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Early History Of The Casket Lights

The patent of the Casket lights was granted by King George I. June 8th, 1723; they were finished early in 1725 when a coal light was exhibited, represented to be on an armourer's forge, kept in constant flame by the bellows. In October 1779, oil lights, in a copper frame lantern were exhibited. In 1790, an alteration was made by a number of Argand lamps, fixed on a ring, moving in circular revolution which still continue.

In 1815, the inhabitants consisted of a man, his wife, and a grown up daughter, whose duty was pretty severe, in watching and trimming the lamps at night, particularly in winter. Their supplies of necessaries of life from the Trinity House, consisting of salt meat, biscuit, flour, malt, etc. were liberal, and of first quality. They occasionally, when the weather permitted, received fresh provisions and vegetables from Alderney; to these were added their own poultry, with the produce of their gardens, the great abundance of fish which they caught from the rock in summer, and either consumed fresh or cured for their winter use; their situation was, in that respect, most comfortable, and indeed, the air of content, the personal cleanliness and cheerfulness of these persons were remarkable. The daughter, on returning one day from a short visit to her relations in Alderney, expressed herself quite disgusted with the world. Alderney was her world!

It has been said that in the year 1119, Henry, Duke of Normandy, son of Henry, Duke of Normandy, son of Henry I., with many of the nobility, were overtaken by a dreadful storm and lost near Alderney. There is however, great doubt about this, as appears by Stow, and other historians. The following is Stow's account;- “This happened in 1120. King Henry having tamed the Frenchmen, and pacified Normandy, and Richard, his sons, and Mary, his daughter, Richard, Earl of Chester, and his wife, with many noblemen, and to the number of one hundred and sixty persons, were missing drowned, the sea being calm.” Coote, in his History of England, Vol II., page 134 says. “That they embarked at Barfleur, on November 26th 1120. The King with a train of barons, arrived in England on the following morning. The prince, who was detained after his father's departure, set sail, at the close of day, with numerous company of youthful nobles; the mariners of the ship having indulged themselves before they sailed, in immoderate drinking, were too disordered to pay proper attention to the discharge of their duty: the ship had not proceeded far, when the carelessness of the crew drove her against a rock. The whole loss amounted to nearly two hundred and fifty individuals, eighteen of whom were ladies of rank, fifty were seamen, and the rest were either noblemen or knights and their attendants.”

“ A Russian man of war was, notwithstanding these lights, lost here some years ago. This vessel was observed at night steering for the Caskets and Alderney. On passing through a narrow interstice in the ledge, so as to be all clear of all dangers, she was seen to tack, apparently for the purpose of

getting to the westward of the rock, when she struck, and every soul perished. These unfortunate persons are supposed, on entering the Bristol Channel, to have first made these lights, and that in such a direction, as to keep two in one, thus mistaking them for the Lizard Lights, until they came abreast of the rock, when they opened the third, found their error, and by endeavouring to exticate themselves, were precipitated into that destruction which the spectators thought they had so miraculously escaped.”