

Kéréon, South Shore of Fromveur : History



*watercolor : A Cadiou
fichier joint*

At the beginning of the XXth century, after the construction of Le Stiff, Creac'h, and La Jument, the coast of Ouessant was not yet totally protected. The next stage, in 1906, was to allow navigation at nighttime in the Passage of Fromveur. The location chosen was the rocks of « Men Tensel », along the shallow waters marked by the Pierres Vertes ; these points furthest on the shelf of Molène and also at the narrowest (and most turbulent) point of the channel .

The rock appears of good quality (granite with coarse grain that yields to the hammer), rather sure and broad to establish a turret there and even a lighthouse. The currents pass very close to the rock, raising the sea there, and then they cover it at a speed estimated up to 7 knots during the spring tides. Men Tensel is almost inaccessible. In 1906, it was necessary to wait 3 months, before being able to set foot on the rock. Work on the foundation cannot be made during the spring tides, when the rock is sufficiently exposed. Moreover, during slack tides, a quasi instantaneous shift occurs and it is still impossible to anchor a navigation marker nearby.

The work is difficult; the winds and currents will not stop for the workmen, the engineers and the sailors. Unloading is perilous and more so the departure, often in haste with the danger of the unforeseen. The accidents follow one another, fortunately usually without severity.

Only the rise of the construction and a better adaptation of marine methods, little by little, the course of the work will make it possible to make it even slightly safer to access the lighthouse. But the currents remain the master of Kéréon. Even when finished, resupplying the lighthouse will be taxing. Even today: horsepower against the force of the sea...

In 1915, in his "Study of the places, the lighthouse of Men Tensel (Kéréon)", the engineer Crouton drew a picture of the conditions following the level of the tides, the direction and the force of the winds. In 2004, it is always news...it is not a miracle in Fromveur.

Birth of the Lighthouse

On June 17, 1907, the Lighthouse Commission authorized the establishment of an ovoid base, built on the shelf of "Men Tensel - Pierre Hargneuse" in the south-east of the island of Ouessant, near Bannec island.

The project design began in 1903. The work of surveying of the rock took place during the summer of 1906 by the Assistant engineer Corvaisier.



View east of the rock - 1906



View northeast of the rock - 1907

By March 1907, a building was constructed on land at Argenton, and a fixed anchorage installed near the rock for the balisor "Leon Bourdelles". Why Argenton? The quay level, proved useful for construction of le Four was already there, and it is a very accessible point of loading, supply, and preparation of materials, being located on the continent. Argenton, surrounded by the communities of Portsall, Porspoder, Laber, is located in a country of sailors and especially skilled labor.



Mechanical equipment at the port of Argenton

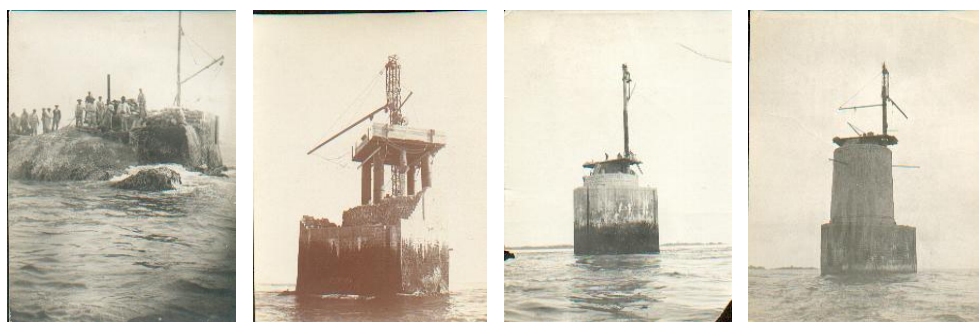
The work began in 1909, after two years of preparations.

Once again, an external circumstance would figure into the work about to rise on Men-Tensel: Mrs. Jules Baudy, January 2, 1910, wrote to the Public Minister for Labor:

"having learned that the Public Ministry of Labour was about to begin the construction of a lighthouse on the rock "Men Tensel" located at the west of the small island of Loedoc, Passage of Fromveur, and wishing to honor the memory with my grand uncle Charles Marie Dall de Kéréon, by a contribution to the erection of a building of this nature, I have the honor to propose to you to contribute to it the sum of 500,425 francs. The lighthouse will bear the name Phare de Kéréon after its completion, it will be built out of granite with a diameter at the base of fourteen meters and a height of approximately thirty meters above the level of the open seas and it will be equipped with sophisticated aural signal and lighting equipment..."

The project was approved by ministerial decree in January 1910 and the building site could continue with its batch of difficulties.

Progress



1908

1911

1913

1914

Year	Number of landings	Volume of masonry laid	Hours spent on the rock	Level of the masonry	Yearly Expenditures
1907	40	61 m ³			21 000 Francs
1908		139 m ³			44 272 Francs
1909		204 m ³			45 728 Francs
1910	64	320 m ³	18:30	0 08	75 000 Francs
1911	76	705 m ³	14:00	01 2	1 36 500 Francs
1912	70	382 m ³	1:30	01 5	1 24 821 Francs
1913	78	352 m ³	0:10	02 3	89 869 Francs
1914	53	254 m ³		03 0	1 12 741 Francs
1915	55	262 m ³		03 9	81 069 Francs
1916		221 m ³			1 25 000 Francs
1917					40 000 Francs
1918					45 000 Francs
Total		2900 m ³	10:10		9 41 000 Francs

This table emphasizes the difficult progression of work and the expenditure made per year.