

SAUNDERS ISLAND

Saunders Island is in the west of the Falkland Islands at 51°22'S 60°05'W and the main island is approximately 21,000 acres. Islands in the group include Burnt Island.

On 12 January 1765 Commodore John BYRON of HMS *Dolphin* named Port Egmont in honour of the First Lord of Admiralty from 1763 to 1766, John Perceval, 2nd Earl of Egmont. Saunders Island was named in honour of Admiral Sir Charles SAUNDERS KB.

HMS *Jason*, a frigate of 32 guns, HMS *Carcass* a sloop, and the storeship HMS *Experiment* left England in September 1765 and, sailing via Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands, arrived in Port Egmont 8 January 1766. The expedition under Captain McBride had all the provisions and necessaries, including a ready framed wooden blockhouse, to establish a permanent settlement on Saunders Island. By April 1866 the blockhouse was completed, a battery and storehouse started and gardens laid out.

On 21 May 1774 Britain withdrew from Port Egmont on grounds of economy, leaving a lead plate maintaining their claim to sovereignty. The settlement remained a popular haunt for sealers and whalers. There was also evidence of sporadic use by adventurers and pirates. During this time new storehouses, a furnace and a forge were built. In 1780 the Spanish burnt and destroyed the settlement. [An Archaeological survey of Port Egmont...by Robert A Philpott]



Ruins of the blockhouse in 1984

In March 1856 the 88 ton British schooner *Allen Gardiner* under William Parker SNOW called at Saunders Island to evaluate it as a potential spot for a Mission.

The 72 ton schooner *Victoria* departed Stanley 6 September 1859 with 8 crew under Captain McLAUHLAN bound for Saunders Island to go pig hunting. The *Victoria* returned 27 September 1859 with a cargo of 58 pigs.

On 28 July 1859 James LANE reported that pigs were numerous on Saunders Island. He sent the *Victoria* to Saunders Island to kill wild pigs 14 September 1859 and the vessel returned on the 28th with 6 barrels of pork and 58 skins. [FIC/E1; desp 27]

On 24 February 1863 an occupation Licence was granted to John PHILLIPS to occupy a Station being: *the southernmost section of Saunders Island bounded on the North by a line drawn from the centre of Sealers Cove running due West till it meets Brett Harbour* for the sum of £5. [BUG/REG/2; pg 124]

In October 1868 Oct an Occupation Licence was granted to Messrs BERTRAND and SWITZER to occupy Saunders Island *and the adjacent Island known as Burnt Island, and containing in the whole 21,000 acres more or less. Provided that it shall be lawful for the Governor for the time being to resume possession at six months notice of such portion of the land in the neighbourhood of the old settlement at Port Egmont as may be required for any public purpose or for the formulation or protection of any settlement which may hereafter be established at that place* for the sum of £17-10-0. [BUG/REG/2; pg 212]

On 27 April 1870 an Occupation Licence was granted to William Davies BENNEY to occupy Saunders Island *and the adjacent Island known as Burnt Island, and containing in the whole 21,000 acres more or less. Provided that it shall be lawful for the Governor for the time being to resume possession at six months notice of such portion of the land in the neighbourhood of the old settlement at Port Egmont as may be required for any public purpose or for the formulation or protection of any settlement which may hereafter be established at that place* for the sum of £17-10-0. [BUG/REG/2; pg 250]

1870-1872 After 27 April 1870 and before 28 July 1872 William D BENNEY has built houses on the Saunders Island Station.

On 28 July 1872 William D BENNEY was granted a twenty-one lease of Saunders Island and Burnt Island, totalling 21,000 acres, under the Amalgamation Ordinance for the rent of £21 per annum for the first ten years and of £35 per annum for the remainder of the term. [BUG/REG/2; pg 346]

On 30 June 1874 William D BENNEY entered into a partnership with Nillson O'BRIEN called Benney and O'Brien, farmers, and sold one third of his share in Port Egmont Station to Nillson O'BRIEN for £400. [BUG/REG/1; pg 378]

On 1 August 1882 CLAXTON and the men (McDONALD and NELSON) started the new woolshed. BENNEY and DORAN were plastering the new house. On 11 August CLAXTON was working on the mouldings of the new house and BENNEY was painting it. On 10 December 1882 McDONALD started framing the house for the shepherd at the Neck and on the 14th BENNEY and McDONALD went down to the Rame Head Neck and dug piles for the shepherd's house. The frame of the house, iron, etc were taken down to the jetty ready for the cutter to take around. [R/CUL/DIA/1#2]

On 31 March 1883 the partnership between William Davies BENNEY and Edward NILSSON formerly known as Nilsson O'BRIEN is dissolved and Edward sells his third share of the Station back to William D BENNEY for £3,500. [BUG/REG/3; pg 163]

1888 Oct 13 William D Benney is granted 560 acres being the compulsory purchase of land in Saunders Island Station under the terms of the lease dated 28 July 1872 for the sum of £56. [Crown Grant 335]

On 1 July 1889 William BENNEY advised the Colonial Secretary that in the house he occupied was also E SUMMERS, wife and three children and that William shared a bedroom with A MERCER. The other house was occupied by J PERCICH, wife and child. Two single men, James WINTERS and Juan ECHANDI, had one of their bedrooms. William was building a house for SUMMERS and his family to move into and as soon as he could afford it he would get another house for the single men. [H44; 235]

On 10 August 1939 Estate W D Benney is granted 20,440 acres comprising all that land known as Saunders Island and Burnt Island (less 560 acres granted under Crown Grant 335) for the sum of £3,066. [Crown Grant 492]

On 8 June 1940 William George BENNEY, nephew of William Davies BENNEY and executor of his will, sells Saunders Island and Burnt Island, totalling 21,000 acres being Crown Grant 335 dated 13 October 1888 containing 560 acres and Crown Grant 492 dated 10 August 1939 containing 20440 acres) to John Hamilton Limited. [BUG/REG/11; pg 221]

In 1973 the wreck of an old sealer close in on the beach near Saunders settlement was dived on. It was thought that she at that point at least 200 years old supported by the fact that she was fastened entirely with copper. [FI Times Oct 1973, pg 14]

The Hamilton Estates were sub-divided into a series of viable units in the 1980s and Saunders Island was sold to the Pole-Evans family.