**SCATTERY ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE.**

This is a local light to lead vessels to the anchorage at Scattery Roads and also to guide up the Shannon, due to the channel between Scattery Island and the Rinanna Shoal being very narrow.

The Chamber of Commerce of Limerick applied for the lights at Scattery Island and Kilcredaun in January 1819. After careful consideration by the Corporation for preserving and improving the Port of Dublin, the latter was selected and established on the 1st September 1824.

The Inspecting Committee of the Corporation (Ballast Board) presented a report to the Board on 30th December 1864 urging the necessity of a light on the south point of Scattery Island to lead into the roads. The report was forwarded to the Board of Trade in London with a strong recommendation from the Ballast Board. On the 17th January 1865 the Board of Trade replied stating that they could not sanction a light being paid out of the Mercantile Marine Fund: The Limerick Harbour Board was informed.

Fifteen months later the Board of Trade informed the Corporation that they had received a letter from the Limerick Harbour Board praying for a light and stating that if the Ballast Board still held the opinion that the light might be defrayed out of the Marine Fund, the Ballast Board should apply to the Trinity Board. This was done and deputations from the Ballast and Trinity Boards met on the 13th July 1866. Two weeks later Trinity House conveyed their sanction for the light and a buoy to mark the Rinanna Shoal. The Board of Trade sanction was received in August 1866.

The best position for the light was within the boundary of the ground where the War Department had a battery. Consequently the light would have to be on rails so that it could be moved during firing practice.

A light-keeper’s dwelling and a simple iron framework to carry the lantern and apparatus, similar to the light at Drogheda West was designed, but due to delays with the War Department permission to construct the station was not granted until late 1867. Building did not start until spring 1868. On 29th October the iron framework which almost complete was damaged in a severe gale finishing up at the foot of the glacis of the fort. Two of the cast iron posts used in its construction are still standing and can be seen directly south of the present lighthouse. It was decided not to rebuild and strengthen the structure but to construct a small stone tower close to the dwelling.

The Lighthouse started operating on the 1st December 1872 and one of the first light-keepers was Bernard Sommers assisted by his wife Mary. They had four children, Catherine Nora 1879: John Pious 1878: Owen Thomas 1876: and Richard Simon 1873, born on Scattery Island. G.W. Kennedy was the light-keeper from 1880 to 1883. In 1885 John Whelan was the light-keeper and his daughter died on Scattery in July of that year. A John Williams was the light-keeper in 1891 and he gave a donation of 7s-6d to the Kilrush Memorial Altar. Thomas Fortune and his wife Elizabeth were the light-keepers in 1896 and their daughter Lucy Agnes was born on the island in June 1896. In 1901 the Lighthouse was operated by John Redmond and his sister Mary from County Meath. In 1908 a Mr. J. Higginbotham and in 1911 by John French and his wife Ellen both from Wexford town. The following were Light-keepers from 1919 to 1932:Michael G Moore 1919, John J Scott 1922, Richard JO'Donnell 1926, George James 1929 and Alexander Murray 1932. A David? Byrne was the last resident light-keeper. All lightkeepers lived in a dwelling house near the Lighthouse where they maintained a garden.

In 1927 Senan O’Donnell, son, son of RJ, was born on the island and in 1993 he was appointed Bishop of Madiguiri in northern Nigeria following in the footsteps of St Senan, founder of the monastic island settlement and first bishop of Scattery. Bishop O’Donnell spent over thirty years in Nigeria. The O’Donnell family were stationed at many lighthouses around Ireland and the family ended their travels at Duncannon, Co. Waterford where Bishop O’Donnell went to school.

Before the lighthouse was built the pilots would light fires, on the highest point of the island on the raised mound in the field directly west of and adjoining the ruined church at Ard-na-nAingeal, to guide ships up to Scattery Roads.

The lighthouse was classified as a single house or one-keeper family house. The keeper and his family mixed in very well with the islanders. In fact when it was time for them to transfer to another lighthouse they were often very lonely. On the night prior to their departure, a Ceili was held, with food and drink in plenty and dancing.

The light was converted from oil to acetylene using carbide generating plant on the 27th October 1933, the keeper was withdrawn and an attendant took charge of the light. A plentiful supply of white sludge resulting from the use of carbide to light the lighthouse was used to white- wash all the houses on the island. It was converted to propane in 1981 and to solar power in September 2002.

The McMahon family took over the running of the lighthouse, as attendants, for sixty years from 1933 to 1993. Starting with Austin and then his daughter Patricia who had been assistant attendant to her father. Patricia left the island in 1978 and went by boat to the island every two weeks until her retirement. Gary Griffin replaced Patricia as attendant and his family has had long associations with the island, his father Gerald was born on the island and is a retired river pilot and at present operates Scattery Island Ferries. The Shannon Foynes Port Company now operate the lighthouse from the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

**Some Newspapers References to the Scattery Lighthouse**.

**1872 30th October** *(Freemans Journal).*

Notice to Mariners: Ireland West Coast:

Fixed Light on Scattery Island, River Shannon, County Clare. Office of Irish Lights, Dublin.

The Commissioners of Irish Lights hereby give Notice that lighthouse has been built on the South end of Scattery Island, River Shannon, West Coast of Ireland, the Light of which will be exhibited on the night of the 1st of December, 1872, and every night thereafter from sunset to sunrise. --

The Tower is White, and the Light is elevated 50 feet above sea level---.

The lighthouse is placed N.N.E. 100 yards from the extreme South Point of the Island, and 20 yards east of the Gun Battery, which must be borne in mind when running for it from seaward.

For every vessel, whether British or Foreign, which may pass or derive benefit there-from, the Toll of three-sixteenths of a penny per ton, of the burthen of every such vessel for each time passing or deriving benefit there-from if on overseas voyage, and one-sixteenth of a penny per ton for each time of passing or deriving benefit there-from, if on a coasting voyage. ---.

**1883 15th October (***Clare Journal).*

Scattery Lighthouse.

Mr. G. W. Kennedy, keeper of the lighthouse at Scattery Island, during the past three years has been transferred to the Beeves Light Rock, in the Shannon. While stationed at Scattery, Mr. Kennedy became a favourite with all classes and leaves the district deservedly regretted.

**1885 1st August (CA).**

Death: At Scattery Island Lighthouse after a lingering illness Ellen daughter of Mr. John Whelan, Lighthouse Keeper. R.I.P.

**1904 11th June** *(CC).*

Well deserved:

Mr. Thomas Fortune, who held principal position as Light-keeper of Scattery Island and Tarbert Rocks for a period of ten years has been transferred to the important station at Youghal. Mr Fortune before his departure was presented with an address.

**1908 20th November (KH).**

Sad Scenes in Town. Victims Kilrush men.

The great fears entertained ....realised ...loss of three local fishermen named Michael Russell, John Hynes and Thomas Kelly ... in the River Shannon westward of Scattery Island.... it was further reported the Lighthouse-keeper on Scattery Island Mr. Higginbotham, had observed a canoe bottom upwards drifting with the tide westward of his station.....

**Sources:**

*www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/genealogy/don\_tran/fam\_his/scattery/scattery\_index.htm*