



U.S. Lighthouse Society ~ Lighthouses of the United Kingdom

St Catherine's Point Lighthouse (St. Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight)



History

St Catherine's Lighthouse is situated at Niton Undercliffe, 5 miles from Ventnor on the Isle of Wight and comprises a white octagonal tower with 94 steps up to the lantern. The main light, visible for up to 30 nautical miles in clear weather is the third most powerful light in the Trinity House Service giving a guide to shipping in the Channel as well as vessels approaching the Solent.

There is a fixed red subsidiary light displayed from a window 7 metres below the main light and shown westward over the Atherfield Ledge. It is visible for 17 miles in clear weather, and was first exhibited in 1904. Both lights are electric, and standby battery lights are provided in case of a power failure.



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A small light was first set up at St. Catherine's in about 1323 by Walter de Godyton. He erected a chapel and added an endowment for a priest to say Masses for his family and to exhibit lights at night to warn ships from approaching too near this dangerous coast, both purposes being fulfilled until about 1530 when the Reformation swept away the endowment. Neither the present lighthouse tower lighted in March 1840, nor the chapel of which the ruins remain, held these ancient lights. The present tower was constructed in 1838 following the loss of the sailing ship CLARENDON on rocks near the site of the present lighthouse. The lighthouse was built of ashlar stone with dressed quoins and was carried up from a base plinth as a 3 tier octagon, diminishing by stages. The elevation of the light proved to be too high, as the lantern frequently became mist capped and in 1875 it was decided to lower the light 13 metres by taking about 6 metres out of the uppermost section of the tower and about 7 metres out of the middle tier, which destroyed its beauty and made it appear dwarfed.

At that time the fog signal house was situated near the edge of the cliff but owing to erosion and cliff settlements the building developed such serious cracks that in 1932 it became necessary to find a new place for the fog signal, which was eventually mounted on a lower tower annexed to the front of the lighthouse tower, and built as a small replica. The resultant effect has been to give a well proportioned step down between the two towers which are now expressively referred to by the local inhabitants as "The Cow and the Calf". The fog signal was discontinued in 1987.

A tragic incident took place at the station during the Second World War. On the 1st June 1943 a bombing raid destroyed the engine house killing the three keepers on duty who had taken shelter in the building. R.T. Grenfell, C. Tomkins and W.E. Jones were buried in the local cemetery at Niton village and a plaque in remembrance of them is displayed on the ground floor of the main tower.

St Catherine's Lighthouse was automated in 1997 with the keepers leaving the lighthouse on 30 July.

The lighthouse had been a weather reporting station for the Meteorological Office for some years; the keepers made hourly reports which included the temperature, humidity, cloud height and formation and wind direction and force. Following demeaning of the lighthouse an automatic weather reporting station was installed which sends details of the weather conditions to the Met. Office.

The lighthouse itself is now monitored and controlled from the Trinity House Operations and Planning Centre at Harwich in Essex.



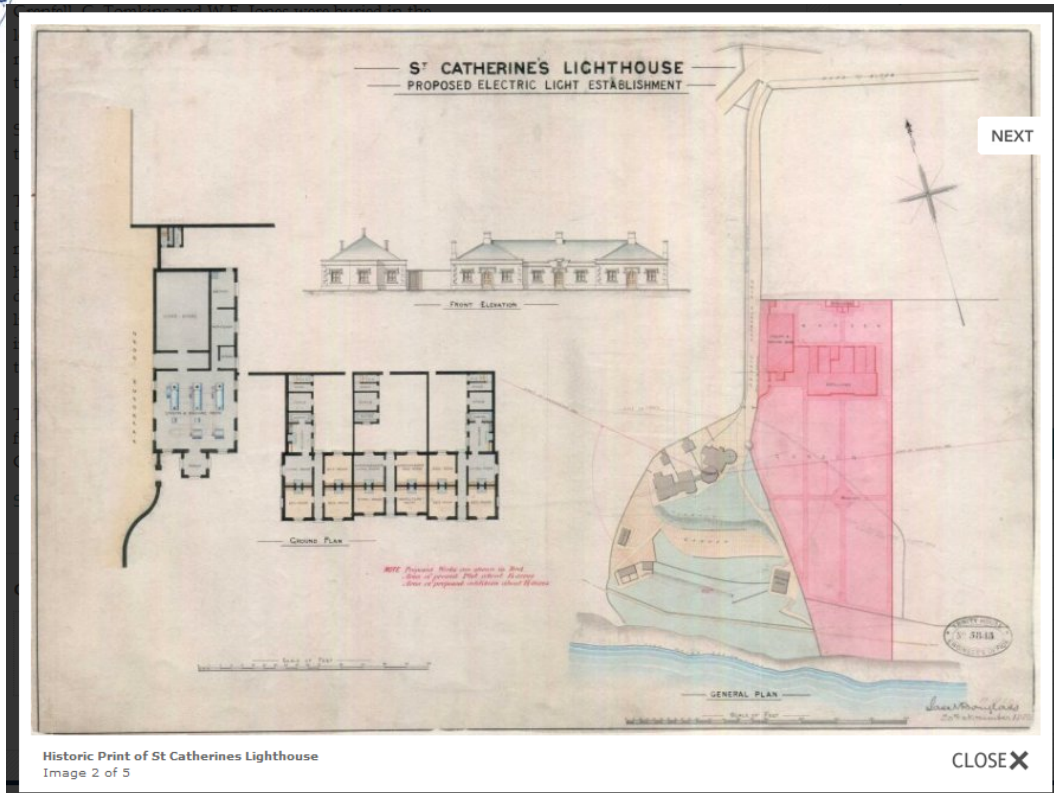
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Specifications

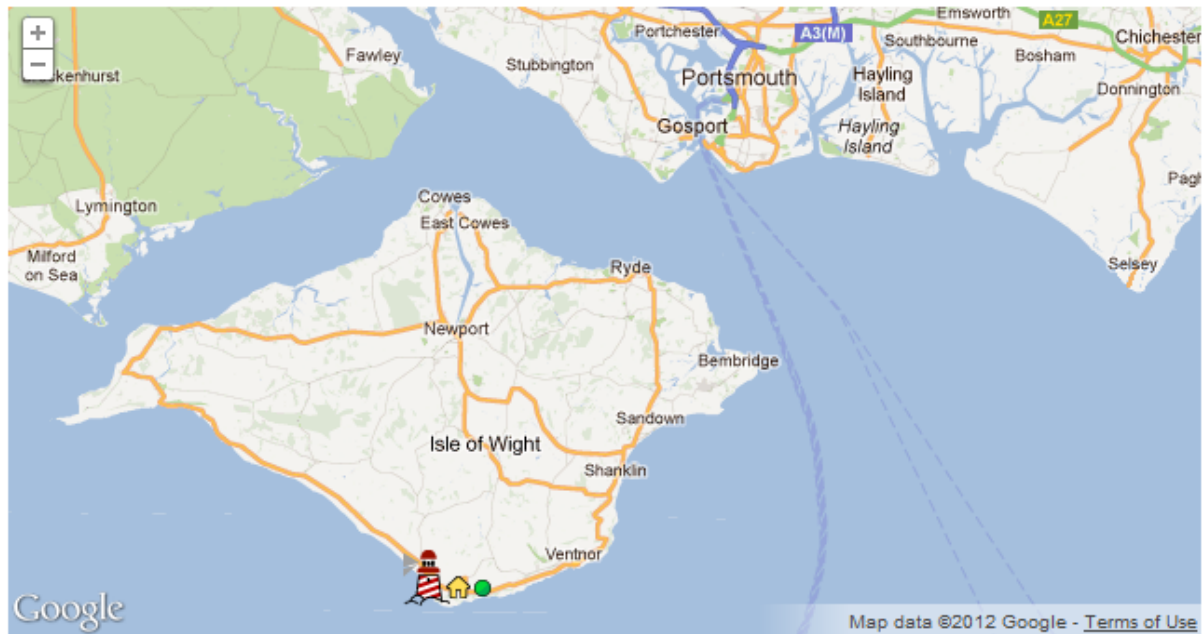
Established	1323
Height Of Tower	27 Metres
Height Of Light Above Mean High Water	41 Metres
Automated	30 July 1997
Lamp	1 X 400 W Mbi Lamp
Optic	2nd Order 4 Panel Catadioptric
Character	One White Flash Every 5 Seconds
Intensity	927,000 Candela
Range Of Light	26 nautical miles



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Location



Location

St Catherine's is situated at the most southerly point of the Isle of Wight, off the A3055 near Niton.

Parking

There is no vehicular access to the lighthouse.



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Visitor Centre

A light to warn shipping was first established on the Southerly tip of the Isle of Wight in 1323. Today the distinctive octagonal tower of St. Catherine's Lighthouse provides a way mark for vessels navigating in the English Channel and a guide to vessels approaching the Solent.

Each tour is approximately 35 minutes.

Tours of St Catherine's Lighthouse are operated by Maritime Heritage Tours Ltd, under license from The Corporation of Trinity House.

Contact Details

☎ +44(0)1983 855069

✉ enquiries@thls.org

Holiday Cottages

St Catherine's Lighthouse is situated just outside the hamlet of Niton, approximately 10 minutes' drive from the popular coastal resort of Ventnor - the southernmost point of the Isle of Wight. The site comprises a terrace of 3 holiday cottages Gurnard, Landward *and* Penda.

The Lighthouse grounds are enclosed with a wall and each Cottage has a private enclosed courtyard and parking area. Beyond the courtyard there is a communal grass area. There is an excellent real ale pub a 10-minute walk up the hill.

Book This Cottage

Bookings are handled by Rural Retreats

Tel: +44 (0) 1386 701 177

www.ruralretreats.co.uk



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ST. CATHERINE'S Isle Of Wight

St. Catherine's offers something for all the family from the Lighthouse enthusiast to the visitor seeking

something completely different. Visit the Lighthouse for a guided tour, climbing the 94 steps to the top of the tower, listening to interesting stories from the history to the present day along the way.

Tour duration: approx 35 minutes

Visits to the Lighthouse are organised by Maritime Heritage Tours Ltd, under licence from Trinity House.

Tel: 01983 855069

Email: maritimelights@talktalk.net

Location: St. Catherine's is situated at the most southerly point of the Isle of Wight off the A3055 near Niton.

Position: 50° 34.50 N, 01° 17.80 W (WGS 84 datum)

Holiday cottages are available at this site.