

South Australian  
Heritage Act 1978-80:

**HERITAGE SURVEY**  
**ITEM IDENTIFICATION SHEET**

REGION 6 :  
SOUTH EAST

Item No. : PTM:002  
ITEM NAME: Cape Northumberland Lighthouse  
Former or other names:

**LOCATION:**

Address: Cape Northumberland,  
near Port MacDonnell

Allotment:

Section : Pt. 767

Hundred : MacDonnell

County : Grey

L.G.A. : Port MacDonnell

S.H.P. Region: 6

A.M.G., Ref. Z: 54 N: 5787700  
E: 470700

**TYPE OF ITEM:**

Description: Lighthouse

Subject: 4.07

Period: 1880-1890

Date: 1881-82 Condition: Well Kept

Architect: Col. Arch. - Edward J. Woods

Builder: Jones and Mattinson

STATUS State Heritage List: Registered

National Estate : Listed

National Trust : Classified

**HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

**RECOMMENDATION:** State

**Description:**

Tuck pointed stone above rock-faced plinth, quoins to doorway, string course below cantilevered stone balcony with cast iron posts and rails. Metal framed windows, rivetted metal roof. Accompanying stone building quoined door and window openings, circular loft vent. Gabled corrugated iron roof.

The first lighthouse was erected in the late 1850's, on a dangerous coast, after a site was chosen for a port. The replacement of 1881-82 followed the decision that the first lighthouse was unsafe because it was built upon crumbling rock.

**Report Text:**

REFERENCES: L. Hill, "Mount Gambier, the City around a Cave" p. 188  
E. Milstead, "Port MacDonnell Centenary Celebrations"  
pp. 5, 49, 51

**Verbal:**

**PHOTOGRAPHS:**

Slide No : 19/33

Film No : 18

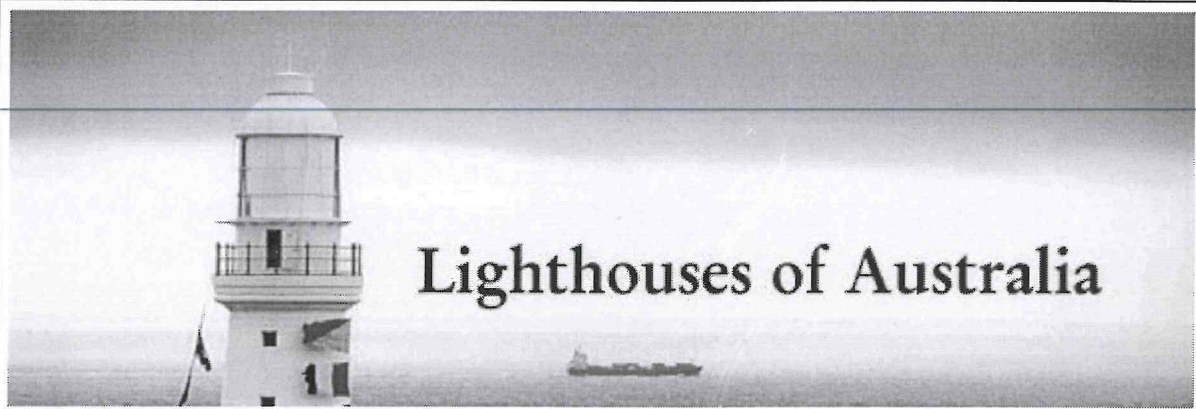
Negative No: 5

Archival No: B2011 (c.1910)

DANVERS ARCHITECTS Date: 1983



xThe Cape Northumberland Lighthouse was built to replace the earlier Macdonnell Lighthouse that was under threat of being undermined by the erosion of the the cliffs on which it stood.



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## The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse at Port MacDonnell

The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse near Port MacDonnell was built to replace the earlier Macdonnell Lighthouse that was under threat of being undermined by the erosion of the the cliffs on which it stood.

[Operation](#)

[History](#)

[Access](#)

[Surrounding Area](#)





**The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse**

*Photograph: Ed Kavaliunas*

## Operation

LOCATION: Latitude 38° 03' 5" S, Longitude 140° 40' 1" E ([Map](#))

OPERATOR: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

CHARACTER: White Flash Every 5 Seconds

LIGHT SOURCE: 120v 1000w Tungsten Halogen Lamp

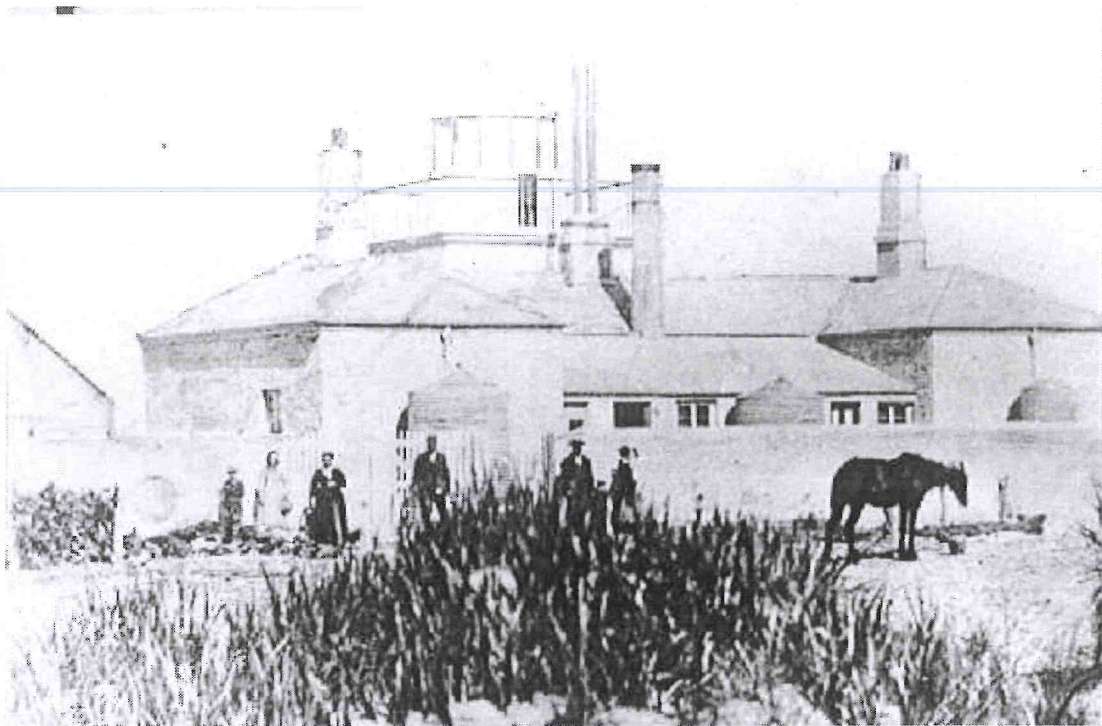
POWER SOURCE: Mains Electricity, Diesel Standby

INTENSITY: 310,000 cd

ELEVATION: 45 Metres

RANGE: 23 Nautical Miles

HEIGHT: 17 metres



**The Old MacDonnell Lighthouse circa 1870**

*Photograph Courtesy: Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum*

## History

The original MacDonnell Lighthouse was built in 1858 and commenced operation in early 1859. The original light had three faces - white, red and green - which it exhibited in succession.

The site was narrow and quite exposed with the buildings being built too close to the cliff edge. Therefore, this light survived only 23 years, due to the danger of its collapse from the cliff on which it stood being undermined by wind and sea. After the new Cape Northumberland Lighthouse was built in 1882 on a hill 400 metres to the East the MacDonnell Lightouse was demolished



**The Old MacDonnell Lighthouse Ruins**

*Photograph: Ed Kavaliunas*



The new light was white with Chance Bros first-order light lantern.

It originally flashed every 60 seconds.

In 1906 the multiple wick oil burners were replaced by an incandescent vapourised kerosene burners which increased the intensity.

In March 1936 the power was converted from kerosene to electricity.

In December 1972 the lights electric operation was converted to tungsten halogen.

In July 1977 the light was converted to automatic .

In January 1990 lighthouse was demanned

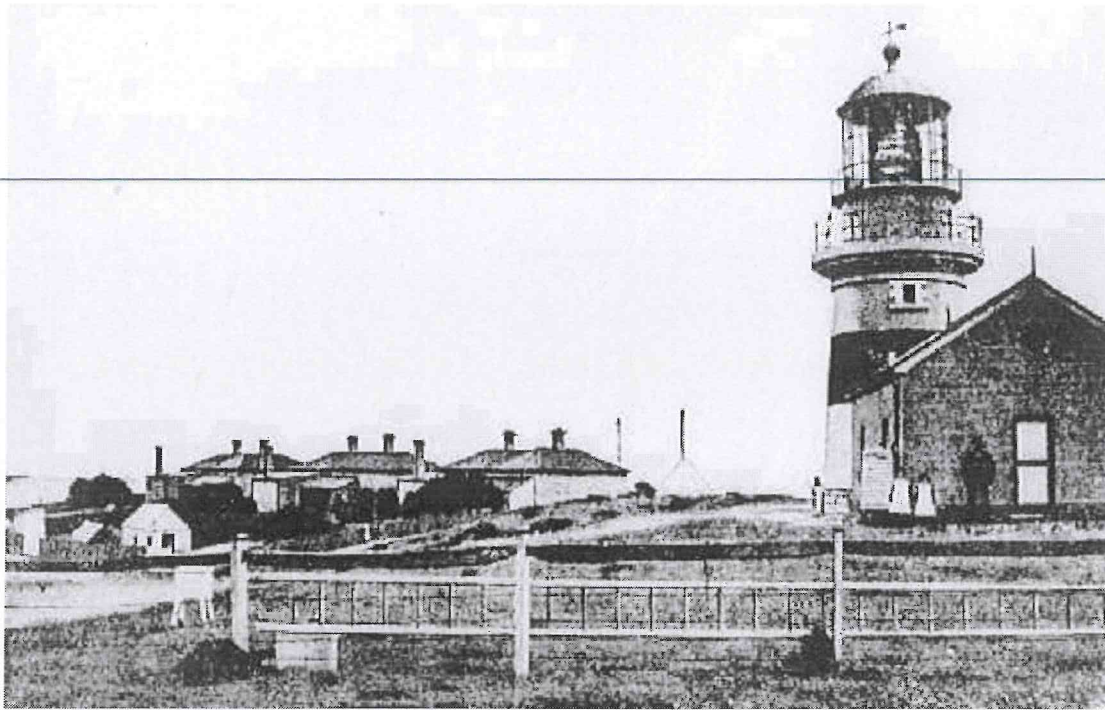


**The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse**

*Photograph: Ed Kavaliunas*

The close proximity of the lighthouse to the Port MacDonnell township meant that keepers and their families were likely to be involved in local community activities, and therefore unaffected by the pressures of isolation which turn keepers at remote stations into figures of mystery and romance, etc.

It is interesting to note that Cape Northumberland, as well as Cape Jaffa, were the only two lighthouses in South Australia where the keeper's children could attend a normal Government School. For this reason keepers with children were circulated through these postings.



**The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse in 1900**

*Photograph Courtesy: Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum*

The lighthouse is supposed to be haunted by a woman in 1950's clothing and this has been witnessed both by more than one individuals at a time as described in the following newspaper article..

*"The second incident (the first was at another lightstation) was a more communal experience. The man living next door to Mr Jordan at Cape Northumberland saw the ghost in his house on the same night about a year ago.*

*'I was just lying in bed when this woman appeared at the end of the bed. She was looking at my wife and smiling. Oh, I smiled back at her and all that', says Mr Jordan. 'The clothes she was wearing were a bit out of date, but not really old-fashioned. She was playing with ends of a scarf she had on her head. I've no idea who she was either. All of a sudden she just vanished, like the one at Jaffa, right in front of me.*

*'I didn't tell anyone about it, but the next morning the chap from next door came up and told me he had seen exactly the same thing, which was strange!'*

*('Keeper of the Night Light' The Advertiser, 8 February 1978)*

## Access

The site of the old MacDonnell Lighthouse is easily accessed by road and is 3 kilometres to the west of Port MacDonnell. The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse is also easily accessible and is off the same road. At this point of time there are no tours of the lighthouse.

## The Surrounding Area

The Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum

The Cape Banks Lighthouse to the West





## Lighthouses of Australia Inc

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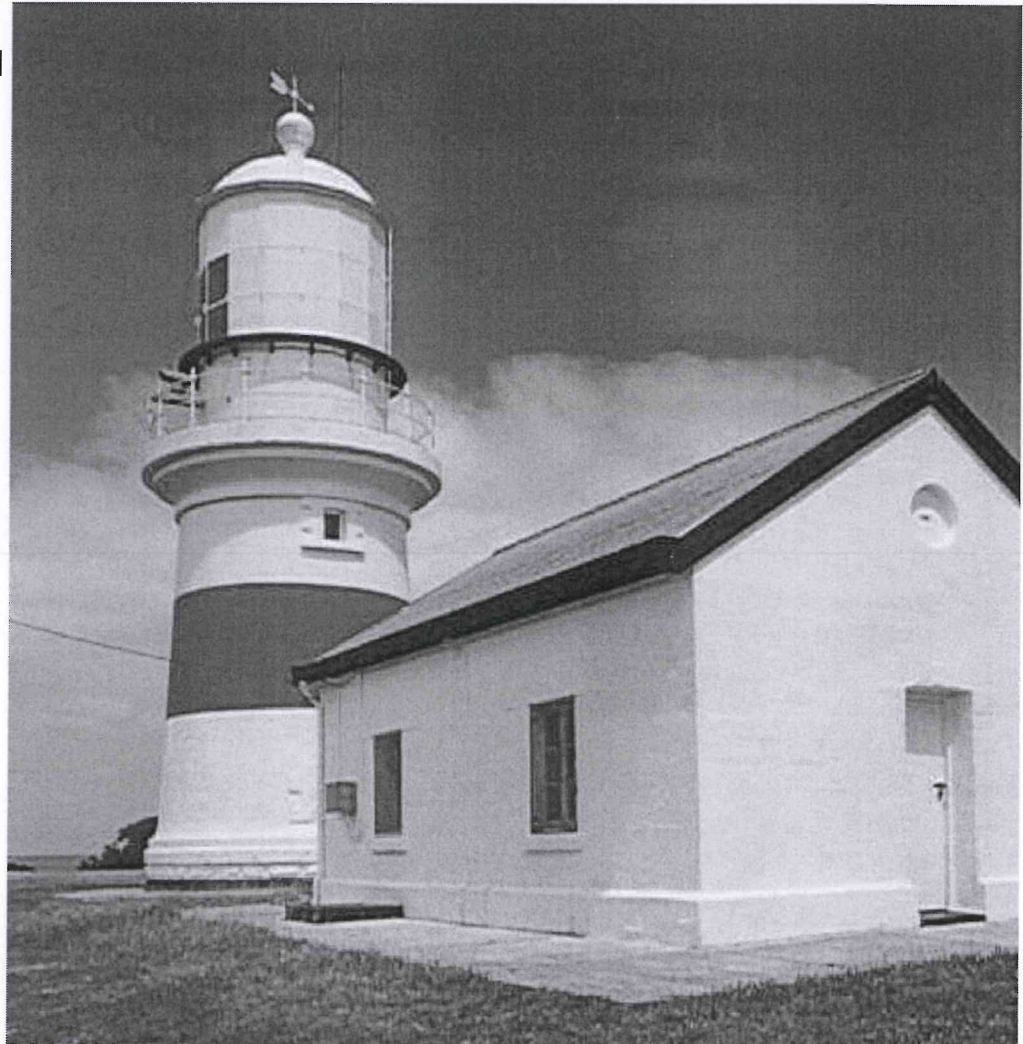
### Lighthouses of South Australia

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#### Cape Northumberland Lighthouse at Port MacDonnell

The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse near Port MacDonnell was built to replace the earlier lighthouse that was under threat of being undermined by the erosion of the cliffs on which it stood.

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The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse  
*Photograph:*

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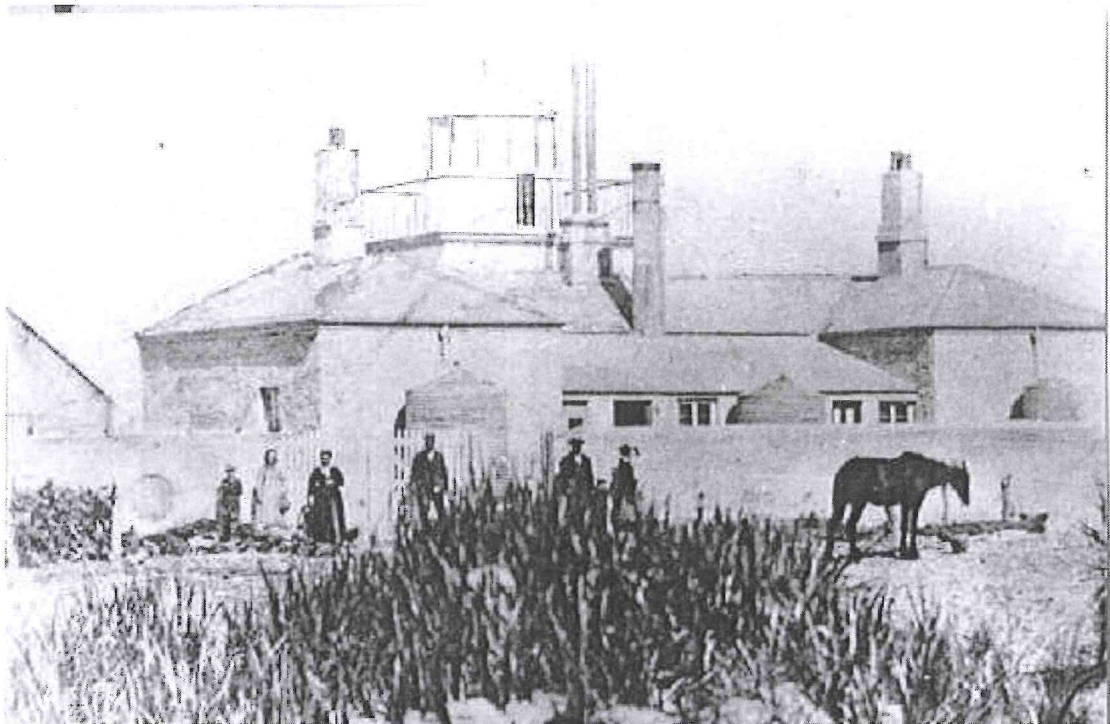
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**The old MacDonnell Lighthouse, circa 1870**

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**The old MacDonnell Lighthouse ruins**

*Photograph: Ed Kavaliunas*

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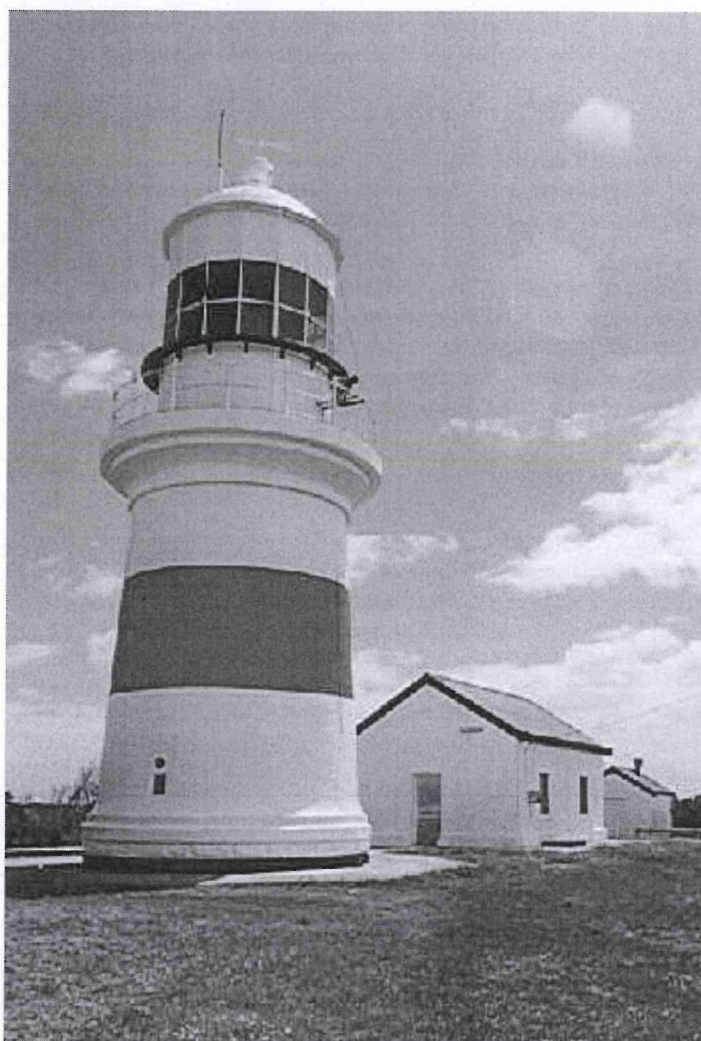
In 1906, the multiple wick oil burners were replaced by an incandescent vapourised kerosene burners which increased the intensity.

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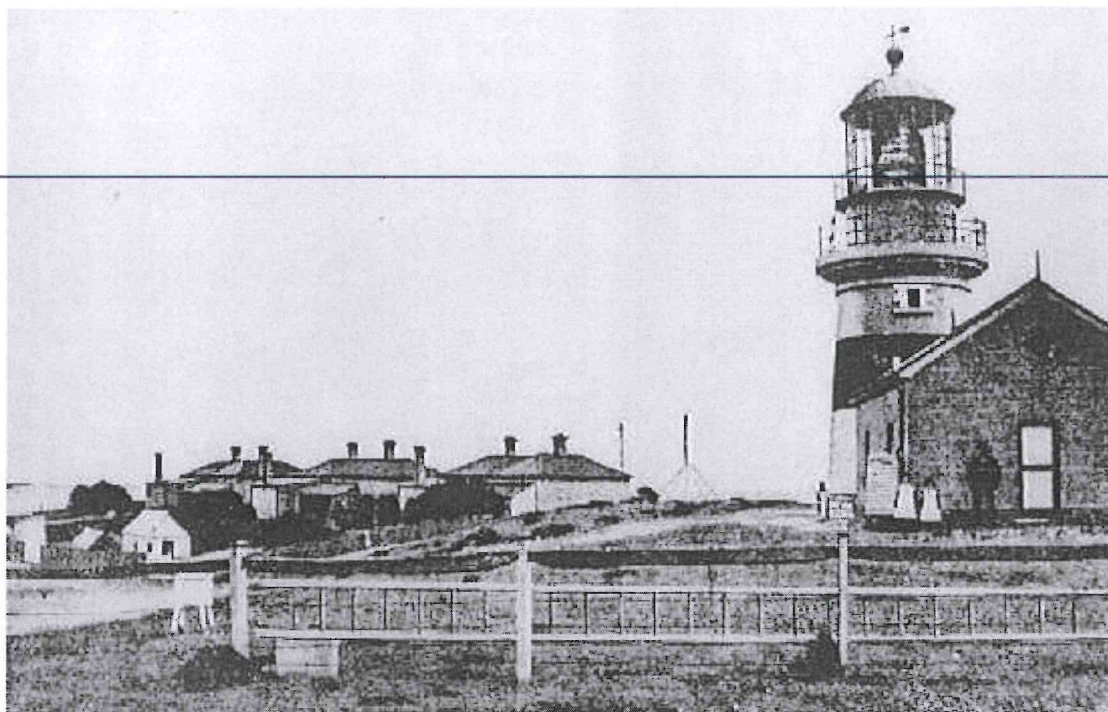
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*Photograph: Ed Kavaliunas*



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*Photograph Courtesy: Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum*

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**Cape Northumberland Lighthouse from the air**  
*Photograph: Australian Heritage Commission*

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## Access

The site of the old MacDonnell Lighthouse is easily accessed by road and is 3 kilometres to the west of Port MacDonnell. The Cape Northumberland Lighthouse is also off the same road, but access is not readily available, as the local residents living in the lighthouse keepers cottages have marked the entrance to the grounds as private property. There are no tours of the lighthouse.

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## News

Port MacDonnell Museum plans set to be unveiled

Bulletin Sep/Oct 2004

Cape Northumberland to be accessible to the Public?

Bulletin Sep/Oct 2004

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## Letters

William Wood, Head Lighthouse Keeper at Cape Northumberland

Bulletin Feb 2004

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## The Surrounding Area

- The Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum
- The Cape Banks Lighthouse to the West

## Other Cape Northumberland Sites

- Grant Maizels [Cape Northumberland Lighthouse](#)



**Cape Northumberland Lighthouse from the air**  
*Photograph: Winsome Bonham*

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### Special Thanks to:

- Australian Heritage Commission for Photograph
- Ed Kavaliunas for Photographs
- The Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum for Historical Photographs
- Veronica Jenkin
- Winsome Bonham for Photograph

### Sources:

- AMSA
- Brian Lord
- *From Dusk Till Dawn* by Gordon Reid
- *Lighthouses of South Australia* by R Parsons

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Page created: 30/04/98

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DESCRIPTION

DATE



Cape Northumberland lighthouse, South Australia.

The lighthouse and associated buildings at Cape Northumberland, South Australia.

ca.1914



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Mount Gambier and District : Cape Northumberland  
Old Lighthouse, Cape Northumberland, McDonnell Bay.  
1880





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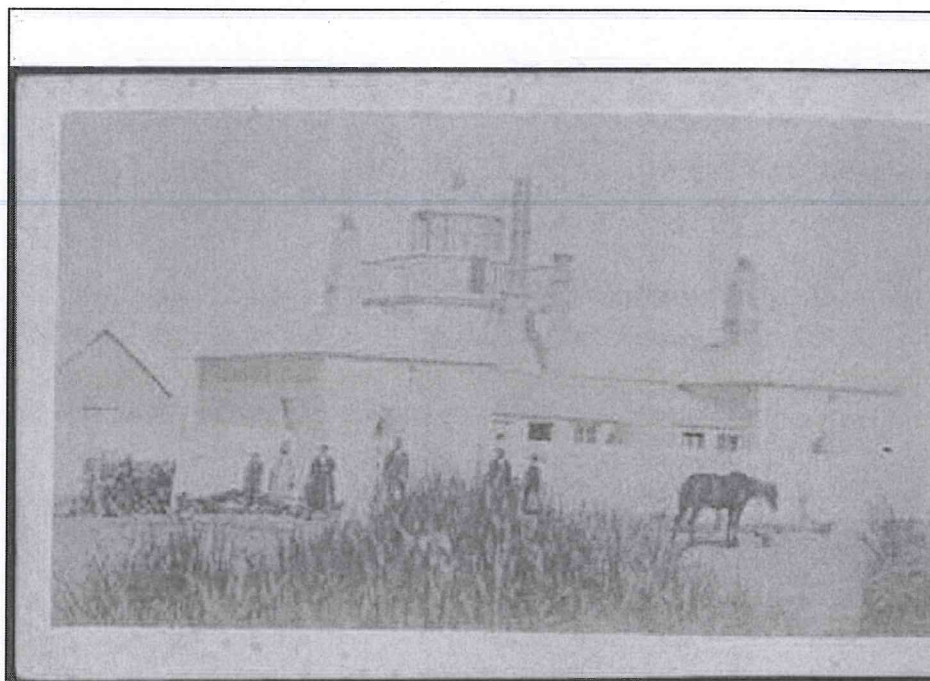
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Cape Northumberland

Old lighthouse at Cape Northumberland.

ca.1877



Cape Northumberland Lighthouse. Built in 1859. It is an important item in the maritime history of South Australia.

X 1882





FILM 53  
NO 9

CAPE NORTHUMBERLAND LIGHTHOUSE  
AND COTTAGE

PORT MACDONNELL  
21-2-79



FILM 53  
NO 8

CAPE NORTHUMBERLAND LIGHTHOUSE  
FROM SOUTH

PORT MACDONNELL  
21-2-79