



Gough Gazette

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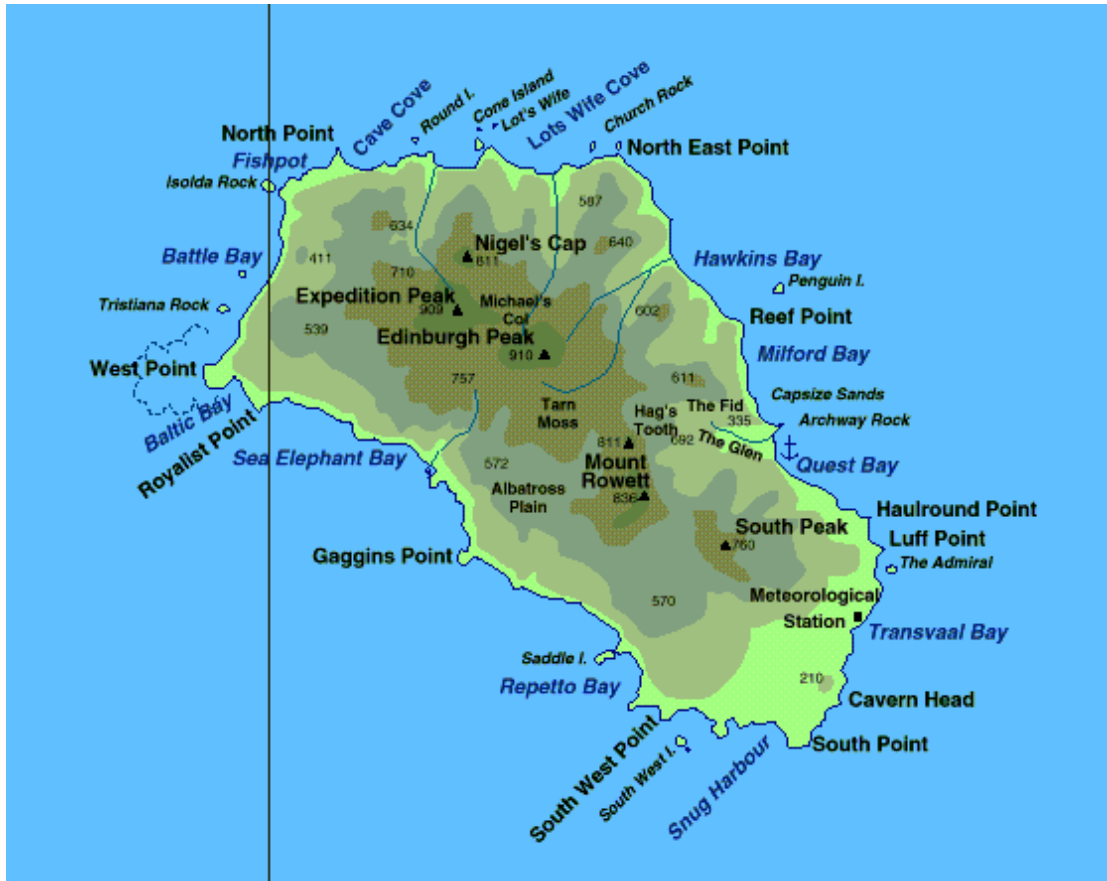
When one mentions Gough Island to people you get quite a variety of responses. Some (very few) people actually know where it is, while others' responses range from ideas of tropical paradise, to an ice-bound speck next to Antarctica.

Gough Island (40° 21' S, 09° 53' W) is a cold temperate island of volcanic origin in the central South Atlantic Ocean, approximately midway between the southern tip of Africa, and South America. The Tristan de Cunha Islands are located approximately 400 km Northwest of Gough and are our nearest neighbours.

The island, although part of the United Kingdom's Dependency of Tristan de Cunha, supports a meteorological station operated year round by the Republic of South Africa under lease.

The island is otherwise uninhabited, and the only people allowed on the island are the six members of the overwintering team, except for visitors who have written permission from the Administrator of Tristan.

The island is also a Wildlife Reserve, and was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in 1994.



The base is located on the South Eastern Coast of the island above Transvaal Bay. Perched atop 40-meter (+- 130ft) cliffs, the base is protected from the direct force of the ocean, but obviously still exposed to the extreme weather of the Southern Ocean. This site was chosen for construction of the

base, exactly for this reason. As a weather station it cannot be in a protected spot, because the observations would not reflect the true state of the weather patterns in the region.



This Picture shows a view from the helipad to the base, with the research vessel, MV SA Agulhas in the background.



The rugged coastline to the south of the base. Note that it is virtually impossible to get to the island from sea level. This is achieved by means of a helicopter, which is sent down with the re-supply vessel.

Next month we will have more information on the base itself, and what daily life on the island is like.

A word from some of the team members:

It's that time of the month where reports and news articles must be sent. It doesn't seem long ago when I last did this. There is nothing much to say as I haven't done a lot of walking except going to check on the yellow nose albatrosses. There were a few that we had to ring and we managed without the birds breaking their eggs. Walking here is a bit difficult because the paths are not clearly visible. There are burrows everywhere and a person has to be very careful where they step. Some of the skuas have chicks and to pass their nests is a quite an ordeal, as they seem to revel in low level bombing runs (aimed at your head!). You constantly need to check your back as they come from behind, and as the old fighter pilots say, out of the sun.

Regards till next month,
Shady

Hi brothers and sisters

Let me tell you something: This is an exiting assignment I have taken, it is challenging, educational, etc. On the island we use water from rainfall that collects in the rivers, for drinking, cooking, washing, cleaning, etc. It is very fresh water. One afternoon we realised that no water was reaching the tanks from the river, and we had to go on a small expedition to find the problem. Remember that we are on Gough Island, so it wasn't very easy to go and check the problem. Climbing the hill or mountain, up and down.

I won't forget the time I went for a walk and I ended up at Seal Beach. Seals are scary, barking like dogs! We also see many types of birds, yellow nose albatrosses, petrels, etc. Another bird that is found regularly around the base is the scavenging Skua. We recently saw nature cruelly at work, when the eldest Skua chick (two days older than the other chick), killed, and ultimately, ate its younger sibling.

Till next month

Titus



This picture is dedicated to my colleagues, family and friends who think Gough is a very cold place; but it is not too bad. We have chance to wear our short pants and stay outside.

This is another time to send news, simply meaning months are passing and soon we will be home.

I don't really know why our team is different. People and ex-Goughians used to say, people get fat whilst on the mv. SA Agulhas (considering the fact that one doesn't do much, but eat and sleep). Secondly, Islanders gain weight a lot, but is so amazing, no changes to our team, we are still the same.

As I still remember the words of Director of Antarctica and Islands, during our last gathering in Cape Town said: "Go well! You are so fortunate, to go down there. It is a privilege, a great opportunity in one's lifetime. Please bear in mind that we are here for any problem that you might come across, no matter how big or small it is, just give a ring." This is really great.

It's not boring! We do different things to keep ourselves busy. For example everyone gets his or her cooking turn,

each Monday we do skivvy (cleaning) and then it is self-service. But I've realised that the self-service thing is so difficult because we are used to sit around the table each dinnertime.

Usually someone will rather get stuck in and make dinner, and you will hear: "Dinner is ready, those who are sleeping wake up!" Any meal without any meat brings complaints, there should be meat; like it or not.

One day at around 15:00 myself, Chris and Titus, the one who can't do without his nice clothes on the island - you will hear team mates asking him is he going somewhere or visiting penguins and seals. Because the weather was so good, we decided to go out to count albatrosses and their eggs. We ended up making a detour to seal beach where one has to rely on a rope to pull oneself up and down the very steep path. It seemed like a long journey but I made it.

But, I'm here to work. Let's not forget about my job as a meteorologist - even if people say we don't work hard because every time we open the door we look right up in the sky. Since we arrived here I had the opportunity to observe the Lenticularis clouds, changing its shape continuously. One night at about 23:00 after releasing the balloon I had a chance to stay outside for ten minutes watching the moon rise above the horizon. The following morning at 05h45 just after doing the sea temperature reading, I could watch a beautiful sunrise on the same horizon!

I love you all at home. Hope you enjoy your Christmas and New Year during my absence. Enjoy yourselves and I will this side.

God be with you.

Tshidi

What can I say? We've been here for two & a half months and it actually feels like two weeks. Time is flying so fast we don't even notice. If you have ever wanted to live in a place without fear, then Gough is the place to be. There are lots of night birds, which don't bother us like skuas do. Well I haven't done a lot of walking and climbing up the mountains, but that is one of the things I have to do. It's so difficult to write something about this place and yet there is so much to say. I've been keeping myself fit by visiting the gymnasium and I believe when time comes I will be ready for walking and climbing the mountains. Watch this space for more news in the next issue.

Till next time.
Lehlohonolo

Monthly Weather Statistics ***October 2001***

Average Temperature : 9.7 °C
Maximum Temperature : 19.6 °C
Minimum Temperature : 8.5 °C

Average Pressure : 1025.5 hPa
Highest Pressure : 1036.0 hPa
Lowest Pressure : 1011.7 hPa

Total rainfall : 123.3 mm
Highest rain in 24 hours : 30.2 mm
Days with more than 1mm : 11 days

Total sunshine : 123.5 hrs
Maximum wind gust : 24.5 m/s or
88.2 km/h

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I would like to thank all these companies and individuals, who through their donations, have contributed greatly to our comfort and enjoyment during our stay. We ask wherever possible our supporters support them as well.

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