

A new walks book provides information on all 21 Post Box walks, along with water-proof literature for the diving and snorkelling enthusiast to help them enjoy the magic of our pristine underwater world.

To support the tour guides and in the interest of their customers safety, all have been trained in Emergency First Response and how to use a VHF radio, as a lot of the walks are to remote parts of the Island. VHF radios have been ordered and will be available for the tour guides to rent.

There is still concern about liability issues which could occur when guiding the walks and there is only minimal maintenance being undertaken on some of the paths.

Overall, the project will enhance the walking experience on St Helena and we are very grateful to OTEP for their support.

Pamela Young, Director of Tourism, St Helena Island; director@tourism.gov.sh

The St Helena Environmental Information System, SHEIS (STH302)

The original SHEIS project was scheduled for completion in March 2006. During the final months of the project, it became clear that there were areas that needed further development. The Department for International Development (DFID) was approached about the possibility of extending the project for a further 6 months. They agreed and provided additional funding to invite the previous consultants back to St Helena to enhance SHEIS.

The consultants had a range of tasks outlined for them. They provided additional training in the use of SHEIS to managers, stakeholders, and other users. They identified further potential uses of SHEIS to St Helena by providing training to the Island's GIS Manager so he could train new users as the system expands. The consultants delivered training in portal applications for the Prince Andrew School. They participated in a public consultation on how to progress towards a National System to incorporate other government departments with the private sector and NGOs. Discussions took place with the St Helena Government (SHG) IT Department on issues surrounding long term security, systems back up, and general IT support.

The training the consultants provided was delivered using a computer suite at the AVEC Centre. This enabled 15 staff from Legal, Lands and Planning Department (LLPD), Agriculture & Natural Resources Department (ANRD), Environmental Planning Department (EPD), and St Helena National Trust (SHNT) to participate during one session. An additional one-to-one in depth training was provided to the SHNT Project Officer.

Discussion with the Prince Andrew School staff resulted in exchanges of ideas about the potential uses of SHEIS for A-Level students. Problems accessing the browser were investigated and solutions identified.

As the use of SHEIS expanded, it was identified that there was the need for a more powerful and efficient network system. The funding provided by DFID allowed for the purchase of an air conditioning unit, new browser software packages, printers, and UPS units to protect against power failures.

The ongoing development of GIS and its potential for St Helena has been recognised by all stakeholders, GIS Office, LLPD, SHG IT staff, and the SHNT. In order to secure its future, a 5-year business case and budget forecast has been presented to SHG to seek future funding to continue and expand this service to various departments and organisations on the Island.

Taken from Annual Report St Helena National Trust 2007-2008

Vince Thompson, Director St Helena National Trust email: sth.natrust@cwimail.sh

Ridding Tristan da Cunha's outer islands of alien plants (TDC201 and TDC403)

Like many other oceanic islands the Tristan da Cunha Islands in the South Atlantic have suffered from the introduction of alien species.

Thankfully, Tristan's feral goats, pigs and cats are now gone, leaving rodents as the remaining mammalian problem. However, invasive alien plants remain a threat to the island group's natural communities, including on the largely unaltered outer islands.

Both Inaccessible and Gough Islands in the Tristan Group are nature reserves and together form a World Heritage Site. The third outer island, Nightingale, is not a proclaimed nature reserve, but is effectively run as one, with a management plan in production. All three islands have active alien plant eradication programme funded by OTEP.

Inaccessible Island

The major effort is directed at removing New Zealand Flax *Phormium tenax* thought to have been introduced in the 1930s. The plant grows on high coastal cliffs that require qualified rope-access technicians to scale in safety. Two expeditions, in 2004 and 2007, have succeeded in removing all but a few plants, and a follow-up visit to remove the last few plants and any new seedlings is planned for 2009.

Nightingale Island

Again, efforts have been directed at New Zealand Flax. Most plants had been removed previously by Tristan Islanders, and in 2007 the remaining 20 plants were removed. Additionally, the alien Australian Brass Buttons *Cotula australis* was weeded out. This species is out-competing the endemic Nightingale Brass Buttons *C. moseleyi* and further eradication efforts are required.

Gough Island

Here, the main alien plant issue is with Procumbent Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens*. This diminutive plant only occurs along a short stretch of coastal cliff near the meteorological station, and rope-access technicians are required to work in safety. It was first discovered ashore in 1998, and since then eradication efforts have been undertaken, utilizing mechanical removal, herbicides and heat treatment to kill the seed load in the soil. On several other southern oceanic islands this species is highly invasive. So far, efforts on Gough have contained the plant at decreasing densities but eventual eradication remains problematic and will require an ongoing effort for a number of years yet.

A management plan for alien plants

In tandem with the above eradication efforts in the field, the project team is producing a management plan and identification guide for Tristan's invasive plants; the former to include a quarantine manual to reduce the risks of further species arriving at the island group. Necessary quarantine activities will include inspections of ships



*Brian Schultz, level-three rope-access technician, descends the coastal cliff at Transvaal Bay, Gough Island, searching for the alien plant *Sagina procumbens* in December 2007.*

Photo: John Cooper

