

LEAD LIGHT TOWER



On the corner of Brown and Tyrrell Sts in Newcastle is a disused navigational tower which looks like a standard battlement from a medieval castle.

The round tower, with its distinct lean, is a familiar landmark on the Hill.

It is the remaining one of a pair known as lead light towers.

From the mid-19th century the two lights, when aligned to each other, were expected to provide a dead reckoning navigational aid. The sister tower, located lower down the hill in Perkins St, has long since disappeared.

Both towers were originally identical except for colour. The front tower, in Perkins St, was painted white with a red light; the Brown St. tower was red with a white light. Because of the difference in their building elevations the towers and their lights appeared one above the other when seen from the sea outside the port.

The first stone bricks of the lead light towers were laid on November 21 and 23, 1865, by Miss Lewis, the daughter of Mr M. Lewis, the government architect for Newcastle, and Miss Allan, daughter of Captain Allan, the harbour master.

It was soon apparent that the towers had two serious faults. They were too low, especially the one in Brown St, and spaced too close together.

The later construction of a two storey Wesleyan parsonage in Perkins St obstructed the Brown St tower. This forced the Government to demolish the original small tower to build a more substantial and higher one on the same site. The new tower began operating in early 1877.

The foundations of the existing tower are made up of seven courses of solid masonry which reach about a metre wide.

Alterations to the bearings of the entrance channel led to the commissioning of new lights in steel towers on other sites in June 1918. These in turn were replaced in the 1980's by the existing lead light towers near Queens Wharf.