



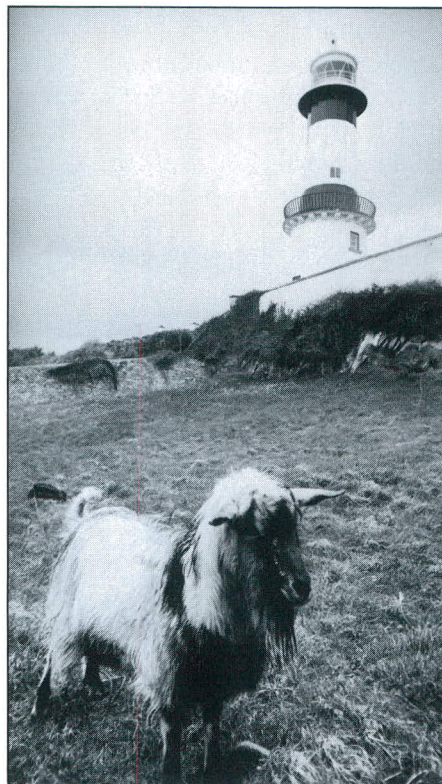
## A Brief History of Irish Lights

Irish Lighthouse Board Information

**T**he oldest operational lighthouse in Ireland and the British Isles is at Hook Head. The tower, with additions and modifications, dates from the Norman times, 12th century, and is reputed to be built on the site where the monks of St. Dubhan established a fire beacon in the 5th century.

Another Norman lighthouse at Youghal was in the hands of local nuns attached to St. Anne's Convent, but the tower fell out of use around Cromwell's time and was replaced by the present tower in 1852.

The Commissioners of Irish Lights are the statutory Lighthouse Authority for Ireland. Originally lighthouses were in private hands and in 1665 King Charles II granted letters patent to Sir Robert Reading to erect six lighthouses on the coast of Ireland, two of which were to be placed on Howth, one to mark the land, the other to lead over the bar. The others were at Old Head of Kinsale, Barry Oge's castle (now Charlesfort, near Kinsale), Hook Head and Isle of Magee, near Carrickfergus.



Top—Inishowen Lighthouse

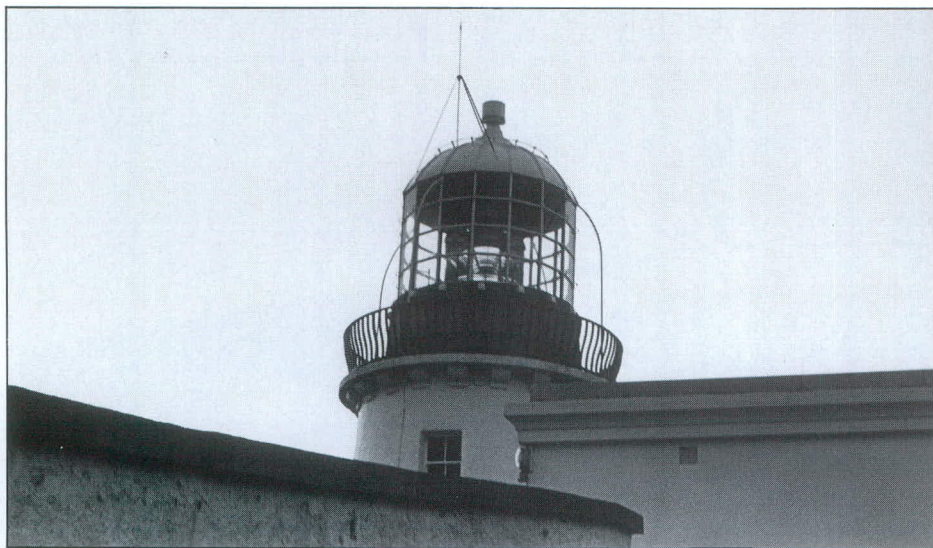
Bottom—St. John's Point Lighthouse. Both photos by District Superintendent John Fasulo.

Of the six lights, two were short lived—the Howth bar light and Isle of Magee. The latter was re-established later on the Lesser Copeland Island. All these lights displayed a coal fire on the roof of the structures.

Due mainly to mismanagement, these lighthouses were transferred into the hands of certain commissioners set up by Queen Anne in 1704. In 1717 during the reign of George I the lands on which barracks and lighthouses were built were vested in the Crown at a price determined by special commissioners.

In 1708 Dublin Corporation, through Parliament, set up a Committee known as the Ballast Board. This in turn was succeeded in 1786 by the Corporation for preserving and improving the Port of Dublin. The constitution of this Board is that of the present Commissioners of Irish Lights.

H. M. Revenue Commissioners were given powers in 1796 to erect lighthouses on the coasts of Wexford, Mayo and Galway. Further acts between 1800 and 1806 were passed in



St. John's Point Lighthouse (1831). Photo by District Superintendent John Fasulo.

The service they provide is financed from the General Lighthouse Fund which is made up of light dues paid by shipping companies entering or using ports in any of the countries mentioned above. Dues are based on net tonnage of vessels and vary between home trade and foreign voyages. In Ireland the dues are collected by the Customs and Excise Authority who pass them on to the Department of Communications, who in turn, pass the money to the Department of Transport in London. The money collected is divided between the three Services according to estimates submitted annually by each Service. Dues are not paid by naval vessels, fishing boats, or yachts.

Local shipowners meet with the Commissioners, and have a say in navigational matters, at joint conferences in London once a year.

connection with lighthouses, dues and purchasing land for lighthouses. In 1810 powers given to the Commissioners for Barracks and others between 1767 and 1806 were all vested in the Corporation for preserving and improving the Port of Dublin or the Ballast Board.

This Board took over the general lighting and marking of the coast when fourteen lighthouses were transferred to it—South Rock, Old Head, Wicklow (2), Howth, Copeland, Hook, Cranfield, Loophead, Aranmore, Clare Island, Balbriggan, Duncannon Fort and Charlesfort.

Originally the number of Commissioners was twenty-two, but when the position of High Sheriff of Dublin was abolished the number was reduced to twenty-one, as it is today. This includes the Lord Mayor, three Aldermen and seventeen co-opted members.

There are three Lighthouse Authorities in Britain and Ireland—Trinity House in London for England, Wales, Channel Islands and Gibraltar, The Northern Lighthouse Board in Edinburgh for Scotland and the Isle of Man, and the Commissioners of Irish Lights for Ireland (north and south).



Information furnished by Keeper Richard Cummins who is also an Irish lighthouse keeper.

**T**he Merchant Shipping Act of 1854 divided the Corporation or Ballast Board into two distinct corporate bodies, identical in personnel and constitution, namely the Corporation for preserving and improving the Port of Dublin for Dublin port and Port of Dublin Corporation for lighthouses, lightships, buoys and beacons around the coast of Ireland.

The severance begun in 1854 was completed by the Dublin Port Act of 1867, the Corporation for preserving and improving the Port of Dublin became the Dublin Port and Docks Board and the Port of Dublin Corporation became the Commissioners of Irish Lights.



Maiden's Rock Lighthouse (1829) on the east side of Ireland north of Belfast. Originally there were Two Maiden lighthouses on rocks 800 yards apart. Richard Cummins photograph.



Richard Cummins Photo

## The Metal Man of Sligo



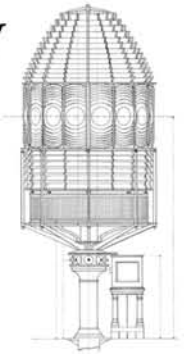
In Sligo Harbor Ireland there stands a most unusual aid to navigation in the form of a metal man dressed in a 19th century sailors uniform. The statue was constructed in 1822 and stands 14 feet high and weighs 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  tons. It is situated on Perch Rock at the entrance to Rosses Point.

The Metal Man holds a small navigation light which displays a flashing white light every 4 seconds (range 7 miles) and is the front light of a range (pair of lights) with the Oyster Island Lighthouse which is located 370 yards to the rear of the metal man. The two lights, when properly aligned, indicate the best water when entering the channel. The metal man also "points" up river to the town of Sligo with his right hand.

A most charming aid to navigation and somehow, quite Irish.



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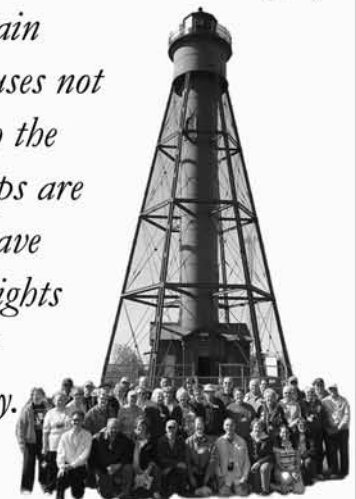
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