

## SEA LION ISLAND

The Sea Lion Islands are situated south of Lafonia at approximately latitude 52.25 south between longitude 58/52 west and longitude 59.9 west; 13 miles to the southward of Driftwood Passage and 8-9 miles from Bull Point and consist of five islands. The main island, which is the westernmost island and the only inhabitable island, is roughly 5 ½ miles long and just over a mile wide at the broadest part. The other four islands are tussac islands and named Rum Island, Brandy Island, Whisky Island and Sea Lion Easterly. There is a reef on the south side of the island running out for about 2 miles and another reef on the south east extending about 3 ½ miles. [SHI/NAV/1#11]

On 23 November 1857 the 535 ton American ship *Antoinette* bound for Cork with a cargo of guano from the Chincha Islands under Captain McCormack, with a crew of 12 and one passenger, was totally wrecked on the Sea Lion Islands. On 27 November 1857 Captain Smyley left Stanley in the schooner *Nancy* to look after the wreck of the *Antoinette* on Sea Lion Island and bring back the boats crew.



**Sea Lion Islands circa 1930s; on the main island looking towards east end  
– photo Hamilton Collection, JCNA**

The Sea Lion Islands were included in Special Grant 134 of Lafonia issued to the Falkland Islands Company Ltd 28 September 1859 as “*all other islands adjacent to the Coast of the Peninsula or tract above described...But saving exceptions and reserving out of this Grant unto us our heirs & successors Beauchene Island*” but they never stocked or farmed the Sea Lions.

On 27 June 1866 the 2400 ton Spanish 50 gun frigate HCMS *Resolucion* was brought into Port William for repairs by HMS *Spiteful* who had brought the frigate from Sea Lion Island in a disabled condition. From 1-26 July 1866 twelve of the 500 crew died from scurvy and were buried in Stanley Cemetery in Section Ai. The *Resolucion* left Port William 18 September 1866.

On 25 October 1868 the British barque *Malvern* of Liverpool, certificate of registry 34871, caught fire off Diego Ramirez. The master, **Edward C KAVANAGH**, bore up for the Falkland Islands. On Wednesday 28 October 1868 about 10pm he anchored the vessel in about 10 fathoms off the North Sea Lion Island then they took to the boats as the ship was completely

enveloped in flames from forward to the main hatch. Captain Kavanagh and her crew, 30 men all told, arrived in Stanley about 2am in a distressed state as they did not have the time or means of saving anything. Captain **Charles W HOPE** of HMS *Brisk* offered passage to fifteen of the crew including two officers. According to the shipping register thirteen of the wrecked crew departed for England 1 November 1868. Captain KAVANAGH and the remainder of the crew were forwarded to Montevideo on board the *Foam* 2 November 1868. [H26: D13: 212; 214]

In 1892 the 1271 ton iron ship *Viscount*, bound from the West Coast of America to Liverpool, was unable to take sights for some days and got astray of their reckoning. The *Viscount* struck on the Sea Lion reef at 9pm on 10 March 1892. While landing on the tussac islands three men drowned and the surviving crew had to live on sea birds until their rescue. On Friday 18 April 1892 the *Cleopatra* went out to the Sea Lion Rocks in search of a crew supposed to have been wrecked there on account of some cases of salmon, a bale of cotton and a barrel of brandy found floating in the water by the *Hadassah* as she was returning to Stanley and which appeared to have only been in the water a short time. The HMS *Cleopatra* was unsuccessful. On Tuesday 16 March 1892 the small local schooner *Result* was bound with cargo from Stanley to West Falkland but on seeing their signals and in some considerable danger from the surf took off the 22 men who were in a starving condition and most of them without even a set of clothing. The wind not being fair for Stanley they had to run to Port Howard for water and provisions and returned to Stanley 20 March 1892 where the crew were provided with a set of clothing and placed on board the HMS *Cleopatra* leaving 22 March 1892 for Montevideo. The shipping master, W A Harding, recommended that the Board of Trade gave some consideration to the grant of a gratuity. Bronze medals were awarded to the crew of the *Result*, **R ROER**, master, and ABs **H HELDERS**, **J GILL**, **J JENSEN** and **J BETTS** but two of the men did not receive theirs as by the time they arrived May 1893 J Gill had shipped out on the *Annie H Smith* August 1892 and Johannes Jensen had drowned at Fox Bay February 1893. [D22; 44: B23; FIM Apr 1892; NA BT 261/5] (Edwin) John Betts' medal, which was donated by family members, is on display in the maritime section of the Dockyard Museum in Stanley.



**John Betts' Medal on display – photo Dockyard Museum**

**Johan Bernard LUCHTENBORG** asked the Falkland Islands Company Ltd whether he could put some stock on Sea Lion Island for £4 per annum. He was leased the Islands about 1905 and was the first person to farm the island, running cattle and sheep. [FIC/D13; 110] Johan travelled to Sea Lion Island 10 April 1905 on board the *Lafonia*.



**Original house on Sea Lion Island circa 1930s; Mrs Ricketts on left  
– photo Hamilton Collection, JCNA**

The original house was built from the wreck of *The Viscount*.

In 1910 J B Luchtenborg was doing boat work for the Falkland Islands Company Ltd and for Speedwell Island with his cutter *Magallanes*. [FIC/EC/SEA/1#1]

A small portion of the Sea Lion Islands was leased to the Falkland Islands Government for the erection of an acetylene light. The lease was sent to the Falkland Islands Government April 1912. The light was never erected and some 10 years later was erected on William Point instead. [FIC/D12; pg 193 par. 18; pg 245 par. 15: D13; pg 733, par. 12]

Johan, a seaman, was married to **Henriette Josephine ORRIÈRE** 17 January 1914 at St Mary's Roman Catholic Chapel, Stanley by Mario Louis Migone. The witnesses were Jeff Bundes and Sarah Alice Parrin. Johan's father was recorded as Helmerich Luchtenborg, carpenter, and Henriette's father was recorded as Jean Marie Orrière, mason.

In 1914 J B Luchtenborg was living on Bleaker Island and requested that the FIC gave him passage to Sea Lion Island before 1 March 1915. During 1915 Luchtenborg, a German, was allowed to remain on Sea Lion Islands by the Falkland Islands Government as he had no boat so was virtually a prisoner there. [FIC/D12; pg 877 par. 10: FIC/D13; 121 par 6] In November 1915 the mail steamer landed Henriette and cargo and loaded 2 tons of wool, 2 bales of sheep skins, 82 bullock hides, 1 bag of tails and 2 barrels of tallow. After the return of his wife Johan killed 40 more animals to get some building materials and wire and droppers for a fence as he stated that he had no fence on the island yet. He had sheep and 300 cattle running. He had got the foundation up for a wool shed on the west end of the island and was waiting for the wood and iron to erect the wool shed. [FIC/EC/SEA/1#2]



On 16 September 1916 John was recorded as owning a shepherds hut and 720 sheep on Sea Lion Island, which was leased from the FIC.



**Original house on Sea Lion Island circa 1930s with Gentoo penguins in the foreground and peat stack to the left – photo Hamilton Collection, JCNA**

On 13 January 1919 **Hermann REDDERMANN** and **Franz BUSE** were given permission to proceed by the next boat to Sea Lion Islands as they had been given the option of a contract to kill cattle. Like John, both men had been classed as enemy aliens during World War I. [24/19]

John, age 54 and a German mariner, died 11 January 1919 from throat cancer and was buried in Grave Ei834. His headstone reads: *In loving memory of my dear husband John B Luchtenberg died January 11<sup>th</sup> 1919.*

On 25 August 1919 Henriette applied to purchase the boat and shed left on Sea Lion Islands by the Government in preparation for the erection of the AGA light. [SHI/NAV/1#2]

Henriette, a widow, was married to (2) **Harry RICKETTS**, bachelor & blacksmith, 19 November 1919 at St Mary's Roman Catholic Chapel, Stanley by Mario Luis Migone, Priest in Charge. The witnesses were V A H Biggs and Sister Mary Ussher. Harry's father was recorded as Francis Edward Ricketts, gardener, and Henriette's father was recorded as Jean Marie Orrière, mason.

In February 1925 Henriette wrote to the manager of the Falkland Islands Co Limited informing him that Harry Ricketts was moving to Stanley as the Island did not suit him and that in future she would not acknowledge any bargains or business of Henry Ricketts concerning Sea Lion Island as he had promised to have nothing more to do with it and that he could have money from her account until he got work.

In August 1925 another unattended light was proposed for Sea Lion Island but due to lack of funds the work did not go ahead. [SHI/NAV/1#11]



On 9 March 1931 Henriette, age 52, was issued with a British passport to travel to France via Uruguay and the British Empire for the purposes of a holiday. Henriette arrived 11 November 1932 on the *Losada* from the UK with her 24 year old nephew, **Alexandre DUGAS**.





**Remains of tallow works January 2019**

In the 1930s a small try-works were built below the gardens. The sheep were boiled using rainwater that collected in a depression above the gardens and the tallow skimmed off, barrelled and shipped to England to be sold.



**Gulch Way, Sea Lion Island 1930s. Jack 'Cracker' Davis in a pram with bales of wool  
– Tony Carey Collection, JCNA**

Before a chute was built in the 1940s, the Island's wool was lowered bale by bale over the cliff and into scows or prams.





**Grave of Alexandre January 2019**

On 9 January 1939 Alexandre, age 30, committed suicide due to depression and was buried near the end of what is now the airstrip. Henriette had to light a signal fire to get help.



Henriette departed due to ill health 4 June 1939 for Montevideo on board the ss *Lafonia*. Henriette died 28 May 1940 in Montevideo, Uruguay and was buried 5 June 1940 in the British Cemetery in plot F178.

In 1941 **William John HUTCHINSON** purchased Crown Grant 134 from the Falkland Islands Co Ltd for £2,050; taking over on 1 August 1941. Due to the war and the documents having to be signed in England before being returned the conveyance wasn't registered until 10 February 1943. There was a double-ridged house containing four rooms and, a 30 minute walk from the house, a small woolshed.



Original house circa 1942 – Tony Carey Collection, JCNA

In February 1942 **Benjamin Charles “Bennie” DAVIS**, who worked on Sea Lion Island, rowed to Cattle Point, Lafonia via Bleaker Island in a boat made from 5 forty-gallon paraffin drums riveted together.

William divided the main island into three sections and increased the four tussac plantations to eight. He erected a new wool shed near the house 20' x 41' and a set of pens to hold 800 sheep. By August 1945 the island carried 1,690 sheep and William also built a 42' long chute to slide the bales of wool into a waiting dinghy and intended building a Nissen hut for final storage of the wool before shipping. [BUG-REG-11; 316: FINW 16 Aug 1945] Supplies for the island were hauled up the wooden chute by a rope pulley system.

Local cutter the *Indiana* was lost at Sea Lion Island November 1949. Her owner **James Andrew HALLIDAY**, along with **Thomas ANDERSON**, had moored and gone ashore on Sea Lion Island as there was a gale blowing and the *Indiana* was leaking. The next morning, they



discovered that the *Indiana* had dragged her anchor and was breaking up on the shore. The Island was uninhabited and Jimmy and Tommy were marooned for three weeks before being rescued. Jimmy drowned in Stanley Harbour less than a year later.

Ownership of the Sea Lion Islands passed to **J W T LEE** in 1950.

**Rob McGILL** purchased the islands in 1966 and reduced the sheep from 2,100 to 1,400. He planted tussac along the eastern sector of the island, protected from the livestock by fencing.

Rob sold Sea Lion Island to **Terry CLIFTON** in 1974 and the stocking rate continued until 1993, with the island holding the National Stud Flock. Terry planted tussac on the western end of the island.



**Grave of Sue January 2019**

On 12 June 1982 **Sue WHITLEY** died in Stanley when the house that she was sheltering in was struck by a shell. She was later buried on Sea Lion Island in a small enclosure near the vegetable gardens.

In 1985 the Falkland Islands Development Corporation (FIDC) built Sea Lion Lodge.

In 1991 **Terry CLIFTON** sold Sea Lion Islands to FIDC and farming ceased in favour of tourism with all but approximately 60 sheep being removed 1992-1993.

**Dave** and **Pat GRAY** leased the lodge from 1994 to 1999.



**Sea Lion Lodge January 2019**

FIDC leased the lodge to Sea Lion Island Ltd (Strachan Visick) for 125 years, expiring in 2128. Management and control of the Sea Lion Islands remained with the FIDC.