle on the voice pipe from the bridge peeped shrilly and the OOW finally reported that such and such a light had been sighted.

So, no wonder then that they will attract us like a moth unto a flame when we come across one, perhaps when on holiday, and have the chance of seeing them up close. It happened to me two years ago at Cape Leeuwin on the South West edge of Australia where the Southern and Indian Oceans meet. I just had to take the conducted tour and was quite amazed, when in discussion with the tour guide, to discover that he had not only heard of my old shipping company but had actually made a model of one of my old ships, the *Trefusis*.

It also happened to Captain Barry Young at the eastern extreme of that same continent. Barry, who, you may remember, contributed a tale of B.I. Days and his poem "Becalmed" in issue 33 of Sept.'09, was on a trip to the Gold Coast with his wife and they visited the Byron Bay lighthouse. He noticed while walking along the peninsular near the tower that the large double fresnel lens was rotating even though it was daytime and the light was off. The museum curator explained that the lens had to be kept moving to prevent the sun from being focused by the lens into a beam which could start bush fires in the interior behind the light!

Barry sends us a picture of the lighthouse and a very fishy "pome" to go with it.

Anyone else out there with a anecdote or two about lighthouses. We could start another feature:
"Lighthouses I have seen"

The Lightkeeper's Daughter

By Max Holmes – one time keeper of the Byron Bay lighthouse, Australia's easternmost lighthouse. This poem is on display in the museum at the base of Byron Bay Lighthouse.

She was only a lightkeeper's daughter
A lonely life she led
She'd sit all day by the salty spray
And dream that she was wed.

A chap called at the light one day
Wearing a **LEATHER JACKET**
SGT. BAKER was his name
A **TAILOR** was his racket.

This **FLATHEAD** thought "Now here's my chance
To **SQUIRE** a lonely **SALLY**
I'll press her **SWEETLIPS** close to mine
And tell her of one **TREE VALLEY**."

Of what a lovely **PLAICE** it is
And maybe I can **SNAPPER**"
The drongo didn't have a **SPRAT**
Although he looked so dapper.

She said "You **PRAWN** you have no **SOLE**
And I'm full to the **BREAM**
Quit **FLOUNDER**-ing here, your **PORPOISE** is clear."
And that was the end of him.

She was only a lightkeeper's daughter
And never went out at night
And although she was always out by day
She finally saw the light.

Barry assures me that these are all genuine names of Aussie fish.

