

TRISTAN DA CUNHA

By JOHN MARQUARDT



1 Pence or 4 Potatoes

The most remote inhabited island in the world has a very interesting philatelic history. A volcanic island in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean, Tristan da Cunha was discovered in 1506, but because of its location, size (38 square miles), and rugged geography, it had no permanent settlers until 1810.

Annexed by Great Britain in 1816, Tristan da Cunha's tiny population of potato farmers and fishermen used the stamps of St. Helena. Wanting their own stamps, a petition was presented to the British Postmaster in 1946. Although the petition was not successful, the proposed stamps are still very interesting. Cash was in short supply on the island but potatoes were plentiful, so in addition to being valued in pence, each of the nine designs was valued in potatoes!



In 1952, a set of St. Helena stamps was overprinted 'TRISTAN DA CUNHA'. Prior to that various postal cachets were used on outgoing mail. It was not until 1953 that Tristan da Cunha had its very own stamp which was included in the omnibus set commemorating Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. By 1954 Tristonians had their first set of definitives.

Still only accessible by boat, Tristan da Cunha has a population of under 300 today.

MORE INFORMATION

Tristan Da Cunha is the most remote inhabited island in the world. It is located in the South Atlantic Ocean about midway between South Africa and South America. Immigration to the island is not possible unless you already have family connections with the island. It is not possible to buy real estate or property on the island.

The only way to get to Tristan Da Cunha is by ship from Cape Town, South Africa. The trip is 1750 miles long and normally takes six days. Travel by boat costs between \$800.00 and \$1,300.00.

The island is known for raising potatoes. Fruit tree crops and other vegetables are also grown there. Chickens and ducks are also kept for food and eggs and to eat kitchen waste. Sheep are kept on the island for meat and wool.

The English language is spoken mostly. The island has much for tourists including museums, nature walks, a small golf course and wildlife viewing. The local currency is the UK pound sterling. No checks or credit cards are accepted. The religions are Anglican and Catholicism and regular Sunday church services are held.

There is a post office that sells stamps, postcards, and philatelic items. Mail posted from the island can take months to arrive at its destination.

Tristan Da Cunha's climate is temperate and Oceanic with rapid weather changes. The local time is GMT and tourists are always welcome.