

SWAN OR WEDDELL ISLAND

The Weddell Island group with a total acreage of approximately 54,000 acres are located to the west of West Falkland between Port Stephens to the east and Beaver Island and New Island to the west. Included in the group are six islands: Penn, Barclay, Fox, Quaker, Low and Hill Islands along with a number of other small islets such as Bald, Carthors, Harbour and Circum.

HMS *Jason*, a frigate of 32 guns, HMS *Carcass* a sloop, and the storeship HMS *Experiment* left England in September 1765 and, sailing via Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands, arrived in Port Egmont 8 January 1766. The expedition under Captain John McBRIDE had all the provisions and necessaries, including a ready framed wooden blockhouse, to establish a permanent settlement on Saunders Island. Captain McBride undertook the first hydrographic survey of the Falkland Islands and the unnamed Weddell Island appears on McBride's "A chart of Hawkins Maidenland".

During the 18th and early 19th centuries Weddell Island was called Swan Island and was still referred to as Swan Island in an 1841 map by John ARROWSMITH. The name was later changed to Weddell Island after Captain **James WEDDELL RN**.

The islands and their surrounding waters were a popular haunt of American whalers and sealers. Barclay Island was named after the Nantucket or New Bedford ship *Barclay*. A number of these men were Quakers and Penn Island was named after William Penn of the Society of Friends or Quakers; Fox Island after George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends and Quaker Island after their faith.

One famous sealer who was marooned on the Falkland Islands along with his dog and four sailors in the winter of 1813 and survived for eighteen months before being rescued was Captain **Charles BARNARD**. The men were based on New Island and in his account Captain Barnard often mentioned hunting for wild hogs on Swan Island. These would have been introduced to the island as a source of fresh food by visiting sealers. In 1813 Captain Barnard recorded that on Swan Island in Quaker Harbour "*About a mile up the bay are the graves and headstones of two men, who must have been buried long since, as the letters were almost effaced from the stones.*" [Marooned Being a Narrative of the Sufferings and Adventures of Captain Charles H Barnard, Embracing an Account of the Seizure of his Vessel at the Falkland Islands, &c, 1812-1816 edited by Bertha Dodge]

On 24 February 1863 **Charles PHILLIPS** was issued a licence to occupy a station at Weddell Island being "*the North East Section of the said Island bounded on the South West by a line drawn from Circum Island Point, Smylie Channel to the head of Kelp Creek, Chatham Harbour*". [BUG-REG-2; pg 125]

On 7 March 1864 **Isaac SMITH** was issued a licence to occupy a station at Weddell Island being "*the North East Section of the said Island bounded on the South West by a line drawn from Circum Island Point, Smylie Channel to the head of Kelp Creek, Chatham Harbour*". [BUG-REG-2; pg 135]

On 7 March 1864 **William WARREN** was issued a licence to occupy a station at Weddell Island being "*the South Section of the said Island bounded on the North East by a line running from Circum Island Point in a West North West direction to the head of Kelp Creek Chatham Harbour, and on the North West by a line running from thence to the head of Pillar Cove*". [BUG-REG-2; pg 136]

On 7 September 1868 a licence was granted to **Frederick E COBB** to occupy Weddell Island “and the adjacent Islets known as “Penn Island”, “Barclay Island” “Fox Island” “Quaker Island” “Low Island” and Hill Island and containing Fifty four thousand acres more or less” for the sum of £45. [BUG-REG-2; pg 207]

On 15 February 1872 a licence was granted to **Charles WILLIAMS** to occupy Weddell Island and “the adjacent Islets known as Penn Island, Barclay Island, Fox Island, Quaker Island, Low Island, and Hill Island and containing Fifty four thousand acres more or less.” [BUG-REG-2; pg 281]

On 15 February 1874 **Charles H WILLIAMS**, having “built upon Weddell Island and stocked the same in the manner required by the Amalgamation Ordinance of the Leases of Crown Lands in the Falkland Islands No 6 of 1870” was granted a lease for 21 years at an annual rental of £124-12-9 for the first 10 years and £207-14-8 a year for the remainder of the lease. [BUG-REG-2; pg 314]

On 28 August 1874 **Charles Henry WILLIAMS**, assigned by mortgage his lease of Weddell Island and Station No 9 Port Edgar Station to **Alexander Lang ELDER** in respect of a debt of £5,759-2-0. [BUG-REG-3; pg 19]

On 2 April 1878 the mortgage of the lease was re-assigned by **Alexander Lang ELDER** to **John Markham DEAN**. [BUG-REG-3; pg 73]

In November 1884 **John Markham DEAN** divided the lease which originally covered Weddell Island and Port Edgar and transferred Weddell Island to the heirs of **Charles Henry WILLIAMS**, retaining security for the balance of his mortgage money. [BUG-REG-3; pg 235]



Weddell Island circa 1889– photograph © Mike Roberts

On 7 April 1889 **Carl JOHANNESSEN**, age 56, died from a bullet wound and shock and was the first person buried in Weddell Cemetery.



Wool sheds and jetty Weddell Island circa 1889– photograph © Mike Roberts

On 7 August 1896 **Julia WILLIAMS** assigned Weddell and adjacent islands to **John Markham DEAN** in respect of debt owed of £8,500 and rented the said land from him at an annual rental of £500. [BUG-REG-5; pg 189]

The 97 ton schooner *Castalia* dragged ashore 31 March 1893. The Falkland Islands Magazine of April 1893 reported “During the Good Friday gale, the “*Castalia*” dragged ashore at Weddell and was damaged on the rocks.”

The 37 ton *Haddassah* was wrecked in New Year’s Cove near Circum Island 24 October 1896. One of the passengers, Henry WALDRON, wrote an account for the local periodical. “...We left “*The Shanty*”, Chatham Harbour, Weddell Island, on Thursday, the 22nd, about two o’clock, had a light fair wind, tide also in favour. On approaching the entrance about 6pm, wind and tide came against us with heavy north swell, Captain Nillson thought about anchoring for the night in Bald Roads, if it had not been for the swell; he then beat round Loop Road, then it was a fair increasing breeze through Smyth’s Channel; it was rather hazy, but not too much for such an experienced navigator as the Captain. The moonlight would not break through the clouds to any extent, so after passing the long reef off Swan’s Point the *Haddassah* hugged the shore. We passed Gull Harbour and saw the lights of the settlement;

also at the same time, Circum Island was distinctly visible, and in order to give the dreaded Smyth's Rocks a wide berth, the course was between Circum islands and Weddell, time about 10.30. Went to my cabin and turned in, soon after felt the schooner going ashore; was told she had just touched and would soon be off. It appears she was luffed just too late, the eddy tide proving too strong; one length of herself and she would have cleared the south point of New Year's Cove...About 2.30 she began to heel over, after ineffectual attempts had been made to get her off, and water commenced to pour in at her top sides; it was then time to land, as the wind and sea were right on top of us, ENE. Passengers consisted of Mr Dettleff; Poole, wife and child, New Island; B Waldron, Beaver; R Dickson, wife and two children, Weddell; and Mrs P Hansen, Stanley. The Captain and men were pumping, Captain let two men get in the boat, with some difficulty the women and children were taken from the cabin to the boat, then landed on the beach, and placed under a rock with but scanty shelter from the torrents of rain; oilskins were spread out, and pouches, blankets, coats, &c, were placed over the women and children, and R Dickson was sent for assistance to Gull Harbour – a walk of about six miles. In the meantime, goods were landed for used of passengers. It was with great difficulty a fire was lighted as the diddle-dees were saturated...About eight o'clock Mr W S Williams, with his brother, men, and horses, came to our help, and sent the women and children to the Settlement, where every attention and kindness were shown.

The Hadassah on the 23rd was still intact and no damaged done, as the ENE wind suddenly moderated. With the help and assistance of Messrs Williams the cargo, consisting of 5000 molymauks' eggs and 10 bales of skins was jettisoned; but on the night of the 23rd a SE breeze came on, and irreparable damage done..." [FIM Nov 1896]



The "bosses house" – photograph JCNA

On 6 August 1904 the property was transferred to **William Markham DEAN** and **Harold DEAN**, the heirs of **John Markham DEAN**. [BUG-REG-6; pg 118]

On 30 September 1909 **Julia WILLIAMS'** letter of July 1909 regarding purchase of the land comprised in the lease of Weddell and adjacent islands had been registered and the purchase sanctioned. Weddell Island including the adjacent islets of Penn Island, Barclay Island, Fox Island, Quaker Island, Low Island, Hill Island, being 54,000 acres, less the freehold of 1,440 acres compulsorily purchased under Crown Grant 286, a total of 52,560 acres at 3/- giving a purchase price of £7,884. [BUG-REG-9; pg 113;114]



Lookout on Mount Weddell 1997 – photograph Emma Edwards

During World War I a drystone lookout was built on top of Mount Weddell. It was used again during World War II.

In July 1919 a draft agreement was drawn up on behalf of Williams & Co, The Speedwell Island Co and H & G Cobb appointing **Herbert John SLAUGHTER** manager of Weddell Island, Speedwell Island and Lively Island. [FIC/D13; 475]

On 8 December 1922 the Trustees of the will of the late Mrs Julia WILLIAMS offered the Weddell Island group comprising of Weddell Island, Penn Islands, Barclay Island, Fox Islands, Quaker Islands, Low Island and Hill Island along with stock and buildings to John HAMILTON for £11,000. The stock and buildings were listed as follows:

Stock May 1922

Rams	210	Horses and mares	24
Breeding ewes	4100	Foals	3
Dry ewes	220	Stallion	1
Wethers	1950	Cattle	90
Hoggets	<u>1693</u>	1 Cutter ½ deck 14 ft 6 in with electric motor	
	8173	3 boats	
Lambs expected this season	<u>2400</u>	Tools and saddlery	
Total	<u>10573</u>		

Weighing machine
3 wheel barrows

Buildings

Manager's house and outbuildings
Foreman's house
Married men's quarters
Unmarried men's quarters and store
House at Chatham Harbour
House at Kelp Creek unoccupied
and out of repair
Wool shed, yards and shop
Hut one room at Quaker
Skin shed and fittings being
converted into dwelling house
Boiling down shed tanks and fittings

Stable and corral and cook house
Drafting yard at Kelp Creek
Dog House Shed
Press shed and press
Jetty

Fencing

12 miles (old)
4 miles (medium)
About 8 miles

Materials

Wood etc etc wire bagging hoop
iron

Furniture

In Manager's House

[BUG-REG-9; pg 126]



Kelp Creek House, Weddell Island 1997 – photograph Phyll Rendell

On 1 March 1923 Crown Grant 286 being 1,440 acres on Weddell Island was sold for £288 and the remainder of Weddell Island “together with adjacent Islets known as Penn Island, Barclay Island, Fox Island, Quaker Island, Low Island and Hill Island containing Fifty two thousand five hundred and sixty acres more or less together with all buildings and erections thereon and belonging thereto all carts vessels boats fencing pens yards jetties machinery utensils implements and farm equipment and all livestock whatsoever thereon” to John HAMILTON for £288 and £11,000 respectively. [BUG-REG-9; pg 141; 142]

On 17 December 1940 John HAMILTON granted Crown Grant 880 known as "*Weddell Island together with adjacent Islets known as Pen Island, Barclay Island, Fox Island, Quaker Island, Low Island and Hill Island containing 52,560 acres more or less*" to John Hamilton Ltd for a peppercorn. [BUG-REG-11; pg 239]

On 22 December 1966 the house at Kelp Creek occupied by **Mr and Mrs Alan CLIFTON** burned down. [FI Monthly Review 2 Jan 1967]



**Wool shed, dip and ss Fitzroy from manager's house, Weddell Island
– photograph FIC Collection, JCNA**

In 1987 **Estate John Hamilton Limited** sold Weddell Island to **Robert "Bob" FERGUSON**, who was born on the island in 1926.