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PORTLAND HARBOUR BREAKWATER LIGHTHOUSE RESTORATION

Portland Port has recently completed the restoration of the historic lighthouse situated at the main entrance to the harbour. Two opportunities were available to the Port; the cheaper option would have been to retire the existing lighthouse and use a modern counterpart. After deliberating both options, the decision was made to restore the existing structure to maintain the historical integrity of the breakwater.

The northern and north eastern breakwaters of Portland Harbour were constructed at the turn of the 20th century, at a time when hostilities with Germany were developing. The Harbour at that time was home to the British fleet and the additional breakwaters gave extra protection.

The 'A' Head lighthouse on the southern roundhead of the north-eastern breakwater, would have been constructed around this time, believed to be approximately 1906, although little is known about its construction. It is however one of the few remaining operating lighthouses of its kind in England.

The manufacturer of the lighthouse is cast into the support legs; Chance Brothers of Birmingham. The company was founded in 1824 as a leading glass manufacturer and a pioneer of British glassmaking technology, however in 1851 they became a major lighthouse engineering company, producing optical components, machinery, and other equipment for lighthouses around the world. Their name is also associated with the manufacture of parts of Portland Bill lighthouse.

The decision to restore the lighthouse was made after the last survey which found it to be in a heavily corroded state. Invitations to tender were sent out, with the restoration contact being awarded to Quest Marine Ltd.

Ned Wiltshire of Quest Marine Ltd. said "It was a great honour for Quest to be asked by Portland Port to undertake the restoration of the Portland Breakwater Lighthouse.

The project involved transporting a large amount of plant and equipment by barge to the breakwater. Over 10 tons of scaffolding was erected to allow us access to all parts of the structure.

The work was carried out by Quest staff from the Weymouth and Portland area. We have very much enjoyed the challenge of giving this historic local landmark a new lease of life."

The structure is exposed to the elements so it was not easy to carry out the work but the transformation is nothing short of miraculous with the lighthouse looking brand new.

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