

## History of Mizen Head Signal Station

- 1810 Only three lights on the southwest coast – Loop Head, Clear Island and the Old Head of Kinsale.
- 1826 2 lighthouses were erected on the Great Skellig
- 1847 SS Stephen Whitney, a 1034 tonnes liner, went down off Cape Clear with the loss of 100 lives and it was decided to build a lighthouse on the Fastnet or Fastness Rock as Cape Clear lighthouse was too far inland
- 1848 – 53 the Corporation of the Port of Dublin built a cast iron 63’ tower on the Fastnet at an estimated cost of £20,000.
- 1854 The Fastnet Rock Lighthouse was commissioned. The seas around the Fastnet were so strong that the structure needed constant strengthening and the costs soared to £27000.
- 1867 The ‘Dublin Port Act’ transferred the lighthouse powers to the Commissioners of Irish Lights.
- 1876 More repairs were carried out at the Fastnet Light
- 1881 Calf Rock (off Dursey Island) Lighthouse which was a similar construction to the Fastnet was carried away in a gale. The same gale broke the glass in the Fastnet lantern 148’ above sea level.
- 1883 The Fastnet was equipped with an explosive fog signal
- 1891 The Irish Lights Board decided that the Fastnet light was not powerful enough and proposed a 147’ granite tower to house a biform oil light.
- 1899-1903 The building of the Fastnet lighthouse at a cost of £84,000.
- 1905 There was a demand from ship owners, who fund the Lighthouse Service through harbour dues, that there should be a lighthouse at Mizen Head. So many ships and boats had foundered on the cliffs. The Irish Lights Board, having spent so much money on the Fastnet Lighthouse, did not deem another light necessary. The Board of Trade in London sanctioned the building
- 1906 It was decided to build a fog signal station instead of a lighthouse. The steam trawler Ribble sank on the cliffs under the site for the Fog Signal Station
- 1907
- 1908 The SS Irada, one of the largest ships of its time, 501’ long and 8124 tonnes, was wrecked on the northern cliffs of Mizen Head in a southwest gale and

fog. Thomas Lord, foreman engineer for the construction of Mizen head Fog Signal Station and his fellow workers rescued 63 crew, pulling them up the cliffs.

1909 Explosive Fog Signal established on Cloghane Island. In fog a charge of dynamite was manually detonated at 7 ½ minutes. Later the Keepers' quarters were built. It was serviced by boat and a derrick.

1908- 10 The Arched Bridge was built. It is part of Irish Civil Engineering Heritage as it was the first reinforced concrete bridge in Ireland. There was a competition for the Bridge to span the gorge between the mainland and Cloghane Island. It is 172' across and 150' above the sea. The aggregate was crushed from the local hard rock. The 'skins' of the four ribs were cast on the mountainside and slung into position by means of a cableway. Then the cores of the ribs, the crown of the arch and the pathway were cast in situ.

1931 A wireless beacon, the first in Ireland, was installed across the gorge.

1959 A light was placed at the end of the Head at a height of 170' and a range of 13 miles in clear weather.

1970s The fog signal was discontinued and sonar and GPS satellites have taken over navigational aids in safety at sea..

1993 Mizen Head Signal Station automated. April 1<sup>st</sup>. the Keepers left the Station.

RACON discontinued

DGPS mast erected

Radio Beacon

Fastnet Lighthouse