



Belle Tout lighthouse (Beachy Head, [East Sussex](#))



History

Belle Tout lighthouse (also spelled Belle Toute lighthouse) is a decommissioned lighthouse and British landmark located at Beachy Head, East Sussex.

Construction

Beachy Head saw numerous shipwrecks in the 17th and early 18th centuries and a petition to erect a lighthouse started around 1691. The calls were ignored for over 100 years until *The Thames*, an East Indian ship, crashed into the rocks of Beachy Head. The petition gained momentum with the support of a Captain of the Royal Navy and Trinity House, the official lighthouse authority, agreed to attend to the matter. Having witnessed the incident himself, John 'Mad Jack' Fuller, MP for Sussex, used his influence and some of his personal wealth to fund the lighthouse construction.

The first Belle Tout lighthouse was a temporary wooden structure that started service on 1 October 1828. The construction of the permanent granite lighthouse began in 1829 and it became operational on 11 October 1834. Its use of 30 oil lamps meant that the lighthouse would require 2 gallons of oil every hour. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_Tout_lighthouse_-_cite_note-TTB-2



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Decommission and sale

The lighthouse was not as successful as had been hoped, with two significant flaws leading to an alternative being sought. The cliff-top location caused problems when sea mists obscured the light, significantly reducing the distance that it would reach.[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_Tout_lighthouse - cite note-TTB-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_Tout_lighthouse_-_cite_note-TTB-2) Vessels that sailed too closely to the rocks would not be able to see the light because it was blocked by the edge of the cliff. However, the cliffs of Beachy Head suffered intense coastal erosion over the years and the rocky area started to be covered by the light.[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_Tout_lighthouse - cite note-BTLHist-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_Tout_lighthouse_-_cite_note-BTLHist-1)

The Belle Tout was in service until 2 October 1902, when a new lighthouse was built at the bottom of the cliffs. Trinity House sold off the building in 1903, after which time it changed hands several times. One purchaser was Sir James Purves-Stewart, who constructed an access road and upgraded the building.

During the Second World War the building was left empty. It was badly damaged by Canadian artillery fire, although the lighthouse itself was not the target: the guns were firing at wooden silhouettes of tanks which ran up the hill along rails to the east of building. The trace of the railway track is still discernible. After the local council took ownership in 1948, the decision was made to restore the lighthouse because of its historical significance. Building work was carried out under lease in 1956 and the lighthouse was brought up to date with modern amenities.

In 1986, the BBC purchased the lease to Belle Tout for the filming of mini-series *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* and a year later it featured in the James Bond film *The Living Daylights*. From 1996 the lighthouse has been used as a family home and, in 2007, the building was put up for sale again. It now includes six bedrooms and large walled gardens.

The lighthouse was further immortalized in the song "Belle Tout" by British rock band Subterraneans, and in the movie *B Monkey* starring Asia Argento. The glass *round room* which once housed the light itself was featured on the popular BBC television show *Changing Rooms*, wherein it was re-designed by celebrity interior designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen.

Coastal erosion

By 1999 the erosion of the cliffs was threatening the foundations of the building and drastic steps had to be taken to stop it from falling into the sea. On 17 March 1999 in a remarkable feat of engineering work the Belle Tout was moved 17 metres (56 ft) away from the cliff face. The 850-ton lighthouse was moved using a pioneering system of hydraulic jacks which pushed the building along four steel-topped concrete beams that were constantly lubricated with grease. The site should now be safe for many years and has been designed to enable further moves as and when they are required.

Belle Toute Lighthouse Preservation Trust

The "Belle Toute Lighthouse Preservation Trust" was formed in 2007 to bring together a non-profit organization that could raise the funds to purchase the lighthouse so that it can be opened as a tourist attraction and Bed and Breakfast. The trust was wound up in May 2008.

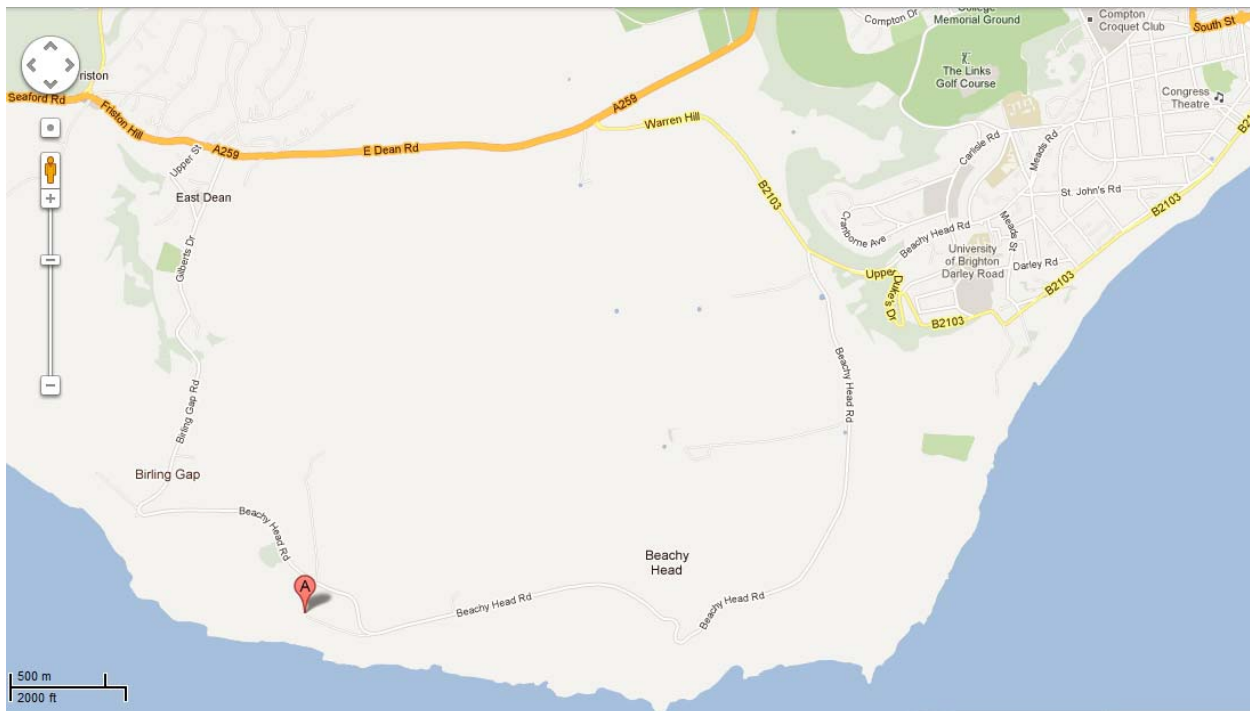


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Restoration and conversion to a bed and breakfast

In January 2010, the lighthouse appeared on Channel 5 in a program named *Build a New Life in the Country*. This showed how it was purchased in 2008 and converted into a luxury bed and breakfast. It had been bought for £500,000 and a further £700,000 was spent restoring it. The original access road was too close to the edge of the cliff; the payment of an easement fee to build a new road had to be negotiated with the local council.

Location



Bed and Breakfast





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Welcome

Welcome to the Belle Tout Lighthouse

Accommodation

The Belle Tout Lighthouse at Beachy Head is a hotel with a difference.

Breakfast

Built in 1832 and decommissioned in 1902, a tea-shop, a home, part-destroyed during the second world war and lovingly rebuilt in the 50's. Owned and filmed by the BBC, moved due to erosion - and now, beautifully restored and renovated.

Room Rates

History

With 360 degree views of the English Channel, beautiful landscape, countryside and the enigmatic Seven Sisters, Belle Tout is a remarkable place to stay.

Contact

Bookings

With themed rooms such as 'The Captains Cabin', 'Old England' and 'Keepers Loft', the accommodation and facilities will ensure a comfortable and memorable break.

Guest Reviews

View more information on our [accommodation](#), read more about the [history](#) or [contact us](#) to make a booking or request more information.

Where to Eat

How to Get Here

Beachy Head

Seven Sisters

Guided Walks

Build a New Life

Watch Belle Tout on Build a New Life in the Country.

Media

The Story of the Belle Tout Lighthouse, a book by Rob Wassell about the fascinating and remarkable history of the Belle Tout Lighthouse has been published. You can buy copies at the lighthouse or online via the website.



"A truly amazing experience, we didn't want to leave."



The lantern room at Belle Tout with its 360 degree views of the channel and the downs

Weekends for the summer filling up fast, book now to avoid disappointment

Imagine staying at a unique Bed and Breakfast where you can see some of the some of the best sunrises and sunsets. Also imagine being snug next to a real log fire, whilst looking out at the breathtaking views of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters.

One Night Stays

We operate a minimum two night stay policy, however, providing there is availability, one night stays may be available within a week of the proposed date of stay. Contact us a week before to check.

Booking in Advance

To avoid disappointment for anniversaries, birthday and honeymoon celebrations - please book well in advance.

Belle Tout Gift Voucher



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View east from the tower towards the new lighthouse at the base of Beachy Head



View west from the tower towards The Seven Sisters and Seaford Head in the distance

An ideal present for friends and family. Any denomination and gift card included. Call now to order yours.

Contact Belle Tout today