

Gunfleet Lighthouse.

Gunfleet Lighthouse is a derelict screw-pile lighthouse standing in the North Sea, six miles off the coast at Frinton-on-sea in Essex, constructed in 1850 by James Walker of Trinity House. George Henry Saunders was the contractor. Walker and Burges were the Engineers. It is 74 feet (23 m) in height and hexagonal in plan; mounted on seven piles forming a steel lattice and originally painted red. It was first lit on 1 May 1856, replacing a light vessel which had been on station there since 1850.

When in use, the lighthouse was manned by two keepers. They were accommodated in a single-storey dwelling, immediately below the lantern, which was divided into a living room (also used as a kitchen/washroom), a bed room and an oil room (in which the fuel for the lamps was stored). The walls and roof were of corrugated iron, with wrought iron angle plates. Additional storage space was provided in the 'inverted pyramid' beneath the dwelling, which was accessed by a ladder from the gallery.

The light flashed red once every 30 seconds; it was lit using Argand lamps and reflectors mounted on a revolving triangular frame, with a pane of red glass mounted in front of each reflector. Initially nine lamps and reflectors were used (three groups of three), but the number was later increased to fifteen (three groups of five). It also had a fog bell, which sounded once every ten seconds in bad weather; like the lamp mechanism, it was driven by clockwork.

In 1908 the light was upgraded to flash red once every fifteen seconds; thereafter it was listed as a dioptric light (i.e. equipped with lenses rather than reflectors).

The light and fog signal continued to be listed as active into the 1940s, but by 1951 it had been decommissioned.

It remains in use as an automated weather station by the [Port of London Authority](#), and marks the northern limit of their jurisdiction.

In 1974 an attempt was made to use the lighthouse as a base for the pirate radio station [Radio Atlantis](#), but this was thwarted by the authorities.

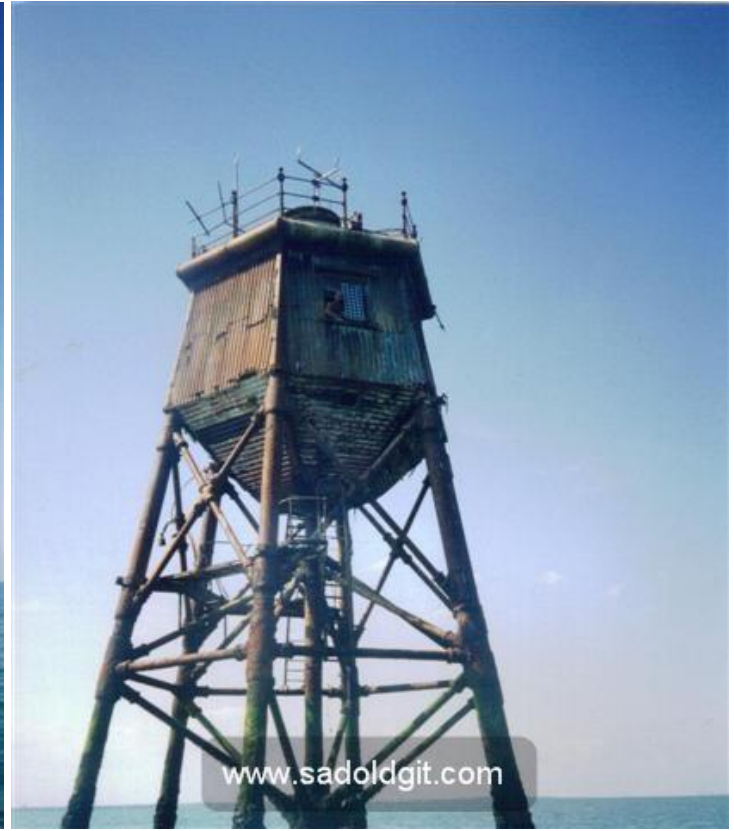


Location.

Six miles off the coast of Frinton on Sea (UK) and equally on the north east limit of the Port of London, therefore just inside territorial waters.

Exact location: 51.46.1478 North and 1.20.2839 East.





Gunfleet Lighthouse at low tide. (2005)



From left to right - more good shots from different view points. The picture below shows the rusty ladder up to the entrance hatch.





From left to right - the solar panel room; the bunk room; 1

Below from left to right: over room with glass rectangular port hole; and the stairway to the roof.





From top to bottom- top of the ladder with the davit arm and block; bottom half of the lamp stand on roof; top half of the lamp stand; and finally, the Port of London Authority weather equipment.

Gunfleet lighthouse is situated six miles off the coast of Frinton on Sea on a horseshoe shaped bay in the northern part of Gunfleet sands. It is equally on the north-east limit of the Port of London and therefore just inside territorial waters.

It was constructed in 1850 as a screw pile lighthouse designed by Mr. Walker of Trinity House, but based on the invention of an Irish man called Alexander Mitchell.

The submerged end of each pile has a poad bladed screw on it. The screw is twisted into a sand or coral bottom in the same manner that a screw is twisted into wood. A platform is then constructed upon the embedded screw piles and the living accommodation and lighthouse erected on top.

A lighthouse of this kind is easily adapted for any area where the light does not require to be seen at a great distance. The piles offer no resistance to the waves which pass through the open spaces without rising any higher than out at sea.

Gunfleet lighthouse is an iron lattice structure built on seven screw piles driven into the unstable sands. Six form an outer hexagon and the seventh a centre support on which is placed hexagonal shaped living accommodation consisting of a living room, bedroom, kitchen/washroom and storeroom. A light tower was fixed on top the living quarters. The whole structure was painted red and stood 74 feet high.

It showed one revolving light every 30 seconds and was visible for 10 miles. It was decommissioned in the 1920s when I assume the fog-warning bell was removed.

The 1891 Census showed Gunfleet lighthouse as the registered address for Richard Turner Ayeis of Great Yarmouth (assistant keeper), and Keeper, John Francis Ellis of Joleland.

In 1974 there was an attempt to board the lighthouse and set up the pirate 'Radio Atlantis' station inside, but this was thwarted in December of that year when the Royal Marine Commandos, Essex Constabulary, Home Office and Trinity House officials prevented access to the would be pirates.

Today the tower is in remarkably good order, considering its age and lack of attention and is currently in use as a weather station. It stands as a beacon with the treacherous sands marked by a series of buoys with bells.

Offshore radio use.

Gunfleet lighthouse had not been considered for use by any broadcaster during the 1960's British offshore radio era.

However in 1974, with the introduction of the Dutch Marine Offences Act, a group of people started work to refurbish the lighthouse for use as a base to re-launch Radio Atlantis as a new English language station, Radio Dolphin.

Refurbishment work started in September 1974, just after the new Dutch law came into effect, while on land a 5kw transmitter was being built by former Radio Atlantis engineer, Andy Anderson.

Studio accommodation, living quarters and a steel framework for guying the planned 120' (= 36,57 meter) aerial mast were all installed during October and November 1974, with a planned opening date for the station of Christmas 1974.

Unknown to those involved with the new station the British authorities had been keeping a close watch on all the activity at Gunfleet and on 19th December 1974, they decided it was time to act.

Three boats carrying Police, Home Office and Trinity House officials arrived at the lighthouse and requested permission to board, which was initially refused by those in occupation. However, after being informed (correctly or not) that those involved with the station on land had already been arrested, they relented and allowed the officials on board.

Home Office officials spent several days dismantling all the radio equipment which had been installed on the lighthouse.

Information about the above mentioned **Andy Anderson**.



Andy was born as Andy Gemmell-Smith on 15th July 1952 in Hammersmith, London. Andy had a disco equipment business in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, until December 1973, when he joined Radio Atlantis as a DJ and engineer. His first broadcast was on Christmas Day and he stayed until the station closed down in August 1974. During that time he married Lynda who was also heard on air occasionally. After Atlantis, he returned to his equipment firm and was also involved in the abortive 'Radio Dolphin' project, for which he was prosecuted under the Marine Offences Act. In June 1976 he joined Beacon Radio in

Wolverhampton, later moving to a number of other independent local radio stations where he was chief engineer and, sometimes, weekend DJ. In 1983 Andy set up a company called Broadcast Designs making radio broadcast equipment under the trade name 'Soundtech'. In 1987 it became Alice Soundtech with Andy as Managing Director. Following his divorce from Lynda, he married Grelen Cabanilla in Cyprus. Sadly Andy passed away on the 1st of July 2017 after a long illness. He was 64. (Photo by Steve England supplied by 'Offshore Echos' magazine).

Another version of the story on "Radio Dolphin" was found on the website broadcasting-fleet.com. It reads:

According to Printz Holman, the Gunfleet Lighthouse was occupied for a continuous period and was not left unattended. By the middle of September 1974 a boarding party was hard at work making the abandoned lighthouse structurally safe and sound. Windows were cut, floors installed and rooms built ready to house the generator and transmitter, a reconditioned Collins 10,000 Watt model obtained from the USA. The upper floors of the lighthouse would be used for the generators, transmitter and studio while the basement would be used for living quarters. During the end of October Adriaan van Landschoot (Radio Atlantis) paid for all the necessary equipment and materials for the conversion of the Lighthouse. On 26th October 1974 the British Home Office raided the lighthouse and removed several items, and placed a message board outside, saying that they paid the lighthouse a visit. On the 19th of December Printz Holman and Ian Hurrion arrived by a small dinghy. They were followed by a ship belonging to the Home Office. On board the ship were either the Royal Marine Commandos or Police from Essex, as well as Home Office and Trinity House officials (the owners of the lighthouse). The authorities had been given 'inside' information and were aware that a supply tender was due to arrive on the night of 19/20 December (prior to Christmas). They were also aware that we were short of supplies as previous tenders had been cancelled. This would appear to be the reasoning behind the choice of the date for the raid. Both Ian 'Brig' Hurrion and myself were on the lighthouse when the authorities attempted the boarding. There was a long stand-off, followed by discussions. Several large vessels were in attendance and it would have been impossible for any supplies to get through. As no transmissions were taking place, it was impossible to tell the world what was happening. The structure was eventually vacated by us. We were not taken to a police station. [Information by Printz Holman]. Printz Holman, a.k.a. Black Printz, worked as a deejay at the Voice of Peace in Israel.

Information about Black Printz was found on the website: offshoreradio.co.uk:

Black Printz



During the sixties he worked for a time for Reg Calvert the owner of Radio City. Always keen on gimmicks, Reg decided that Radio City should have a programme called The Flying Dutchman Show presented by an anonymous DJ. This was Printz.

He spent just one stint on the fort.

On 23rd June 1974 he presented one pre-recorded show on Radio Atlantis as Black Printz. The tape was aired from the Jeanine from 00.00 till 01.00 BST. Later he was involved in the abortive Radio Dolphin scheme with Atlantis engineer Andy Anderson. He then worked on the Voice of Peace in the Middle East and on board the Mebo II, Radio Northsea's old ship, which by then was based in Libya. On 14th August 1978 he and Robin Adcroft put out a special programme in English to mark the anniversary of the Marine Offences Act. They told their bosses that they were testing the equipment! This was the final English language programme to be broadcast from the ship. Printz now runs a studio and production company in the UK. (This photo, courtesy of Hans Knot, was taken at the Radio Academy's 'Celebration Of Offshore Radio' in August 2007).

About his recent whereabouts, I found this piece of information:

Mr. Printz Peter Holman is a writer/broadcaster from Buxton Derbyshire. This person was born in February 1947, which was over 74 years ago. Mr. Holman is British and resident in the United Kingdom.

Legal matters.

Four people involved with the planned station were later summonsed to appear at Southend Magistrates Court on the 11th of December 1975 on a charge of "conspiring" to install apparatus contrary to Section 4 (3) (d) of the Marine etc Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967. They were committed for trial at Chelmsford Crown Court.

The trial took place on the 5th of April 1976 when three defendants appeared (the fourth, Printz Peter Holman, was by then working at the Voice of Peace off Israel).

The prosecution evidence comprised of three separate files, a total of 138 pages of statements, photographs and evidence.

Several of the statements were made by Andy Anderson, following the many visits by the Home Office made to his house to confiscate equipment. Another statement was made by Les Livermore, Andy's partner in the plan and was entrusted with all the financial support provided by ex Radio Atlantis Adriaan van Landschoot.

The 10 Kilowatt transmitter was purchased from Colomor Electronics.

The Home Office had contacted them because Colomor Electronics themselves had become suspicious. They had been led to understand that the transmitter was for export to Holland and so naturally had requested a copy of the shipping order for their VAT claim. As the transmitter was in fact never exported, this was not received. From here the Home Office sleuths traced a van hire firm

and from their statement they were able to track down where the transmitter had been delivered to ie Andy's garage. Of course by that time half of it was out on the Gunfleet Lighthouse.

Other interesting statements came from the Home Office officials, Mr. W.F. Lancefield and Mr. R.B. Schofield. Mr. Lancefield's statement started: "On the 30th of November I was flying in a helicopter over the Thames Estuary. I observed a structure standing on legs in the sea. I took photographs which I produce as exhibits ... etc." Clearly this was a no expense spared effort by the Home Office. In view of the seriousness of the charge (conspiracy) and of the dubious action taken by the Home office in raiding the Lighthouse, Andy at least, was prepared to fight the case and plead "Not guilty". However as the date for the case drew nearer, things were not as hopeful as they seemed. You need to have a lot of money behind you to be able to fight the case on a matter of principle and this type of money was not around. This and other considerations led Andy to follow the advice of his council, whose main concern was to get Andy off with as small a penalty as possible. So, minutes before the case started, a deal was made with the prosecuting council whereby Andy and Co. would plead "Not guilty" to the serious charge of "conspiring with others to controvence the M.O.A.", but would plead "Guilty" to a lesser charge. Clearly the Home Office did not want to fight the case (and have to justify their actions), so they agreed to this plan and in court entered a second charge of "supplying wireless telegraphy apparatus", which was a direct M.O.A charge.

Ian Hurrion, the third accused was immediately dismissed as his part in the episode was small and the case proceeded for Andy and Les Livermore (the fourth accused, Printz Peter Holman, was not present due to his being on the Peace Ship.

The judge was clearly unimpressed by this turn of events, what had originated as a serious crown court case had reverted to a simple magistrates court matter. He clearly felt his time was being wasted by the Home Office. This was to be Andy's saving grace. The defence for both accused consisted of persuading the judge that each of them were jolly good persons and how they had been led on by the other (and visa versa). The Judge took all this in with a casual interest, made a few jokes at the Home Office's expense and gave both Andy and Les a two year conditional discharge and £50 costs.

He couldn't have let them off more lightly really. A good result for Andy therefore, particularly as it had begun as a real attempt to start a new offshore radio station, but a disappointment for those who were looking for a real battle with the Home Office.

It's worth noting that the losers out of this entire venture are the two ex Atlantis people:

Andy, who lost a lot of money at the time and still had his legal fees to pay, and also Adriaan van Landschoot, who lost all the money he had invested.

The Home Offence were of course granted the right to keep the transmitter they had confiscated.

Andy Anderson and Les Livermore were given a two year conditional discharge and ordered to pay £50 costs.

The case against the third defendant who appeared in court, Ian Hurrion, was dismissed.

No personal information about Ian Hurrion and about Les Livermore was found on the internet.



Equipment seized from Gunfleet Lighthouse in 1974.



Bits and pieces.

Gunfleet Sands Offshore Wind Farm.

Today the little old lighthouse is surrounded by wind turbines of the Gunfleet Sands Offshore Wind Farm project. For more information about the project, please follow this link:

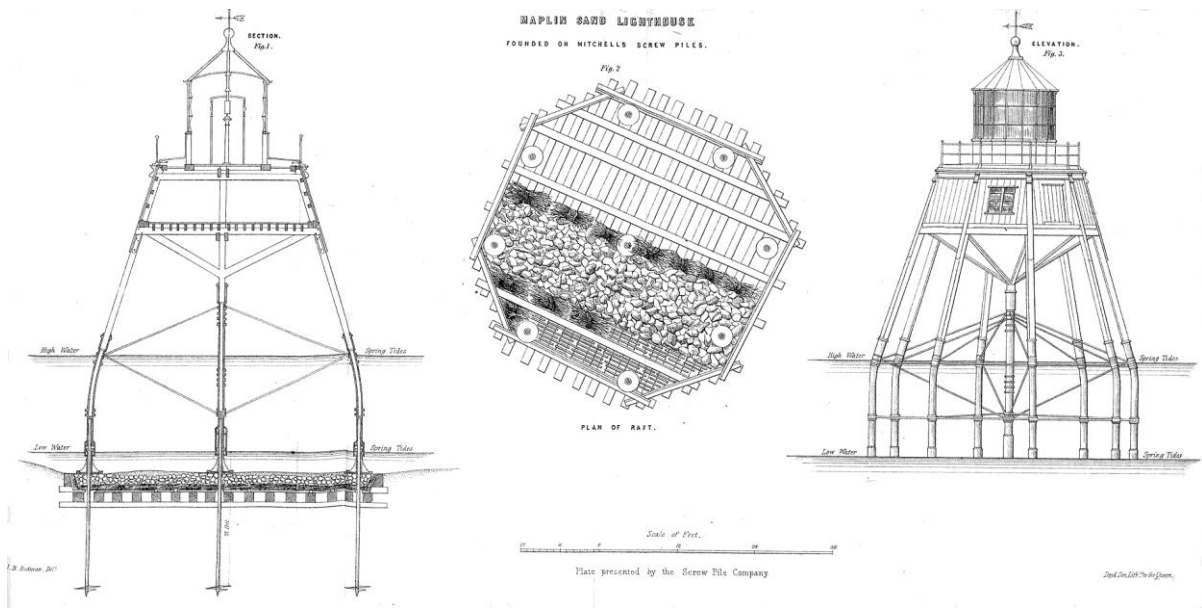
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunfleet_Sands_Offshore_Wind_Farm



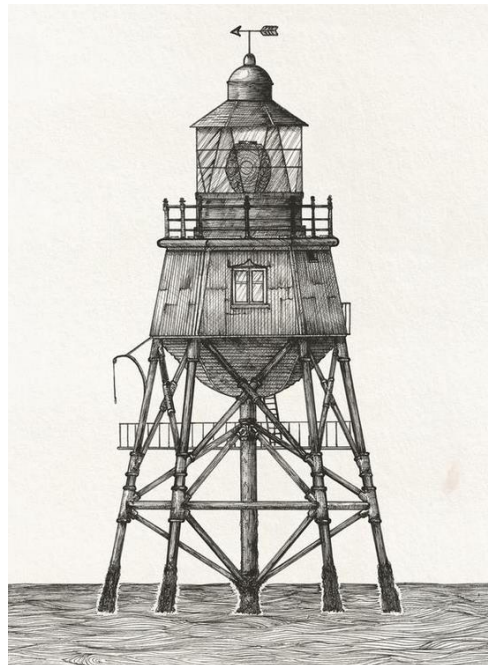
Gunfleet Sands Offshore Wind Farm.

Blueprint.

The blueprint of a similar lighthouse, Maplin Sand Lighthouse. The Maplin Sand Lighthouse has 9 piles, while the Gunfleet lighthouse has 7 piles.



Print.



This print can be found on and be bought from: www.etsy.com

Mark Keable from Felixstowe.

Mark Keable from Felixstowe added on his Facebook page the following information:

“I suppose because of it's connection to offshore radio, this place has always fascinated me. Makes you wonder if the planned station would have worked, as naturally the structure isn't that big, so presumably programmes would have been prerecorded, as you wouldn't have had much of a crew onboard..... the bit that gave it more clout as far as seriousness was the involvement of Andy Anderson.

I've done a bit of research on the structure and it's history..... here's a bit of the earlier years.

September 1878 saw a tragedy for one of the two keepers onboard. While attempting to reach a newspaper which was brought to him by a local yacht he over-reached and fell into the water and subsequently drowned. In 1887 Thomas Proom wrote to the Essex Standard to appeal on behalf of the Keepers of the Lighthouse. He said that many residents and visitors to Clacton could see how isolated the lighthouse was. Naturally the keepers tending the lights spent many dreary hours at their station. Therefore he appealed for old Illustrated Papers, Newspapers and Periodicals to be sent to his home and he would then forward them on via Trinity steamer once a month. In 1893 work commenced to fit cable to allow telephonic communication between the lighthouse and land!”

Letter from Mouse Music Company, 4th of December 1974.

Brief Atlantis 7-12-1974

Mouse Music Company n.v.

MARKT 27

9990 MALDEGEM

- Music Publishing
- Artist Managing
- Artist Promotion
- Record Promotion
- Record Production

M. H. Smoey
Mercuriuslaan 44
Rochangt (2-H)
Nederland

(Maldegem, 4 december 1974)

Beste,

Hartelijk dank voor je briefje van 3 november.

Tot nu toe hebben wij nog niet uitgesproken
daar wij nog steeds wachten op de uitspraak
van het proces. De uitspraak volgt op

20 december a.s.

Wij lopen zo vlug mogelijk na de
uitspraak met de uitzendingen te
herbeginnen maar we hebben nog geen
definitieve datum voorop getekend

Graceljes.

☎ 050 - 73 152
73 153
73 154

Kredietbank: Adegem, Rekening Nr 441-3852671-76
Generale Bankmaatsch. Maldegem, 290-0124635-11

B. T. W. 413 802 790
H. R. Gent, 113 642

Translation of the letter from Mouse Music Company:

"Dear,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 3rd of November 1974.

Up to now the station is not on the air yet, because we are awaiting the verdict of the court case.

The verdict will be on the 20th of December.

We hope to start the transmissions as soon as possible after the verdict, but haven't set a date yet.

With kind regards."

The Mouse Music Company is owned by Adriaan van Landschoot. The Company still exists today.

Preservation.

This old lighthouse is quite an intriguing structure. Being the product of some excellent British engineering, it should be preserved!

Sources of information.

The above information was found on the following websites:

www.en.wikipedia.org

www.offshoreradio.co.uk

www.offshoreradiomuseum.co.uk

www.azanorak.com

www.uklighthouse.com

www.gracesguide.co.uk

www.mycetes.co.uk

www.broadcasting-fleet.com

www.sadoldgit.com

www.hansknot.com

Most information on the legal matters came from Newscaster vol. 5, no. 4 of May 1976. Newscaster was published by the Free Radio Campaign (F.R.C.), London, England.

Compilation.

The story was compiled by Harry Snoeij from Holland (hlcsnoeij@gmail.com).

Brielle, March 2021.
