Lizard Lighthouse

(Lizard Point, Cornwall)
History

Lizard Lighthouse is a landfall and coastal mark giving a guide to vessels in passage along the English Channel and warning of the hazardous waters off Lizard Point.

Many stories are told of the activities of wreckers around our coasts, most of which are grossly exaggerated, but small communities occasionally and sometimes officially benefited from the spoils of shipwrecks, and petitions for lighthouses were, in certain cases, rejected on the strength of local opinion; this was particularly true in the South West of England.

The distinctive twin towers of the Lizard Lighthouse mark the most southerly point of mainland Britain. The coastline is particularly hazardous, and from early times the need for a beacon was obvious. Sir John Killigrew, a philanthropic Cornishman, applied for a patent. Apparently, because it was thought that a light on Lizard Point would guide enemy vessels and pirates to a safe landing, the patent was granted with the proviso that the light should be extinguished at the approach of the enemy. Killigrew agreed to erect the lighthouse at his own expense, for a rent of "twenty nobles by the year", for a term of thirty years. Although he was willing to build the tower, he was too poor to bear the cost of maintenance, and intended to fund the project by collecting from ships that passed the point any voluntary contributions that the owners might offer him. In spite of the difficulty of recruiting local labor, the tower was finished by Christmas 1619, and proved a great benefit to mariners. However, the ship owners offered nothing for its upkeep, and the mounting costs of maintenance were bankrupting Killigrew. Thus, in the face of more opposition from Trinity House, James I set a fee of one halfpenny a ton on all vessels passing the light. This caused such an uproar from the ship owners that the patent was withdrawn, the light extinguished and the tower demolished.

Applications were made in ensuing years, but it was not until 1748 that Trinity House supported an attempt by Thomas Fonnereau to erect a lighthouse. The building was completed in 1751, and consisted of two towers, with a cottage built between them, in which an over looker lay on a sort of couch, with a window on either side commanding a view of the lanterns. When the bellows-blowers relaxed their efforts and the fires dimmed, he would remind them of their duties by a blast from a cow horn. Trinity House assumed responsibility in 1771. The Lizard Lighthouse was automated in 1998.

Specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Established</th>
<th>1619</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height Of Tower</td>
<td>19 Metres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Height Of Light Above Mean High Water</td>
<td>70 Metres</td>
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Automated | Scheduled For 1998
---|---
Electrified | 1924
Lamp | 400 Watt Mbi
Optic | 1 Kw Metal Halide
Character | One White Flash Every 3 Seconds
Intensity | 800,000 Candelas
Range Of Light | 26 nautical miles
Fog Signal Character | 1 Blasts Every 30 Seconds

Location

The Lighthouse is well signposted from Lizard village, which is approximately one mile away. Lizard village is on the A3083 from Helston.

Parking

National Trust car park next to entrance gate. Please note: The road from the village to the lighthouse is not suitable for large vehicles such as coaches.
Visitor Centre

With the help of a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Trinity House has renovated the Engine Room at Lizard Lighthouse, retaining some of the old engines. It now also features new exhibition material, an audio visual room and a number of interactive displays. The Lizard Lighthouse Heritage Centre was officially opened on the 13th July 2009 by HRH The Princess Royal. The temporary exhibition at the Lizard lighthouse was renewed in 2011.

Fun activities

- Climb the lighthouse tower
- Power up and sound a foghorn
- Track ships in the local area
- Find out about the weather and complete a weather log book
- Build a lighthouse
- Send a message using Morse Code
- Learn about semaphore and signal flags
- Discover the history and development of Safety at Sea
- Identify the different shapes, colors and markings of buoys used to mark safe routes
- Listen to Lighthouse Keepers' stories and learn about living and working on a lighthouse
- And much more...

The distinctive twin towers of Lizard Lighthouse mark the most southerly point of mainland Britain. See displays depicting Trinity House's history, housed in the original engine room. It was commissioned in 1752. For over 250 years, the lighthouse has provided a welcoming landfall light to vessels crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

Tours of Lizard Lighthouse are organized under license from the Corporation of Trinity House.

What else is there to do?

Aside from visiting the Lizard Lighthouse Heritage Centre there are many other attractions to keep visitors to the area occupied. For information about other attractions you are advised to visit (www.visitcornwall.com), the official website of the Cornwall Tourist Board, telephone 01872 322900 or email (enquiries@visitcornwall.com).

Interesting Walks

The coastal path provides access to some beautiful seascapes and wildlife. For more information about walks in the area, and all around the Cornish coast, please visit www.southwestcoastpath.com.

Contact Details

+44(0)1326 290202
enquiries@thls.org

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LIZARD
Cornwall

Visit the mainland’s most southerly Lighthouse, climb to the top of the 250 year old tower, see the lens in action, discover its secrets and take in the breathtaking views.

Build your own giant foam Lighthouse, power up and sound a foghorn*, or listen to Lighthouse Keepers' stories about life at a Lighthouse.

Lizard Lighthouse Heritage Centre is fun for all ages.

Visits to the Lighthouse are managed by Cardona Heritage, under licence from Trinity House.
Tel: 01326 290202  Email: lighthouselizard@aol.com

Location: Lizard Lighthouse is signposted from Lizard Village on the A3083 from Helston TR12 7NT.
Position: 49° 57.58 N, 05° 12.07 W (WGS 84 datum)

* Only available at Lizard Heritage Centre.
Holiday cottages are available at this site.
Holiday Cottages

Lizard Lighthouse is positioned at the Southern-most tip of mainland Britain and has six adjacent cottages enjoy unrivalled access to breathtaking scenery and coastal walking, literally from the front door. Rare birds, rare flowers and even the occasional school of dolphins can be spotted from the cliff tops surrounding the accommodation, yet you are just a ¼ mile from Lizard village with its friendly pub, shops and restaurants.

Book This Cottage

Bookings are handled by Cornish Cottages
Tel: +44 (0) 1326 240333/ +44 (0) 1326 240315
www.cornishcottagesonline.com

Heritage Project

With the help of a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Trinity House has renovated the Engine Room at Lizard Lighthouse, retaining some of the old engines. It now also features new exhibition material, an audio visual room and a number of interactive displays. The Lizard Lighthouse Heritage Centre was officially opened on the 13th July 2009 by HRH The Princess Royal.

What did the project entail?
There were a number of elements that had to be completed before the new Lizard Lighthouse Heritage Centre opened in Spring 2009.

The timing of the refurbishment work was influenced by the replacement of the slate roof of the engine room, the general refurbishment of the building itself and the conversion of some garages to a toilet block. This work had to take place in fair weather, as the old roof was removed and the new Welsh slates laid, but the ability to open the Visitor Centre without compromising the safety of the guests and to maximize revenue also contributed to the scheduling.

Some of the old equipment which had no historic value was removed to make more space available for the new exhibit and reception area. Some of the equipment was retained and kept available as spares. However, much of the fog signal equipment was retained and will become one of the main features of the new exhibit, after all the building was constructed as a fog signal house. Field Operations personnel from St Just and Swansea carried out the necessary technical activities to ensure that the work was carried out sympathetically and that any redundant parts were disposed of in accordance with the appropriate regulations.

The space that formerly housed fuel tanks will become the new ticketing and reception area. Part of this space also includes a retail area for lighthouse related products, and a small refreshment area.

Learning at Lizard
Particular subjects of strength are the history of navigation over the centuries, the role of Trinity House, and the historic buildings and technical and social heritage that has developed in order to undertake that function. To put the lighthouse into context though, the exhibit and associated information relates to other buildings, organizations and history in the area.
The improved facility offers visitors information about the structural, technical and social history of Lizard lighthouse and the associated southwestern offshore Rock Lighthouses, using interactive and audio-visual displays. The displays have a strong emphasis on education and more schools and young persons’ groups such as Scouts and Guides, will be encouraged to visit. The site will also be used for formal and informal education for all, particularly the local community. And a wide range of subjects and activities will ensure that there is something that will appeal to all age groups and abilities.

For example, for the family fun days, with a different theme each time. These would be held on Saturdays as this is the principal changeover day for organized tourist accommodation, this would allow greater access to local communities. Themes/activities could include rocks/minerals, rope craft, badge making, biscuit decorating, etc.

The over 60’s community will be invited to special events to include talks from visiting specialists such as historians, curators, writers, artists, etc. Links with local attractions are being investigated with the possibility of holding special evenings with/for them. In Cornwall there are a large percentage of senior walkers and ramblers who walk the South West Coastal Path adjacent to Lizard lighthouse.