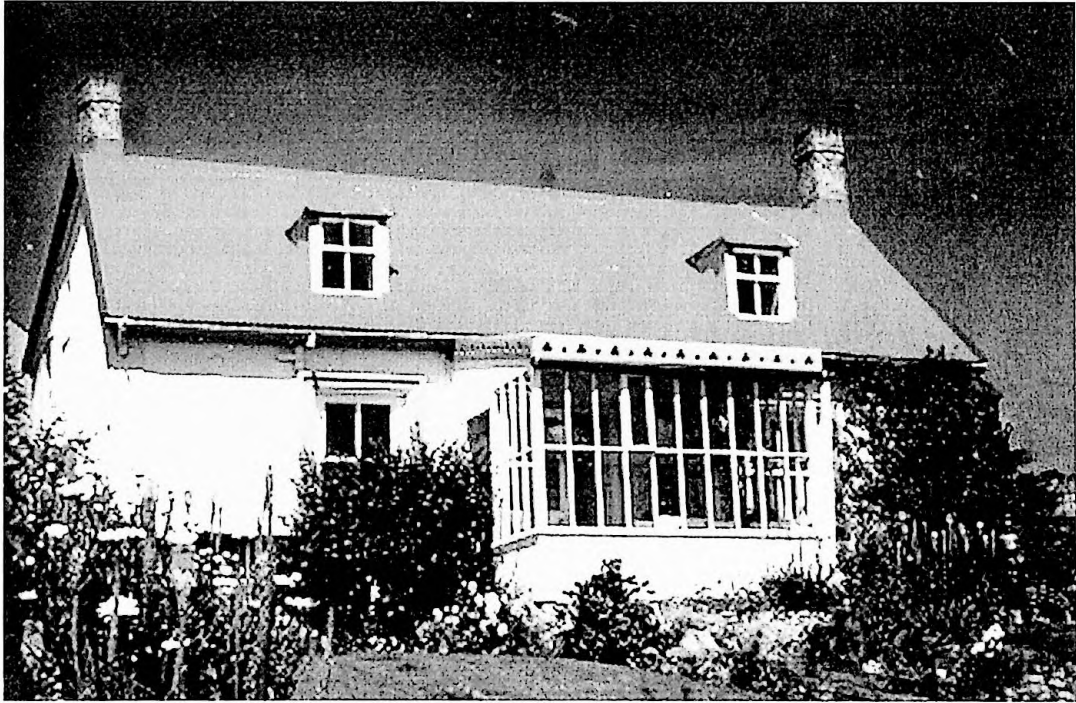


## TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

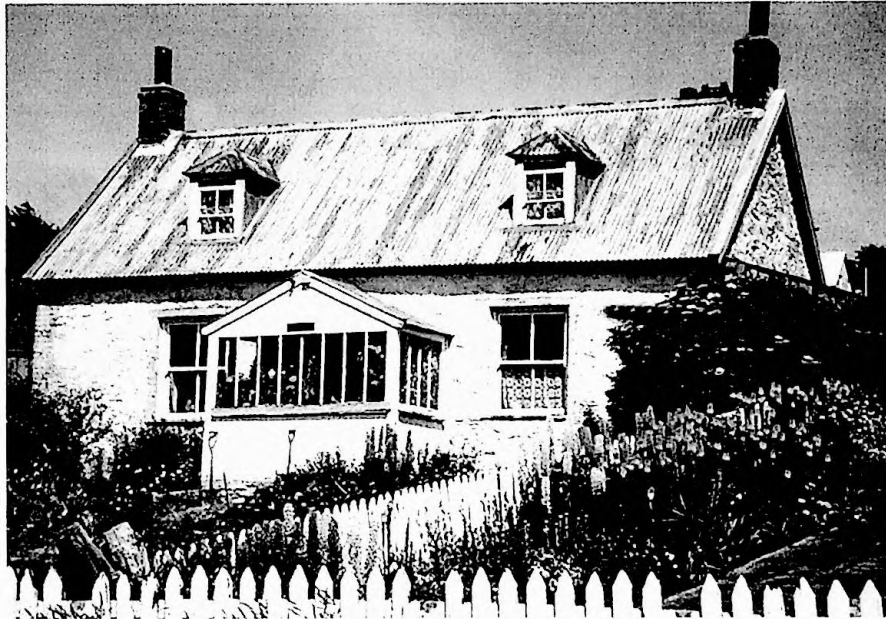


*19 Fitzroy Road*

Flashes of scarlet and green, brilliant yellow and cornflower blue, decorative barge boards and finials, wooden garden fences. Standing out in the landscape, with its white walls, coloured roof and painted woodwork shining in the sun, the timber-framed house, clad in iron sheets or wooden weather boarding, characterises the Falklands.

The distinctive charm of old Falkland Island buildings comes from traditions forged by pioneering settlers. They had to overcome the hardships not only of isolation, but also of a treeless landscape which did not easily yield other materials for shelter. An 18<sup>th</sup> century Benedictine priest was the first to discover that the prevalent local stone was unlikely to be adaptable for buildings. When he arrived in the Islands in 1764 with Louis de Bougainville's party, Dom Pernety wrote *"I attempted in vain to carve a name upon one of these stones.....it was so hard that neither my knife nor a punch could make any impression upon it."*

Later generations of settlers struggled with the unyielding quartzite and lack of natural lime also hampered building in stone. In the end it was only normally used for foundations, although the sheer perseverance of some of the pioneers has left us with a handful of beautiful, solid stone buildings.



*21 Fitzroy Road*

With the stone so hard to use and an absence of trees, there was no alternative but to import building materials. The cheapest and lightest available, wood and tin, were chosen, for the settlers were not wealthy and everything had to be transported hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles across stormy oceans. All the main settlements on the Islands were built on natural harbours, to allow for sea transport.



*8 Ross Road East*

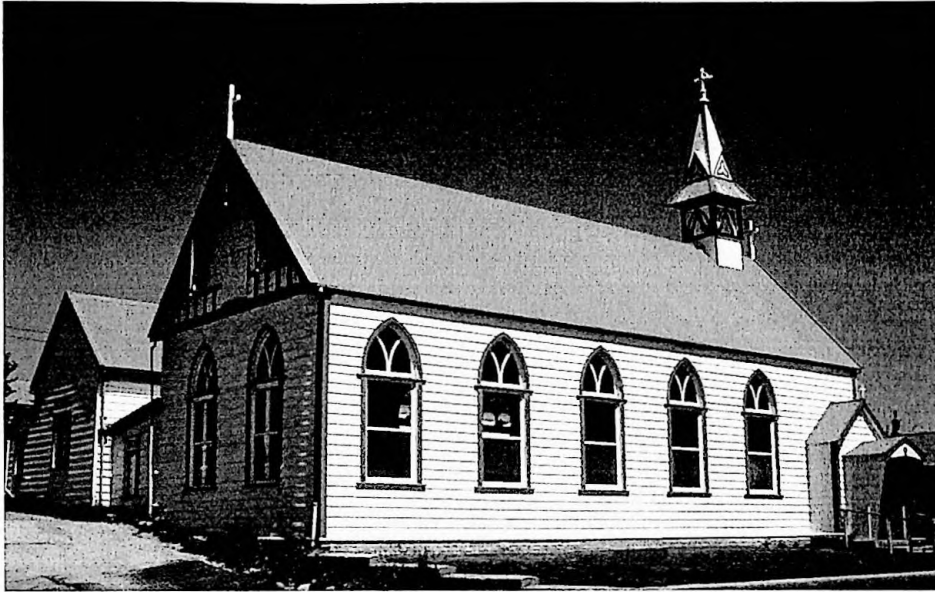


Loch Head Shanty

Anything moved overland had to be dragged slowly across rough, trackless country by horses pulling wooden sleighs.

Timber and iron had an advantage over stone, in that buildings could be constructed quickly and without special skills. The early settlers had to on live on board schooners or in the roughest shelters while they constructed their houses. In 1843 the Governor reported that *"two civilians in the employment of Government had no other home during the present winter than under an old boat"*. The founder of Douglas Station was even reputed to have slept in a barrel while he built more substantial accommodation.

In the early 1840s the capital was moved for naval reasons from Port Louis to Port William. In the infant settlement of Stanley, named after the Colonial Secretary of the day, even the Colonial Surgeon lived in a tent in his garden while he built his house, Stanley Cottage, which today serves as the offices of the Education Department. The Governor, Richard Clement Moody, laid out his new town on a simple grid pattern and gave the streets names connected with the settlement of the Islands: Ross Road, after Sir James Clark Ross, the naval commander instrumental in deciding the site for the new capital; Fitzroy Road after Captain Robert Fitzroy, commander of the survey ship HMS Beagle, which brought Charles Darwin to the Falklands in 1833; Philomel Hill after HMS Philomel, survey ship in the Islands in the 1840s.



*St. Mary's Church*

Buildings were sometimes sent from Britain in 'kit' form, to make construction easier. Examples in Stanley include the Tabernacle and St. Mary's Church, both dating from the late 1800s. But in order to save time and money islanders became adept at using whatever materials came to hand.

The sea proved a rich treasure chest. Before the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, Cape Horn was one of the great trading routes of the world. But many sailing ships came to grief in the stormy waters and ended their days in the Falklands. Their legacy lives on in older buildings, where sections of masts and yards can be found, serving as foundation piles and floor joists. Heavy canvas sails, patched and torn after battles with the southern ocean, lined bare boards. Deckhouses sheltered chickens, skylights were used as cold frames in gardens. Nothing went to waste.

So simple timber-framed buildings with corrugated iron roofs, improvised insulation, and walls covered in sheets of tin or wooden weather boards came to be typical of the Falkland Islands. Paint was originally used to protect the wood and iron from the effects of the salt Atlantic air. It became a much-loved form of decoration. The Falkland Islands have seen many changes in recent years, but the tradition of colour in buildings continues to breathe life and character into the landscape.

