

Another light which would have been of great assistance to an enemy raider in fixing his position was the North Cape light, and instructions were given to the Fisheries Inspector of the Department at Russell that this light must be out on the night of the 23rd December. Although this officer is not in the lighthouse service, his report is an epitome of the spirit of loyalty and a story well worthy of inclusion in the annals of the Department.

In December, 1940, the lights at Mokohinau, Cuvier Island, Gable Islet, Honeycomb, Separation Point, Le Bons, St. Annes Point, Puysegur Point, and North Cape were closed down for the duration of the war or the period of the state of emergency, and in so far as the Mokohinau station was concerned the keepers were withdrawn.

The light at the Chickens was extinguished and replaced by a light on Taranga (Hen) Islet, while the light on the top of the wireless mast at the Chathams was extinguished and later was exhibited only at the request of vessels known to be arriving. In reference to this light it is interesting to note that the "Port Waikato," which recently lay off the Chathams with a broken shaft, was instrumental in having the light exhibited for a period of thirty-six hours prior to the expected arrival of vessels at the port because of her arrival in February, 1944, a day earlier than she was expected. It seems that the vessel was, as mentioned, a day early and was attempting to make harbour without the aid of the light when just before she made the break she found herself uncomfortably close to the reef. After this representations were made to the Department and to the Navy, with the result that the period of lighting was extended to thirty-six hours prior to the expected arrival.

A test of the blackout of coastal lights was carried out in February, 1941, and it was found that with few exceptions the lights could be extinguished within fifteen minutes. Those which took longer were, when such action did not endanger shipping, extinguished for the period of the emergency.

In addition to their many normal lighthouse duties, the keepers were required to carry out coast-watching and radio watching duties, thus adding to the severe strain to which the reduction in power of their lights had already placed upon them. Meteorological reports and data had to be prepared and transmitted to the appropriate authorities and details of any suspicious vessels noted and forwarded to the Navy.

All these duties meant that the watchkeeper had to be continually on the alert and ready at any time to note any peculiar circumstances which may or may not have been of importance; in addition, the stores position in some of the more remote stations at times caused great anxiety owing to the non-availability of the "Matai" and the lighthouses' dependence on small craft for the conveyance of necessities.

When the "Matai" was withdrawn from the lighthouse service the Department was faced with the job of servicing the lights by other means, with the result that island lights were supplied by small coastal launches, while the land stations were supplied by road. Many of the land stations were, by the very nature of their location, cut off from road transport and supplies had to come in on the backs of packhorses, and at times for the last portion of the journey heavy loads were manhandled over rough terrain by the keepers.

It can be understood that as many of the automatic lights were extinguished by inexperienced persons it was possible that valuable equipment may have been inadvertently harmed and, in any case, without regular maintenance deterioration would rapidly take place, so in the early part of 1942 the Department arranged for inspection and overhaul by Public Works mechanics.

The value placed on the lights by seafarers was demonstrated in March, 1944, when the organization representing fishermen plying out of Bluff wrote asking if the light at Pegasus Harbour, Stewart Island, could be re-established, as it was of great assistance to the fisherman in finding their bearings; as a result of these representations the light at Pearl Island was re-established.

From then on, as the menace of surface and submarine raiders became more remote, more and more lights and radio beacons were re-established until in August, 1945, practically all were back on their full pre-war power.