

Mission Atlas Project

South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands

Country Name: South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

Country Founded in: June 1982

Population:

0, the small military garrison on South Georgia withdrew in March 2001, to be replaced by a permanent group of scientists of the British Antarctic Survey, which also has a biological station on Bird Island; the South Sandwich Islands are uninhabited

Government Type:

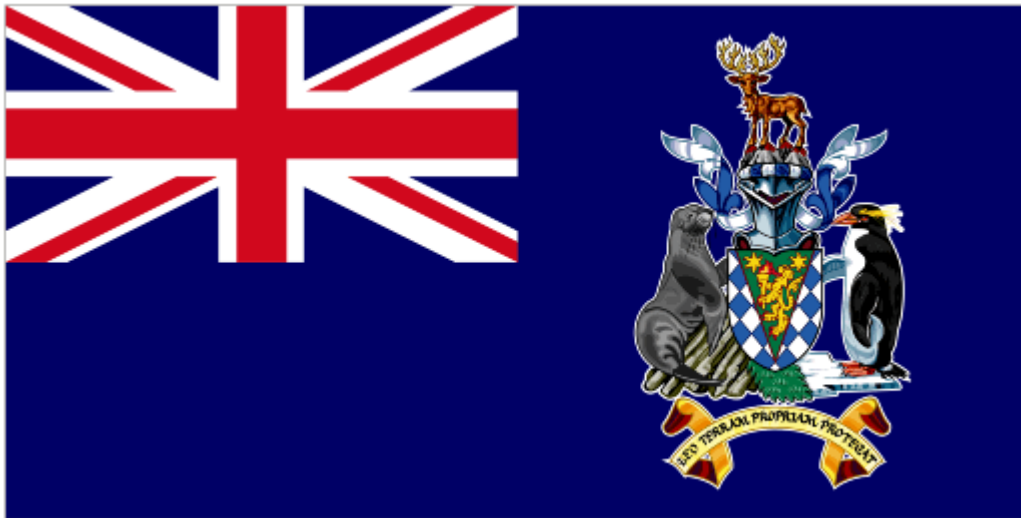
It is a territory of the United Kingdom which is a parliamentary democratic dependency. Therefore, there are no administrative divisions. The monarchy is hereditary; governor appointed by the monarch.

The area is administered from the Falkland Islands by the United Kingdom civil commission Howard Pearce.

Geography/location in the world:

Southern South America, islands in the South Atlantic Ocean, east of the tip of South America (this includes Shag Rocks, Black Rock, Clerke Rocks, South Georgia Island, Bird Island, and the South Sandwich Islands, which consist of some nine islands)

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot

Because there are no native inhabitants, no religious statistics can be listed. The British Scientists have not been surveyed for their religion. However, there is a church building located on South Georgia.

Demographics –

During the year at King Edward Point, around 18 people work, but during the winter the average is 8. On Bird Island, the research center holds 8 people, but is not regularly occupied. During the winter, it only averages 3 to 4 people. Overall, the maximum participants on the islands are 26.

Language –

Because of the British Scientists on the land, English is their primary language.

Society/Culture –

Lifestyle and culture are British in nature.

Government –

Overseas territory of the UK, also claimed by Argentina; administered from the Falkland Islands by a commissioner, who is concurrently governor of the Falkland Islands, representing Queen ELIZABETH II; Grytviken, formerly a whaling station on South Georgia, is a scientific base

The constitution is adopted from the Falkland Islands and was adopted in October 1985. They became a separate territory to be administered from the Falkland Islands.

English Common Law is their legal system. The senior magistrate from the Falkland Islands presides over the Magistrates Court.

List here the type of government including all levels from national to local. List any important areas that affect mission or church work also.

Economy –

Some fishing takes place in adjacent waters. There is a potential source of income from harvesting finfish and krill. The islands receive income from postage stamps produced in the UK, sale of fishing licenses, and harbor and landing fees from tourist vessels. Tourism from specialized cruise ships is increasing rapidly.

Reindeer, introduced early in the 20th century, live on South Georgia.

Literacy –

N/A

Land/Geography –

Southern South America, islands in the South Atlantic Ocean, east of the tip of South America which includes Shag Rocks, Black Rock, Clerke Rocks, South Georgia Island, Bird Island, and the South Sandwich Islands, which consist of some nine islands

The total: 3,903 sq km, slightly smaller than Rhode Island.

100% of the land is unusable (largely covered by permanent ice and snow with some sparse vegetation consisting of grass, moss, and lichen.

The South Sandwich Islands have prevailing weather conditions that generally make them difficult to approach by ship

Most of the islands, rising steeply from the sea, are rugged and mountainous; South Georgia is largely barren and has steep, glacier-covered mountains; the South Sandwich Islands are of volcanic origin with some active volcanoes. On the eastern side of the Sandwich, is a trench.

The highest point is Mount Paget (South Georgia) 2,934 m.

The climate is variable, with mostly westerly winds throughout the year interspersed with periods of calm; nearly all precipitation falls as snow.

History –

The South Sandwich was given this name to differentiate them from the Sandwich Islands which are now the Hawaiian Islands. A British merchant, Antoine de la Roche, first noticed the island in 1675 while sailing from Lima, Peru to England. As he traveled, they were blown south. In 1756, a Spanish treasure ship, the *Leon*, saw the island as they were blown off course. The first person to step foot on the island was James Cook in 1775. He named the southern tip Cape Disappointment because he realized that it was not Antarctica. However, the name Isle of Georgia was given to the entire island to honor the king. In 1882, a group of German scientists lived on Royal Bay for a year. During this time, they made records of the islands biology, geology, meteorology, and topography.

The islands lie approximately 1,000 km east of the Falkland Islands and have been under British administration since 1908 via the Letters Patent, except for a brief period in 1982 when Argentina occupied them. Grytviken, on South Georgia, was a 19th and early 20th century whaling station.

Famed explorer Ernest Shackleton stopped there in 1914 en route to his ill-fated attempt to cross Antarctica on foot. He returned some 20 months later with a few companions in a small boat, trekked across the island to a whaling station, and arranged a successful rescue for the rest of his crew, stranded off the Antarctic Peninsula. He and the two others were the first people to traverse across the entire island. He died in 1922 on a subsequent expedition and is buried in Grytviken. Between 1976 and 1982, the

Argentineans had a research station on Thule Island. From 1909 to 1965, seven whaling stations existed on South Georgia Island. Briefly in 1943 to 1944, a small Norwegian garrison was stationed in order to protect the area from Axis invasion. During the Falklands War of 1982, a group of Argentines pretending to be scrap metal merchants took over an abandoned whaling station at Leith Harbor. A month later, the British retook the islands. During the battle, two British helicopters crashed and are still stuck in the snow. No deaths were recorded on either side.

Argentina agreed in 1995 to no longer seek settlement by force. Today, the station houses scientists from the British Antarctic Survey. The islands have large bird and seal populations, and, recognizing the importance of preserving the marine stocks in adjacent waters, the UK, in 1993, extended the exclusive fishing zone from 12 nm to 200 nm around each island. Overall, 175,250 whales were caught and processed in the area.

Christian History –

Because only visitors and scientists work on the island, there is no Christian history. However, there is a chapel located on South Georgia Island.

Religions-

N/A

People Groups –

There are no native inhabitants to the islands.

Pictures –





Missiological Implications –

1. Due to the limited population on the islands, little in terms of missionary work is either possible or needed.
2. Evangelical Christians could cooperate with the British officials to minister to the military and scientific personnel on the islands.

Links –

The following is the official website for the South Georgia Islands:

<http://www.sgisland.org/pages/sghome.htm>

Citations:

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761578569/Falkland_Islands.html

www.falklands.gov.fk

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Georgia_and_the_South_Sandwich_Islands

<http://www.antarcticconnection.com/antarctic/shackleton/so-georgia.shtml>

http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/Ernest%20Shackleton_Trans-Antarctic_expedition4.htm

<http://www.pbs.org/edens/southgeorgia/unique.html>

<http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/South-Georgia-and-the-South-Sandwich-Islands/History>