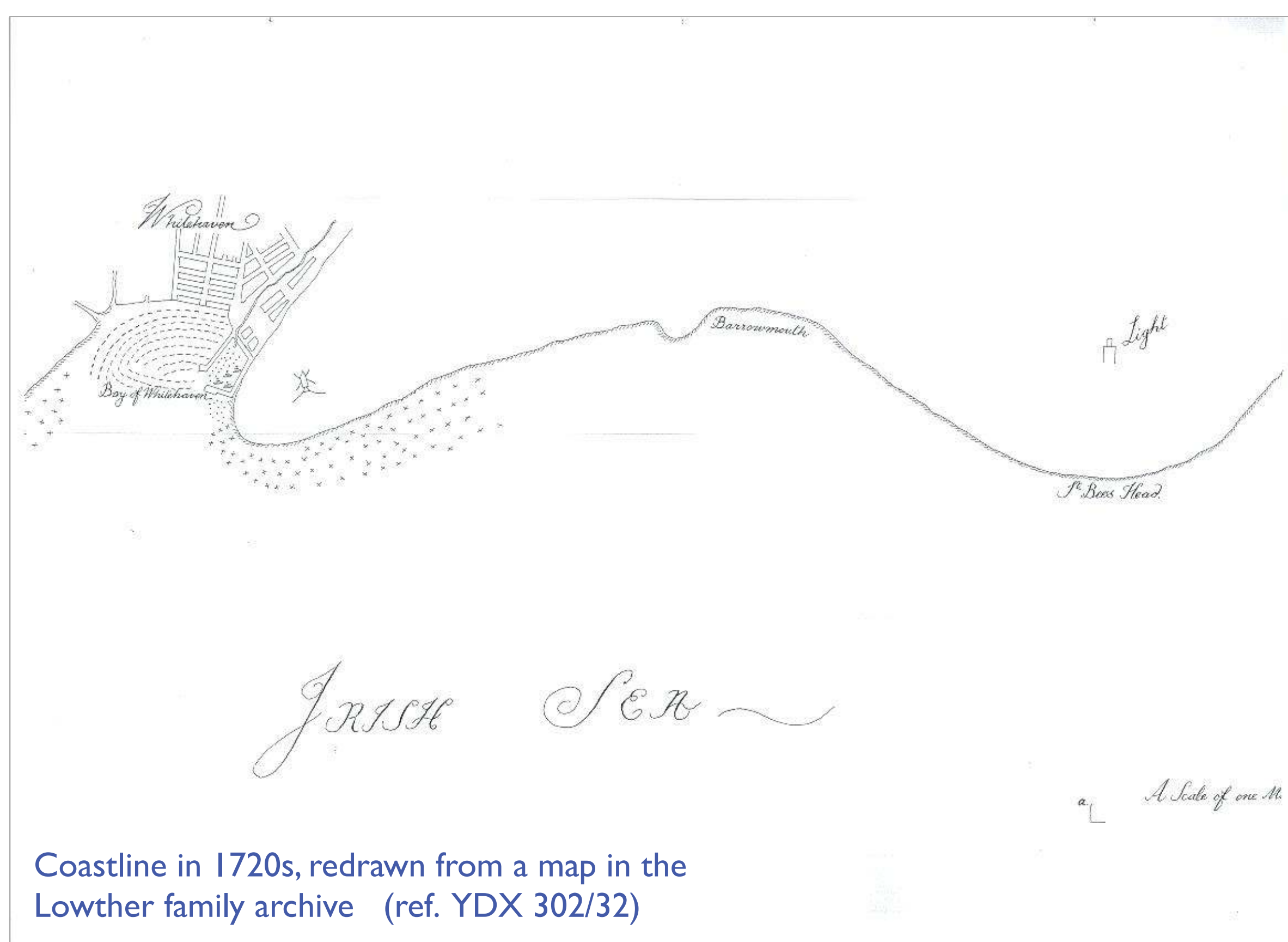


Maritime Lights

Lighthouses have been a constant guide and a warning of danger to seafarers, in all weathers, over the centuries.

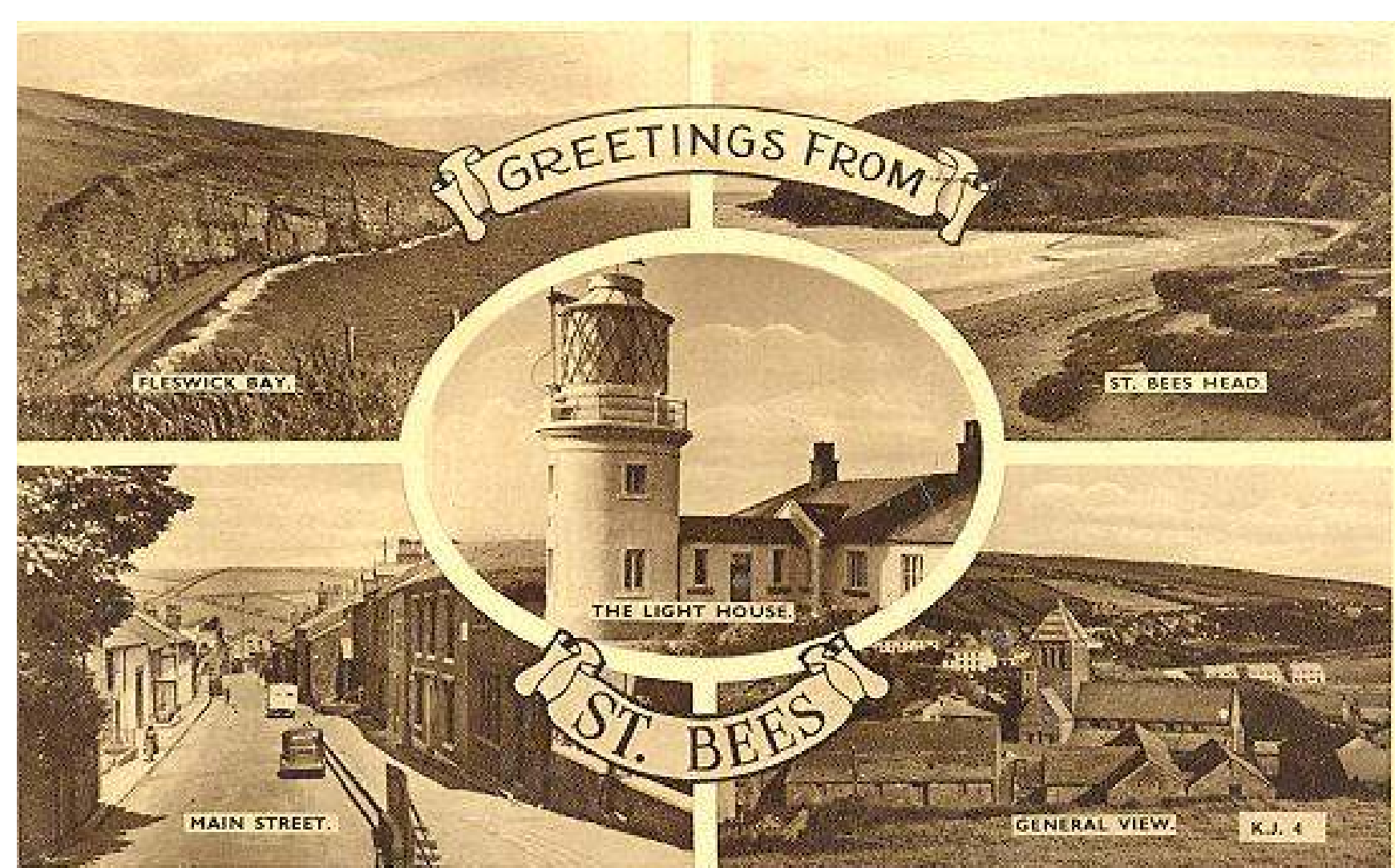
Trinity House is the general lighthouse authority for England, Wales, the Channel Islands and Gibraltar.

It was created on 20th May 1514 when Henry VIII granted a royal charter authorising 'our true and faithful subjects, Shipmen and Mariners of this our Realm of England' to establish a guild with general powers to regulate pilotage. In 1566 an Act of Parliament gave Trinity House powers to set up 'so many beacons, marks and signs for the sea... whereby the dangers may be avoided and escaped and the ships the better come unto their ports without peril'.

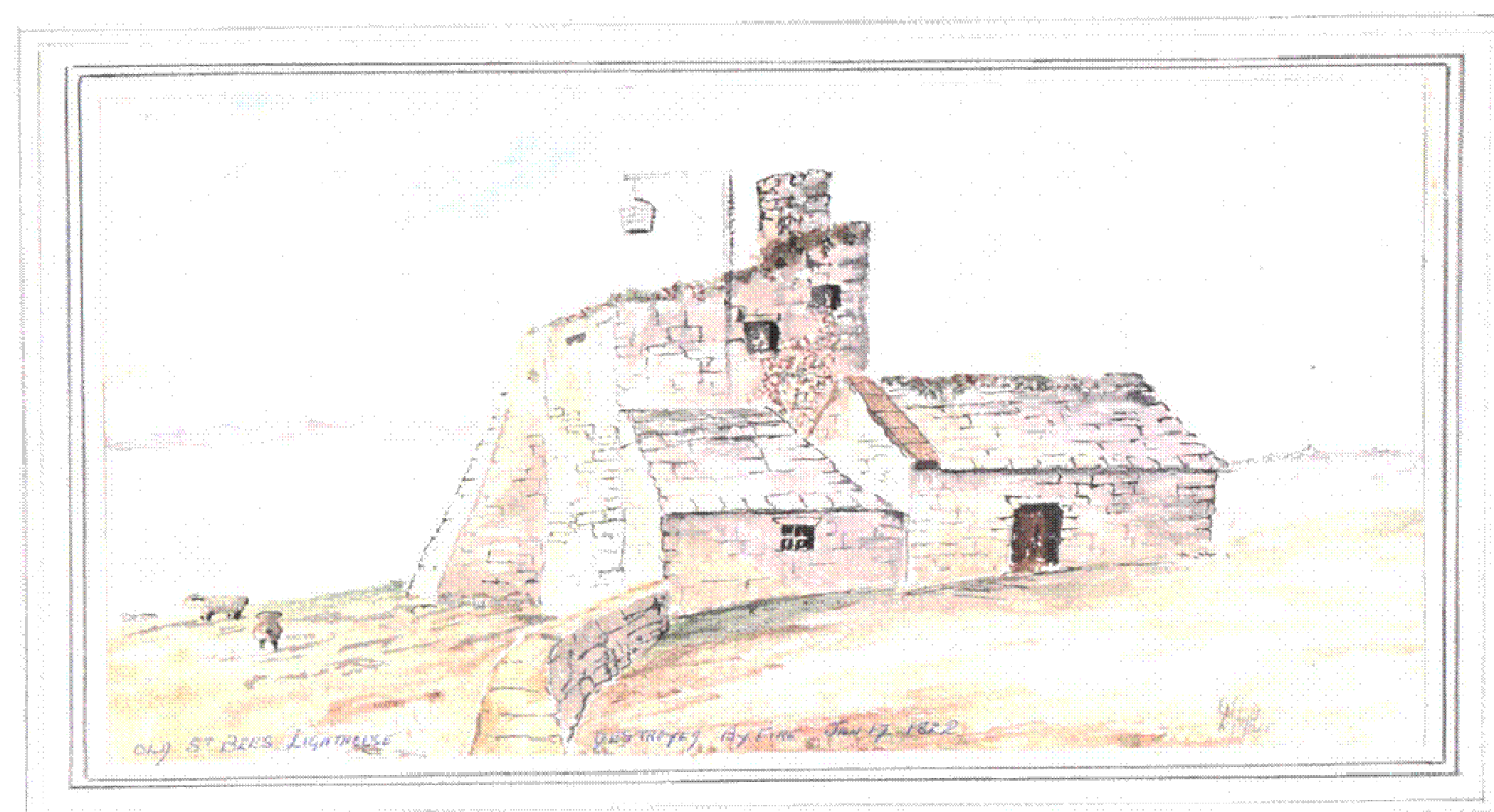


The first lighthouse to be built by Trinity House was Lowestoft in 1609. However there was a lengthy delay before the corporation became responsible for the management of all lighthouses as it was common practice for the crown to issue patents and grants to private individuals. In 1836 Trinity House was given compulsory powers to maintain the lights itself at a cost of £1,200,000.

One of these maintained by Trinity House is St Bees Lighthouse. The cliffs around St Bees Head were a danger to the coastal vessels trading between the ports of Wales and the Solway Firth, with the busy ports of Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport.



View of St Bees light-house in the past (refs. PH)



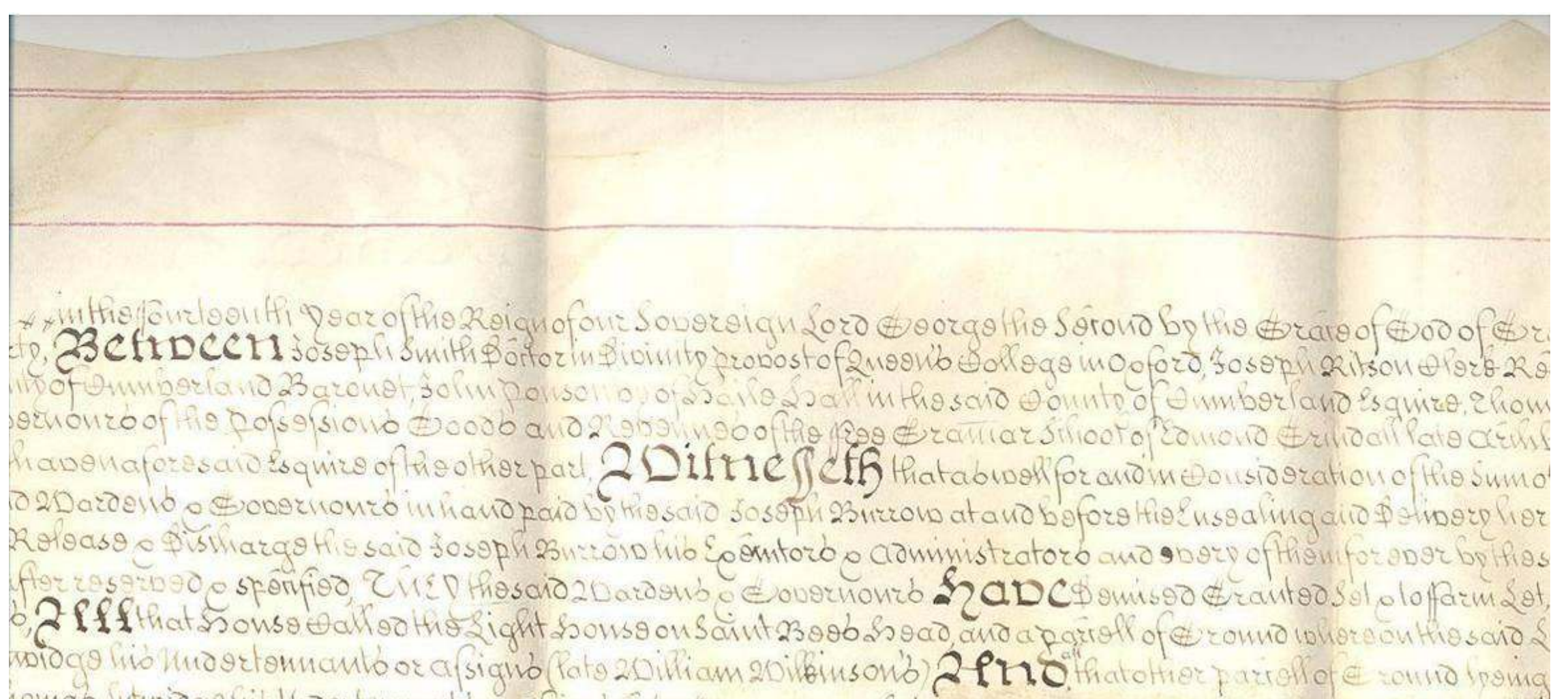
Maritime Lights

St Bees Lighthouse

A patent was obtained for the building of a lighthouse on St Bees Head in 1718 by Trinity House.

This was leased to Thomas Lutwidge for 99 years at £20 per year. He undertook to build the tower and maintain the light at his own expense. Dues were levied at the neighbouring ports of Whitehaven, Maryport and Workington to provide him with an income.

He built a strong round tower of 9 metres high and 5 metres in diameter of local sandstone. On top of this was a large metal grate into which the keepers poured coal.



Counterpart of lease dated 10th October 1740 from the Governors of St Bees School to Joseph Burrow of Whitehaven of the lighthouse at St Bees Head, with adjoining parcels of land, at 1 shilling annual rent. (ref.YDS 60/74/7)

However there were often complaints from ship-owners because the light was variable in intensity and often produced a thick smoke depending on wind conditions.

These working conditions came with their dangers, not just to seamen, and in 1822 the tower, which was the last coal

burning lighthouse in Britain, was destroyed by fire killing a family of 6.

Cumberland Pacquet

28th January 1822

Many lighthouses keepers and their families made St Bees their home across the centuries, as detailed in the census.

Township of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Hamlet or Tything, etc. of	Electoral District of
St. Bees	St. Bees	St. Bees	St. Bees	St. Bees	St. Bees	St. Bees

Here we meet the residents in 1861 and 1911: above was George Gould, the 47 year old lighthouse keeper from the Isle of Wight, with his wife Mary from Wales, and children George Ray and Sarah, both born in St Bees. By 1911, Alfred Grigg was keeper, living with his wife and nephew.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911									
Household	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of Person	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	When Born	When Married	When Died
1	George Gould	Head	Married	47	Lighthouse Keeper	Isle of Wight	1814	1841	
2	Mary Gould	Wife	Married	44		Wales	1817	1844	
3	George Ray	Son	Single	14		St Bees	1861		
4	Sarah Ray	Daughter	Single	12		St Bees	1863		

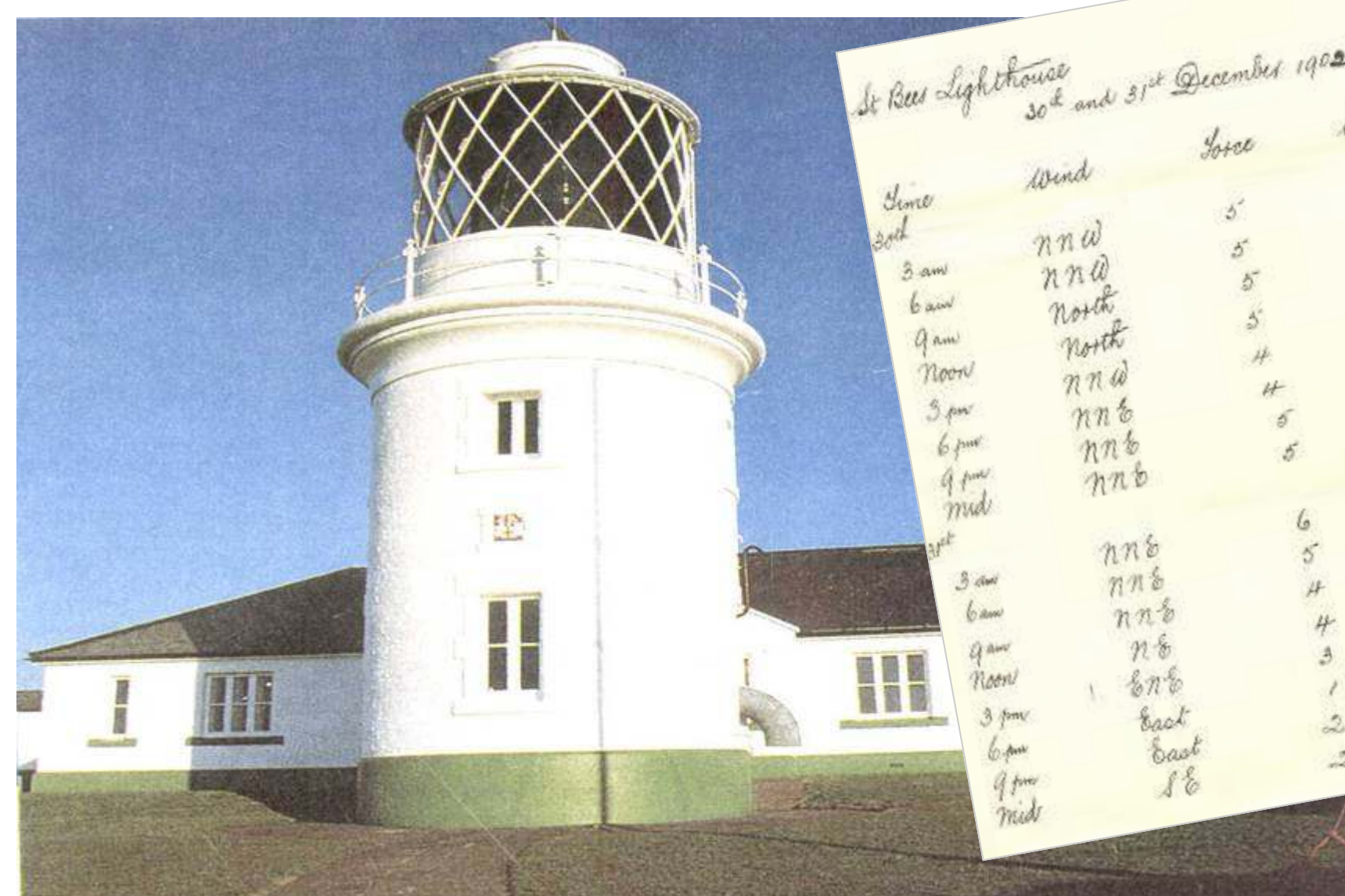
Melancholy Event.—On Saturday last, Inquests were held before PETER HODGSON, Esq. Coroner, at Tarnflat, in Sandwith, on the bodies of Mary Clark and her five children, who were found dead the preceding evening in the Light House, on St. Bees Head, and the Jury returned verdicts—"Died by Suffocation." It appeared in evidence that the bed and bed-cloths in which the mother and four of the children were lying were on fire, and the smoke arising from the fire filling that apartment, and ascending to the room above it, where another child was sleeping, had occasioned the death of these unfortunate individuals. The father of the family was found lying upon the floor, alive, but in so precarious a state that his life is despaired of. It is conjectured, that owing to the current of air under the door circulating more freely where he was found, than where his unfortunate family slept, he was preserved from sharing their immediate fate.—It did not appear in what manner the bed and bed-cloths had caught fire, nor is it ascertained at what hour the fatality took place. The cause of this disastrous catastrophe seems to be inadequate to its effect—the flame had not burst forth, the curtains surrounding the bed were not burnt, and only one of the children had any marks of fire upon its body!—The father remains insensible, consequently can give no information how this awful occurrence which has deprived his wife and all his children of their lives originated, but it appears that all the family must have been asleep, or one member of it would have aroused and saved the whole.—St. Bees Light House is situate on one of the boldest and loftiest eminences bordering this channel, and its inhabitants in their domicile are separated from almost all intercourse with man; the only visible neighbour from it is the newly erected farm building at Tarnflat. The tenant of this estate and his servants observing on Friday night that the light was not apparent as usual, went to the Light House, and the accident was thus discovered.

Cumberland Pacquet 21st January 1822

Maritime Lights

St Bees Lighthouse

A pair of parabola reflectors powered by oil on a 27ft high building replaced the original lighthouse. This in turn was replaced by a higher round tower in 1865 with two new dwelling houses for the keepers. In recent times, like many others, St Bees lighthouse became automated with the last keeper leaving in 1986.



St Bees Lighthouse
2nd and 3rd December 1900

Time	Wind	Force	Weather
3 am	NNW	5	6
6 am	NNW	5	6
9 am	North	5	6
Noon	NNW	4	6
3 pm	NNW	5	6
6 pm	NNW	5	6
9 pm	NNW	5	6
Mid	NNW	5	6
3 am	NNW	5	6
6 am	NNW	5	6
9 am	NNW	5	6
Noon	NNW	5	6
3 pm	NNW	5	6
6 pm	NNW	5	6
9 pm	NNW	5	6
Mid	NNW	5	6

Weather readings from the lighthouse, used as evidence in a court case about a salvage at sea (ref. BH/1/134)

FIGURES TO DENOTE THE STATE OF THE WEATHER

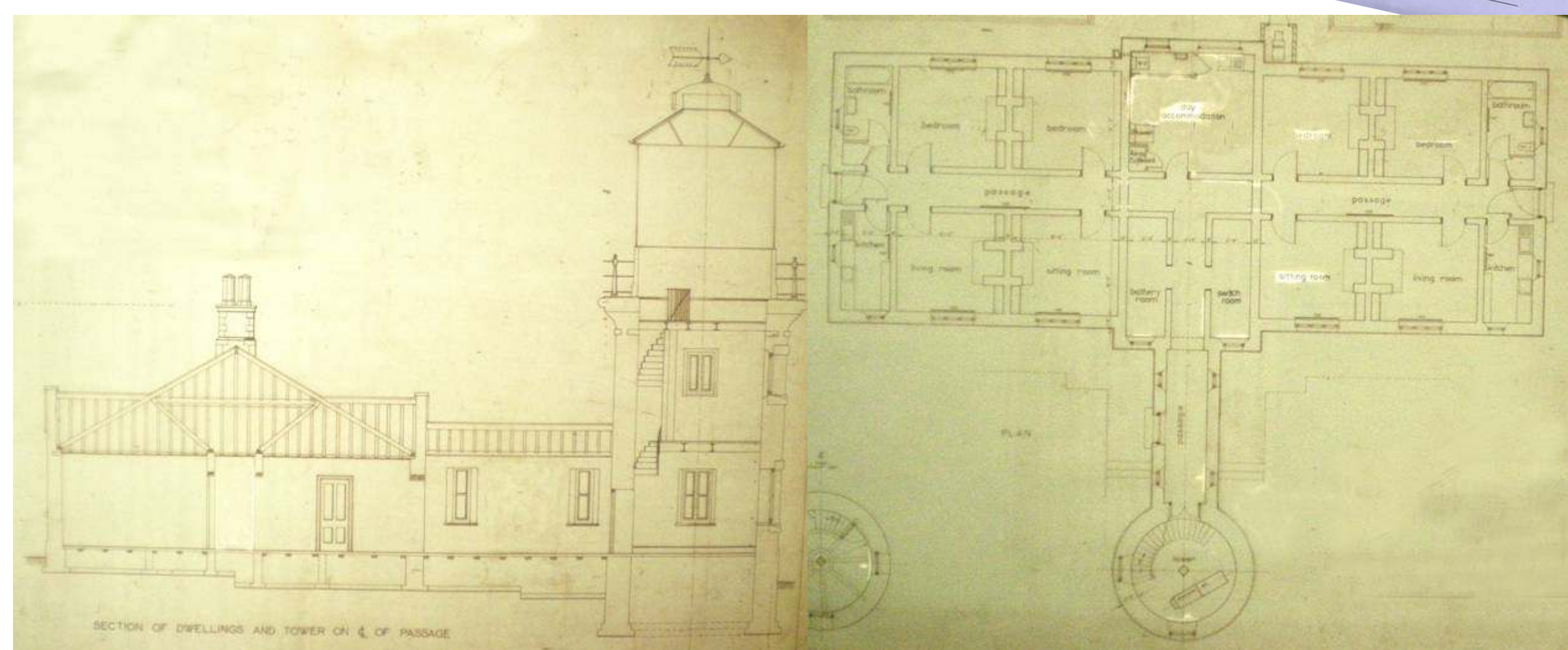
FIGURES	TO DENOTE THE STATE OF THE WEATHER
0	Clear sky
1	Light rain
2	Light rain
3	Light rain
4	Light rain
5	Light rain
6	Light rain
7	Light rain
8	Light rain
9	Light rain
10	Light rain
11	Light rain
12	Light rain

ST. BEES NEW LIGHTHOUSE.

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new light-house at St. Bees Head was performed on Wednesday last. The old apparatus, which consisted of a pair of parabola reflecters, was considered by the Hon. Board of Trinity House insufficient to supply an adequate light, and it was determined to substitute for it a catadioptric light of the first order. To do so it was found necessary to build a new circular tower of a greater height than the old structure. The first Pharos at St. Bees' Heads was erected in 1718, and was lighted with coals up till within the remembrance of some of the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The coals were carted to the place during the summer months; and the fire was attended by a man appointed for the purpose, whose principal duty was to stir it up with a long poker. Some 50 years ago the original edifice was burned to the ground, the keeper's wife and family falling victims to the flames, and the keeper himself barely escaping with his life. After that the present lighthouse was built. The building itself is about 27 feet high, and the new lighthouse will be some 10 feet higher. The present light is capable of being seen some 30 miles off; and although the new light will not be distinguishable at any greater distance, yet the illuminating power will be much more intense and effective. The new lantern was originally intended for Gibraltar, and Mr. Norris, the resident engineer, who has the superintendence of the work for Trinity House, says that it is one of the clearest and most perfect pieces of mechanism he ever saw in his life. It will be lighted by one lamp, instead of fifteen, as the present one is. The lamp will be supplied by Messrs. W. Wilkins and Co., of Longacre. The new tower will be built of the red sandstone of the neighbourhood, and surmounted by a lantern upon a new and improved principle, twice the height of the present one. Mr. John Glaister, of Whitehaven, is the builder, and there is no doubt the work will be turned out to the satisfaction of the engineer. Besides the new tower, two new and very substantial dwelling houses are being erected for the keepers.

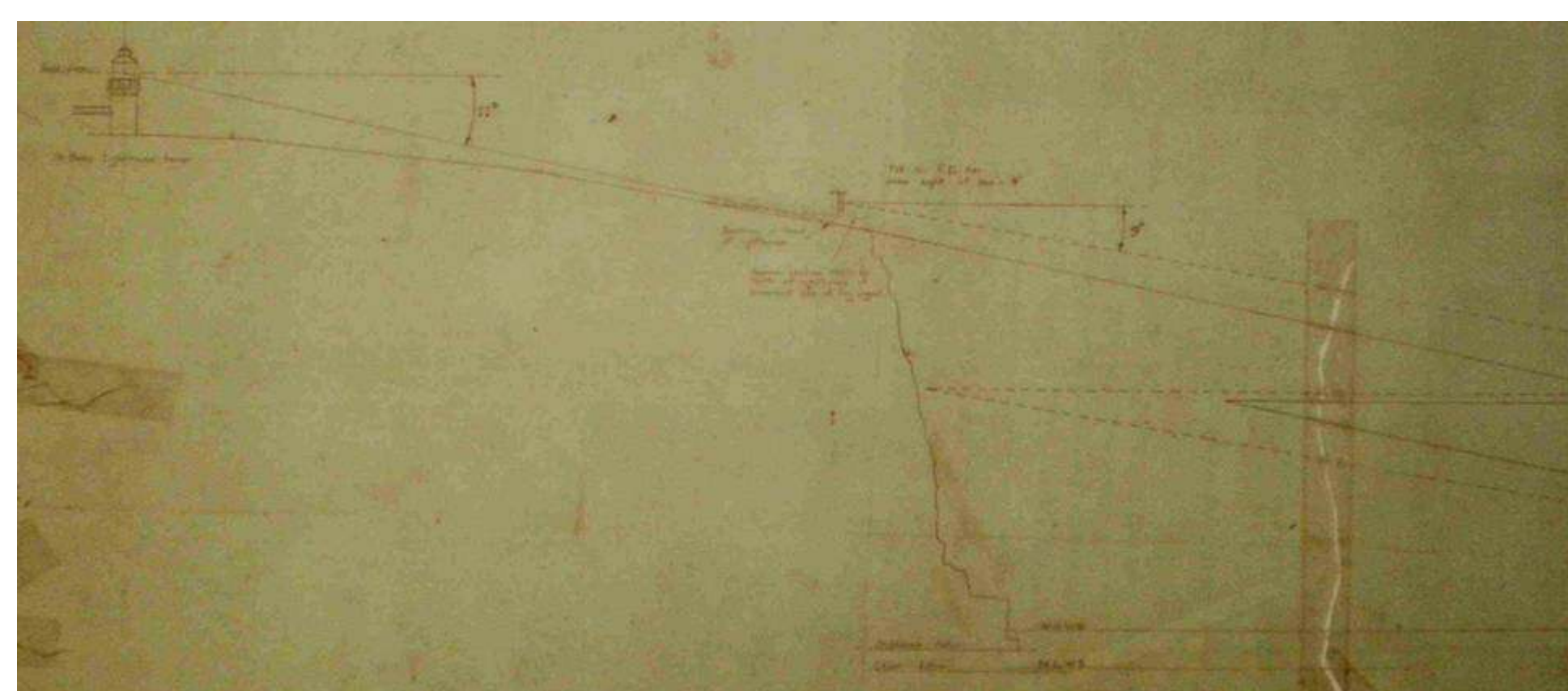
The laying of the foundation stone was fixed for four o'clock; and about that time a select company of gentlemen having arrived, the ceremony was commenced by the workmen placing the foundation stone, or rather the key-stone, in its position. The Rev. Joshua Tyson, curate, Distington, then offered up the following prayer:—

"We humbly acknowledge, most gracious Lord, that the works and intents of men are vain and fruitless, unless they be sustained and hallowed by Thine aid and benediction. Grant that this work which is now begun may be continued and ended in Thy name. May the light which shall henceforth guide the benighted mariners to the haven where they would be, hailed by thousands and tens of thousands of all people, nations and languages, as the emblem—feeble



St Bees lighthouse in more modern times, on plans dating from 1989 (above) and cross section of cliff showing proposed site of fog signal in 1960s (ref. YGLA/1/1)

Cumberland Packet 16th May 1865

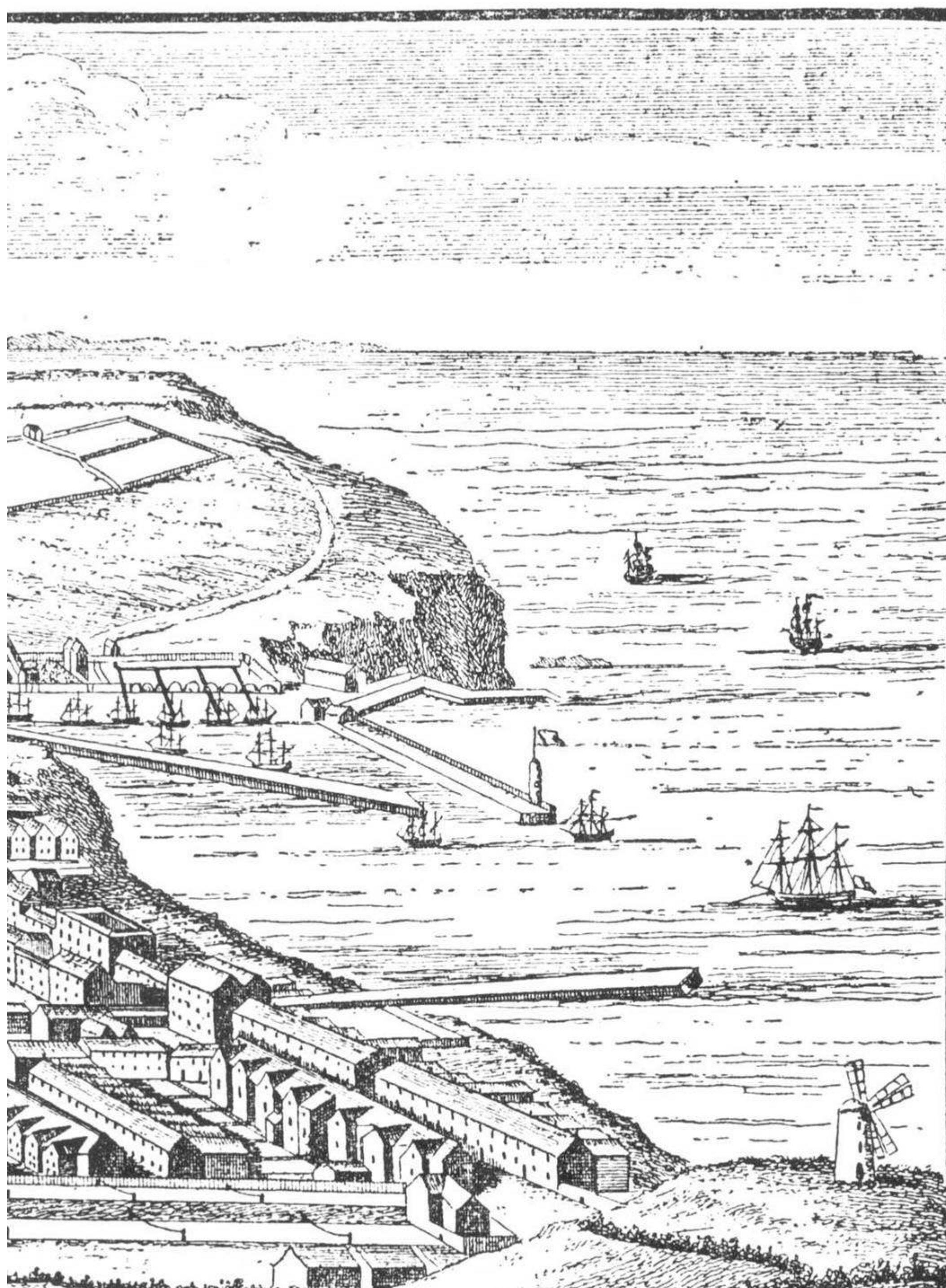


Rev Joshua Tyson of Distington offered the following prayer as the key-stone to the new lighthouse was laid:

May the light which shall henceforth guide the benighted mariners to the haven where they would be, hailed by thousands and tens of thousands of all people, nations and languages, as the emblem - feeble and faint indeed, but still the emblem of that glorious light, which yet shineth in darkness to direct the steps of those who wander on in heedless or hopeless course, towards Thee, the only source of spiritual light and safety. Amen

Maritime Lights

Whitehaven Harbour



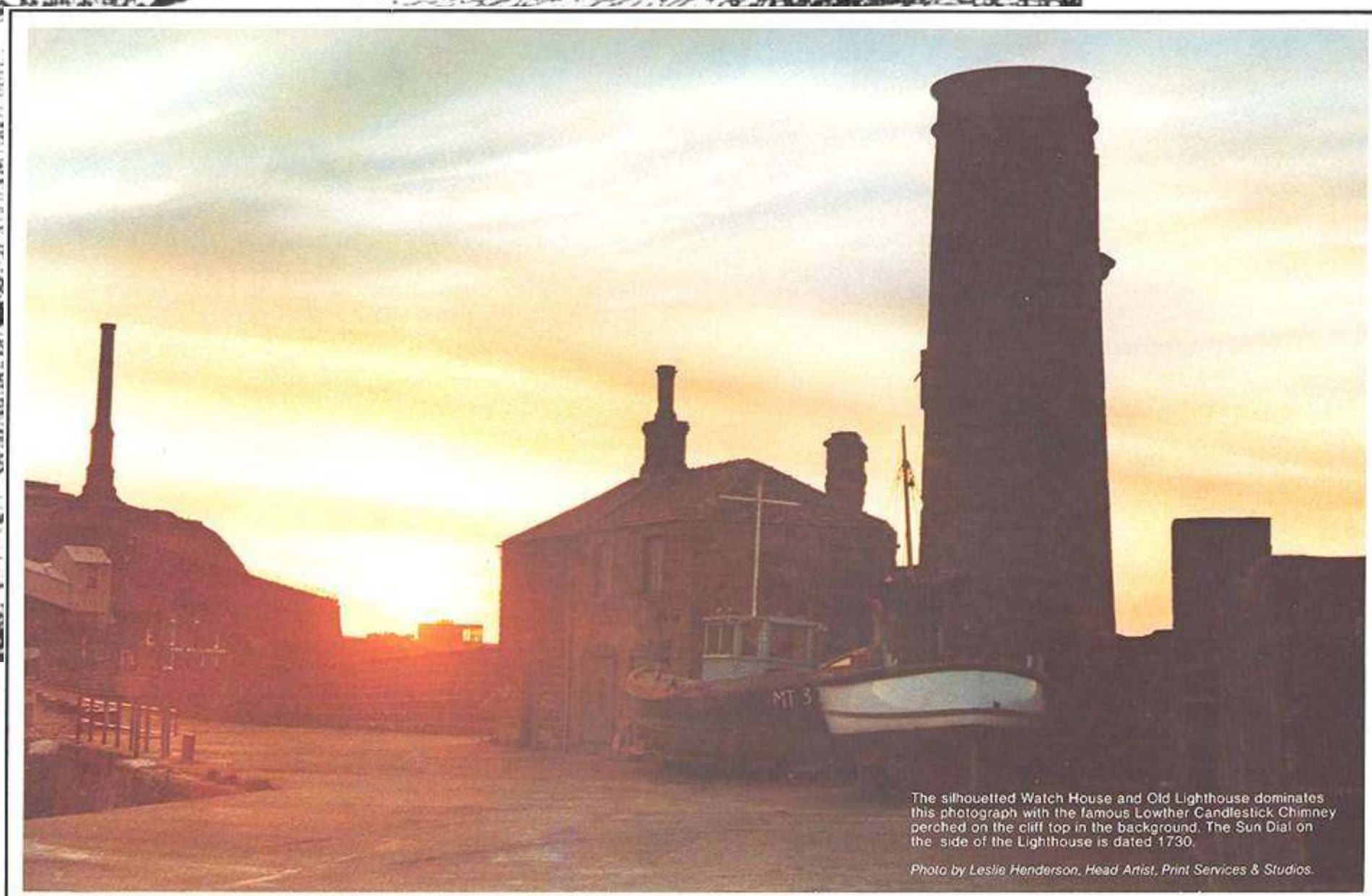
The lighthouse on the old quay was probably built as a tidal light sometime between 1710 and 1727. The sundial on the side dates from 1730.

By 1785 an oil burning reflector had been fitted to the lighthouse, which was upgraded to gas by 1864. Later in 1903 a window was cut out 7 feet below the light so that a red light could be shown when it was necessary to block entrance during the night. During the day red flags were flown from the flagstaff above the lighthouse to prohibit entrance by day.

A light was established on a mast at the end of the old quay in 1902 and the light from the old lighthouse was later discontinued.

Views of Whitehaven

(refs. DH 359/37 (left),
Lighthouses by Hague
and Christie (1975)
(right) and
PH/1579/6 (below)



The silhouetted Watch House and Old Lighthouse dominates this photograph with the famous Lowther Candlestick Chimney perched on the cliff top in the background. The Sun Dial on the side of the Lighthouse is dated 1730.
Photo by Leslie Henderson, Head Artist, Print Services & Studios.

