



# TRUSTED

2nd Edition

March 2016



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### In Brief

- \* We were thrilled to welcome Rebecca Cairns-Wicks onto the staff in the second half of 2015 as the Trust's Head of Operations. Rebecca has been President of the Council, Vice President and even acting Director over the Trust's 13 years. She Joins Phyllis and Jeremy on the Trust's Senior Management Team
- \* Michel Martineau has stepped into Rebecca's place as Vice President of the Trust Council and has already had a great impact despite many other demands on his time
- \* Michael Davies finished his time as Post Box Walks Supervisor—thanks Mike! He has been replaced by Darren McCoy who joins the team from the Roads section of SHG
- \* Richard John aka 'Bumper') and Robert Benjamin (aka 'New Pence') have joined the Built Heritage team and are settling in well.
- \* Jeremy, Isha, Arlo, and Peter have moved into Veranda Quarters; a lovely Chief Secretary House in Ladder Hill. We are hoping this will be our last move for a while!
- \* **We have a new video! See it on our new-look website**

## Director's Note

Since returning to the island from a successful and busy month or two in the UK, life for me has been dominated by the review and re-write of the Trust's five year strategy. I confess I have been more than a little intimidated by the significance of this piece of work. The document it supersedes is a lovely publication produced some years back with the help of the RSPB. A succinct and visually attractive brochure titled '*St Helena National Trust Vision*'.

"Supersedes" is perhaps not the right word since the vision document yet remains useful and relevant. The Strategic Plan 2015—2020 builds on this vision and lays out a more detailed roadmap for seeing it achieved. Next is the implementation plan!

In some ways wrestling with the strategy for the Trust for the coming five years mirrors the process that the whole of St Helena is locked into as we anticipate the first plane load of visitors next year. How are we to wisely plan in the face of so much uncertainty? How do we strike the balance between protection and progress? What and where is the good in any decision we take? We are forced to ask questions that strike to the very heart of what is best for St Helena and her people. These are difficult big questions.

I am encouraged time and again as I wrestle with these questions to find that I am surrounded by like-minded hard-working individuals.

As we step into 2016—the year of the airport—the Trust has a strong team of dedicated and skilful staff, a committed and active group of Council members and a wonderful array of members and organisations backing us up. My thanks goes out to each and every one of you and I look forward to another great year on St Helena.





## Training in the UK

I arrived in the UK Wednesday on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 and was initially introduced to staff that worked at Kew Gardens. For the first two days, I was shown around Kew and the different nurseries. I went with Marcella to get my Kew pass that would allow me to go to any department in Kew.

I first started work at Wakehurst place and was accompanied by Vanessa from St Helena and Lorene. There I worked with Chris, who is one of the nursery workers. I took cuttings with Chris from the garden which we later brought back to the potting out shed. We potted on using 50% medium and 50% perlite.

I sat in lectures talking about seeds and how to check the moisture levels and how to dry the seeds out before they are stored for a long period of time. Overall my time at Wakehurst was very enjoyable, I learned a lot and made a lot of new friends.

After returning to Kew I worked with Rebecca in the tropical nurseries with our island endemics e.g. gumwood, ebony, old fathers etc.

Some of the training involved cleaning some of the plants e.g. ridding them of mealy bugs using 70% alcohol wipes. We also sprayed it on and used plant brushes to brush the mealy before rinsing the plants with water. We cleaned branches thoroughly as this is very important.

In the temperate nursery I worked with Louise potting out seedlings and potting cuttings using different potting media's. I was surprised to see the different sized particles that make up the different media.

I was lucky to see an orchid that was in flower whilst at Kew as it had not flowered in the last thirty years. It was a challenging visit because a lot of the plants that I worked with I have not heard of.

Whilst I worked in the Princess of Wales conservatory with Nick the conservatory manager, I found out he had visited St Helena. Working in this conservatory was all about presentation by keeping it clear of debris. All of the plants had to be at the right levels and the dead leaves had to be collected off the ground.

The last part of my training was a visit to Cornwall to work at the Eden Project site which was fun. I worked in the rain forest biome, which was extremely dehydrating. Also I spent a day in the nursery, where I worked with our islands endemics such as the ebony. Over all I would have to say that my training was mind blowing, I learned a lot and I feel that the experience will live in my memory for a long time.

## Strategy

A strategy should be a working document. It should be regularly referred to by all who are involved with the organization and regularly adjusted. The St Helena National Trust Strategy 2015-2020 has been developed in keeping with the belief that the Trust is now ready for steady sustainable growth.

The Trust has a mandate from the St Helena Government (SHG) to preserve; maintain; manage; protect and augment; tender advice; promote access to and enjoyment of land; buildings; animal life; plant life; marine life; furniture; pictures; and documents and chattels of any description having national or historic or artistic interest.

The key to our success now and in the future is focus. We must identify those areas most in need of our attention, most central to our responsibilities, and where the desired outcomes are most achievable. The Trust's areas of responsibility have been distilled into three broad Work Areas in the Mission statement for the organisation; Built Heritage; Cultural Heritage; and Natural Heritage.

As mentioned above, the Trust's Strategic Plan is a working document and will be revisited and adjusted regularly. Updated versions will be posted on the Trust website for all to view and understand the direction we are heading as an organisation.



## Gibraltar & The Royal Geographical Society

### UKOTCF Sustaining Partnerships Conference

In July Jeremy Harris attended a 6 day conference in Gibraltar organized by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). It was a chance to meet many other people working around the world in other UK Overseas Territories, share experiences and learn lessons.

The conference schedule was stuffed to bursting with valuable and interesting sessions beginning at 7am each day and often not wrapping up until 6:30 or 7 in the evening. Thanks to support from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) I was able to make the lengthy and time consuming trip to attend the conference along with other representatives from far flung territories.

I was asked by the conference organisers to present the work that the St Helena National Trust has been doing on Red Listing our endemic invertebrates. This work came out of a Darwin funded project supported by BugLife and SHG. My talk and presentation were delivered on the first day and received with interest by those at the conference.

Representatives from the BBC radio program '*Costing the Earth*' were in attendance for the first few days of the conference. Despite their chosen theme being 'Marine', they took an interest in the St Helena invertebrate story and connected me with a writer from the BBC Earth Blog. This resulted in a good piece on St Helena that can be read on-line here:

Further information on the conference can be found here:

<http://www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm>



## Trusted Staff Profile

### Martina Peters

Forest School Officer Martina Peters is one of our long standing employees having been with the trust for over five years. She is also one of the youngest members of the team. Martina first joined the Trust as a work experience student from Prince Andrew School and joined our Wirebird Conservation team during school holidays.

After completing advanced level studies, Martina joined our Darwin funded project aimed at developing island capacity in environmental conservation. During this time she completed a work based NVQ in conservation management and also provided of-  
fice based support for the Wirebird Predator Control Programme.



Martina's energy and enthusiasm for practical work and learning hasn't stopped. After a short period as assistant project manager she took on the role of the Forest Schools Officer under our current Darwin funded Community Forests Project. Alongside this she has completed a distance learning Degree in environmental management and sustainability. We're very proud of Martina's achievement and look forward to seeing where her energies and hard work take her next.



## Collaborations

On the 4<sup>th</sup> December the Community Forest and Millennium Forests teams joined the St Helena Government's Environmental Management Division (EMD) at their nursery on the Peaks to learn about some of the techniques they are employing in propagating endemic ferns and Peak grass.

The weather couldn't have been better as we were given a tour by the Peaks team of their recently planted tree fern sites around Mount Actaeon and Diana's Peak. This was the first time one of the team had visited the Peaks, and for another the first time in many years. The diversity of the flora and the visible achievements of the Peaks team in propagation, habitat restoration including care of critically endangered ferns and path upgrading was a pleasure to behold.

After a bite for lunch it was time for some harder work, after being given a demonstration it was down to everyone to get stuck in and divide the Peak grass seedlings which had been grown in the onsite nursery. Dividing them when they are still small provides a quick and practical way of getting larger numbers of plants from a single seed to support the restoration programme.

The day was great fun, a great way of sharing experience and ideas and building good relations and one which we hope to be repeating soon. We look forward to hosting the





## Creepy Crawlies in Danger of Extinction

In 2014 the RSPB released a report that took stock of the species across the UK's Island Territories – they brought together all known records from the last 300 years and what they found was in some ways alarming but in others highlighted a huge opportunity for those of us working in these places. The full report is available online here:

The take home message from the report was that the UK overseas territories contain 94% of the unique British species and 85% of the *Critically Endangered* species that the UK is responsible for. *Critically Endangered* is the category that the species most threatened with extinction are put into on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The IUCN Red List is the most authoritative and highly regarded global database that categorizes species by extinction risk and is used as a reference point by governments, conservation organizations, funding bodies and even banks, mining and oil companies. It's a pretty big deal.

According to the report, St Helena has the most known unique species – a staggering 502. Bermuda comes second with 321 and Tristan da Cunha comes in third with 183. This is where the math gets a little complicated. The total number of known unique species in the UK Overseas Territories is 1,547 which means that on St Helena we have almost one third of the total number (32.45% to be precise). Since 94% of all of the UK's species occur in the Overseas Territories, it can be worked out that **St Helena – this tiny little island in the South Atlantic – has more than 30% (30.5%) of all of the UK's unique species!** What an incredibly important task we have in looking after them!

As a part of the Darwin and Bug Life funded project known as the 'Bugs on the Brink' project, we were required to submit some species assessments to the IUCN Red List. The Project Manager David Pryce (a.k.a. Bug Man) set about mining his extensive existing data with the intention of compiling and submitting accounts for all 416 endemic invertebrate species on St Helena – no small task. In an attempt to hold David back from working his way into an early grave (cause of death: data poisoning), we agreed to break up the assessments into taxonomic groups and prioritize them.



As of right now, 15 accounts have been submitted to the IUCN Red List and a further 90 or so have been prepared and will be submitted and published shortly.

The results of the first lot of assessments were dramatic to say the least and so David has taken a preliminary look at all of his data and what he discovered was astounding.

For some context, consider that the discovery in 2008 that close to 30% of the world's amphibians were in IUCN Threatened Categories (*Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered*) sent the conservation world to panic stations. International groups were set up, meetings were held around the globe and millions of pounds were raised and spent.

Here on St Helena our best guess (based on a lot of good information) is that **close to 83% of our unique invertebrates would find themselves in IUCN Threatened Categories!**

### The Trust— A Snapshot, March 2016

**People:** 19 Staff, 2 long-term volunteers, 2 NVQ students

**Projects:** Millennium Forest, Bugs on The Brink, Wirebirds, Community Forests, Post Box Walks, Pest and Predator Control, Spiky Yellow Woodlouse, High Knoll Fort, Liberated African Remains, built heritage contracts, Lemon Valley

**Places:** Broadway House, Heart-Shaped Waterfall, Millennium Forest, Sandy Bay Ruin, Veranda Quarters

## Mission

The built, cultural and natural heritage of St Helena for all, forever.

## Vision

To ensure a future for St Helena that is rooted in the firm foundations of our past by providing trustworthy information, effective management and conservation of St Helena's heritage.

## Looking Forward

- \* **Jeremy and family will be in the UK in July 2016—Rebecca will be in the UK with her family in August/September (depending on what travel is available)**
- \* **The basement of the Trust's HQ have been vacated by the fire department who were using it for storage. We are converting it into a space that can be used for our shop and other things—watch this space!**
- \* **We are recruiting for a new Project Manager for the Spiky Yellow Woodlouse Project and look forward to someone new joining the team**
- \* **We are growing our admin team. Keep an eye on the local papers for upcoming opportunities**
- \* **If anyone has a spare £20,000 burning a hole in their pocket we have something exciting we could use it for. Get in touch!**



## Millennium Forest Update



### Planting the Future – The Napoleon Two Hundred to mark Two Hundred Years

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 found the staff and volunteers helping make the planting of two hundred plus gumwoods at Millennium Forest an astounding success. Being Bicentenary Week the Community Forests Project decided it would be fitting to make available two hundred endemic trees for the public to plant. The French Delegation was keen to make their contribution and a day and time were arranged. Soon the Navy was involved along with tourists and Saints. The saplings were bedded in, in just two hours. Area D is now looking more like a mini forest. A generous total of £141.00 was also donated on the day.

A special thank you to all those that participated and supported this venture and made it an astounding success. We would like to make a special mention to Bronwyn and David Street who arrived early and excavated a number of holes in readiness for the plant off. They belong to the Balcombe Estuary Reserve Group (Mt Martha) in Australia. This is a conservation group who remove invasive species and plant endemics in their homeland of Australia in a voluntary capacity. It is always good to meet likeminded people to share ideas and troubleshoot concerns. A local thank you goes to Michel Martineau, Sandra Sim, Helena Bennett, Zedella Young, Qhi Sim-Green, Joel and Merle Peters.

## Birthday Event



It is 15 years since the Millennium Forest was planted and 35 years since the first Ebony was re-discovered on the 11th November. Therefore it was thought fitting to hold a Millennium Forest Birthday Party on the nearest weekend to the latter which fell on Sunday 15th November 2015. Refreshments and a Birthday Cake were provided along with activities to say thank you to an array of people that have helped contribute to the success of the Community Forest Project and also to encourage people to visit if they have not done so already.

Activities included a Treasure Hunt, Guided Tours, Flax Weaving and Tree Planting. Eighty three plants including Gumwood were planted on the day helping to extend the forest. A Birthday Cake wish box was sent around with a slice of cake so participants could write a wish for the forest and what they would like to see in the next fifteen years. The event was well attended and it was good to see everyone enjoying themselves.

Here are a few extracts from the Birthday Cake Wish List.....

- \* A forest thriving independently
- \* I would like to have/see a Remembrance Section for departed "Saints" for visitors and family to remember
- \* I wish the forest grows and thrives with many overseas fans buying trees
- \* I wish for lots of tall trees.
- \* That all of these plants will one day be found in gardens around the island.



## Trust Membership

Annual Membership: (family—local)	£5
Annual Membership: (individual—local)	£3
Annual Membership: (family—international)	£50
Annual Membership: (individual—international)	£30
Life Member: local	£100
Life Member: international	£500

### A Forest School first for St Helena

Forest Schools can be defined as “an inspirational place which helps children, young people and adults to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning in local woodland”.

Forest School was created as part of the National Trust’s Community Forests Project funded by the Darwin Initiative and supported by the St Helena Government Education Directorate. The Forest School base is located at the former Blue Hill School and now Field Centre where there is easy access to the building and its facilities along with surrounding nature. We suspect it is the first Forest School to have been set-up on a British Overseas Territory and since it was started in September 2014 it has been a huge success.

The St Helena National Trust and the Education Directorate collaborate closely in organising a minimum of two Primary school classes to join the Forest School each mid-term for six weeks per class. The Programme is led by Martina Peters the Trust’s full time Forest Schools Officer and supported by Sheena Isaac, a teacher at St Paul’s Primary. Both Martina and Sheena are qualified to teach Forest Schools after receiving training in the UK under the Community Forest Project. Between them they lead on the planning for each class with one session a week per class.



In our first year we hosted 12 classes, a total of 161 students, from across the islands three Primary Schools. The sessions run for 2 hours, usually starting by setting the physical boundaries followed by a game and then onto the activities. It closes with time to reflect on the session and suggestions for future ones, as the planning is all learner-based, which means the participants interests are put first in terms of session planning. Activities include den building from natural materials, erecting tarpaulin shelters, fire lighting and management, flax weaving, tying knots and using them to make picture frames, rope bridges plus much more.

Children are encouraged to take risks, build resilience and become physically active. They learn how to respect St Helena's nature, others and themselves as well as improve their social and problem solving skills. Forest School gives children opportunities to express themselves out of their usual School framed in a safe outdoor environment where they can become more autonomous and use their transferrable skills in other aspects of their lives. Everyone is encouraged to come in suitable footwear and be prepared for adverse weather conditions.

The pupils who have attended the six week sessions have been enthusiastic and energetic and made notable progress in life skills. It is hoped that the eagerness shown towards Forest Schools will continue to grow to become a permanent part of the islands education system for years to come.



## A Second Bug-based Project.

The new Darwin Plus funded project 'Securing the future for St Helena's endemic invertebrates' began in August 2015. The initial phase saw the Project Manager, David Pryce (the Bug Man), working at the Natural History Museum in London for eight weeks taking high-resolution images of species from St Helena; these will be used on-island to help identify insect specimens collected during the survey phase of the project.



To create these super-sharp images a series of pictures are taken with the camera mounted on a rack; it is gradually moved closer to the specimen as each image is taken so that each one is in focus on a different part of it. These images are then combined using specialist software to create a single sharp image. Photographs of the camera in operation and a sample image are given for reference.

Now back on island, David is designing an island-wide invertebrate survey that will use standard equipment at each site. It is planned to use Malaise traps to collect most of the specimens; these are tent-like flight intercept traps that collect the bugs into preservative solution. In order to minimise risk of harm to the invertebrates present at the site the collecting bottle will only be attached for a few days each month. This survey should allow us to see if the conservation work being done for endemic plants is working for the bugs; it will also give us an understanding of how seasonality affects the invertebrates through the year-long survey.



Five standard Meteorological Office rain gauges have been purchased to monitor rainfall at key sites as this is believed to be one of the key factors affecting species abundance; these will be passed on to SHG at the end of the survey.

It is hoped that all of this will produce a baseline survey against which future changes, positive or negative, can be assessed. Capacity for this type of work to be undertaken on-island will also be built significantly.

Specimens from the survey will be used to create an invertebrate reference collection that will be housed at the Museum on completion of the project. Microscopes and museum database software will also be purchased for the Museum as well as extra copies of the important reports produced after the two expeditions from the Royal Museum for Central Africa in the mid- to late-1960s.

A second key part of the project will see very accurate GPS surveying equipment purchased for the Trust. This will be used to survey the Prosperous Bay Plain mole spider sites so that a better understanding of its ecology can be made. This equipment will also be used to record areas of natural regeneration such as the Scrubwoods at Blue Point in order that changes can be monitored accurately over time; areas of the Millennium Forest and other conservation plantings will also be accurately mapped.

It is hoped that all of this will produce a baseline survey against which future changes, positive or negative, can be assessed. Capacity for this type of work to be undertaken on-island will also be built significantly.



*Photos:*

*High-resolution specimen image capture at the Natural History Museum in London.*

*A sample stacked image of the endemic Common Samphire weevil (*Acanthinomerus armatus*).*

*A Malaise trap in use.*

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With thanks to:

St Helena National Trust Staff  
St Helena National Trust Council  
Paul Tyson Photography & Design

