

# SAINT HELENA

Protecting the world  
heritage of a small island

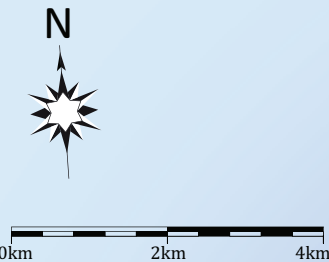


The St Helena National Trust strategic vision



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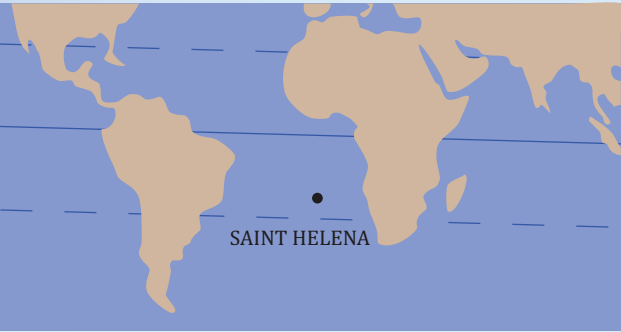
# ABOUT ST HELENA

Imagine one of the remotest inhabited places on earth...

Saint Helena is an island in the South Atlantic Ocean, over 1,200 miles from the nearest landmass. It covers 47 square miles and can only be reached by sea. St Helena has been part of Britain since 1659 and today is one of the UK Overseas Territories.

St Helena has many world class historic and natural attractions, but without concerted action many of these will be lost.

The St Helena National Trust is the island's only conservation charity and needs your support to ensure a vibrant future for St Helena.



Andrew Darlow



# WHY IS ST HELENA SPECIAL?

St Helena is a treasure trove of world heritage. Its 47 square miles boast an extraordinary diversity of built and natural attractions

Shaped by volcanic activity 14 million years ago, St Helena is an island of staggering natural beauty, including cloud forest, barren desert, sculpted volcanic rocks, lush woodland and breathtaking coastal scenery. The geographical isolation of the island has helped to evolve a unique flora and fauna, including over 400 plants and invertebrates that exist nowhere else on Earth.

Once a vital staging post to India and the British Empire, by the late 18th century St Helena was perhaps the most impregnable place in the world. Today its historic attractions echo its former global importance: a vast network of fortifications from the heyday of the British Empire; the house where the Emperor Napoleon lived out his exile; a site where tens of thousands of African slaves were liberated; a wonderfully preserved Georgian trading town and plantation houses.

A long sea journey is still the only way to reach St Helena, as it has been for the past 500 years. Towering cliffs, a steep-sided valley with a fortified settlement nestling in its base – this is the same spectacular vista that has greeted visitors from the heyday of the great maritime empires to the present day. New plans for an airport provide opportunities to open up St Helena and its attractions to the world.

St Helena has a distinctive identity and culture – including architecture and customs – that have been shaped by five centuries at the crossroads of the South Atlantic.

The St Helena National Trust is responsible for protecting the island’s built, natural and cultural heritage. This strategic vision outlines how we will achieve our aims. With your support we can help to ensure that St Helena remains truly special.

St Helena is ringed by precipitous cliffs that give no hint of the lush, forested mountain interior.

Andrew Darlow



Jacob's Ladder

Merrill



Mark Fraser-Carpenter (SHNT)

“If I knew any one who lived in St Helena I would supplicate him to send me home a cask or two of earth from the island, and from any dried-up pond, and thus, as sure as I'm a wriggler, I should receive a multitude of lost plants”

Charles Darwin



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# LIVING HISTORY

Preserving St Helena’s world-class built heritage

## Napoleon's House at Longwood



St Helena was discovered by the Portuguese in 1502. For the past 350 years it has been in British hands.

A vital stepping stone to the British Empire, the heyday of the island saw a thousand ships a year calling, bringing explorers such as Captain Cook, Charles Darwin and Edmund Halley. In 1815 the Northumberland arrived with St Helena’s most famous resident, the Emperor Napoleon. His six-year exile on the island was a landmark episode in world history. St Helena also played a significant role in the abolition of slavery, liberating over 25,000 slaves and putting their captors on trial.

Today there are reminders of St Helena’s incredible history wherever you look. A string of impressive cliff top fortifications survive along its rugged coastline, cannons still in place. Napoleon’s house has been restored to appear as it was on the day he died. James Bay is full of historic wrecks, many of which were bearing rich cargoes from the Orient.

Archaeological digs have recently made remarkable discoveries at the Rupert’s Valley slave site, shedding new light on this extraordinary episode in world history.

The St Helena National Trust has a key role in the protection and management of the island’s built

## Banks Battery



heritage. We believe that St Helena’s uniquely preserved built heritage will form the basis of the island’s tourism-based economic future. Yet the decades of neglect that have helped to preserve this fragile history are now taking their toll and many of the island’s key heritage tourism sites are on the verge of collapse. The increase in development pressure that will accompany the much-needed regeneration of the island will bring further challenges if this precious asset is to be preserved.

### Our vision is to:

1. **Reopen High Knoll fort** – The island’s most impressive historic monument has been closed due to collapsed walls.
2. **Rejuvenate Lemon Valley** – This historic slave site needs to be restored and made more accessible.
3. **Restore Bertrand’s Cottage** – This Napoleonic house has huge potential as a new visitor attraction.
4. **Take responsibility for flagship sites** – Many of the island’s neglected heritage tourism sites need investment and management plans.





18'00 5'00

# NATIONAL TRUST IN ACTION HIGH KNOLL FORT



Perched on a hillside overlooking Jamestown, High Knoll fort is one of St Helena’s most spectacular historic sites. Begun in 1798, the fort never actually saw military action, but it remains an iconic memorial to the strategic importance of the island to the British Empire.

15'00

Over the years the fort has fallen into disrepair: two sections of wall collapsed, with other sections deemed unsafe. The fort was closed to the public in 2008.

The Trust is now working with the St Helena Government to reopen the fort. The first phase has fenced off the most dangerous sections and installed safety signage. We have also prepared a Conservation Management Plan for the site.

14'00

In the longer term the full restoration of the fort walls needs to be undertaken, an ambitious project which could take up to a decade – possibly using locally trained apprentices. The Trust is keen to develop income-generating streams, such as craft workshops and other visitor facilities, to fund the ongoing maintenance of High Knoll fort.



8'00 9'00

# NATIONAL TRUST IN ACTION LEMON VALLEY



After the abolition of the slave trade within the British Empire in 1807, the trade continued elsewhere and St Helena was at the forefront of attempts to extinguish it. In 1840 a Vice-Admiralty court was established on the island, judging cases of slave vessels captured by the Royal Navy on their way from Africa to the Americas.

Today most of the Lemon Valley slave buildings are still standing, although in a poor state of repair. A tranquil place that can only be reached by boat, Lemon Valley also provides a much-loved recreational resource for camping and fishing.

14'00

The St Helena National Trust, in partnership with the local Development Agency, has ambitious plans to rejuvenate this historic landscape, through restoring the Lemon Valley slave buildings and providing new visitor facilities, including an improved landing place.

13'00 8'00 9'00

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# RESTORING NATURE

Helping St Helena’s globally unique flora and fauna to thrive again

St Helena is a treasure trove of some of the world’s rarest biodiversity, with over 400 species which occur nowhere else on the planet, including the Wirebird, giant tree daisies and desert-dwelling, nocturnal spiders. The seas around the island are also home to 10 species of endemic fish.

At the time of its discovery St Helena was a pristine wilderness, with six endemic land birds, significant seabird colonies and extensive forests of endemic plants. Within a century much of it had been destroyed by settlers and wild goats.

Today a large proportion of the island’s flora and fauna is on the brink of extinction, surviving in isolated fragments. This unique biodiversity is facing significant threats, including rapid encroachment by invasive species and soil erosion.

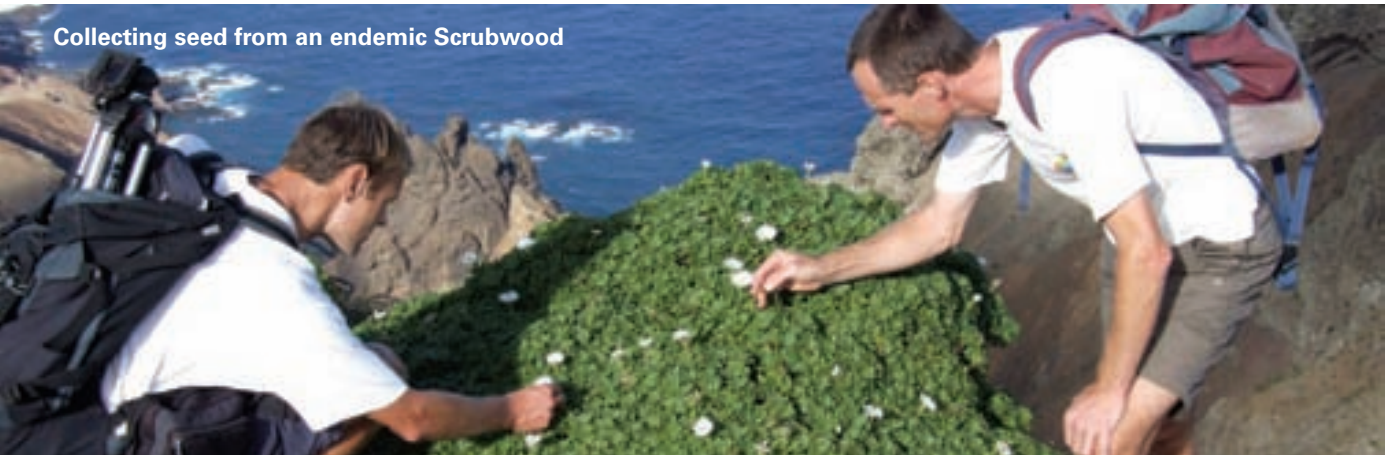
The past three decades have been marked by ambitious efforts to conserve the remaining endemic species and to restore tracts of native

forest. Exciting plant and seabird discoveries have been made. The St Helena National Trust has played a major role, with achievements including establishing 35 hectares of Gumwood forest, and helping to increase endangered Wirebird numbers by 50%. With increased funding and support we can achieve much more, both on land and at sea.

**Our vision is to:**

- 1. **Conserve threatened species** – Many critically endangered plants are on the brink of extinction and require intensive action.
- 2. **Restore native habitats** – A new plant nursery will help to mass produce endemics to recreate diverse wild habitats.
- 3. **Control invasive species** – Halt the spread of pheasant tail fern and other dangerous invasives that threaten native biodiversity.
- 4. **Secure Wirebird numbers** – The population will increase if habitats are properly managed and threats from predators reduced.

Collecting seed from an endemic Scrubwood



Golden sail spider



St Helena Wirebird



St Helena Ebony



## DARWIN ON ST HELENA

Charles Darwin visited the island in July 1836 and was deeply influenced by its unique evolutionary conditions, pronouncing that “St Helena versus the world would perhaps be the first division of a phytogeographical system.”

To commemorate his visit a new St Helena National Trust project, funded by the UK’s Darwin Initiative, will restore native habitats and train up a new generation of young conservationists.



# NATIONAL TRUST IN ACTION

## MILLENNIUM FOREST



The eastern half of St Helena was once covered with a huge swathe of endemic forest known as the Great Forest. However by the 1700s most of the trees had been felled by settlers and the East India Company was attempting unsuccessfully to erect a huge wall around what remained. By the 20th century only a smattering of endemic Gumwood trees survived.

In 2000 the Millennium Forest initiative was launched, with the ambitious goal of recreating up to 250 hectares of native forest on degraded wasteland. The St Helena National Trust took responsibility for the Forest

in 2002 and to date has co-ordinated the planting of 10,000 Gumwood trees and other endemic plants, covering 35 hectares of barren eroded ground. Already the Gumwoods are starting to regenerate naturally, and the Trust is continuing to expand the diversity of the forest with other St Helena endemics.

The Millennium Forest is a genuine community initiative, and over the years hundreds of islanders have planted trees. Visitors and overseas supporters are also able to sponsor a tree, thereby leaving a personal legacy to this inspiring story of ecological recovery.

### SAVING THE WORLD'S RAREST TREE

The National Trust has been working with Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the local Conservation Section to rescue the endemic Bastard Gumwood tree, until recently the world's rarest tree with only one known specimen. An intensive recovery programme has discovered a second wild tree and has successfully reintroduced over 100 young plants back into the wild.

# NATIONAL TRUST IN ACTION

## WIREBIRD RECOVERY



The Wirebird – St Helena's national bird – is the last survivor of the island's six endemic land birds and is one of the world's most endangered bird species.

In 2006, Wirebird numbers were found to have slumped to about 210, a dramatic drop from the previous population level of around 450 birds in 2001. The species appeared to be sliding inexorably towards extinction, with deteriorating habitats and predators the main threats.

Proposals for a new airport at Prosperous Bay Plain, a key site for Wirebirds, led to the initiation in 2006 of a recovery project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Through improving pastureland, the Wirebird's preferred habitat, the project aimed to provide benefits both to biodiversity and farmers' livelihoods.



The Wirebird mitigation project – delivered by the RSPB, the local Agriculture & Natural Resources Department and the St Helena National Trust – has improved over 150 hectares of habitat. The Wirebird population has now increased to almost 400 birds, which the Trust monitors through an annual count. Farmers are also reaping the benefits, with improved grazing for livestock and new fencing.

The St Helena National Trust is currently working with the RSPB to secure funding for a new project to control Wirebird predators such as rats and feral cats.



# IMPROVING TOURISM

Supporting a sustainable tourism-based economic future for St Helena



Andrew Jarlow



Jeremy Cairns Wicks

Sustainable tourism, based on St Helena’s extraordinary built and natural heritage, including its pristine oceans, is crucial to the island’s future prosperity.

The island of St Helena boasts world heritage that would be the envy of many nation states. St Helena should be a thriving tourist destination, drawing tens of thousands of visitors a year. Yet the island’s very remoteness and inaccessibility have ensured that its attractions remain relatively unknown and unvisited.

With news of an airport, there is a great opportunity for St Helena to develop high end, low impact tourism and thereby revive its flagging fortunes.

While increased tourism could pose threats to the fragile environment of the island, managed sensitively this could give a much-needed economic driver to heritage and natural protection

on St Helena. Successful models for distinctive heritage tourism include colonial Williamsburg in the USA and Robben Island in South Africa.

The St Helena National Trust will lead by example in developing high quality, sustainable visitor attractions on St Helena.

**Our vision is to:**

1. **Expand eco-tourism** – Provide visitors with a memorable outdoors experience, through nature tours and walking holidays.
2. **Improve tourism sites** – Bring existing heritage tourism sites alive with interpretation and events to benefit islanders and visitors.
3. **Develop ‘voluntourism’** – Provide volunteers with rewarding activities and the support they need to ensure a satisfying experience.
4. **Create new attractions** – Develop new visitor destinations based on St Helena’s built and natural heritage.



Jeremy Cairns Wicks



The Heart Shaped Waterfall is one of St Helena’s most picturesque and iconic natural attractions, cascading one hundred metres down a perfectly heart-shaped cliff.

Although close to the capital Jamestown, the waterfall is difficult to get to. The old path is overgrown with invasive scrub, and in places it is steep enough to deter all but the most adventurous. Even Napoleon, who resided less than half a mile away at the Briars, never reached it.

The St Helena National Trust is now opening up access to the waterfall by creating a new footpath and installing six bridges. The new trail will include viewpoints, walkways and interpretation boards. Endemic plant species – including the rare Bastard Gumwood – have already been planted so that visitors will one day be able to experience how the area might have looked to early settlers.

The Trust was generously donated the land up to the waterfall by the Honorary French Consul in 2007.



# INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Enhancing St Helena's traditional skills as a basis for growth

St Helena's distinctive identity and culture has been shaped by five centuries at the crossroads of the South Atlantic, with influences ranging from the Far East and Africa to Europe and the Americas.

The island's unique way of life, customs and architecture are among its strongest assets. To reap the benefits of tourism St Helena must value and preserve this cultural heritage.

The St Helena National Trust is committed to building local capacity in traditional crafts and skills – everything from restoring historic buildings and managing landscapes to producing local crafts. Keeping skills on the island is an increasing challenge that can only be addressed by high quality vocational training and improved employment prospects. The Trust recognises that young people hold the key to the future of St Helena, and we will work closely with schools to

enthusiase and engage them in keeping alive the island's traditions and skills. There is also an exciting opportunity for St Helena to become a regional centre of excellence, exporting skills to other Overseas Territories.

## Our vision is to:

1. **Deliver high quality training** – Including new apprenticeship schemes for the built and natural environment.
2. **Create economic opportunities** – Establish a new heritage construction company to restore heritage tourism sites.
3. **Support local organisations** – Our member organisations play a vital role in maintaining local diversity and quality of life.
4. **Inspire young people** – Give young people hands-on experience of their unique built, natural and cultural heritage.

## NATIONAL TRUST IN ACTION HERITAGE CONSTRUCTION TRAINING

Retaining traditional skills and crafts will be vital to the future of St Helena. This is especially true in heritage construction, where historic buildings need to be restored and maintained using traditional techniques.

In late 2009 the St Helena National Trust, in partnership with the local Development Agency and training provider AVES, organised the first ever Heritage Construction Skills training course. Over 50 people received training from internationally renowned craftsmen Henry Rumbold MBE and Jeff Orton, in skills such as stone masonry, cobbling and plasterwork. The course gave trainees an immediate opportunity to get hands-on experience starting the restoration of two historic sites in Jamestown, the Castle Courtyard and Essex House.

One of the young trainees was so impressive that the Trust helped him to secure a place on the prestigious Prince of Wales Building Crafts Apprenticeship in the UK. On his return he will help to train others in traditional skills, meaning that fewer training experts will need to be brought in from overseas.

The St Helena National Trust is keen to establish a not-for-profit heritage construction company, in order to train up a new generation of craftsmen and provide specialist restoration and maintenance services.



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Nursery training



Ben Jeffs



# RECONNECTING ST HELENA TO THE WORLD

Increasing awareness of St Helena's built and natural assets and working in partnership to conserve them

# THE ST HELENA NATIONAL TRUST AND ITS PARTNERS



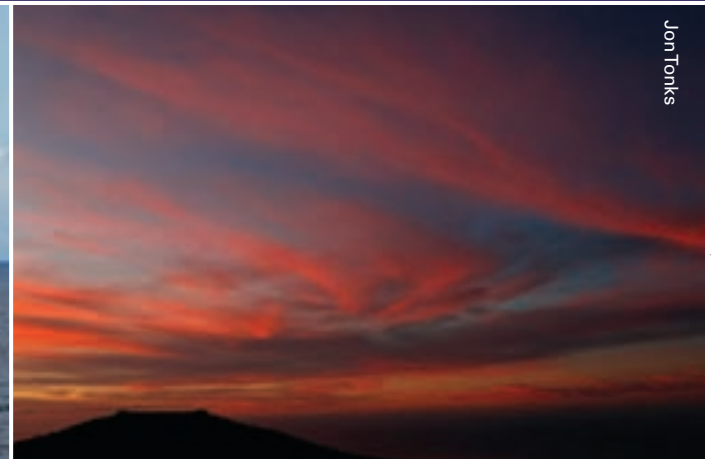
Andrew Darlow



Mark Fraser-Carpenter (SHNT)



ARND



Jon Tonks

St Helena is today synonymous with the concept of remoteness and isolation, most famously as the place of exile for Napoleon. Yet for several hundred years it was a thriving maritime hub, on an ocean-going motorway shaping world history.

For St Helena to thrive again it must reconnect itself to the outside world, whilst retaining those special attributes that make it unique. Its historical significance to Europe, the Far East and the Americas provide opportunities to build partnerships with organisations and funders across the globe. Often it is simply a matter of letting people know we're here.

St Helena needs to attract overseas expertise to bolster home-grown conservation effort. This will require providing improved facilities for scientists, researchers and volunteers, who can contribute immeasurably to its preservation.

The St Helena National Trust has a successful track record of working closely with international organisations such as the RSPB and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. We will work to strengthen these relationships and to develop new ones to ensure a sustainable future for the island.

## Our vision is to:

1. **Establish new links** – With international funders and supporters.
2. **Create lasting partnerships** – Build upon existing collaborations to conserve the island's built and natural heritage.
3. **Promote St Helena** – The world heritage of the island needs to be widely communicated if it is to be valued and preserved.
4. **Grow our membership** – The Trust needs greater support both at home and overseas if it is to achieve its conservation objectives.

Established in 2002, the St Helena National Trust is responsible for the protection, enhancement and promotion of St Helena's unique built, natural and cultural heritage. With eight members of staff and 10 volunteers the Trust is working to conserve threatened endemic species and to restore the native habitats of St Helena. We also raise awareness and provide training and education in practical conservation.

The St Helena National Trust works closely with a number of organisations, including:

- RSPB
- Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
- Department for International Development (DFID)
- St Helena Government
- St Helena Development Agency
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

- UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum
- Buglife

The Trust also benefits from the financial support of the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP), the Flagship Species Fund and the Darwin Initiative.

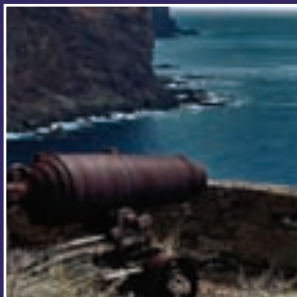
## HOW YOU CAN HELP

The St Helena National Trust relies upon the help of its funders and supporters. If you want to support the work of the Trust you can:

- Become a member.
- Become a volunteer – both in mainland UK and on St Helena.
- Sponsor a Gumwood tree – an ideal gift for the person that has everything.

For more information on the above and about Legacies and Donations please contact us (details on back cover).





The remote island of Saint Helena is a treasure trove of world heritage, including hundreds of historic monuments and over 400 species which occur nowhere else on the planet.

Yet today this extraordinary heritage is threatened by neglect and lack of funding.

The St Helena National Trust needs your support to give this island and its heritage a future.

For more information about how to support the St Helena National Trust, please contact us at:

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a million voices for nature