



SOUTH GEORGIA POSTAL HISTORY 1902 - 1941

INTRODUCTION

South Georgia (SG) Postal History began in 1902 when Carl A Larsen explored the island. He returned in 1904 to build the first whale oil refining plant at Grytviken fed by whales harpooned by company whale catchers. Technology and labour were Norwegian but funding



Argentinean. The venture prospered, rivalry and variations evolved using off shore and pelagic factory ships to refine blubber into oil. Administration as a Dependency of the Falkland Islands (FI) was British, mostly Falklands' Colonial officers. SG's only post office (PO) opened Grytviken December 1909 adopting FI postage rates, practises and stamps (until 1944).

PURPOSE & SCOPE

The exhibit focuses on SG postal history starting with early mail predating Grytviken PO followed by mail cancelled by loaned FI datestamp pending arrival of true 'South Georgia' unit (SG1). It evolves with examples from whalers and other senders using PO available services, internal within the FI colony, Empire or where Universal Postal Union (UPU) rates applied, registered, airmail etc, plus labels/markings applied locally or in transit; to countries worldwide, plus visiting Antarctic expeditions' mail. It ends at the end of 1941 - South Georgia on the back foot, Norway under occupation, many ships lost, and all whaling stations, excepting Pesca, shut. It is very comprehensive, all major rarities present.

STRUCTURE & CONTENT

The exhibit is structured chronologically in four chapters with their content listed in the PLAN below. More significant covers are described in the RARITY & HIGHLIGHTS section.

RARITY & HIGHLIGHTS

Time, isolation, small work force, infrequent mails, wars have reduced the number of covers seen today. Rarity statements refer to personal, auction and specialists' records compiled over many years as a 5,000+ FI and SG cover index. The exhibit's more important items are listed below and mostly mounted within a red box. **E** identifies covers favourably expertised.

1 - Pioneering Years (Frames 1 & 2; Sheets 1-24)

1902 Swedish Antarctic Expedition Postcard, 1904 Argentine Postcard from Capt Larsen en route to SG, 1910 Postcard with large 'SG' handstamp, from second mail from SG; Cover with small 'SG' handstamp; 1910 Postcard with Earliest datestamp SG1; 1910 Earliest possible Registered Cover; 1911 KEVII 2½d bisect tied to piece, unique; 1911 Postcard GSPE to Germany, taxed, four known; 1912 'Paid At' covers - EBB initialled at 1d Empire & JIW at 1d printed matter, both unique rates; 1911 Taxed postcard stamped 'Insuff./ Postage / 1d.'; 1912 Private Mail between whaling stations, Husvik to Leith Harbour.

2 - Time for Development (Frames 2 - 4; Sheets 25-50)

1915 Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition postcard sent by L Hussey, Inward cover, 1922 Postcard telling of Shackleton's death; 1917 Cover Censored at SG, unique; 1928 Provisional Surcharge Cover to Norway; correctly rated 1923 Bisects on cover to USA - 2½d unique & 6d, another known; 1920, 1923, 1924 & 1929 Registered covers, and parcel piece, with provisional registration labels; 1918 & 1920 Covers sent from Tristan da Cunha in transit at SG.

3 - Era of Stability (Frames 4 - 5; Sheets 51-72)

1930 2d Bisect postcard; 1930 Cover sent unfranked receiving Norway postage dues; 1931 FF 'Anglo-Norse' Expedition cover; 1932 Cover with short year slug (2 for 1932 cancel) 1929 Whaling cover ex Godthul Harbour, unknown until recently; 1930 Covers with provisional registration markings; 1930 Airmail registered cover, philatelic but rare; 1933 2 covers, Argentina taxed (Centenary stamps rejected by Argentina).

4 - Disruption (Frame 5; Sheets 73-80)

1939 & 1940 Censor postcards; 1941 'Consignee's Letter', unique; 1940 Censor 'Paquebot' cover to Norway, unique; 1940 Cover to Norway with 'Postal Services Suspended etc' marking.

PERSONAL STUDY, RESEARCH & REFERENCES

A visitor to SG, & FI on many occasions, he has researched at 'Jane Cameron' National, Stanley and local PO Archives plus South Georgia and England. Articles and findings have been published in magazines of international, national and club level, in English and French. Author of "South Georgia Provisional Paid at/At Handstamp, 1911-12" pub. 2013; and editorial team member for the renowned Specialised Stamp Catalogue of FI & Dependencies, to which reference is made in the exhibit.

PESCA by Ian B Hart, published 2001.
Whaling in FI Dependencies, 1904~31, by Ian Hart (2006)
The Island of South Georgia by Robert Headland (1984)

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