



Arranmore Lighthouse.

Irish Lighthouses by Drone

By John Eagle

I got myself a name for taking aerial shots of Irish lighthouses from helicopters. Over a twenty year period I flew in a variety of helicopters around the Irish coast taking pictures few others could get. I didn't have a business plan and to this day I don't do it just for money. I go ahead and take shots whether they sell or not. I think I must have been a moth in a previous lifetime.

The dawn of the drone meant hundreds of people were able to do what I have been doing for years from choppers. What with health and safety making flying in helicopters much harder I was faced with a decision whether to get a drone or not.

A couple of Christmases ago my brother Martin bought me a Phantom 3 Advanced. I was gobsmacked by his generosity. I was soon out taking aerial shots of lighthouses, making some money with it and able to purchase another one. I went for the DJI Phantom 4 pro plus with its powerful 20 mega pixel camera and built-in screen on the handset. Now I could compete with the others. It has become a very competitive market, and quite annoying at times to go to a lighthouse and find some other flyer already there. Fortunately not all of them want to take the risks that I do; that is, fly in wilder conditions.

Arranmore Lighthouse, for instance, was one I wanted for a long time, because with an aerial of that I had aerial shots of every lighthouse from Rathlin Island's three, all the way round the coast to Eeargh in The Aran Islands. Recovering from major cancer surgery meant I could not drive up there myself, 300 miles away from my home on the Beara peninsula in Southwest Ireland. So I patiently waited for the Northern Irish Lighthouse 2018 Tour to come along when I would get a lift there. The conditions were pretty wild, but I felt it was worth it to give it a try and snapped some pretty wild surf shots of the lighthouse on this County Donegal Lighthouse.

One of the drawbacks of getting stormy pictures is the

lighthouses tend to look small in the frame. When I was making the Irish Lighthouse Series postcard series I was constantly being told that the collectors wanted to see the lighthouse rather than the scenery around it. Then when I did a close up I was getting hammered by all those who wanted to see the scenery it stood in. So you can't win.

In 2017 I started making calendars to show off my images. This means I am working a year in advance. When I produced the 2019 calendar in May of this year people were aghast that I had the calendar before we were half way through 2018!!

Galley Head Lighthouse was a shot I wanted to improve on from the 2018 shot. This is a lighthouse we stay at during the Southern Irish Lighthouse Tour, and the attendant Gerald Butler is a good friend of mine. I well remember going there in April and sending the drone off on its way, my collie Suzie chasing after it and me praying she wouldn't leap off the high cliffs. However, I very nearly crashed the drone into the Atlantic because instead of flying away from the lighthouse I was descending. About six feet off the waves I realised my mistake and immediately climbed up. Still I got some great shots.

I wanted to see the new LED light the Commissioners of Irish Lights (CIL) had just installed on the Fastnet Lighthouse. The CIL doesn't care that the huge following of lighthouses hate LED lights. The one on Tory is rusting, which makes me smile because it is awful. A pair of car headlights would look nicer. There were reports of a mercury spillage at the Fastnet Light. They should have left it well alone, but CIL knows best . . . supposedly.

Just wish to add that I was glad to see Brendan Odum come with his drone on the Northern Irish Lighthouse Tour in August 2018. I hope people come on my tours with their drones, the more the merrier.

www.JohnEaglePhoto.com john@john eaglephoto.com



Galley Head Lighthouse.

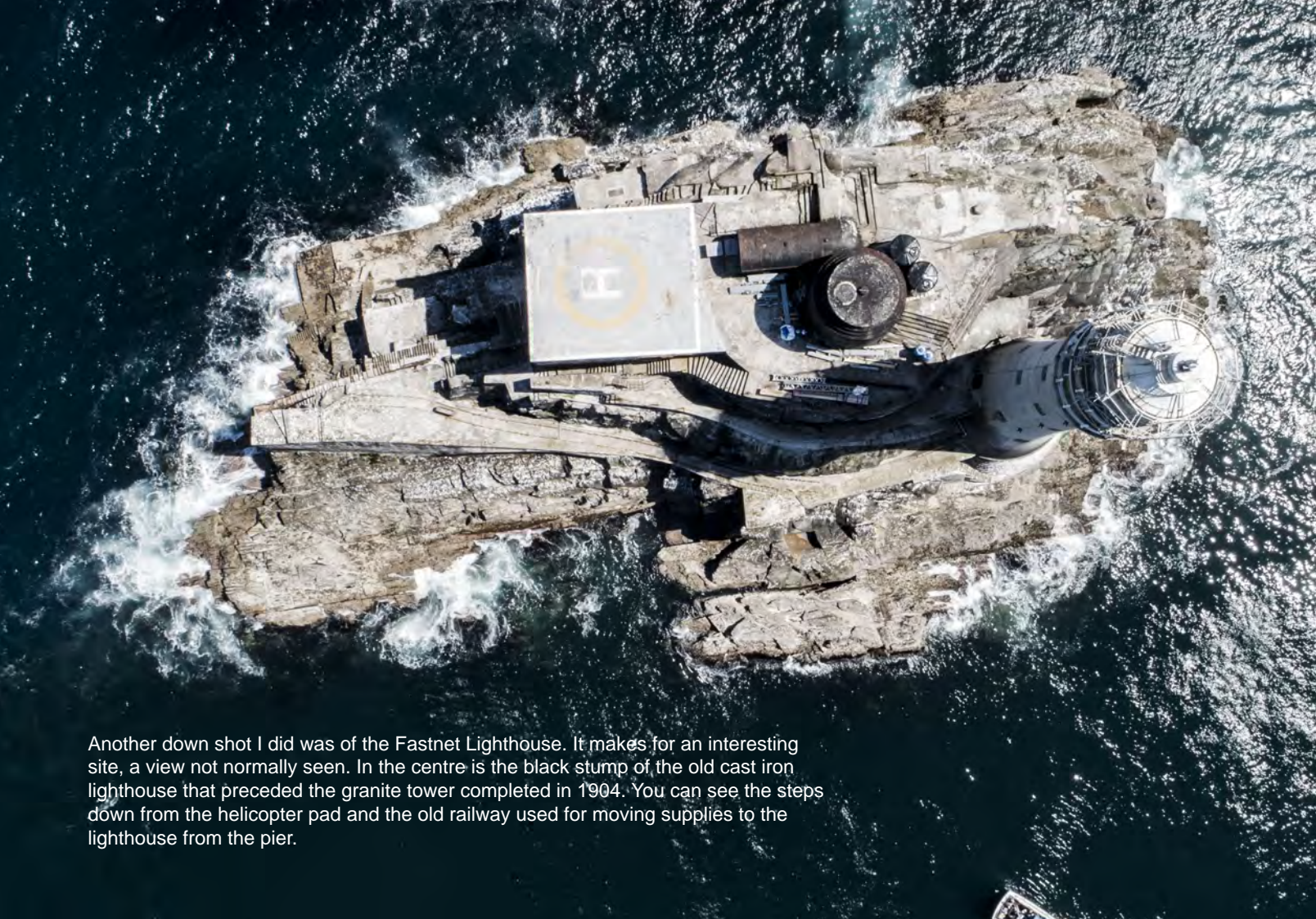


Suzie is happy with the wild flowers beside Galley Head Lighthouse.

Last June, I added drone shots of the Fastnet Lighthouse on the 2018 Southern Irish Lighthouse Tour. In this picture of mine you can see the new LED perched on top of the top of the tower.



One of the fun things I like doing with drones is pointing the camera straight down, like in this one of Blackhead Lighthouse in Northern Ireland.



Another down shot I did was of the Fastnet Lighthouse. It makes for an interesting site, a view not normally seen. In the centre is the black stump of the old cast iron lighthouse that preceded the granite tower completed in 1904. You can see the steps down from the helicopter pad and the old railway used for moving supplies to the lighthouse from the pier.



And last but not least here is an overhead view of the ILV *Granuaile*, the Commissioners of Irish Lights tender, anchored in Berehaven Sound on the Beara peninsula. I didn't manage to catch any of the crew sunbathing!! The white fork-like object is the crane for lifting buoys etc. out of the sea, some of which you can see on the aft deck.