

# The history at a glance of Sea Lion Island

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Sea Lion Island is the most Southerly occupied Island in the Falklands archipelago and is the largest of the 'Sea Lion Islands' group. They first appear named on a map of 'Hawkins Maidenland' in 1689 and have been known as the Sea Lion Islands since.

Not a great deal is known about Sea Lion Island's history between its discovery and the mid-nineteenth century but it is safe to assume that the bountiful stocks of seals and sea lions were exploited by the many sealers visiting the Falklands in the 1800s.

The last sheep on Sea Lion Island, named Bob, was removed in 2008.



As with many of the Falkland Islands, Sea Lion Island does have a rich maritime history often linked either to the perilous waters around Cape Horn or to the shallow reefs off the island itself. This maritime connection first appears in 1857 when, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, the American 535 ton ship *Antoinette* (bound for Cork with guano) was recorded as being a total loss on the Island.

In 1859 with settlement in the Falklands generally becoming more stable, the Sea Lion Islands were included in a special grant issued to the Falkland Islands Company (FIC). With no major farming taking place here, the next chapter in the islands' history is predominantly maritime with losses of more ships to the Island.

In October 1868 the British barque *Malvern* (of Liverpool) was recorded as being on fire off Sea Lion Island. She had caught fire off Diego Ramirez but the Master

The HMS Sheffield Memorial.



(Edward Cavanagh) bore up for the Falkland Islands. Suffering from a little less luck than their predecessors wrecking here, in 1892 the 1271 ton vessel *Viscount* (heading from the West coast of America to Liverpool) fell victim to the seas around the Island after poor weather prevented them from taking bearings and was a total wreck,

The wreck of the *Viscount* was used to build the original farmhouse on Sea Lion Island.

As the twentieth century dawned, it seems it was time for the Sea Lion Islands to shed their luckless maritime exploits and join the rest of the archipelago in being exploited for their land resources as well as their oceanic.

In 1905, Johan Bernard Luchtenborg asked the FIC whether he could put some stock on Sea Lion Island in exchange for the princely sum of £4 per year. He was granted the lease and became the first person to farm the Sea Lion Island (both cattle and sheep).

In 1941 William Hutchinson purchased the island from FIC for £2,050. (worth approximately £93,000 in 2018).



The original farmhouse at Sea Lion Island built from the wreck, *Viscount*.

In 1953 Beaver floatplanes were introduced to Falklands, landing on a saltwater pond on Sea Lion Island (now the aptly named Beaver Pond) to allow easy access to and from the island by air for the first time.

The Falklands Conflict of 1982 didn't pass the islands by without incident. As commemorated by the cross at Rockhopper Point, on 4<sup>th</sup> May *HMS Sheffield* was hit by an Argentine Exocet missile some 40 miles off the Southern coast of Sea Lion Island, with 20 people killed on board.

In 1985 the Lodge was transported onto Sea Lion Island (under slung on a British Chinook helicopter) and built by October 1986. In 1991, Sea Lion Island was sold to the Falkland Islands Development Corporation to secure its future.



HRH Prince Charles visited Sea Lion Island in 1999. He was photographed on the island on the front page of the FI Newsletter of April that year. Incidentally, his son, Prince William, would visit the island during his rotation as a search and rescue pilot in 2012, meaning that Sea Lion Island has hosted not one but two heirs to the British throne.

In 2008 the last sheep and cattle were removed from the heavily overgrazed island and the Island was set aside to be the Nature Reserve that it remains today for the enjoyment of guests to the Lodge.