

# Hood Point Lighthouse

Hood Point was not the first lighthouse to be erected in East London. That honor belongs to the Castle Point Lighthouse, which went into operation on the 1st of August 1860. Built on a rubble base, it was a tapered square timber tower painted red and white, located near the stem of the breakwater on the West Bank side of the harbor. Although it was originally intended to be a temporary structure, it remained in service for 35 years; even after it had been decommissioned, the building itself somehow survived for another 34 years, and was only demolished in 1929.

A lighthouse commission appointed by the colonial government first proposed the establishment of a more permanent lighthouse in 1890. The site selected was a small hillock located about 1.8 kilometers (1.1 miles) to the south-west of the Buffalo River mouth, approximately 37 meters (121 feet) above sea level. Maps dating back to 1849 refer to this spot as Point Hood, but where this name came from is not clearly defined. The most likely explanation is that it was named after Lieutenant Hood, one of the members of a team that was instructed to survey the area by the British Admiralty in 1823.

The contract to build the lighthouse was awarded to Messrs. Hendry & Pearce, under the supervision of Clerk of the Works Mr. H. Freeman, and the lantern and optic equipment were sourced from Chance Brothers and Company of Birmingham, England. It was completed on schedule, and commissioned on the 4th of June 1895. The 19 meter (62 feet) tower was originally painted in a rather garish color scheme which consisted of a patchwork of white and vermilion (vivid reddish-orange) squares, but then changed to its current all-white daymark, offset with red gallery rails and lantern dome, in March 1929.

The optical apparatus was a first-order quadruple group flashing lens system consisting of four dioptric panels with a totally reflecting prismatic mirror of 180 degrees. It rotated on a mercury bath, and was centralized by means of ball bearings on a vertical steel shaft. The original light source was a five-wick Trinity House Douglass burner which provided a final light beam intensity of 7,500 candelas, but it was replaced with a petroleum vapor burner in 1910. Today, after various upgrades, the current light source has an intensity of 6,000,000 candelas, and is visible for a distance of 28 nautical miles.

One of Hood Point's most distinguishing features is its location. It is situated right next to a graveyard in the center of the West Bank Golf Course, a fact which has no doubt contributed to its popularity amongst lighthouse keepers! It was declared a provincial heritage site on the 22nd of May 1998.

## Hood Point Lighthouse Fact File

LSA Number	34
Name	Hood Point
Province	Eastern Cape
Location	East London
GPS Coordinates	S33.040699 E27.898799 33°02'26.5"S 27°53'55.7"E
ARLHS Number	SAF-050
Admiralty Number	D6420
NGA Number	32092
Active	Yes
First Established	1895
Commission Date	4 June 1895
Decommission Date	Not applicable
Construction Type	Round masonry tower
Daymark	Tower painted white; lantern painted white with a red dome.
Tower Height	19 meters (62 feet)
Focal Plane	55 meters (180 feet)
Luminous Intensity	6,000,000 candelas
Nominal Range	28 nautical miles
Characteristic	Fl.(4)W.
Period	40 seconds
Pattern	Fl. 0.5s, ec. 4.2s; Fl. 0.5s, ec. 4.2s; Fl. 0.5s, ec. 4.2s; Fl. 0.5s, ec. 25.4s
Pattern Description	4 white flashes every 40 seconds.
Manned	Yes
Site Open	Yes
Fenced	Yes
Tower Open	No
Accommodation	No
Access Method	Car
Access Notes	All access roads are tarred.