
REPORT ON JUNE MEETING

Mr Brian Rogers: Wollongong Lighthouse.

This talk could not have been better timed as the Wollongong Breakwater Lighthouse is at the present moment undergoing an extensive and complete renovation. Mr Brian Rogers is the Heritage Advisor on the Committee set up to carry out the renovations. While writing this review the lighthouse is headless or rather topless after its lantern housing was removed for repairs a week or so ago.

Brian, with the help of an overhead viewer, described the early beginnings of Wollongong Harbour and that in 1869 the government called for tenders to build an iron lighthouse at the end of the new breakwater. There seemed to have been some controversy who designed this light house and it was finally agreed upon that E O Moriarty, Engineer-in-Chief of the Harbours and Rivers, who selected the site, received that honour. Brian showed us part of the foundation and discussed how the structure was held down. He then proceeded to discuss the structure itself. For example the steel sheets covering the main structure were prefabricated in Sydney and engineers today are still amazed how these sheets were bent in both directions, namely round horizontally and hollow vertically. The frame itself was manufactured from wrought iron.

The lighthouse was lit on 12 March 1872. The light ran on vegetable oil until 1883 when gas was used. In 1907 an electric light was installed which ran until 1973, co-existing with the Wollongong Head light from 1937. Though nearly all lighthouses were taken over by the Commonwealth, Wollongong Breakwater light remained under NSW Maritime Services Board control as this light house was never considered a sea lighthouse more like a harbour light; its beam barely reached 10 nautical miles out to sea. Over the years the lighthouse has become an icon of Wollongong for organisations and businesses, maybe not as famous as Sydney's Harbour Bridge, but to Wollongongites a reminder of 'home'.

When the renovations have been completed a worthwhile and remarkable landmark and icon will have been saved for future generations and tourists.

Thank you Brian for an interesting and informative talk.

JH