

New Zealand's first lighthouse MCH, 2020h

1 January 1859

1859 p.69



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Pencarrow Lighthouse

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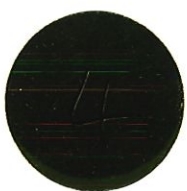
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Pencarrow Head lighthouse, at the entrance to Wellington Harbour, was lit for the first time amid great celebration. After years of inadequate solutions, Wellington finally had a permanent lighthouse – New Zealand's first. Equally notable was the lighthouse's first keeper, Mary Bennett, who had tended Pencarrow's temporary light since her husband's death in 1855 – she remains New Zealand's only female lighthouse keeper.

During the day, many settlers visited their new lighthouse on the SS *Wonga Wonga*. The 10 a.m. excursion carried about 65 people. The afternoon excursion, which left at 4 p.m., was much more crowded.

When the *Wonga Wonga* anchored off Pencarrow about 7 p.m. nearly 40 people, including officials, went ashore and walked up to the lighthouse, where engineer Edward Wright gave a tour.

Wellington's provincial superintendent, Isaac Featherston, had the honour of lighting the light for the first time. Although those on the *Wonga Wonga* were initially concerned at its apparent inefficiency, their disappointment soon gave way to pleasure as a brilliant light came into view.



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Mary Bennett

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