



THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH SOUTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS  
IN SEA-BORNE COMMERCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY  
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In the nineteenth century, Britain had four island possessions in the South Atlantic: St. Helena, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha and the Falkland Islands. St. Helena, a fragment of an old volcano, discovered by the Portuguese in 1502, had been a port of call for the ships of the English East India Company which administered the island with two interruptions between 1659 and 1834 when the Colonial Office took over. Napoleon was imprisoned there from 1815 until his death in 1821. Ascension Island, which lies 750 miles north-west of St. Helena, is also of volcanic origin. It remained uninhabited until 1815 when, because of fears that attempts would be made to rescue Napoleon, it was occupied by the British. Until 1922 the islands was administered by the British Admiralty. Likened by Charles Darwin to «a huge ship kept in first-rate order», it was officially a vessel, a tender attached to a succession of naval vessels. After 1905 when the island came under the command of the Royal Marine Office, the islands was carried on the books of HMS *Cormorant*, stationed at Gibraltar. Until the Colonial Office took over in 1922, persons born on Ascension were deemed to have been born at sea and were registered in the London parish of Wapping. Tristan da Cunha, the largest of a group of volcanic islands —the others are Inaccessible Island and Nightingale Island (one large and two smaller rocks)— was discovered by the Portuguese admiral, Tristão da Cunha, in 1506 but was not permanently settled until 1810 when an American, Jonathan Lambert, established himself there. It lies 1300 miles south-west of St. Helena. Like Ascension, Tristan da Cunha was formally annexed by Britain in 1816 in connection with Napoleon's detention on St. Helena. When the British garrison was withdrawn in 1817, Corporal William Glass and his family and two stone masons stayed behind to found the present settlement. The fourth possession was a group of islands, the Falkland Islands, first sighted by an English sea-captain, John Davis, in 1592. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the French, the Spanish (and later the Argentinians), the British and the Americans were all involved in

attempts to settle the status of the islands. But the situation remained unsettled until a British naval squadron took formal possession of Port Egmont on 20 December 1832 and obtained the surrender of the Argentinian garrison on 3 January 1833. The contributors to the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* offer different views on the reasons for these steps. In the context of Anglo-French colonial rivalry, W.F. Reddaway has written that «Commercially the islands had little value save as a centre for vessels engaged in whaling and sealing, but as a strategic point in the South Atlantic and on the Horn route to Australia and to the Pacific coast of America, it was important that they should be prevented from falling into the hands of France or of the United States. It was an “Admiralty” rather than a Colonial Office move»<sup>1</sup>. But Paul Knapland opined that the Falkland Islands «were apparently seized because of their importance for whaling—the oil from the whale was superior to that from the palm as lubricant for the machines of Manchester»<sup>2</sup>. In response to Argentine appeals, President Jackson refused to invoke the Monroe doctrine against claims which seemed to antedate the American Revolution and Argentine protests in London carried the matter no further. Initially the islands were administered by the Admiralty but in a *Report* in 1840 the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners enumerated four grounds to support its recommendation that the Falklands should be transferred to the Colonial Office. These were:

- 1.- the usefulness of having a port of refuge for merchant ships plying round Cape Horn.
- 2.- the expediency of having a base for the South American Squadron
- 3.- the advantage of the islands as a penal station, and
- 4.- their fitness for agricultural and commercial purposes.

The third recommendation was rejected but the others were accepted and a Lieutenant-Governor was appointed, who reached the islands in 1842. This closed the matter as far as Great Britain was concerned. The passing of the Act in 1843 which provided for the full colonial government of the Falkland Islands, A.P. Newton stated in 1940, «meant the beginning of

1. W.F. REDDAWAY, «Anglo-French colonial rivalry, 1815-1848», in *Cambridge History of the British Empire, II The growth of the new empire 1783-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 259.

2. Paul KNAPLAND, «Colonial problems and colonial policy, 1815-1837» in *Cambridge History of the British Empire, II*, 280.

the modern colony whose uneventful further history need not concern us»<sup>3</sup>, a statement which would have to be worded rather differently in 1982.

The first three islands had much in common. They all lacked harbours and merely provided sheltered anchorages. At St. Helena, for example, the only practicable landing place is on the leeward side at St. James Bay, an open roadstead. They had a limited demand for goods and had little to export and they all lacked hinterlands. As a product of geography in the age of oceanic sail and of the early steamship in the nineteenth century, they were quintessentially ports of call where vessels could obtain information, victuals and water and stores and could lie for repairs. St. Helena and Ascension also served as coaling stations. As we now know all too well, the Falkland Islands are different. They had a number of secure harbours. While they acted, like the other three, as a port of call supplying food, water and stores and the opportunity to make repairs and later served as a coaling station, they also had a larger population, a demand for goods and products for export.

The role of the British South Atlantic islands will be discussed in the pages which follow under the following heads: a) navigation, b) information, c) provisions and water, d) whaling bases, e) coaling stations, f) for repair, g) as calls for the sick, h) as naval stations and i) as refuges<sup>4</sup>. Finally, the part played by the Falklands as a market for imports and as a source of exports will be discussed.

## I

### a) NAVIGATION

As in previous centuries<sup>5</sup>, so in the nineteenth, the British South Atlantic islands continued to have a role in navigation. Even if the vessels did

3. A.P. NEWTON, «International colonial rivalry: the new world, 1815-1870» in *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, II, 545-6.

4. It should be noted that none of these islands served the commercial function identified by Christian Koninckx (see above p. ●●) and no dealings in foreign currency took place on them.

5. Of the seventeenth century T. Bentley Duncan noted (*Atlantic islands: Madeira, the Azores and the Cape Verdes in seventeenth century commerce and navigation*, University of Chicago Press, 1972, p. 3) that transatlantic mariners had always to rely largely on dead reckoning and for them the glimpse of an island, after weeks out of sight of land, was cause for rejoicing. Ships northward bound in the South Atlantic took the route which led past the islands of St. Helena and Ascension, both visible for great distances at sea.



not call, the sight of Ascension, St. Helena or Tristan da Cunha provided assurance to vessels that they were on the right track. As late as 1900 Claude Woollard recalls that «leaving the Doldrums behind us, we eventually passed through the region of the south-east Trade Winds and shaped a course for the Cape of Good Hope but intending to sight Tristan da Cunha, so that the captain could check for any errors on his two chronometers»<sup>6</sup>.

#### *b) INFORMATION*

In an informal way the islands also continued to be a source of information. The bottle post at Ascension, for example, still operated in the early nineteenth century<sup>7</sup>. Vessels calling at these islands could obtain information about the movement of other ships, about weather conditions and market prospects passed on by previous calling vessels. But the role of St. Helena and Ascension as sources of information changed in the middle of the nineteenth century with the commencement of a regular mail service between England, Cape Town, St. Helena and Ascension. In 1863 the initial mail contract with the Union Steamship Company provided that the Company's packet boats would call at Ascension and St. Helena once a month on their return voyages from Cape Town. From 1866 it provided for stops on the outward voyages also should the Postmaster General specifically order them<sup>8</sup>. Ten years later, in 1876, Donald Currie obtained a share of the mail contract and thereafter Castle steamers called alternately with Union ships. At this time the service was performed by mail, as distinct from intermediate, vessels of both companies but in 1889 intermediate vessels took over the monthly St. Helena service each way<sup>9</sup>. While calls were made at St. Helena in each direction from 1866, the provision did not operate in the case of Ascension until 1903, no doubt because of the additional costs involved.

With Tristan da Cunha a regular mail service was never established and the islands had to rely on chance contact with passing vessels. But a mail contract was also established with the Falklands. In 1881 and 1884, for

6. *The last of the Cape Horners*. Ilfracombe: Stockwell, 1967), p. 36.

7. See KONINCKX, p. •• above.

8. Marischal MURRAY, *Union-Castle chronicle, 1853-1953*, Longmans, 1953, p. 296.

9. MURRAY, *Union-Castle chronicle*, p. 296. «Intermediate» services were introduced in 1876 when the mail contract was shared between the Union and the Castle Lines to provide employment for their vessels which were no longer required for the mail service; they sailed «intermediately» with the mail ships (MURRAY, *Union-Castle chronicle*, p. 75).

example, a Parliamentary grant of £ 500 and in 1882 and 1883 of £ 1000 was made in aid of the mail service<sup>10</sup>. This service was operated by the German Kosmos Line of Hamburg whose vessels called at the Falklands once a month. From 1895 more frequent calls were made every three weeks for mails and merchandise and in July 1900 the contract was taken over by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, which used larger ships. The vessels called at Port Stanley on voyages between London and Callao and return. The voyage from Stanley to London took 28 days. On the eve of the first world war the frequency of the service was increased to once a fortnight as the result of the opening of the Panama Canal which led to an alteration in the result of the opening of the Panama Canal which led to an alteration in the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's vessels' schedule. There was also a regular mail service between South Georgia and Buenos Aires<sup>11</sup>.

A further improvement in communications came in 1899 with the arrival on 24 November of the first submarine cable which ran from Cape Town to St. Helena, on to Ascension on 15 December and then to St. Vincent in the Cape Verdes Islands where it joined the main lines to Porthcurno in Cornwall. Ascension was also for strategic purposes connected direct to West Africa by a cable laid to Sierra Leone<sup>12</sup>. Thus Ascension became the hub of a communications network, a role which has developed considerably in importance since that date. From 1899 vessels could pass Ascension or St. Helena in order that their whereabouts could be reported to their owners<sup>13</sup>. Again Tristan was missed out. On the Falklands a radio station was set up in Stanley and communications were established with Cerro (Uruguay) and the Straits of Magellan from September 1912<sup>14</sup>.

10. *BPP* 1899 LXI 631-2. The mail subsidy for the years 1895-8 was 1350 a year (*BPP* 1899 LXI 642).

11. *Falklands Islands: Kerguelen*, Foreign Office Historical Handbook, no. 138, HMSO, 1920, p. 25.

12. Kenneth C. BAGLEHOLE, *A century of service*. Welwyn: Bournemouth Press, 1969; cited by Duff HART-DAVIS, *Ascension: the story of a south Atlantic island*, Constable, 1972, p. 153. Later Ascension was linked by cable with Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Ayres. A new cable was laid to St. Helena in 1904 (*BPP* 1905 XXX 211).

13. In 1920 the *Bellands*, on a voyage from Melbourne to Falmouth for orders with a cargo of wheat, touched at St. Helena, 10 weeks out of Melbourne, in order to contact the signalling station so that her position would be reported (Alan VILLIERS, *The set of the sails: the story of a Cape Horn seaman*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1949, pp. 86-7).

14. *Falkland Islands: Kerguelen*, p. 26.

c) PROVISIONS AND WATER

A third role played by the British South Atlantic islands was as source of water and provisions. Tristan da Cunha was a port of call for outward-bound merchantmen, which caught the Westerlies by sailing close to the coast of South America and so had a fair run before the wind to the Cape<sup>15</sup>. In 1815 Tristan da Cunha was described as being «in the direct route from Europe and the United States to India, China, and New Holland («Australia»), a situation which «together with its relative distance from those places render it a very convenient place for vessels which are only in want of water and such other articles as the Islands supply, to touch at»<sup>16</sup>. A few years earlier, Jonathan Lambert had announced that he had «this 4th day of February, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and eleven, taken absolute possession of the Islands of Tristan da Cunha, so called... solely for myself and my heirs forever», basing his claim «on the rational and sure principle of absolute occupancy». He invited «all vessels of whatever description, and belonging to whatever nation» to call at the islands, henceforth to be named «the Islands of Refreshment», and «by fair and open traffic, supply themselves with those articles of which they may be in need». He also declared «that I hold myself and my people, in the course of our traffic and intercourse with any other people, to be bound by the principles of hospitality and good fellowship and the law of nations (if any there are) as established by the best writers on that subject». This document was published in newspapers in Cape Town and Boston<sup>17</sup>.

Lambert's enterprise came to an early and tragic end. Little more than a year after he issued his declaration, he is supposed to have drowned while out fishing in an open boat. This was the only systematic attempt ever made to establish Tristan da Cunha as a refreshment station for sailing vessels. But the sail traffic continued and the ships that rode the Westerlies were often in need of supplies after some 90-120 days out from European or American ports. So, after the British annexation in 1816 and the establishment of a permanent settlement in 1817, Tristan da Cunha quite naturally fell into the role of serving the needs of sailing vessels. Barter with passing ships became an important component of the island's economy.

15. For Tristan da Cunha, see Peter A. MUNCH, *Sail traffic on Tristan da Cunha during the mid-nineteenth century*, El Paso, Texas: Society of Polar Philatelists, 1979.

16. Letter from Captain Peter Gordon, master of the *Bengal Merchant*, to Henry Alexander Esq, Table Bay, 24 May 1815 (*Records of the Cape Colony*, X (1902) 304 f).

17. *Boston Gazette*, 18 July 1811.

The exact number of ships that called at Tristan da Cunha for refreshment during the nineteenth century is unrecorded except for a brief period in the 1850s when the Rev. William F. Taylor, the first resident clergyman on the islands, apparently saw it as his duty not only to take care of the spiritual and moral life of his flock but also to introduce some measure of administration into the community. So he kept records not only of baptisms, weddings and funerals but also of more mundane things, thus providing the first official registers of Tristan da Cunha.

Taylor arrived in Tristan on 9 February 1851 and remained there until 21 September 1856. Soon after his arrival he started to keep a «Logbook» which opens with a list of «Inhabitants of Tristan d'Acunha» at 1 January 1851, then numbering 84. The Logbook also contains a «Journal» with brief and somewhat scattered notes, mostly of Taylor's own activities. Then there is the «Shipping Intelligence», listing visiting ships with names of their captains etc., also including notes about ships sighted but not contacted. Finally, there is a «Diary of Conduct» with very brief, often highly self-critical, notes about Taylor's own spiritual life and general state of mind.

Unfortunately he did not keep up his diligent record-keeping for long. The census was faithfully repeated and brought up-to-date each year and the Diary of Conduct was continued throughout his stay on the island, although the original daily entries eventually become more scattered. But the Journal was badly neglected after a year or so, entries becoming rarer, sometimes with big gaps between them —no entry was made, for instance, between 17 January 1853 and 1 January 1854. And the Shipping Intelligence stops abruptly on 9 November 1852 although scattered references to shipping occur in the Journal thereafter<sup>18</sup>.

During the 5 1/2 years of his stay on Tristan, Taylor made a note of altogether 64 calls by 54 vessels, three of which were official visits by British warships, including the *Torch*, the first steamer ever to touch at Tristan. Of the remaining 61 calls, 24 were made by 23 merchantmen, one of which was American, two Prussian, 17 British and the other three unidentified but probably also British. As far as ports of origin and destination are indicated, they all came directly from England except two (both British) who came from ports in South America; and all of them were bound for the Far East or Australia and New Zealand. There was one English barque who ap-

18. These documents are now in the archives of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at its headquarters in London.



parently had Tristan da Cunha for her destination as she was going for guano and stayed around for three days. Although some «did nothing», most of them bartered with the islanders for fresh provisions. From the 1870s, however, the number of ships calling for provisions and water at Tristan considerably diminished. To judge, however, from the number of shipwrecks<sup>19</sup>, a number of merchantmen continued to pass. But by the 1890s it was reported that no ship called regularly<sup>20</sup>. During the last nine months of 1893 13 vessels of various nationalities were communicated with; between January and April 1894 14 vessels were seen but only two of these were communicated with; 25 vessels passed the island in the whole year while between January and April 1895 ten vessels passed Tristan<sup>21</sup>. Although the islanders, whenever the weather permitted, endeavoured to reach the vessels, they were not often successful either because the vessels did not notice them or else intentionally declined to communicate.

There were seasonal variations in the traffic. According to Taylor's list, altogether 42 calls were made during the southern summer months October-March while only six occurred during the winter months April-September. These figures are the more significant because the list covers only one full summer (with the end of the preceding one) while two full winters are included. The most important factor here, obviously, was the foul weather in the waters around Tristan. Not only were there fewer vessels around, as demonstrated by the relatively small number of sightings during the winter (even taking into account the fact that the list is probably not complete) but most of those that did sail the waters around Tristan da Cunha at that time of the year could not be reached because of rough sea and high wind, although some of the captains appeared to be anxious to communicate. For more than five months in 1852 (12 April - 29 September) not a single contact was made.

As a victualling station St. Helena enjoyed a fair measure of prosperity after the death of Napoleon in 1821 and the cessation of control by the East India Company in 1834 until about 1870. Because of its position directly in the midst of the south-east trades, the island was in the track of sailing vessels returning to Europe round the Cape of Good Hope from India and the Far East. A considerable number of ships called to take on fresh provisions,

19. See MUNCH, *Sail traffic*, p. 24.

20. *BPP* 1897 LXI 277.

21. *BPP* 1897 LXI 283.

by which, it was reported, the inhabitants rapidly made money<sup>22</sup>. Potatoes of good quality were the principal crop but cattle and sheep were also raised.

Figures of vessels calling in the early nineteenth century do not appear to be available but two different returns provide figures for 1850-54 and 1866-69.

#### VESSELS ENTERED AND CLEARED ST HELENA 1850-1854

Year	United Kingdom		Brithis colonies		United States		Other states foreign		Total	
	no.	tons	no.	tons	no.	tons	no.	tons	no.	tons
<b>ENTERED</b>										
1850	10	2,601	235	115,784	22	5,845	82	42,250	349	166,480
1851	12	3,191	187	96,264	22	5,082	86	40,403	307	144,940
1852	16	6,243	171	88,318	—	—	101	42,473	288	137,034
1853	20	4,835	179	110,642	2	573	102	41,600	303	157,650
1854	10	2,140	184	99,385	1	98	131	54,147	326	155,770
<b>CLEARED</b>										
1850	13	7,201	19	6,196	1	238	17	2,851	50	16,486
1851	17	10,271	15	4,220	1	141	9	1,830	42	16,462
1852	16	7,075	17	4,423	2	555	11	2,073	46	14,126
1853	19	11,826	6	2,303	2	451	18	3,654	45	18,144
1854	11	5,896	5	1,136	4	1,195	20	4,407	40	12,534

Source: BPP 1856 LVII 720

22. Alfred B. ELLIS, *West African islands*, Chapman & Hall, 1885, p. 5.

For the late 1860s the information is given in a different form. As the following table shows, the peak year was 1866:

#### SHIPPING AT ST HELENA 1866-1869\*

Year	Merchant sailing vessels		Ships of war and mail steamers	Total
	British	Foreign		
1866	529	322	67	918
1867	503	309	66	878
1868	501	318	72	891
1869	456	319	78	853

*Source: BPP 1890-1 LV 140*

\*This return includes only ships which «called»

When sailing vessels began to be replaced by steam ships and particularly from 1869 when the Suez Canal was opened and much of the traffic to the Far East, including the troop ships from India, no longer returned via the Cape, fewer ships passed the island while of those which did, the greater number were so well-found that it was no longer necessary for them to call. New methods of preserving meat and vegetables made it unnecessary for vessels to take on fresh provisions from St. Helena and better methods of water supply rendered calling for water also superfluous. In 1869, the year in which the Suez Canal was opened, 853 vessels called; by 1879, as the following table, which covers the years 1870-89, shows, the number had fallen to 603 and ten years later in 1889 only 288 vessels called, of which 15 were warships (including nine British, three French, one Brazilian and one Portuguese), 226 merchant sailing vessels, 30 merchant steamers and 17 vessels from the Southern Whale Fishery<sup>23</sup>. From 1886 the figures were fur-

23. *BPP 1890-1 LV 126*. The report went on: «the falling off during the last 20 years has been proportionately larger in the case of British than of Foreign sailing vessels; which is perhaps due to the operation of the Plimsoll Acts».

ther affected by the Passing Ships Ordinance. Until that date no ship was allowed to have any communication with the island, except by signal, unless it had been boarded by the harbour master and he had given it pratique. Under the Ordinance vessels which only wanted to obtain a few potatoes or fresh vegetables or post letters could «pass» rather than «call». The «passing ships» which traded with licensed boatmen increased in number from 109 in 1887 to 166 in 1888 and to 261 in 1889<sup>24</sup>.

**SHIPPING AT ST HELENA 1870-1889\***

Year	Merchant sailing vessels		Ships of war and mail steamers	Total
	British	Foreign		
1870	416	322	69	807
1871	380	308	70	758
1872	319	285	63	667
1873	370	291	56	717
1874	380	247	57	684
1875	298	242	65	605
1876	306	222	54	582
1877	335	266	63	664
1878	362	251	56	669
1879	310	228	65	603
1880	306	191	67	564
1881	245	215	65	525
1882	233	203	61	497
1883	250	213	58	521
1884	188	160	66	414
1885	225	160	65	450
1886	166	153	58	377
1887	150	111	56	317
1888	142	124	64	330
1889	134	110	44	288

Source: BPP 1890 - 1 LV 140

\*This return includes only ships which «called»

24. BPP 1890-1 LV 126.

During the Boer war prisoners of war were interned on St. Helena —their number at one time amounting to 6.000— and the Passing Ships Ordinance was suspended because it was held that «it gave boatmen and others, who boarded vessels many miles from land, free access to ships that were not subject to the special restrictions imposed on all calling vessels during that period. The Ordinance was, however, re-enacted in 1904, with certain modifications, thereby giving these licensed traders the privilege of boarding and trading with vessels not actually touching at the port. By this means such vessels obtain fresh vegetables and are able to post letters»<sup>25</sup>.

After the peak of traffic which arose from the peculiar circumstances of the Boer war, the number of vessels calling at St. Helena continued to decline, as the following table shows:

#### VESSELS CALLING AT ST HELENA 1899-1913

Year	Number	Tons
1899	138	264,689
1900	207	484,768
1901	173	253,602
1902	199	426,499
1903	125	250,226
1904	107	254,069
1905	99	242,141
1906	86	215,217
1907	57	149,182
1908	53	184,454
1909	59	159,915
1910	51	181,071
1911	64	186,420
1912	60	157,707
1913	60	210,609

*Source: BPP 1901 XLV 599, 616; 1902 LXV 545; 1903 XLIII 438; 1908 LXIX 538; 1910 LXIV 888; 1912-13 LVIII 354; 1914 LVIII 363*

25. *BPP 1906 LXXV 216.*

The calling vessels were mostly British<sup>26</sup> and consisted in the main of three categories: the mail ships, warships and whalers. Inevitably there was still a considerable number of sailing vessels<sup>27</sup>.

The official view was that one reason for the decline in the number of vessels calling was the high price of provisions and water. While the authorities could do little about the price of provisions, they did take action about the price of water which was reduced in 1907 specifically in order to encourage vessels to call<sup>28</sup>. But this move had little effect for the cause of the decline in numbers was technological —the fact that most vessels were now able to go long distances without the necessity to take on fresh water— rather than economic.

In the early nineteenth century ships returning from the Cape of Good Hope —many of them British— sometimes arrived at Ascension in distress, having missed St. Helena. In such circumstances Ascension could furnish them with essential supplies. Because, however, the island did not have enough water on occasion for its own needs, persistent attempts were made to discourage merchant ships from calling for water. In order to reduce the traffic, high dues were charged —1s for every cask, case or package shipped from the island, 5s for every ton raised by the steam hoist, 7s 6d for the Health Officer's fee and 2s 6d for the certificate of clearance. Despite these charges, some 500 vessels called every year in the early 1860s. So, as a further measure, all the rates were doubled suddenly in 1868. Inevitably the move brought complaints and to counter them the Admiralty produced a printed notice which was sent to ship-owners, pointing out that it had become a common practice for homeward-bound vessels to run past St. Helena deliberately, in order to avoid paying the port dues there, and to call at Ascension «on the plea of being in distress». «Ascension is not a place suited for private trade», the Admiralty added, «being only a rock on which sufficient stores are kept with reference to the requirement of Her Majesty's ships»<sup>29</sup>.

26. In 1905, of the 99 vessels which called, 69 were British, 14 were Norwegian, 4 were French, 4 were American and 3 were Danish; 1 vessel was Dutch, 1 Spanish, 1 Italian, 1 Swedish and 1 Russian (*BPP* 1906 LXXXV 243).

27. In 1905 there were 43 steamers, 9 men-of-war and 47 sailing vessels (*BPP* 1906 LXXXV 243).

28. *BPP* 1908 LXIX 538.

29. In the 1870s the ground above the landing place was said to have been dotted with coal sheds and store houses (ELLIS, *West African islands*, p. 31). A return of 1891 showed that on average in three years 1888-90 coal to a value of £ 2362, naval stores worth £ 2260 and victualling stores amounting to £ 7766 were issued (*BPP* 1890-1 LI 593).

Shipping also called at the Falklands for water and provisions. For the period 10 May 1847 to 16 June 1851 detailed returns are available as follows:

SHIPPING CALLING AT THE FALKLANDS  
FOR WATER AND PROVISIONS 1847-1851

	(10 May—)		(—16 June)			Total
	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	
Water and provisions	6	5	7	8	13	39
Island service and supplies	—	—	—	2	1	3
Supplies and repairs	1	4	—	3	2	10
Total	7	9	7	13	16	52

Source: BPP 1852 XVIII 385-90

And this function they continued to perform until the first world war. On 23 October 1898, for example, the *Blackbraes* arrived off Port Stanley. «The captain went ashore in the ship's boat... Later in the day the boat returned loaded with carcasses of fresh mutton and fresh vegetables.»<sup>30</sup>

d) AS A BASE FOR WHALERS

All four of the British South Atlantic possessions served as bases for whalers. Of Ascension, the Commandant, Captain Roger Tinklar, wrote in 1839, «I understand the Americans would give anything for possession of this island as a rendezvous for their ships engaged in the South Sea fishery»<sup>31</sup>. The New England whalers were active in the neighbourhood of Ascension, St. Helena and Tristan in the 1840s and 1850s. At Tristan, during the period covered by Taylor's shipping intelligence between February 1851 and November 1852, almost two-thirds of all the calls for provisions and water were made by American whalers but their number declined in the later nineteenth century. More whalers continued to call at St. Helena. Until 1884, it was reported that St. Helena was a regular port of call for the American whaling fleet in the South Atlantic. Some 30 or 40 vessels (ranging from 100 to 300 tons) called regularly twice a year, in March and September, in order to give liberty to their crews, to take in green vegetables, po-

30. WOOLLARD, *Cape Horners*, p. 213.

31. Cited by HART-DAVIS, *Ascension*, p. 133.

tatoes and water, and replenish with stores from America which were sent out in schooners. These schooners returned to America with the catch of oil and bone. The fall in the price of oil and the high prices asked at St. Helena for provisions and water, together with the demands of too big an advance in cash by the natives of St. Helena to work as deck hands, were said to have caused the collapse of the trade<sup>32</sup>.

In the early years of twentieth century it was reported that the American whaling vessels were slowly returning to St. Helena but between 1900 and 1910 Tristan had only ten visits from whalers, including two by the *Charles W. Morgan*. The last call by a whaler was made on 22 November 1913 by the barque *Morning Star* of New Bedford<sup>33</sup>.

A *Return* of 1852 shows that whalers also used the Falklands as a base, as the *Report* of 1840 forecast. Nine called in 1848, one in 1850 and two in the first six months of 1851<sup>34</sup>.

#### e) AS COALING STATIONS

When steam vessels began to be employed on oceanic voyages, Ascension, St. Helena and the Falklands (but not Tristan) came to serve as coaling stations. From 1842 details of coal exports to these islands, most of which must have been used for bunkers, are available as follows:

#### COAL EXPORTS 1842-1913 including coke and patent fuel

Year	Ascension	St Helena	Falklands
1842	1,261	—	—
1843	1,737	—	21
1844	2,875	—	—
1845	1,669	—	80
1846	2,605	1,237	—
1847	1,987	235	—
1848	3,218	856	—
1849	1,710	681	176
1850	702	783	—
1851	4,059	1,809	—

32. BPP 1911 LI 748.

33. MUNCH, *Sail traffic*, p. 24.

34. BPP 1852 XVIII 391.



1852	2,380	1,732	—
1853	3,913	1,044	973
1854	1,245	881	719
1855	—	752	365
1856	2,518	1,869	—
1857	12,035	1,336	237
1858	585	3,276	—
1859	7,268	453	500
1860	3,863	713	100
1861	686	851	542
1862	4,273	1,285	968
1863	3,088	2,667	1,632
1864	890	1,411	1,409
1865	2,709	3,099	260
1866	4,059	1,235	2,491
1867	6,744	1,806	1,194
1868	2,232	624	130
1869	2,246	923	833
1870	830	851	663
1871	3,065	150	245
1872	2,746	1,038	696
1873	—	841	307
1874	2,966	21	80
1875	3,437	1,502	330
1876	2,363	100	1,252
1877	1,817	262	271
1878	—	468	377
1879	2,237	1,560	1,360
1880	1,356	786	575
1881	2,300	1,271	766
1882	2,001	523	574
1883	1,004	874	968
1884	1,178	722	704
1885	1,242	1,635	499
1886	1,014	283	1,943
1887	1,850	151	850
1888	—	1,620	1,204
1889	2,446	2,116	1,491
1890	1,214	1,861	1,486
1891	2,348	780	752
1892	1,129	1,684	895
1893	630	1,429	727

1894	3,320	2,060	309
1895	1,320	3,625	478
1896	3,116	30	146
1897	1,764	447	1,681
1898	2,645	927	1,744
1899	2,511	3,303	1,847
1900	1,873	12,530	799
1901	2,618	6,770	1,980
1902	679	1,601	2,263
1903	2,509	1,997	2,191
1904	2,134	4,089	758
1905	—	1,451	1,162
1906	2,026	4,193	260
1907	695	1,851	932
1908	699	1,431	5,150
1909	1,384	1,611	15,035
1910	695	4,357	21,937
1911	—	2,303	30,903
1912	—	4,082	34,729
1913	—	4,737	28,580

Source: National Coal Board

Some of the coal was exported for the use of merchant vessels, some for naval. An Admiralty chart of 1874 showed that 500 tons was kept at a number of places, including Ascension, St. Helena and Port Stanley (Falklands). In 1886 the Royal Commission recommended that provision be made for the defence of St. Helena as a second-class naval coaling station<sup>35</sup>. Until 1903 Great Britain maintained a naval squadron on the south-east coast of South America but Port Stanley was still of sufficient note as a coaling station to be the objective of Admiral von Spee's squadron after his destruction of Craddock's force at Coronel on 1 November 1914. Von Spee was defeated in the Battle of the Falkland Islands on 8 December 1914. At Ascension and St. Helena the coal was stored in heaps but in the Falklands, hulks—of which SS *Great Britain* provides the most famous example—were employed.

35. *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference*, HMSO, 1887, p. 278. It was stated that 30,000 had already been expended upon the fortifications and it was now proposed to put up a comparatively light armament at a cost of 7000 on works and about 2000 on additional armament.

f) FOR REPAIR

Tristan and Ascension were not very suitable for repairs though occasionally a vessel lay off to effect repairs but St. Helena had a role to play in this respect. However its importance declined in the later nineteenth century. As Governor W. Grey Wilson noted in 1888, St. Helena had suffered from «the elimination of defective ships due to recent imperial legislation, by which excellent measures this colony has been deprived of much of the harvest cleared from vessels in distress»<sup>36</sup>. «In the old days of St. Helena's prosperity», a *Report* of 1905 stated, «the greater part of the revenue was derived from the shipping, especially in the way of wharfage on the cargoes of leaking ships»<sup>37</sup>. But the Falklands were a different case. Because of the fierce conditions around Cape Horn, the Falklands had a continuing role as a place for repairs. In the middle of the nineteenth century the following calls were made:

VESSELS CALLING FOR REPAIR  
AT THE FALKLANDS 1847-1851

	(10 May—)			(—16 June)		Total
	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	
Supplies and repairs	1	4	—	3	2	10
Repairs	—	1	3	3	3	10
Total	1	5	3	6	5	20

Source: BPP 1852 XVIII 385-90

A *Report* of 1875 stated that during the previous two years few vessels had arrived seeking shelter and repairs which, it was suggested, as in the case of St. Helena, was due to the stringent orders issued by the Board of Trade which had reduced the number of unseaworthy vessels being employed<sup>38</sup>. Not a few vessels, it was reported late in the nineteenth century, known locally as «lame ducks», after suffering injury during heavy weather off Cape Horn, called at the Falklands in distress, though it was said later that the maintenance of the requisite plant and the high wages current ren-

36. Cited in Emily L. JACKSON, *St. Helena: the historic island from its discovery to the present date* Ward Lock, 1903, p. 93.

37. BPP 1906 LXXV 215.

38. BPP 1876 LI 45.

dered such repairs costly<sup>39</sup>. The official *Report* on the colony for 1898 noted that that year was the first during many years past during which no vessels put into Port Stanley for repairs or in distress<sup>40</sup>. But for a number of ships which had been dismasted or otherwise battered, the Falklands became a final resting place if the surveyors condemned them as «constructive total losses» which meant that the estimated cost of repair exceeded their value.

Once condemned, the vessels were usually sold locally to serve as beached or floating warehouses. Usually the product stored was wool or general supplies but once the steamship began to call some were used to store coal<sup>41</sup>.

#### g) CALLS FOR THE SICK

St. Helena and the Falklands also served as places where the sick could be put on shore for attention. While the navy had an anti-slave trade patrol off the West African coast from the 1820s to the 1840s St. Helena served as a sanatorium and the same purpose was performed by the Falklands for the British South Atlantic squadron. In 1901 the hulk *Howden* was moored off St. Helena for quarantine purposes.

#### h) AS NAVAL STATIONS

St. Helena, Ascension and the Falklands served as ports of call for naval vessels throughout the nineteenth century. Provisions were obtained from them and stores and coal held there for naval use. Not only British warships called but so did warships of other nations. In 1913 one German,

39. BPP 1893-4 LIX 249; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1909-10. Montevideo was the preferred refuge but it was further away and repairs took longer.

40. BPP 1899 LXI 648-9.

41. Amongst the hulks which still survive in the Falklands are the *Margaret*, which spent two months trying to get round Cape Horn when she began to leak badly and put about for the Falklands in 1850; the *William Shand*, on a voyage from Liverpool to Valparaiso in 1859; the snow *Squall*, on a voyage from New York to San Francisco in 1864; the packet *Charles Cooper*, bound from Callao to Melbourne in 1866; the *Jhelem*, out of Callao for Dunkirk in 1870; and the *Capricorn*, whose cargo of coal caught fire in 1881. Best known of all is the *Great Britain* which, while carrying coal from Penarth to San Francisco, was damaged off Cape Horn. Condemned in 1886, she was used to store coal and wool. In 1970 she was refloated and brought back to the dock where she was built in Bristol and is now on display there. (John SMITH, *Condemned at Stanley*, National Maritime Historical Trust, 1973).

one French, one Japanese and one Argentinian warship called at St. Helena in addition to nine British warships<sup>42</sup>.

i) *FOR REFUGE*

Sailing vessels and whalers also called at Ascension, St. Helena, Tristan and the Falklands for the purpose, as consular *Reports* put it, of giving their crews liberty. It must have been a relief to be on dry land after days and weeks at sea, especially in bad weather. Additionally, on Ascension there was the chance of some sport chasing turtles.

## II

### *IMPORTS AND EXPORTS*

Both Ascension and St. Helena had little in the way of trade. Their imports consisted only of a limited range of commodities for the support of the inhabitants and neither had anything in the way of exports except the water and provisions which they supplied to passing vessels. St. Helena was a slightly different case. Imports were on a larger scale to support the garrison and, during the Boer war, the prisoners of war. Throughout the nineteenth century imports exceeded exports but there were periodic attempts to develop export products. In 1905 the *Annual Report* noted that «there is no regular export trade in St. Helena. It is to be hoped, however, that this evil will be remedied in the near future by success attending the efforts to revive the flax industry and by the hoped for working of the manganese ore deposits.»<sup>43</sup> the disparity of imports and exports is made clear in the following table for selected years, 1851-1913. It should be noted that the value of whale bone and oil transhipped is excluded.

42. *BPP* 1914-16 XLIII 505.

43. *BPP* 1906 LXXV 212.

ST HELENA: IMPORTS AND EXPORTS 1851-1913 (£s)

	Imports	Exports
1851	55,219	5,846
1887	33,688	685
1890	31,958	325
1899	91,699	4,592
1913	43,394	7,568

Source: *BPP* 1856 LVII 721; 1888 LXXII 768; 1892 LV 625; 1902 LXV 542; 1914 LVIII 358

Only the Falkland Islands had a sizeable export trade which they were able to carry on because they had a larger population and a number of secure and well-protected harbours, particularly San Carlos Bay and Port Stanley on East Falkland<sup>44</sup>.

A continuous annual run of figures for vessels entering the Falklands is available for the period 1846<sup>45</sup> to 1898. This shows that the number of sailing vessels entering fluctuated from year to year with weather conditions and the state of trade. The largest number of sailing vessels, 74, entered in 1863; the peak year for tonnage was 1866 when a tonnage of 42,547 tons were recorded. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had its effect on the number of vessels which sailed round Cape Horn to Australia and the shift from sail to steam also had its effect. The first steamships arrived in 1878. As their numbers grew, so the numbers of sailing vessels tended to decline. The number of vessels calling at the Falklands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was also affected by general shipping developments. Not only did steam replace sail but vessels of small tonnage gave way to vessels of greater size and these had more commodious storage space for water. Further, all in all, vessels were in every way better found which tended to reduce the number of vessels calling for repairs. Details of the vessels entering the Falklands, 1846-98, are given in the following table:

44. For a detailed assessment of the ports and anchorages in the Falklands, see *Falkland Islands: Kerguelen*, pp. 20-3.

45. The table in *BPP* 1899 LXI 630-2 begins with the year 1842 but there is no information about vessels entered until 1846.

VESSELS ENTERING THE FALKLANDS 1846-1898\*

Year	Sailing vessels	
	number	tons
1846	25	7,262
1847	22	—
1848	28	—
1849	29	9,205
1850	36	13,881
1851	50	15,197
1852	62	22,024
1853	60	25,186
1854	55	23,728
1855	53	19,793
1856	33	10,501
1857	40	18,415
1858	28	8,645
1859	53	22,140
1860	47	15,909
1861	54	21,327
1862	62	34,306
1863	74	33,673
1864	60	23,524
1865	55	20,452
1866	70	42,547
1867	62	32,678
1868	50	29,730
1869	54	22,195
1870	55	20,227
1871	60	29,959

Year	Sailing vessels		Steamers		Total number
	number	tons	number	tons	
1872	48	25,700	—	—	—
1873	53	26,518	—	—	—
1874	49	17,679	—	—	—
1875	55	22,403	—	—	—
1876	37	22,892	—	—	—
1877	31	11,415	—	—	—
1878	35	8,386	4	—	39
1879	44	12,725	—	—	44
1880	38	20,475	7	—	45
1881	29	18,942	27	—	56
1882	30	20,174	20	—	50
1883	23	14,238	13	—	36
1884	23	16,747	14	—	37
1885	21	11,353	15	—	36
1886	22	15,505	15	—	37
1887	35	21,535	18	—	53
1888	21	8,132	15	—	36
1889	31	12,241	14	—	45
1890	30	12,336	13	—	43
1891	26	16,766	17	—	43
1892	32	17,765	18	—	50
1893	24	10,398	18	21,065	42
1894	18	12,043	21	26,345	39
1895	21	14,204	15	27,986	36
1896	22	16,429	21	39,867	43
1897	16	11,051	25	42,747	41
1898	13	5,415	33	56,716	46

Source: BPP 1899 LXI 630-2, 648-9

\*As, with but few exceptions, the vessels entered also cleared, a return of the latter is not given.



In a different form, figures of sailing vessels and steamers entering the Falklands are available for the period 1899-1913, as the following table shows, with the number of steamers increasing sharply from 1980:

#### VESSELS ENTERING THE FALKLANDS 1899-1913

Year	Sailing vessels number	Steamers number	Total number	Tonnage
1899	29	28	57	77,262
1900	17	31	48	76,404
1901	11	33	44	97,878
1902	14	32	46	100,128
1903	26	32	58	117,147
1904	23	37	60	119,651
1905	14	35	49	122,803
1906	18	39	57	137,470
1907	16	50	66	145,696
1908	17	46	63	155,611
1909	13	56	69	160,503
1910	14	58	72	168,220
1911	14	64	78	154,869
1912	12	88	100	197,803
1913	18	141	159	260,837

*BPP* 1902 LXIV 526; 1904 LVI 308; 1909 LVII 329;

*Source: Falklands Islands: Kerguelen, p. 25*

For the period May 1847 to June 1851 a return is available which distinguishes vessels entering on «island service» from vessels calling for water, provisions and repairs and from whalers:

**VESSELS ENTERING THE FALKLANDS  
ON ISLAND SERVICE 1847-1851**

	(10 May—)			(—16 June)		Total
	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	
Island service	8	9	10	11	8	46
Island service and supplies	—	—	—	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>49</b>

Source: BPP 1852 XVIII 385-90

For the same period a similar return gives information about the nationality of the vessels. As can be seen, British and American vessels were in the majority.

**VESSELS, BY NATIONALITY, ENTERING THE FALKLANDS,  
10 MAY 1847-16 JUNE 1851**

	1847		1848		1849		1850		1851	
	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons
British	4	1,070	12	5,896	11	4,628	23	10,511	15	6,576
American	6	1,575	12	4,162	12	2,845	8	2,094	13	3,257
Norwegian	1	350	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	406
Danish	1	350	—	—	—	—	1	250	1	60
Oriental	2	225	2	180	2	196	2	226	—	—
Hamburg	1	127	—	—	—	—	1	400	—	—
Chilean	—	—	1	400	—	—	—	—	—	—
French	—	—	1	1,100	—	—	—	—	1	400
Russian	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	400	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3,697</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11,738</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>7,669</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13,881</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10,699</b>

Source: BPP 1852 XVIII 391

Half a century later the British vessels predominated amongst the steam vessels while sailing vessels belonged to several countries. The following table for the years 1900-1 and 1905-6 shows the effect of the shift of the mail contract from the German Kosmos line to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company in 1900.

**VESSELS, BY NATIONALITY, ENTERING THE FALKLANDS  
1900-1, 1905-6**

	Steam				Sailing			
	1900	1901	1905	1906	1900	1901	1905	1906
American	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	1
British	14	30	31	33	3	3	7	10
Chilean	5	—	1	2	7	3	3	2
Danish	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Dutch	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
French	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	1
German	11	1	—	—	2	—	2	2
Norwegian	—	2	3	4	2	2	—	—
Italian	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Russian	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Totals	31	33	35	39	17	11	14	18

	Tonnage			
	1900	1901	1905	1906
	3,504	—	—	1,533
	42,837	92,095	117,940	127,383
	2,373	372	418	626
	—	—	—	199
	—	—	291	—
	—	3,307	—	1,696
	24,222	168	2,891	3,033
	968	1,378	945	1,867
	2,500	—	—	1,133
	—	558	318	—
	76,404	97,878	122,803	137,470

Source: BPP 1902 LXIV 506; 1907 LIII 517

The major difference between the Falklands and the other British South Atlantic island dependencies was that the Falklands carried on an active trade. The value of imports (which were retained for home consumption) and of exports (which were the produce of the colony) for the years 1849 to 1913 are set out in the following table:

FALKLANDS ISLANDS: IMPORTS AND EXPORTS 1849-1913 (£s)

Year	Imports	Exports	Year	Imports	Exports
1849	9,760	2,660	1876	27,056	37,121
1850	—	—	1877	33,283	59,878
1851	13,000	4,500	1878	35,792	51,055
1852	16,132	5,800	1879	38,940	71,340
1853	16,862	7,428	1880	33,505	88,564
1854	13,800	6,500	1881	40,443	87,919
1855	—	—	1882	35,429	76,931
1856	11,300	11,800	1883	52,913	84,593
1857	—	—	1884	67,848	101,338
1858	—	—	1885	48,314	97,846
1859	13,890	6,892	1886	73,602	108,946
1860	26,697	4,910	1887	66,785	107,995
1861	27,205	14,486	1888	54,008	88,743
1862	25,532	15,556	1889	55,716	116,102
1863	28,658	18,415	1890	67,182	115,865
1864	19,438	10,114	1891	67,827	130,752
1865	15,040	17,325	1892	70,138	126,312
1866	20,948	21,780	1893	71,126	134,872
1867	22,125	18,230	1894	62,270	131,801
1868	20,710	12,695	1895	71,826	122,988
1869	18,172	19,184	1896	69,985	132,194
1870	20,596	19,894	1897	63,286	123,186
1871	23,715	24,692	1898	72,987	106,984
1872	24,441	31,435	1899	73,978	139,203
1873	36,540	40,586	1900	66,948	111,539
1874	28,156	41,720	1901	74,772	110,294
1875	42,460	38,989	1902	63,851	90,838

1903	111,384	160,883	1909	89,862	261,514
1904	49,501	126,935	1910	94,294	308,930
1905	58,155	167,450	1911	93,913	471,156
1906	66,433	185,227	1912	93,264	623,875
1907	73,619	246,435	1913	239,222	1,460,219
1908	73,062	189,972			

Source: *BPP* 1898 LXI 630-2; 1907 LIII 8-9; *Falkland Islands: Kerguelen*, p. 35

Exports increased steadily with year to year fluctuations but not till 1871 did they, with a few annual exceptions such as 1856 and 1865, consistently exceed imports. As the following table for 1893 to 1913 shows, imports came mainly from the United Kingdom.

**SOURCE OF IMPORTS INTO THE FALKLANDS ISLAND**  
1893-1913 (£s)

	1893	1898	1910	1913
United Kingdom	64,571	64,992	81,924	152,958
Germany	700	705	—	—
Uruguay	1,939	2,119	7,093	1,781
Chile	3,748	5,171	3,949	1,986
Argentina	168	—	192	43,482
Other countries	—	—	1,136	39,015
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,126</b>	<b>72,987</b>	<b>94,294</b>	<b>239,222</b>

Source: *BPP* 1895 LXIX 199; 1899 LXI 643; *Falklands Islands: Kerguelen*, p. 37

The United Kingdom was also the main market for the products of the Falklands.

DESTINATION OF EXPORTS FROM THE FALKLANDS ISLANDS  
1893-1913 (£s)

	1893	1898	1910	1913
United Kingdom	130,319	103,700	232,192	730,994
Chile	3,103	—	394	37,700
Argentina	1,450	3,284	—	80,552
Norway	—	—	—	414,490
Other countries	—	—	76,344	196,483
<b>Total</b>	<b>134,872</b>	<b>106,984</b>	<b>308,930</b>	<b>1,460,219</b>

*Source: BPP 1895 LXIX 199; 1899 LXI 643; Falkland Islands: Kerguelen, p. 36*

Amongst the imports, wearing apparel, groceries, provisions, liquor and beer loomed large, with coal, ships stores and building material also of importance, as the information available for 1897 and 1898 bears witness:

## IMPORTS INTO THE FALKLANDS 1897-1898 (£s)

Articlés	From United Kingdom		From Germany		From Uruguay		From Chile		From Argentina	
	1807	1898	1897	1898	1897	1898	1897	1898	1897	1898
Coal	3,242	2,689	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wearing apparel, clothing material including boots and haberdashery	12,832	14,396	—	61	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hardware, machinery	7,410	9,629	—	75	—	359	—	—	—	—
Oilmen's stores, groceries and provisions	12,140	13,631	628	554	175	226	—	—	—	—
Livestock and fodder	640	295	—	—	84	107	296	315	250	—
Building material, including timber	2,994	3,124	—	—	—	—	2,260	1,981	—	—
Liquor, beer, spirits and wine of all kinds	6,606	8,216	14	15	—	—	6	—	—	—
Tobacco and cigars	2,657	1,925	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Specie	40	1,500	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ships stores, cordage & c	4,503	7,397	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheep dip	1,161	2,190	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fruit and vegetables	—	—	—	—	702	467	158	85	—	—
Cereals	—	—	—	—	1,833	960	2,656	2,790	—	—
Fencing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	54,225	64,992	642	705	2,794	2,119	5,375	5,171	250	—

Source: BPP 1899 LXI 645-6

The principal occupation in the Falklands was sheep farming and so wool formed the largest export with tallow, hides and sheepskins also finding a sale abroad, mainly in the United Kingdom. Details of the exports for the period 1882-1913 are set out in the following table:

**EXPORTS FROM THE FALKLANDS 1882-1913**  
(£s)

	1882	1887	1898	1910	1913
Wool	57,655	80,065	92,206	161,666	158,443
Seepskins	3,893	5,039	4,375	4,138	17,905
Sealskins	—	12	787	170	598
Hides	4,819	515	1,000	963	1,236
Tallow	10,120	4,475	1,250	8,439	4,516
Live sheep	—	3,314	6,686	—	5,229
Whale oil	—	—	—	120,995	1,206,396
Guano	—	—	—	—	34,343
Whale bone	—	—	—	2,280	11,693
Seal oil	—	—	—	—	9,840
Others	359	14,575	680	10,279	10,020
<b>Total</b>	<b>76,846</b>	<b>107,995</b>	<b>106,984</b>	<b>308,930</b>	<b>1,460,219</b>

*Source: BPP 1888 LXXII 96; 1899 LXI 644; Falklands Islands: Kerguelen, p. 36*

Thus in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Falklands had a role in sea-borne trade both as a port of call for provisions and water, for stores and repairs, and for coal but had also developed a sizeable export trade in wool and the by-products of sheep.

46. This total and the figure for total exports from the Falkland Islands in 1882 given in the table on p. 26 above come from different sources.



## CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century Britain had four island possessions in the South Atlantic: St. Helena, acquired in 1659, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, occupied in 1816, and the Falkland Islands which came under British rule in 1833. During the period of oceanic sail in the nineteenth century, all four islands served as ports of call, as places to which vessels resorted for fresh food (to prevent scurvy), for water, for stores and for repairs. In particular, vessels damaged attempting to round Cape Horn crept back to the Falklands. Some were repaired but others were not worth restoring. Many of these hulks which still survive, having served to store wool or coal, make the Falklands an important graveyard of nineteenth century sail. When the steamship developed, St. Helena, Ascension and the Falklands (but not Tristan da Cunha) served as coaling stations both for merchantment and for warships.

Four developments largely brought the role of these islands as ports of call to an end:

- 1.- The opening of the Suez Canal altered the pattern of trade routes to the Far East and Australasia;
- 2.- Canning and later refrigeration and better water treatment plants on ships made calls for food and water no longer necessary;
- 3.- Steamships followed different tracks in the South Atlantic, no longer, except in the case of mail ships, passing close to St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; and
- 4.- More stringent regulations relating to the seaworthiness of ships meant that fewer ships were damaged at sea.

So St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha declined while Ascension found a new role from 1899 as a communications centre and from the 1940s as an aircraft staging post. The Falklands were different. Before they were caught up in recent history, they developed an export trade in wool and other products of the sheep. This gave them a small and precarious place in world trade as well as in world shipping.

The role of the British South Atlantic islands in the nineteenth century was a product of a certain set of political, commercial and technical factors. When these changed, their significance altered<sup>47</sup>.

47. I gratefully acknowledge the help of Alistair Couper, A.J. Frances, John Kanefsky and Alston Kennerley in the compilation of this article.