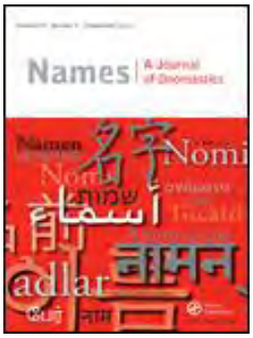

Names

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St. Helena Place-Names

VIVIENNE DICKSON

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CHARLES DARWIN LIKENED IT to a "huge black castle"; Napoleon called it "this accursed island"; romantics have dubbed it the "Ocean Roadhouse" and "Das kleine Paradies"; . . . the islanders call it [sìnt əlí·nə]. Seventeenth century cartographers frequently mislaid it and modern cartographers have been known to place their legends on top of it. But St. Helena, an island of 47 square miles lying 1,000 miles off the west coast of Africa, is, I suggest, of interest to students of place-names.

Because of the remarkable conservatism which the islanders have displayed in their retention of place-names, the island's history is written on its map. It is exceptional for a new name to replace an old. Even some sixteenth century place-names survive, and seventeenth century names are particularly tenacious. Houses usually keep the names of their first owners, so the Bateses will not now be found living at *Bates's*, or the Robinsons at *Robinson's*, for Bates died in the seventeenth century, Robinson in the early nineteenth. A newcomer to the island who is confused by this practice will be infuriated, moreover, at the persistence of names for features which no longer exist: *Black Gate*, *Cason's Gate*, *Gold Mine Gate* (which is doubly absent as there was never a gold mine), *Boyce's Gate*, *Hutt's Gate*, *Grape Wine* (or *Vine*) *Gut*,[1] *Gordon's Post* and *Grand Marshall's Walk* have vanished, but are still referred to as landmarks.

St. Helena has preserved a very full record of her past and she has inspired several historians to publish the results of their research.[2] Consequently, the origin of many place-names is known, although it is certain that a search of the archives would turn up more facts. On my visits to the island I have not been able to examine the archives but I have, however, been able to exercise a daughter's privilege and call on the help of my father (who lives on the island and is the A. H. Mawson who appears in the footnotes) to supplement the list of St. Helena names published by the U.S. Board on Geographical Names in 1957 and to record new information.

[1] In the island dialect, *w* is pronounced as *v*; hence the alternative names of this and *Headowain/Head of the Vein*.

[2] The most thorough general history and bibliography of St. Helena is Philip Gosse, *St. Helena 1502—1938* (London: Cassell, 1938). The U.S. Board on Geographical Names, Gazetteer No. 31, 31 Jan 1957 (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.) and the map of St. Helena published by D. Survey, Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom, 1966 (Series G891; Sheet ST. HELENA; Edition 3-GSGS) are incomplete but useful.

Some of the general names for natural features are now obsolete or rare in English: *gut* is used both for steep, narrow valleys and for the springs running through them[3] (a *valley*[4] is larger and broader and a *bottom*[5] is broader still); the sides of a valley are known as *hangings*[6]; there is a *vale*[7]; there are two *runs*,[8] a *watercourse*,[9] a *lay*[10] and five *knolls*.[11]

Apart from these uncommon names, there are the usual *hills*,[12] *ridges*,[13] *points*[14] and *ledges*[15] inland, but only *Diana*, the highest hill on the island, and one other hill, are called *peaks*.[16] The second highest hill, *Acteon*, is a *mount*, as are four others.[17] The ambitious name *plain* is given to the rare flat pieces of land, such as *Francis Plain* (into which the cricket field is fitted with difficulty).[18] The *pounds* are where the animals which grazed on Company land were impounded annually for counting and

[3] *OED*: "Gut" *sb.* 5. A narrow passage. a) A channel or run of water, a branch of a stream; a sound, strait. First citation 1538. b) As a local designation. First citation 1716. c) On land: A narrow passage between two declivities; hence, a narrow passage or lane of any kind. First citation 1615. See also A. R. Dunlap, "Gat and Gut," *Names*, 5: 4 (December, 1957), 248. *Guts* on St. Helena include *Bevin's, Bilberry Field, Broad Bottom* (*gut* refers here to the stream), *Broad, Dry* (three of these), *Lemon Tree, Mulberry, Netley, Paitrig, Peak, Powell, Powell's, Rural Retreat, Salt, Sheep Pound, Warren's, Water, Woodlands.*

[4] *Valleys* include *Banks's, Breakneck, Deep, Fisher's, Friar's, Lemon, Old Woman's, Pleasant, Rupert's, Sane, Sharks, Swanley, Thompson's, Young's.*

[5] Including *Broadbottom.*

[6] *OED*: "Hanging" *vbl. sb.* 7. A steep slope or declivity of a hill. Now *local.* First citation c. 1400.

[7] *Arno's Vale.*

[8] One supplies water to *Jamestown*, the other to *Sandy Bay.*

[9] A brick drain, now disused, built for irrigation.

[10] *Botley's Lay. OED*: "Lea, ley, lay" *sb*[2]. Now *dial.* Land that has remained untilled for some time; arable land under grass; land "laid down" for pasture, pasture-land, grass land. First citation 1357.

[11] *High Knoll*, which has a fortress on top, *Sheep Knoll, Spring Knoll* (a house built in the 1960's), *Terrace Knoll.* There are also *Knollcombe Church* and *Knollcombes.*

[12] The *Hills* include *Alarm, Barn, Barren, Beach, Blue, Brook, Bunker's, Dry Gut, Featherbed, Green, High, Joan, Ladder, Munden's, Peak, Powell's Valley, Rock Rose, Rose, Rupert's, Scott's, Silver, Sugarloaf, Thompson's, White, Wild Ram.*

[13] The *Ridges* include *Banks's, Bonfire, Devil's Hole, Friar's, Goat Pound, High, Hooper's, Horse, Knotty, Long Ground, Narrow, Sandy Bay, Stitch's, Stone Top, Tipley's, Woody.*

[14] Inland *Points* include *Blue, Botley's, Horse, Lazy, Middle* (there is also a coastal *Middle Point*), *West* (on a cliff top), *White, Woody.* The intriguingly named *Cuckhold's Point* is on the same ridge as *Diana's Peak* and *Mount Acteon.*

[15] Including *Barn Ledge, Gough's Ledge, Long Ledge, Toby's Ledge.*

[16] *High Peak.*

[17] *Halley's Mount, Mount Eternity, Mount Ross* and *Mount Vesey. Mount Pleasant* is a house which its present owners believe was named after the district in London. Napoleon visited Sir William Doveton there in 1816 and 1820.

[18] There are also *Cleughs Plain, Crack Plain, Deadwood Plain, Donkey Plain, Longwood Plain, Prosperous Bay Plain* and *Tobacco Plain*, but *Plain* is charitable rather than accurate.

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marking.[19] Along the coast there are *islands* (the title is a little grand for rocks no longer than 500 yards),[20] *rocks*,[21] *points*,[22] *bays*,[23] *coves*[24] and *holes*.[25]

Most of the houses are not given a generic name. However, there are three *halls*,[26] a number of *cottages*[27] and four *cots*.[28] There is one *folly*[29] and there are three *lodges*.[30] The *Castle* in *Jamestown* was built on the site of the old *Fort James* in 1707 and its name is "seemingly derived from its being enclosed within a high quadrangular wall, or rampart ... and surmounted with battlements or small embrasures."[31] The Government offices are located here and "The Castle" has become virtually a synonym for "The Government". The many *forts*, *towers*, *batteries*, *butts* and *posts* (most of them nameless) testify to the former importance of the island.[32] Some of the fortifications reflect Sir Hudson Lowe's anxiety to prevent Napoleon from repeating his Elba exploit, but most of them date from, to use an island phrase, "the before days."

The specific place-names of St. Helena can be roughly divided into four types: those given at the whim of the owner; those adopted from other countries; those linked with events or people; and those associated with unusual natural features. For the sake of convenience, I shall observe this division.

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[19] *Sheep Pound Gut, Goat Pound Ridge* and *Wild Cattle Pound.*

[20] The *Islands* include *Bird, Black Horse, Egg, George, Peaked, Rough Rock, Sandy Bay, Shore, Speery, Thompson's Valley, White Bird.*

[21] The *Rocks* include *Black*, three *Flat, Landing, Lighter, Lower Black, Robert, Rough, Salt, Upper Black. Ladies Chair, The Lion, Jar* and *Porches Gate* are also rocks.

[22] The *Points* include *Barn, Barn Long, Bay, Bennett's, Black, Buttermilk, Castle Rock, Crown, Gill, Horse Pasture, Long, Long Range, Middle, Munden's, New, Old Father, Old Joan, Powell, Rainy, Repulse, Saddle, Sandy, Scraggy, South West, Stone Top, Sugarloaf, White Hill.*

[23] The *Bays* include *Banks' Valley, Deep Valley*, two *Dry Gut, James, Lemon Valley, Manati, Potato, Powell, Prosperous, Rupert's, Sandy, Stone Top, Thompson's, Tripe, Turk's Cap.*

[24] The *Coves* include *Long* and *Long Range.*

[25] The *Holes* include *Cavalho* and *Shepherd's. Cat Hole* is a steep gut inland.

[26] *Rosemary Hall* (now a ruin), *Teutonic Hall* and *Virgin Hall.*

[27] Many of the cottages do not use the generic name and are simply called after their owners. Most of them are not marked on the maps.

[28] *Glen Cot, Saddle Cot, Trap Cot, Wood Cot.*

[29] *Fox's Folly.*

[30] *Farm Lodge, East Lodge* and *West Lodge* (the latter, a ruin, is reputed to be haunted).

[31] Thomas Henry Brooke, *A History of the Island of St. Helena*, 2nd ed. (London: Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, 1824), p. 68.

[32] Where they have specific names, they are usually those of the officer in charge of their construction. However, the *Half Moon Batteries* are so called from their shape, and the *Portuguee Battery* was built to a Portuguese design.

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Type I: Place-names given at the whim of the owner

Considering how common this type is in British and Colonial suburbia, it is surprising there are so few examples on St. Helena. Although there is not a *Dunromin*, a *Shangri-La*, or a *Bide-a-wee*, of recent vintage on St. Helena are *Bishopsholm*,[33] *Rexnor*, *Meadow*, *Rural Retreat*, *Willowdene*, *Sea View* and *Piccolo Hill*.[34] The cottage satirically named *Marble Halls* is where the ladies of easy virtue resided when there was a garrison on the island. New houses are either named by their owners (although an old name may stubbornly persist – a new house at the *Dungeons*[35] has not yet changed the old name, in spite of its owners' efforts) or the house is simply called after its first occupants, as has long been the practice on the island.

Type II: Place-names adopted from other countries

The practice of nostalgically naming places in a new country after the immigrant's homeland probably accounts for *Mount Pleasant*, *Scotland*, *Sydenham*, *Arno's Vale*, *Boxwood Hill*, *Kent Cottage* and *Grosvenor Cottage*.[36] Most of the British immigrants were from southern England, so *Peak Dale*, a northern name, is unusual. The practice of calling a grocery shop which sold tea *The Canister* was transferred to the island, although the present *Canister* was built on the site of the older building in 1958 and now sells handicrafts.

From further afield, the coast of Java, came the name for the hill *Bencoolen*. *Robbin Island*, an inland cottage, may be connected with the *Robben Island* in *Table Bay* off *Cape Town*. Possibly the name is satirical, given to it by Boer prisoners, for the South African island was, at the time of their exile, a colony for lepers and lunatics.

Type III: Place-names linked with events or people

When the Portuguese discovered the island in 1502 (on St. Helena's Day) they built a small wooden chapel in a valley. There is now no trace of this or of the stone chapel which replaced it, but the valley, in which *Jamestown* was later established, is still referred to as *Chapel Valley*. The Portuguese kept the island a secret for 86 years. Then Captain Thomas

[33] The house in which the Anglican Bishop lives. The bishopric was established in 1859.

[34] *Piccolo Hill* is the site of the Diplomatic Wireless Station and is named after some equipment used there.

[35] There are two places called the *Dungeons*. There is no record of there ever having been underground prisons on St. Helena so it is possible that they were originally "donjons," towers.

[36] *Grosvenor Cottage* was recently given this name by a daughter who worked in London.

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Cavendish rediscovered it, and the four powers squabbled intermittently over it until, in 1699, Captain John Dutton took possession of the island in the name of Richard Cromwell for the English East India Company. The engraved *Dolphin Stone* (named after Dutton's ship) is a contemporary record of his visit. Dutton built the *Castle of St. John* which later became *James Fort* in honour of the Duke of York, later James II. James had superintended the fighting of the Great Fire of London and it may have been in gratitude for his efforts that the 30 refugees who were the first permanent settlers on the island in 1667 christened the settlement, *James Town*.

The valley next to *Chapel Valley* is also named after a royal prince, but his connexion with the island is obscure. It is certain that *Rupert's Valley* refers to Prince Rupert, the nephew of Charles I and the son of the King of Bohemia, but there is some doubt that he ever called at the island (as an entry made in the *Records* some years later states)[37] since at the time he was sailing off the coast of West Africa the island's Charter was granted by the Commonwealth.

With the arrival of the seventeenth century settlers the blank spaces on the St. Helena map began to be filled in. The Great Fire Refugees were joined by discharged soldiers and other settlers, and their names were given to their lands. Some of them are Banks, Bennett, Billy Birch (who has only the precipice he fell from named after him), Cason, Chubb (the spring on his land and the rock from which he fell to his death still bear his name), Coles (a planter who achieved a kind of immortality when a slave throttled him at what became known as *Coles' Rock* – the notion that he committed suicide was presumably put abroad by his slaves), Coxe, Francis (this London surname is still common on the island), Hyam (a Jonathan Higham was a member of the party which took the island from the Dutch in 1673 – this may have been the same man), Hunt, Long, Lufkin (or Luffkin – also a London name), Pouncey (*Pounce's* is named after him), Powell (a George Gabriel Powell, born in St. Helena in the early eighteenth century was Acting Governor for a time, but he was so unsavoury a character that he had to leave the island; Brooke records that he "proceeded to America, and was conspicuous as a patriot at Carolina, and, it is said, even became a member of Congress"),[38] Seale, Sich (*Stitches Ridge* is believed to be a corruption of *Sich's*),[39] Southens and Wrangham. *Headowain* or *Head of Vein* was originally *Head* (i.e., Headland) *of Swain*, an early settler. The records

[37] E. L. Jackson in *St. Helena: The historic island from its discovery to the present date* (London: Ward Lock, 1903), p. 190 quotes from the May 1734 entry in the *Record*. The name was already in use by 1678.

[38] Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

[39] Sich and Pouncey were both involved in rebellions.

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of the period amply demonstrate that these settlers deserved to be immortalised in St. Helena place-names, for many of them were tendentious men whose disputes with the Governors, the clergy and each other make lively reading.

The next important event on the island occurred in 1673 when the Dutch, landing with the help of the traitor Cox at *Bennett's Point*, captured St. Helena. St. Helena was, in those days, too valuable to be left in enemy hands, and within a few months she was retaken by the British. One storming party under Lieutenant Keigwin (or Kedgwin) landed at *Prosperous Bay*[40] at what is now *Keigwin's Point* and was guided ashore by an escaped slave, Black Oliver.[41] The cliff face was so sheer that the soldiers could only scale it by sending one of the men, Tom, on up ahead to a rock ledge. Tom secured a rope – and the rock, 1,056′ above the sea, is still known as *Hold Fast Tom.* The second storming party, under Captain Richard Munden, landed at *Rupert's Bay.* When they appeared on a hill above Jamestown (the hill is now known as *Munden's Hill*), the Dutch surrendered. St. Helena has been under British control ever since. Before Munden left the island he placed two pieces of cannon on *Munden's Point* which overlooks *James Bay.*

Because of its position on the shipping route between Europe and India, St. Helena has been visited by many famous people.[42] But they have been birds of passage, and St. Helena has not been dazzled by their fame. Neither has it – which is unusual for a British colony – commemorated the visits or the reigns of monarchs. There are no Queen Victoria Squares or King George Avenues for later generations to deplore when the anti-British fit comes on them. There is only *Jamestown*, although possibly *George Island* is named after George I. The preference for names

[40] Brooke suggests the Bay may have been given this name from this auspicious event. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 182, lists it as one of the five places where outguards were kept in 1678.

[41] Black Oliver had escaped in a ship with the Governor when the Dutch arrived. When they returned, he was freed and given land, but was later killed accidentally when the garrison fired into a mob attacking the Castle.

[42] Amongst the early visitors were the Abyssinian Patriarch who stayed for a year in 1557 and three Japanese Ambassadors on their way to visit the Pope in 1583 (it was through them that Cavendish learned of the island's existence). Explorers and scientists who have called there include Captains Thomas Cavendish in 1588, William Dampier in 1697, Thomas Cook and Joshua Slocum, Charles Darwin, Joseph Banks, Mason and Dixon and William John Burchell, who was a schoolmaster on the island before he went to South Africa. William Makepeace Thackeray stayed there, and so did Sir Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington). It had been thought that Wellington slept in *Porteous House*, where Napoleon was later to spend his first night on shore, but Margaret Stewart Taylor in *St. Helena: Ocean Roadhouse* (London: Robert Hale, 1969), p. 59 states that "a local historian told me this is incorrect. Wellington lodged on the other side of Main Street in a house known today as Yon's Cafe."

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with local connexions accounts for the reversion of *King William's Fort* to *Banks's Platform*. The original *Banks's Platform*, named after the officer in charge of its building, had to be abandoned because the rollers periodically washed over it. It was rebuilt on higher ground, renamed *King William's Fort*, and in due course reverted to its original name.

The astronomer Edmund Halley (spelt Hawley in the Company *Records*) was one of the few famous visitors to be remembered in an island place-name. In 1676 Halley observed a transit of Mercury over the sun's disc from the observatory he built on St. Helena. *Halley's Mount* is thought to have been the site of the building. Dr. Maskelyne and Mr. Waddington were less fortunate in 1761 when they came to observe Venus passing over the sun's disc (Captain Cook was observing it in the Pacific and Mason and Dixon were in Sumatra). Clouds obscured their view, although the transit was distinctly seen in *Jamestown*. Their visit was not commemorated. Another *Observatory*, this time on *Ladder Hill*, was built in 1823 under the direction of Lieutenant Johnson, who was later appointed the astronomer of Radcliffe Observatory at Oxford. An *Observatory* at *Longwood*, whose ruins are still marked on some maps, was built in 1840 by General (as he was later) E. Sabine, another notable astronomer.

Few of the Governors of the island are remembered in place-names, perhaps because the majority deserved oblivion. Some exceptions are *Patton's Battery*, which is named after a Governor of the early nineteenth century; *Sister's Walk*, a path cut from the hillside to provide a retired promenade for Patton's daughters; *Drummond Hay Square* and *Hay Town*, named after "an unusually enlightened Governor"[43] of the 1850's; *Pilling School*; *Harford School*; the *Lady Field Home for Children* and *Field Road*, named after a Governor and his wife in the 1960's. Captain Robert Jenkins (minus his ear) was a Governor of the island between 1740 and 1742. *Lemon Cottage*, where he lived, has an engraved stone in the wall to commemorate his tenancy. *Teutonic Hall* received its present name (it was formerly *Hayses*, then *Mason's*) when it was bought by the Hamburger Secretary to the Governor, G. W. Janisch, in 1822. His son, the only island-born Governor to have a memorial erected in his memory by the island, was probably born in this house. The *Consulate Hotel* was once a private house (with 21 bedrooms) but in the 1850's rooms were let to consular agents on the island. The United States had a consular agent on St. Helena for some 70 years until the American whaling fleet left Antarctic waters, but he lived in a house of his own. *The Consulate* was a club at one time and was also used by the Cable and Wireless Company before it became a hotel.

[43] Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

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Some of the military men on the island had batteries and posts named after them and a road was named in the mid-nineteenth century after a Major Barnes who directed prisoners and liberated slaves in its building.[44] There is also a *Blarney Bridge*, believed to be a corruption of *Barnes's Bridge*, and Grant records an excavation in the side of a hill was called *Barnes' Stables* because he tethered his horse in a shed there.[45] The military influence is chiefly shown in such names as *Ladder Hill Fort*, *Parade Cottage* (formerly the residence of the Commanding Officer of the late St. Helena Regiment, the "Old Saints"),[46] *Flagstaff* (a perpendicular hill rising to 2,290′ and used as a look-out until 1692), *Barrack Square*, *The Depot* (a ruined house where provisions were stored in Napoleon's time), *Drummer's Point* ("called so on account of the drummer boys of the garrison having been trained there in order not to disturb the Town with their rub-a-dubs"),[47] *Alarm House* and *Alarm Cottage* (guns were originally placed on *Alarm Hill* but were moved to in front of *Alarm Cottage* as they could not be heard from *Sandy Bay*), *Sentry-Box* ("so called on account of a hole being excavated out of the red clay for a shelter for the sentry that used to be stationed there in the time of the captivity of Napoleon"),[48] the *Signal Station*, *Telegraph Hill* (named before the Electric Telegraph had been invented), *Two Gun Saddle* and *One Gun Saddle*.

The well-fortified island had a famous reluctant guest, Napoleon Bonaparte, but even he has only two places named in his honour: *Napoleon Street* in *Jamestown*, which was the road he took into the interior after spending his first night ashore at *Porteous' House*,[49] and his tomb in *Sane Valley* (the valley itself is named after the landholder before Napoleon's time). In the Ordinance recording Queen Victoria's gift of the tomb and *Longwood* to France in 1858, the valley was called *Napoleon's Vale*, but that seems to have been an invention of Whitehall's. Napoleon was, however, responsible for the delightful name, *Nymph's Cottage* (the more prosaic and more generally used name is *Robinson's*). Mary Ann Robinson, a farmer's daughter living in *Fisher's Valley*, was noticed by Napoleon

[44] The island played an important role in stopping the slave traffic from West Africa. On the island itself all slaves were freed between 1818 and 1832. From 1839 the cargo of captured Slavers was brought to the island where the slaves were kept until they had recovered. There is a memorial to the men of the *H.M.S. Witchwater* in the Castle Garden. Admiral Sturdee, who commanded the fleet in 1914 at the Falkland Islands Battle, was the son of a Captain of the *Witchwater* and a Miss Doveton of *Mount Pleasant*.

[45] Benjamin Grant, *A Few Notes on St. Helena* (St. Helena, 1883), p. 110.

[46] The present Post Office was the Officers Mess of the St. Helena Regiment.

[47] Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[49] See note 42. *Porteous House*, which was named after the Superintendent of Improvements in 1806, was demolished in 1937.

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and nicknamed "The Nymph."[50] "He liked teasing his unmarried courtier, Gourgaud, about the girl being in love with Gourgaud, but this was only a joke."[51] The *Grand Marshall's Walk* is named after the member of Napoleon's entourage.

There have been other involuntary residents on St. Helena, amongst them Chief Dinizulu and members of his family, 6,000 Boers captured during the Anglo-Boer War with General Cronje at their head and, in 1957, three Sheiks of the Bahrein. The house where the Sheiks lived, which had been used for guns and searchlights in the World Wars, is sometimes referred to as the *Bahrein Prisoners' House*,[52] but it, and the Boer tombs in the Baptist Cemetery are the only records in the place-names of these prisoners.

Of the 650 indentured Chinese labourers who arrived in 1810, only *China Lane* and *Ahing's* (or *Chinaman's*) *Cottage* are a reminder of their sojurn. *Maldivia* was named after the natives of the Maldive Islands who were rescued from a drifting canoe by the ship "Drake" in the Indian Ocean. In 1735 the survivors, five men, a woman and a boy, were landed at St. Helena where they laid out the gardens of a house which was to be built there seven years later and given the name of their home. The names and deeds of slaves who were imported from Madagascar, Mauritius, Java and West Africa, live in the *Records*, but in the list of place-names there are only the *Peepul Trees*,[53] under which the slaves were auctioned, and *Toby's Ledge*,[54] which was named after a slave.

New names which were acquired in the twentieth century include *Thompson's Crane* (Thompson was the diver in charge of extensions to the Wharf before the First World War), *Bagley's Ladder* (named after the foreman in charge of its construction in the 1960's) and *Harper's* (Mrs. Harper left the land in trust for the island).[55]

Men have sometimes contributed unwittingly to the stock of place-names. *Emery's Jump*, as it is now called, although the *St. Helena Gazette* records his name as Sergeant John Emily,[56] is a point on the side of *Ladder Hill* where Emily jumped deliberately to his death. The reason

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[50] Octave Aubry, *St. Helena*, trans. Arthur Livingston (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1936), p. 149 tells this story.

[51] Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[52] Information from A. H. Mawson.

[53] Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 3: "a species of the banian of India, and named in Bengal the peepel tree."

[54] Aubry, *op. cit.*, p. 129 records that Napoleon was interested in the plight of a Malay slave called Toby, but I do not know whether this was the same man.

[55] Information from A. H. Mawson.

[56] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 78 cites the report from the *St. Helena Guardian* of Sept. 20, 1845.

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for his puzzling suicide (in 1845) is still a subject for speculation on the island. Jackson records that *Rowland Cove* was originally called *Downing's Cove* "from a fatal accident to a soldier of that name. In 1734 Corydon . . . was killed there, and later, a man named Rowley, carrying a small keg on the same path hit it against the jutting rock, when it bore him down and smacked him to pieces,"[57] which seems an explicit demonstration of the power of Demon Drink. Colonel Pierie was more fortunate. An Engineer employed by the East India Company, he was so afraid of a certain large, precariously balanced rock on the side of a road above Jamestown, that he used to race past it on his horse. Pierie died in bed, but there was a rockfall there some years later – and it was given the name *Pierie's Revenge*. The *Man and Horse Cliffs* are alleged to be named after an incident when a man accidentally galloped his horse over the edge into the sea 600′ below.[58] When the present French Consul drove his car off a road and landed, safely, some 200′ below, he made an original addition to St. Helena place-names: the site of his accident is now called *The Frenchman's Leap*.[59]

Near *Lemon Valley* there is a cave known as *Hick's Hall*. Two men with small-pox were quarantined here in the eighteenth century, but whether the "Hall" was named after a gentleman called Hick, or was a disparaging reference to both gentlemen, I have been unable to ascertain. In 1897 another cave, fitted up as a home, was discovered on the *Barn*. Jackson writes of the cave, "It is supposed that the cave is the much talked of place of abode of an eccentric person called 'London Ben', who was subject to occasional fits of mania, and who would absent himself from civilisation for lengthened periods, living a wild and hermit-like life. It was known that he lived on the barn, because, when he began to feel what he termed 'that way' he always said, 'the white goat on the barn called him' and then made his disappearance. He had been missing twenty-three years when the cave was discovered."[60] *London's Ben Cave* can still be visited by the intrepid. There is no relic of St. Helena's first recluse (and first inhabitant), Fernando Lopez. Lopez, a Portuguese who had turned traitor in India and had been mutilated when he was recaptured, was voluntarily marooned on the island in 1516. He elected to remain there for the rest of his life (until 1545), but when a Man Friday, an escaped Javanese slave, appeared, Lopez did not feel there was room for the two of them, and he persuaded a passing ship to take the intruder away.

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[57] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[58] Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

[59] Information from A. H. Mawson.

[60] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

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Type IV: Place-names associated with natural features

St. Helena is not very large but it boasts a varied scenery. It has deserts, primeval forests, volcanic cones, lavish pasture lands, and forests (although the latter are chiefly a memory). The vegetation is both tropical and temperate and the annual rainfall ranges from 40″ in the hills to 10″ in *Jamestown*. So it is not surprising that there are many place-names associated with natural features. These fall, usefully if not always gracefully, into two types: a) those that arise from a fancied resemblance to another object and, b) those that draw attention to an unusual or distinctive feature.

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a) Place-names derived from a fancied resemblance to another object

That the Devil had a hand in the making of St. Helena may well have been believed by some of its involuntary residents, but it was not they who named *Purgatory*, *Gates of Chaos*, *Devil's Hole*, *Devil's Cap*, *Devil's Backbone* and *Devil's Garden*. The opposition is represented on the other side of the island by *Mount Eternity* (where slaves were formerly buried). *Fairyland*, a brilliantly green area in dry *Sandy Bay*, offers a third possibility.

The two columns of phonolite, old volcanic cones, in the *Sandy Bay* area, are called *Lot* and *Lot's Wife*.[61] The *Lot's Wife Ponds* are rock-pools. *Lot* is 290′ high, his wife 260′. Two escaped slaves sheltered in a cave at the foot of *Lot* in 1718 and repelled invaders by rolling down stones. They were eventually subdued by men who climbed up *Lot* from behind and attacked them from this vantage point. The *Asses Ears* and *The Chimney* (which is 20′ from the mainland) are also volcanic cones. The phonolite *Bell Stone* is so called because it makes a clear ringing sound when struck.

An area near *Sandy Bay* is scattered with unusual white boulders. Because of their resemblance to gravestones, there is a *Churchyard* and a *Thompson's Wood* (a corruption of *Tombstone's*, spelt "Tomstone" in the *Records*).[62] There is also a *Ball Alley* and a valley called *Shaken Rocks*. *Spy Glass*, a high look-out, is near *Ball Alley*.

On the other side of the island (the northeast), a large, solid hill is appropriately called *The Barn* with, at its highest point of 2019′, *The Haystack*. Napoleon referred to *The Barn* as "that eroded pantheon."[63]

[61] Arne Zettersten in *The English of Tristan da Cunha*, Lund Studies in English, No. 37 (Lund: Gleerup, 1969), p. 126, suggests that the phonolite *Lot's Wife* on Tristan was named after a man called Lot. This seems unlikely, as the St. Helena allusion is clearly biblical.

[62] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 193 states that *Tomstones Wood* was first mentioned in the *Records* in Sept., 1678.

[63] Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

Sandy Bay has its own, much less impressive *Barn*. In *Rupert's Valley* there is a hollow known as *The Punchbowl*. To the north west there is a rock which, unlike many rocks which are said to resemble human figures, really does resemble a cowled *Friar*. The *King* and *Queen Rocks* are rising headlands. *Sugarloaf Hill* and *Turk's Cap* are self-explanatory.

All of the roads on St. Helena have startling curves and bends – so startling that large American cars are impractical. One of the wriggliest is called the *W Road* in recognition of a particularly difficult portion which taxes the turning circle of a British Mini. From the *Sidepath*, which climbs into the hills from Jamestown, there is a view of the *Heart-Shaped Falls*. In 1682 they were known more prosaically as *High Waterfall* and Grant, writing in 1883, calls them the *Big Waterfall*.[64] Also on the *Sidepath* are *Corner of the Wall* (where the road divides) and *Button-up Corner* (where the temperature suddenly changes as you reach the highlands).

b) Place-names which draw attention to an unusual or distinctive feature

Sir Thomas Herbert in 1785 recorded a sailor's saying about St. Helena, "The way is such that a man may choose whether he will break his heart going up or his neck coming down."[65] There is no apparent reason for there being only one valley – and a relatively inoffensive one – called *Breakneck Valley*.[66] Similarly, there seems to be no reason for one place rather than another being called *Creepy Cove* ("because it is impossible to climb along the cliffs unless you creep on all fours"),[67] *Windy Point*, *Swampy Gut*, *The Acre* and *Rush Hollow* (where the rushes do not seem to grow more thickly than elsewhere).

Amongst the places which refer to distinctive natural features are *Sandy Bay* (the only bay on the island which offers sand as well as pebbles); *Putty Hill* (from the stickiness of the clay in wet weather, to which Governor Blackmore could have attested had he not been killed by his fall on the hill in 1690); *Crack Plain* (an allusion to "the strange appearance of the ground hereabouts, it having apparently been split in various directions by subterranean agency")[68]; *Peaked Island* (also called *Lanark Island*); *Great Stone Top* (1620′ high) and *Little Stone Top* (1550′); *Distant Cottage*; *Riding Stones* (a cottage); *Silver*, *Red*, *Green*, *Blue* and *White Hills*; *White Gate* and *Red Gate*; *Salt Gut* and several *Dry Guts*.

[64] Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[65] Cited by Gosse, *op. cit.*, ch. 1.
[66] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 183, records that it was mentioned in the *Record* of July 14, 1684.
[67] Green, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
[68] Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

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Some house-names were probably derived from striking plants in the garden (or, in the case of *Barren Hill Cottage*, from the lack of them): *Bamboo Hedge*; *Chestnut Cottage*; *Oaklands*; *Oakbank*; *Palm Villa*; *Rock Rose* (now a ruin); *Rose Bower* and *Rose Cottage*.[69] *Mulberry Gut* and *Bilberry Field Gut* presumably had similar origins. *Cabbage Tree Road* is named after a plant endemic to the island. *Guinea Grass* is an area where this grass was first introduced from West Africa. *Potato Bay* may have been christened in a spirit of optimism, for nothing grows there now and probably never did. A name which has unfortunately died out on the island was given to a house built on a ridge by an early settler, Powell. Because of its bleak and exposed situation, "people used by way of derision to call it Stark-Naked House."[70]

Some of the names refer to features which are no longer there. The first settlers on the island found the natural vegetation abundant, and in 1678 there is a record of the name *The Great Wood* being given to an inland area. By 1716 goats and men had destroyed much of it, and a portion was renamed *Deadwood* and treated as a common, while the rest of it was called *Longwood*.[71] *Levelwood*, on the other hand, is far from level, and there are no records of a wood having been there. The house of *Longwood* was the residence of the Lieutenant Governor until Napoleon's arrival. Napoleon did not live to see the completion of *New House* which was built at *Longwood* for him. *Hutt's Gate* was called *The Wood's End* or *Wood End Gate* when there was still a *Great Wood* but by 1673 it was known as *The Hutts* after the slave huts that were built there.[72] Ebony trees were found on the island by the first settlers, but these were destroyed, chiefly by burning for lime. *Ebony Plain* is a reminder that they once grew there. *Lemon Valley* (its name is recorded in 1678 as *Sprague's*) produced much of the fruit and water that refreshed the sailors of the 15,000 ships that used to call at the island each year. In 1672 the Dutch attempted to take the island from here, "but were assailed by such showers of stones, rolled upon them from the precipices above, that they did not deem it prudent to advance."[73] A landslip in 1732 changed the taste of the water, and the lemon trees died. There is a *Lemon Tree Gut* and a *Lemon Grove* elsewhere on the island. The origin of *Half-Tree Hollow* is uncertain, although Grant states that it is "so called from the number of stumps of trees which were to be seen in the locality up to eighty or

[69] *Rose Cottage*, now a ruin, was built by Sir William Doveton for his third daughter, who died on her wedding night. See Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

[70] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[72] Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 12 and 59; Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

[73] Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

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ninety years ago."[74] However, this seems to be the same area as *Half Way Tree* which is mentioned in the *Records* in 1696 as being the place where a suicide was buried with a stake through her body and "a heap of stones cast upon her."[75] There is a *Half-Way House* at *Half-Tree Hollow*, but half-way from where to where, nobody knows.

Some places have been called after animals. It had been believed that horses were not introduced to the island until 1734, but this did not explain why *Horse Ridge* was recorded in 1695 and *Horse Pasture* in 1714. Further investigations found that in 1652 some sailors of Admiral Teylinger's fleet (on their way back from India) let their horses come ashore and were unable to recapture them. In 1655 the sailors from the *Tulp* caught two and an account of a voyage in 1666 by M. Rennefort showed that the horses had gone wild. When chased, they fled over the precipices. There is no allusion in the *Records* to horses on St. Helena between 1673 and 1734, so perhaps they were chased too vigorously.[76] Other domestic animals are referred to in such names as *Wild Cattle Pound*, *Wild Ram Hill* (the cattle and goats were feral, the latter doing such damage to the vegetation that they were eventually shot out), *Coalsheds* (a corruption of *Coltsheds*), *Sheep Knoll*, *Donkey Plain* and *Cow Path* (the track up *Ladder Hill* which was used when cows were brought to Jamestown for milking).

A dead "maneti" was found in 1682 at what is now *Maneti Bay* and the Governor, prompt to act in the island's best interest, issued a proclamation that in future a proportion of the oil be given to the Governor. But no more "manetis" offered themselves for this worthy cause and the sole martyr was, as Dampier recorded when he visited the island in 1697, one of "those Creatures called Sea-lyons."[77] (A whale oil industry was started in the 1880's, but the whales had gone; the slip-way at *Rupert's Bay* is a relic of this enterprise.) *Man o'War Roost* is named after the frigate or man o'war birds and *Frightus Rock* (sometimes called *Frigatus Rock* by the islanders)[78] may refer to the same birds. The diet of the early settlers was supplemented by sea-bird eggs and *Egg Island* is mentioned in the *Records* by 1681. There is also a *White Bird Island*. *Cavalho Hole* is named after a fish common to these waters.

The ill-fated whaling industry (and the ill-fated fishing industries which came later) were only some of the enterprises that have been started on the island, but not all of them are recorded in the place-names. *New*

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[74] Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[75] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

[76] Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[77] Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 140 and *OED* entry for "Manatee."

[78] Information from A. H. Mawson.

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Ground was so named in 1710 when Governor Roberts decided to irrigate it so yams could be grown for the slaves. *Plantation House*, the present Governor's Residence, was built in 1791 on a plantation developed originally to supply the needs of the Governor and his slaves. *Coffee Grove* commemorates an attempt to make the island's economy viable. The coffee grown here was awarded first prize at the British Exhibition in 1851, but the island coffee has been less remarkable for its quantity. *Tobacco Plain* and the mills for processing New Zealand flax, which were closed recently, are reminders of other agricultural efforts. *The Briars*, which was originally an estate known in 1678 as *Parsley Bed Hill* but which acquired its present name in 1739 – possibly because of the characteristic vegetation in that area – was the site of another commercial venture when an enterprising Governor planned to develop a silk industry with the help of the Chinese labourers. The beautiful gardens of *The Briars* were destroyed for the mulberry trees, but the worms died. William Balcombe acquired the house in 1811 and it was in the *Pavilion* of this estate that Napoleon spent his first (and happiest) weeks on St. Helena.

The St. Helena Railway Company was floated when the rope ladder on *Ladder Hill* (by 1733 it had this name) was replaced in 1828 with an ingenious iron ladder and tramway with wagons worked by machines and ropes at the top. The ladder is 900′ long, there are 700 steps (one buried), the angle is between 30° and 40°, and the children who attend school in the old fort at the top of the hill can scale it in five minutes. The journey down used to be even quicker – until recently, when knobs were put on the rails, the young islanders, like the mess-boys before them, slid down with their feet over one rail, their heads over another. The Railway no longer operates, and there is now only one way down *Jacob's Ladder* – on foot.

The names of two of the stores in *Jamestown* are of interest: both are called after salvaged ships whose cargoes were kept in the buildings, the *Malabar* and *Rickmers* (the latter after the "Madeline Rickmers" which caught fire in the harbour in 1896).

There are many tantalisingly unexplained names left on the map. What are the origins of the *Christening Bank*, of *Featherbed Hill*, *Virgin Hall*, *Taglate*? When – and why – did *Fiddler's Green* (which the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* illustrates with the quotation "a sailor's elysium, in which wine, women, and song figure prominently") get its name? Who was Old Joan? My paper cannot pretend to anything approaching completeness, but I hope it has given some indication of the richness of the place-names of the island of St. Helena, South Atlantic Ocean.

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