

Other Stories and Special Events in the Lighthouses History

Captain Musick

In 1937 American Captain Edwin Musick flew the first long-distance flying-boat (a Boeing 314 named the *Samoan Clipper*) into New Zealand for Pan American Airways.³⁴⁹ The captain flew from San Francisco via Honolulu, the Kingman Reef and Pago Pago to Hobson's Bay in Auckland.³⁵⁰ He used Cape Brett Lighthouse as a navigation point, and naturally everyone at the settlement turned out to wave him over.³⁵¹ On the return flight in January 1938 Captain Musick and his crew died when the clipper exploded over Pago Pago in American Samoa.³⁵² Musick Point in Auckland is named for him.

Whalers³⁵³

During World War 2 a Norwegian whaler approached the principal keeper wanting to restart whaling activities in the Bay of Islands. He set up two of his men on the station — one standing on the point by the first house; the other behind the third house — to keep a lookout for the southern migrating whales. Once the men had spotted a whale they were to warn him of their approach so that the fleet could make chase. His fleet consisted of one main launch and two chasers. The group caught three whales but had to abandon all — due to bad weather, suspected bad weather and the state of the Whangamumu station. For every chase most of the adults and children would stop what they were doing to watch and would even help to signal where the whales were. The Norwegian finally gave up once he actually saw the state of the equipment at Whangamumu — it was all rotten and rusty.

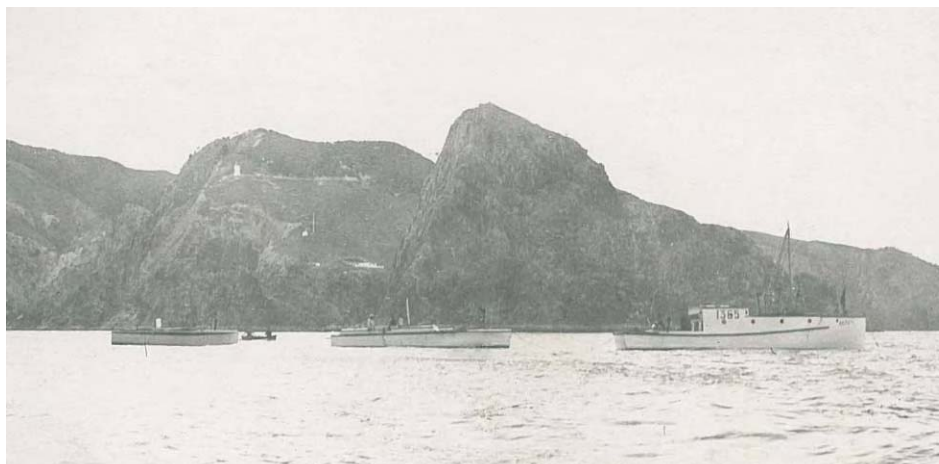


Figure 192 –The whale chasers rounding Cape Brett during early 1940s.

The Norwegian Tanker³⁵⁴

Early in 1942 the keepers identified the rapid approach of a Norwegian oil tanker. The tanker had been discharging oil when the Japanese invaded Singapore in February and the captain decided to leave immediately. He headed to New Zealand and the tanker was first sighted by the keepers at Cape Brett. The tanker's captain stopped in the Bay — prompting exaggerated calls of invasion — and the principal keeper heard the escape story. After many hours on the party line to the naval and defence departments — proving that the tanker was real — the tanker's captain was allowed the charts to get to Auckland.

Department of Conservation Work

In addition to the refurbishment of the second house (see page ??) and the painting of the lighthouse (see page ??) several other small jobs have been carried out on the site. In December of 2007 the spares cupboard in the lighthouse was cleaned out before a team came in to clean the rest of the inside of the light. The second team, in July of 2008, scraped down all the flaking paint on the inside of the lighthouse and then gave all the floors and walls a scrub down.



Figure 193 – The spares cupboard on the second floor of the lighthouse before cleaning, 2007.



Figure 194 – The cupboard after cleaning, 2007.



Figure 195 – The bottom floor of the lighthouse during cleaning. Here the flaking paint has been scraped, the floor swept and one row of panels has been scrubbed, 2008.

In May 2008 one of the old keepers' tracks was reopened to provide an easier walking track between the lighthouse and the hut. Teams from DOC and Nothtec's conservation corps students spent four days at the station cutting back the grass and encroaching scrub off the old track.



Figure 196 – An upper portion of the old keepers track, facing the lighthouse, before clearing.



Figure 197 – A cleared portion of track, 2008.

Conclusion

Although the lighthouse at Cape Brett was only one of many around the New Zealand coast, in the hearts and minds of all who worked, lived, and saw its light Cape Brett will always be a unique place. Over the preceding chapters we have shared some of the stories and events that took place at this unique location, and in doing so have, we hope, done justice to those individuals who moulded the Cape Brett settlement's history. From the lighthouse to the sheds, from the first to last keepers, this station holds a special place in the hearts of many.