# Islands and Britishness

# Islands and Britishness:
# A Global Perspective

Edited by

Jodie Matthews and Daniel Travers

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A Global Perspective,
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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## JODIE MATTHEWS AND DANIEL TRAVERS

Islands and archipelagos hold great imaginative power, and they have long been a subject of study for cartographers and geographers, for anthropologists and historians of colonisation. But what does it mean to be an islander? Can one feel both British and Manx, for example? What are British tourists looking for when they go to Malta? How do past relationships with Britain affect islands today? What happens to our identity when we travel to islands? This collection takes a variety of perspectives to provide answers to such questions, examining war, empire, tourism, immigration, language, literature, and everyday life. More generally, in this Introduction we try to answer the questions "why islands?" and "why Britishness?" By "Britishness" we refer to something like a national consciousness (whether felt collectively or by the individual towards a larger group, and felt in any location) which is not, as Frantz Fanon makes explicit, necessarily nationalism.[1] This is not to say, of course, that Britishness is barred from conscription to the cause of nationalism. Written by authors from different fields of academia, we arrive at different conclusions about the relationships between islands and Britishness in this collection, but our contention is that these differences are productive, lending the comparisons to be made across the chapters (and across the islands that are their subject) originality.

What, then, is the value in our comparing the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus with the windswept islands of Heligoland and Orkney, Jamaica with Man? Pan-island studies of this sort have been successful before. For instance, in Godfrey Baldacchino's groundbreaking island studies reader, Edward Warrington and David Milne compare the markets of Singapore and Jersey despite the self-evident climatic, geographic, demographic and cultural variations.[2] But our aim here is not to schematize various features of islands as Warrington and Milne do, rather to interrogate whether there is a facet of identity that might usefully be labelled "islandness," and whether a shared cultural history with one nation in particular can be seen to affect it. Baldacchino suggests that it is precisely the uniqueness of each island that means there may be no better comparison for one than another.[3] We introduce this collection of contributions from scholars across the world examining islands that, for some, are both home and object of study. If not quite home, most of the authors profess an affinity with the island in question. As a collection, we take a genuinely global view of the questions surrounding islands and Britishness. We not only bring together various contemporary strands in Island Studies, but uniquely focus on the relationship—historical, cultural and economic—between particular islands and Britain, and, crucially, how this relationship frames identities both on the island and in Britain itself. In inviting contributions for a collection interested in islandness, we selected those which concentrate on the small (and lesser-researched) islands which form part of the "British archipelago," and on the much further flung isles that demonstrate the reach of Britishness. This selection thus includes the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands, Hong Kong (with its relatively large population of around seven million) and New Zealand, but excludes Ireland. Reams of academic studies do greater justice to the relationship between Britain and Ireland than could one chapter here, but the accuracy of positing the island of Ireland as "small" is also in doubt when one of our key questions asks about a sense of islandness.[4] With a combined (Éire and Northern Ireland) population of over six million and surface area of around 84,000 sq. km., it constitutes its own mainland, with islands such as Rathlin and Aran forming its satellites.[5] Hong Kong and New Zealand may be larger than Ireland in terms of population and surface area, but their islandness in relation to Britain is accentuated by vast distances.

The appeal of islands is almost a cliché. For one thing, their boundedness means that they are "able to be held in the mind's eye and imagined as places of possibility and promise."[6] One can also draw on the wealth of British literary, philosophical and filmic references to the island as the setting for utopia (and, indeed, its appropriateness as a dystopian milieu, as in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* or *The Wicker Man*).[7] It has become something of an orthodoxy in island studies to quote Margaret Atwood's assertion that, symbolically, the island is to England (or, as this collection has it, to Britain) as the frontier is to America.[8] Our cultural binds to the idea of the island are even tighter than that, however, as the form has long been used to represent the individual. Most people can quote John Donne's denial of insular man, but this very denial implies the opposite: despite being part of a continent of mankind, in many ways we are also like islands, particularly in a world view that values the concept of the self-determining individual. Gillian Beer notes that our affinity with the island may even have associations with our pre-natal experience in the womb.[9] In (and on) islands we find metaphorical affinity though we might be far from home, cultural familiarity because exoticism has led many to write of and study them; in short, we find paradox. Pete Hay has commented on this strange feature of island studies: are islands "characterised by vulnerability or resilience?" Are they "victims of change, economically dependent, and at the mercy of unscrupulous neo-colonial manipulation?" Or, rather, are their inhabitants "uniquely resourceful in the face of such threats?"[10] Further, the island can be both paradise; a "magical and unsinkable world"[11] and prison, as Judith Okely evocatively describes in relation to her experiences on the Isle of Wight in Chapter Four. In her work elsewhere on Tasmania, Elizabeth McMahon alludes to the current potential for tourist appeal in the island's penal history (and it is a literary interpretation of this history on which Maciej Sulmicki focuses in Chapter Fourteen).[12] Perhaps the key paradox to highlight here is that, despite the fact that the defining feature of the island is its state of being completely surrounded by water, in none of the chapters of this collection does the reader feel a sense of the island being culturally cut off—instead, they all elaborate on the island as a site of complicated and fruitful or terrible exchanges.

What is meant by "island identities?" Though this collection interrogates each island's identity as part of a global "British Isles" (problematically or otherwise), the authors collected here assert that each island possesses its own, specific and multi-faceted identity. Regardless of their continued legal relationship with Britain, islands might be viewed as having something akin to a national identity because they are self-contained societies that define themselves, at least in part, by their natural geographic borders. Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an "imagined political community," with the members of each nation possessing an image of community, despite having no direct contact, can directly be applied to each island.[13] Within smaller islands, the concept of community may be more literal, as direct contact with other members is likely to be more frequent because of smaller populations, but its imagined nature is still important. Members of the island intelligentsia, of certain trades, and of certain specific interest groups may be well aware of one another's existence more than on the mainland, but this is not to say that a builder in Ramsay and a fisherman in Port Erin consider themselves any less Manx for not personally knowing one another; the bond is less tangible than that. It is this sense of connectedness which is central to understanding island identities as analogous to a national identity. As

David Miller has argued, such an identity links people to a geographical place, in contrast to other identities (such as religious ones), which have no terrestrial boundaries.[14] An island's water boundaries lend themselves to a feeling of finitude in much the same way that a nation's borders encapsulate it. Treating island identities as a national identity not only makes sense, it also allows us to draw on the wealth of scholarship already written on the subject.

The assertion is not without its problems. If one adopts Anderson's definition there is a danger of confusing the political nuances inherent in island life. Whatever the divisions on an island, however, one can usually observe the notions of connectivity that Anderson's definition requires. Islanders often feel a certain loyalty to the island that they inhabit, which tends to take precedence over feelings of unity with the mainland—however near or far that is. Many Orcadians, for example, consider themselves Orcadian first, then Scottish or British.[15] This hierarchy of identity can be flipped in times of national celebration, mourning, or war—as is evidenced by Jersey's willing participation in traditionally British commemorations of Liberation Day, explored in Chapter Eighteen, or in Linda Riddell's assessment of Shetland during and after the First World War (Chapter Eleven). As Linda Colley asserts, "identities are not like hats, human beings can and do put on several at a time."[16] This is true within island societies, and many islanders identify with both the island of their residence (or birth) and Britain, or at least the British Isles. As Brockliss and Eastwood have argued, Britons themselves possess a "composite identity," created not by suppressing other identities but by forging a whole new "British" lived identity.[17] As the following chapters show, island identities are as complex as those in larger nations, with various social and cultural elements contributing to them. It is not strictly necessary to absolutely define Britishness in order to understand its effects on the culture and life of the people who are affected by it. Arthur Aughey has said that defining "Englishness" is not a "precondition for saying something intelligible about contemporary England."[18] Bernard Crick has argued the same about Britishness.[19] There are so many different factors in constructing a "British national identity" that it is almost impossible to do so. Language, place, origin, religion, and gender, to name but a few, invariably have an impact on the way in which an individual understands his or her own identity. Britishness, it seems, is dynamic; it can be transplanted or absorbed into the daily life of a society, it can be used pragmatically, and, importantly, it can be rejected.

It is, perhaps, no surprise that a major theme of the collection is the (post)colonial, as it was Britain's imperial ambition that defined and continues to define many of these islands' relationship with Britain. However, to repeat a commonplace of imperial historiography: "if the metropole dominates the periphery, the periphery nevertheless influences the metropole."[20] Britishness was made in new ways, at home and abroad, because of new forms of contact between peoples. As Gillian Beer notes, "even now, remote islands—the Falkland Islands or Fiji—are claimed as peculiarly part of empire history."[21] The island incites even more scholarly interest as a result of particular historico-political contingencies, such as the Falklands conflict in 1982, which saw the British media and Conservative political establishment highlighting the affinities of "island races."[22] Britain's association with islands across the globe is much older than that, of course. As Christian Depraetere points out, by the beginning of the last century most islands were part of colonial empires, with Britain "'ruling the waves' through its truly global islands network."[23] The residents of small islands might consider themselves unfortunate that the land mass on which they live is not only supremely useful to the seafaring imperial power; it also *looks* like property.[24] The inhabitants of Heligoland fit into this category, as Sebastian Seibert discusses in Chapter Fifteen, finding themselves caught up in the strategic geography of the German Bight. The vast island network that made up the British Empire no longer belongs, of course, to Britain, but that is not to say that it is no longer relevant to it. Much scholarly attention has been paid since the 1970s to the identities of colonialism and its returns, an example of which is explored by R. M. Christofides in relation to British Cypriots in Chapter Eight. One thing that becomes clear from the essays in this collection is that colonialism has far-reaching and long-lasting effects on identity that could never have been anticipated at the point of island independence.

"Britishness" in relation to islands is not just about the influence of an empire, however; power relations are not only geopolitical but cultural. To assert, as this collection does, that Britishness continues to play a role in conceptualising the identity of these islands is not to reinscribe the gestures of colonialism, tying the islands to a British metropolitan centre and denying the importance of local history, power and culture. Britishness is just one feature of these islands' identities, and chapters in this collection also consider the relationships played out on the island between Britishness and the other nationalities with which the islands share an affinity—Turkey and Greece in Cyprus, for example, Spain on Gibraltar, Scottishness in Shetland. Indeed, many of the chapters further complicate received wisdoms about national identity on the islands by considering the intersecting discourses of class and gender, such as Dalea Bean's exploration, in Chapter Ten, of gendered notions of loyalty to

Empire in Jamaica during the World Wars, and Oliver Benoit's work in Chapter Seven on the fissures of class within a nascent national identity in Grenada. Nevertheless, any stated affiliation between Britain and the islands in this collection can never be politically neutral, framing as it does an island's history in a particular way, no matter how much the frame is critiqued herein; it is not a strategy without risk and it is one to which we are alert. As Chris Bongie points out, to do away completely with relational identities is unrealistic, and our project here is to examine Britishness in relation to other national, separatist or colonial identities.[25] Across the chapters in this collection we see a clearly dislocated, fragmented form of Britishness, ex-isled as it no longer finds itself on the British mainland, and a reconstituted Britishness that blends with and complicates its other. Viewed through the prism of Britishness, the paradox of the island becomes clearer than ever.

Island identities, like national identities, are not created overnight; they are the result of gradual political and cultural processes. For islands, these processes often entail centuries of socio-political negotiation between themselves and their larger neighbours or colonising powers far away. The dynamic of interference and engagement with the larger nation often continues to define the modern identity of the island itself. This is the case in either a direct way (through colonialism or political rule), or by the smaller island using the other to distinguish its own cultural sovereignty. Each island's identity is not, then, merely the sum of its cultural and political influences, but is also a separate entity. Only when Manxness or Malteseness is accepted is it possible to make comparisons with Britain and Britishness. There exist distinct differences between islands and the mainland. As David Moore writes, while islands are "intimate communities . . ., a medley of rural simplicity and urban sophistication," they may also possess a far-reaching view. Many of these islands are leaders in international financial markets, or in tourism and leisure, proving that the insular can be innovative (or adept at exploiting the inequalities encouraged by capitalism, depending on one's view).[26]

Island societies are subject to the same sentiments regarding threats to independence as any other analogous entity, be it state or nation. As the nationalist Prussian historian Heinrich Von Treitschke asserted, "it is only in war that a people becomes in very deed a people."[27] Even islands whose legal sovereignty from Britain is still being negotiated may engage in territorial disputes with their other neighbours: full independence from one country is not necessarily a prerequisite for engaging in altercations with another. An example of this is the debate over the tiny Écréhous islands between Jersey and France, a dispute played out in peaceful protest thus far, and one that perhaps resembles the disputes between Japan and Korea over the Liancourt Rocks.[28] Though most people in Britain were completely unaware of the event, the temporary invasions of the Écréhous in 1993 and 1994 by French fishermen were closely monitored by the people and authorities in Jersey. Such conflicts strengthen a sense of island identity, with victories and defeats defining island values. More often, however, islands are the unfortunate inheritors of conflict, forced into belligerency based on the actions of their mainland neighbours or the colonial administrator. An island's relationship with Britain and Britishness could play a pivotal role in war, and, in the past, loyalty to the Empire has been called upon, resulting in dilemmas between local and imperial identities. Amongst others, Hong Kong, Jamaica, and Singapore went to war in 1914 as part of the British Empire, and again in 1939 when their safety was less than certain. Association with Britain and Britishness in wartime is risky, especially if the island occupies a strategically important or vulnerable location.

Islands can be used as pawns in strategic posturing between rival nations, with imperial powers considering islands to be part of their territory despite their remoteness. Since the thirteenth century, the Channel Islands were symbolic of the struggle between France and England, and changed hands on a number of occasions. This rivalry between great powers can be manifested in the culture, language, and politics of each island society. Orkney and Shetland, as Silke Reeploeg shows in Chapter Sixteen, are culturally Scottish and Norse at the same time. Man tends to negotiate between its Gaelic, Norse, and English identities, while Guernsey retains its Britishness with a French flair. The Maltese are caught between British and Italian cultural influence. This can and does retain a presence in an island's quotidian identity.

Many islands, especially those in the British archipelago, define themselves based on their relationship with the British "other," and Britishness or Englishness can be used as a mirror with which to assert an island's distinctiveness. This exceptionalism allows islands to focus their energies into proud displays of uniqueness in sport, in heritage, and in cultural events. Though Britishness continues to play a major role in the island's society, the overt rejection of Britishness serves to strengthen its own identity. Placing emphasis on the island's own history as separate from that of the mainland serves to deepen and delimit the island's distinct heritage, just as island-specific cultural displays reinforce cultural sovereignty. This can be used pragmatically for the purposes of tourism, allowing visitors to the islands from the mainland an escape, and perhaps conveys a feeling of the exotic. It also gives the tourist a peek into the daily realities of island life, as Emma-Reeta Koivunen discusses in Chapter Nine. Exceptionalism also applies to islands further removed from Britain. Remote islands occasionally define themselves by being *more* like the colonial power than their neighbours. In this way an island culture uses Britishness to take itself out of the regional context (but implicitly draws attention to Britishness as a performance and complicates notions of self and other). Marie Avellino hints that this is the case in Malta in Chapter Five. The island ostentates its Britishness to appeal to tourists, and a figurative island of Britishness in the Mediterranean is created, a place that gives a taste of the "real," imperial Britain, paradoxically untouched (yet made possible) by twenty-first-century globalisation. This is also the case in St. Helena and Bermuda, as Stephen A. Royle explains in Chapter Two, with many visitors commenting that the islands are "strangely British." Gibraltar is an island, at least in a symbolic way, for this reason; its Spanishness is marginalised in favour of aspects of Britishness. Gibraltar's very survival as a British Overseas Territory in fact depends on this distinction, according to Chris Grocott in Chapter Twelve.

Commodification of Britishness allows it to be used pragmatically for the islanders' benefit. Hong-Kong's wealthy businessmen, for example, considered Britishness a nominal identity based on financial pragmatism. As described in Yizheng Zou's chapter, Hong Kong's elites saw opportunity in Britishness. Culturally, particularly likeable images, icons, events and cultural displays are sometimes imported and given an island twist, while more distasteful aspects are rejected. The monarchy is an institution which islands tend to celebrate, and a royal visit is often greeted with eager anticipation. The person of the Crown has in the past been a strong tie to keep the British Empire and, later, the Commonwealth together.[29] Other institutions, festivals, holidays, and commemorations are often deliberately retained. This "buffet Britishness," picking and choosing different elements from the mainland, ensures that particular aspects of Britishness are consciously or unconsciously chosen as part of an island's society or are appropriated as part of its own. Elements of Britishness, as Sue Lewis describes in Chapter Thirteen, enhance local satire on the Isle of Man. The war memory of the Channel Islands is influenced by British remembrance and commemoration, as Paul Sanders shows in Chapter Three. This need to favour Britishness or conversely to make Britain the "other" can create rifts in island communities. The strength of Manx identity, for example, creates a society where Manx and non-Manx might be defined by their background. As Cheek, Grainger, and Nichol describe in Chapter Six, the concept of other people's Manx identity is often enough to create a feeling of alienation among immigrants from Britain to the island, with the self-imposed assumption that they could never become truly "Manx." Internalising the label of otherness, they make the hyphen of hybrid identities (such as British-Manx) an insurmountable barrier.

Finally, then, without wishing to limit the dialogue that readers might find between the essays that follow, there are some assertions that can be made about Britishness from looking at its manifestation on islands. To make such a claim is unusual amongst studies of Britishness, as the conclusion is usually that this identity is *in*tangible, or historically contingent, or always a fiction. We take these things as going without saying, but want to draw something more concrete from the work of scholars here.

Intriguingly, Britishness was perceived in some former colonial locations as a successful form of national identity for export, one that could be used in island locations paradoxically in support of an emergent national consciousness designed to throw off the yoke of colonialism. Britishness finds meaning, therefore, not just on the "mainland" of England, Scotland and Wales but is, rather, a particular ideology that may be conveyed, nurtured, called on, used to interpellate and, conversely, rejected, across the globe. It is perhaps this very exportability that leads to British tourists today visiting postcolonial islands in search of a Britishness they feel has been lost at home. They hope that insularity will have preserved a Britain of the past, quite possibly one that never existed outside the imagination. The island thus becomes a site of dislocated and detemporalized identity. For islanders, meanwhile, Britishness can be treated pragmatically or ignored depending on the circumstances. It might be a commodity to sell to tourists, something that separates socio-economic classes, or an idea that reinforces loyalty to a particular administrative regime or body politic. Crucially, this loyalty is understood in terms of action (whether that means being photographed giving a British soldier a cup of tea during the Falklands campaign, or signing up for combat in Jamaica during the world wars) rather than unobserved sentiment. These activities are likely to be framed as gendered, meaning that manifestations of Britishness are also divided along gender lines.

For those who move permanently to an island away from the British "mainland," it seems possible to assume an island identity, to be accepted as an islander and perhaps shed, share or cover up the extent to which "Britishness" is felt as one's primary identity. For those who visit the island for a short period, the extent to which islanders are willing to share (formally or informally) local knowledge, the experience of seasonality and the reality of isolation all affect the extent to which one can understand everyday life there. And back on the mainland, when postcolonial islanders return to a place they have been encouraged to consider a “home” (or at least a place of opportunity), continued political, economic, linguistic and cultural traversals of the sea from Britain to island influence the relationship between postcolonial identities and a diversely-perceived British national narrative. This collection is intended to encourage questions and stimulate discussion about island identity and how it relates to Britishness. The first of its kind to cover such a topic, it is hoped that the following chapters will contribute to a growing understanding of how Britishness exists in the context of a global British Isles.

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# CHAPTER TWO

# IDENTITY AND THE OTHER BRITISH ISLES: BERMUDA AND ST HELENA

## STEPHEN A. ROYLE

One Sunday afternoon on Rapanui (Easter Island) I watched a soccer match, deciding from the colours of the shirts that I would characterise it as between Argentina (blue and white vertical stripes) and Blackpool (tangerine). The game was played to FIFA rules, controlled by a referee in an official black strip who, in a fashion found everywhere, was abused by sections of the crowd. The local separated from the global insofar as few referees can have been abused in *rapanui* and at the end of the match "Argentina," 1–0 victors, had a team photograph taken at the base of a *moai*, an Easter Island statue which had silently overseen the game from a position alongside one of the penalty areas. What identity did the team display? Were they Chilean, or Polynesian by association if not all by bloodline, or had their island donated their primary identity? Perhaps they had multiple identities; it would hardly have been appropriate to disturb the team's victory celebration by conducting interviews to find out. I tell the story simply to introduce the idea that identity may be multi-layered and that one significant layer for islanders may be that donated by their island itself. In other situations, on other islands, I have asked about identity. I recently taught summer school at Jeju National University. This is on Jeju Island, politically part of South Korea, but with its own traditions and culture, expressed most noticeably in the liberal scattering of *dolhareubangs*, literally "stone grandfathers," statues of male heads and torsos who stand guard outside both old and new properties to ward off evil spirits. These statues are not found elsewhere in Korea. I questioned the class about their identity and the answer was unequivocal and unanimous. They were Jeju islanders first, Koreans second.

Across the world, this type of answer might be found. Cape Breton Island is a good example. This eastern Canadian island was first occupied by ancestors of the Mi'kmaq people; some of whom still live there. The island was then caught up in colonialism. It was used by European fishers before it became French under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, then British after the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The European powers had transferred their rivalries to this new world setting and the French city of Louisburg on Cape Breton had fallen twice to the British: in 1745 and 1758, being destroyed after the second conquest. Until 1784 the island was part of a large Nova Scotia colony, until that was split into three parts: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island. Cape Breton remained separate until 1820 when it was again reunited with Nova Scotia, its tiny administration then struggling to deal with migration streams from Scotland associated with the Highland Clearances. Cape Breton later developed a distinct economy with coalmines and a major steel works in and around Sydney. This area became known as Industrial Cape Breton; an ironic designation now as both steelworks and coalmines are closed. Cape Breton's past, particularly its industrial heritage and the Scottish, indeed Gaelic, ancestry, still celebrated in language and culture, especially music, has given the island a distinct identity, one sometimes fiercely expressed. "I'm from the Bay, boy," is a phrase associated with people from Glace Bay, one of the former mining communities, with an unspoken, challenging appendage: "and what are you going to do about it?" The island's particular economic history engendered problems not shared by the rest of Nova Scotia and there is a widespread belief that provincial administrators in Halifax, never mind the Federal government in distant Ottawa, do not understand Cape Breton and do not properly address the island's issues.[1] It is perhaps significant that for a time there was a dedicated Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation as well as the island being part of the wider remit of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.[2]

Ask a resident of Cape Breton about their identity and the answer is multi-layered but pretty straightforward. They are Cape Bretoners first, Maritimers certainly (the three provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick form the Maritimes), Canadians, yes. Not Atlantic Canadians particularly (Atlantic Canada comprises the Maritimes plus Newfoundland which joined Canada in 1949), that grouping does not seem to have engendered a feeling of belonging, and almost never do Cape Breton islanders claim to be, or want to be considered as, Nova Scotians. It is the island, not the province to which they relate; there is, again, an island identity. Part of that identity is predicated upon the British history, indeed, for tourism marketing purposes Cape Breton almost becomes a Scottish island: drive the Ceilidh Trail; stop at the Glenora whisky distillery; go to the Highland Village museum at Iona. The cruise ship terminal in Sydney is dominated by a statue of a giant violin, from the base of which Scottish fiddle music emerges ethereally. A less celebratory depiction of the island's modern Scottish culture and identity can be gained through reading the works of Alistair MacLeod. Thus, in his story "The Tuning of Perfection," MacLeod, through an old man, Archibald, tells of the decline of traditional culture, in this case singing in Gaelic. There is to be a television programme featuring it, highlighting Archibald: "you're known to the folklorists and people like that. You have *credibility* [author's emphasis]" but his narrative songs are deemed to be too long and too mournful and the producer tells him "Look, I really don't understand your language so we're here mainly to look for effect."[3]

It must be acknowledged that island identities do not necessarily or always subsume wider allegiances. One obvious example is Cyprus. This island had a tortuous colonial history in which its people were subject to outside rule from Hittites, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Franks, Venetians, Ottomans and British, whilst being influenced in population and cultural terms by the Greeks. Cyprus finally achieved independence in 1960 after a bitter struggle against the British. An independent nation has memorials to commemorate gaining such status and that for Cyprus is the Eleftheria (Liberty) Monument in Nicosia. This is a challenging memorial, comprising a white prison building upon the roof of which stand statues of two Cypriot soldiers hauling open the barred gates. A stream of people emerges into the light and their statues ascend steps to left and right. They are dressed in the garb of the different ethnic groups that inhabit Cyprus, a souvenir of its complicated colonial history. Leading the way up the left hand steps is a Turkish Cypriot: representative of a substantial minority of the island's population, the majority of which is of Greek descent. This island's people have dual identities and being Cypriot is less significant than being of Turkish or Greek origin. The long contestation between these groups reached a peak after independence and, in 1974, ostensibly to protect its ethnic brothers, Turkey invaded and took the northern third of Cyprus. The island and city remain divided by a *de facto* international boundary. In the Greek Cypriot sector of Nicosia the statue of the Turkish Cypriot ascending the steps of the Eleftheria Monument has been shot in the head.

These examples are of postcolonial identity in an island setting, a neglected object of study for, as Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith in the introduction to *Islands in History and Representation* noted, islands have tended "to slip the net of postcolonial theorising," figuring as "negligible, purely strategic sites." The folly of such dismissal can be seen in occasional crises which thrust postcolonial islands such as Cuba and the

Falkland Islands onto centre stage. Commonalities associated with islandness such as boundedness, "discretion" (islands can be hidden from outside gaze) and microscopicality (small scale) render them available for "colonial fantasies and extreme colonial realities," but Edmond and Smith conclude that islands should be "specific locations generating their own potentially self-reflective colonial metaphors."[4]

In their study of *The Last Colonies*, Robert Aldrich and John Connell emphasise that reflection and, indeed, identity may not extend to becoming post-colonial (the insertion of the hyphen narrowing the term to mean after colonialism has ended) for "optimism, even euphoria, about post-colonial futures has often been overwhelmed by disappointment and frustration" and the rush to decolonisation has slowed to a stop. Many remaining colonies are islands too small to exist "without a powerful international protector and benefactor," whilst for others "colonialism has enabled particular kinds of development, in tourism and the finance sector, which might be more difficult to achieve in an independent state," for the political stability and security that can come through dependence might be crucial.[5] David Killingray has written of the "discarding [of] imperial possessions, sometimes with accelerated haste, in a world where Empire was no longer acceptable." The UK had certainly been an actor in this process, but Killingray was able to note that "The UK would not force independence on the remaining Dependent Territories[; most] would remain dependent, and even if any became independent they were likely to continue to be a charge on the British exchequer for aid and defence. There was no idea that Britain would simply abdicate all responsibility for the smaller territories," although for some such as Bermuda (see below) and the Turks and Caicos Islands independence has certainly been debated.[6] These "other British Isles" have an unusual layering of identities as being British, if at some remove, whilst having, perhaps, an island strand to their characters. This will be explored here for St Helena and Bermuda.

## St Helena

St Helena is a small, basalt, South Atlantic island of 122 sq. km. There were no indigenous people; this island really was discovered by Europeans, in this case the Portuguese in 1502. Its existence was not publicised, the Portuguese wishing to reserve its strategic opportunity as a revictualling station for ships returning from Asia to themselves. However, St Helena's position in the trade wind belt ensured that other European trading nations came across it and there was much contestation over its use, for St Helena provided water, whilst livestock had been released on the island and could be hunted. The contestation included the sinking of a Dutch ship there, the *Witte Leeuw* by the Portuguese in 1613. Occasionally sick sailors would be left ashore on St Helena to be picked up the following season, but the island was not permanently occupied when annexed and fortified by the English East India Company (EIC) in 1659 to reserve its use solely for themselves. St Helena resupplied company ships returning from Asia and was also a rendezvous for the company fleet, which could then sail home in convoy for mutual protection through what were dangerous waters, given the almost constant warfare in Europe in the seventeenth century. To make efficient use of its new possession, the EIC had to establish settlement and society there in order to produce the food needed for the ships. This proved a troublesome task. It was difficult to attract high quality staff to spend their lives on an isolated rock in the South Atlantic and early governors tended to be flawed characters, if somewhat more reliable than the chaplains who were a series of rogues. Their charges also proved difficult to manage. The EIC struggled to attract migrants to St Helena, even though land was provided to farm. The labour shortage was alleviated by bringing in slaves, which engendered other problems. There was also the difficulty of protecting the small island against invasion and when the Dutch landed in 1673, the garrison and community just fled on a ship, being unwilling, it would seem, to die for the East India Company. The Royal Navy retook the island a few months later, the commander insouciantly remarking, “we having noe other business too doe.”[7] The EIC, which had had to petition the king for the return of their island, then had to repopulate it. The former, almost utopian, plans for settlement of the company’s island were abandoned and the company adopted a harsher regime. This was rewarded by mutiny in 1674 and sedition in 1684 when the governor, safe within his fort, turned guns on the population. In 1693 there was mutiny again, a sergeant and several other soldiers murdered the governor and stole the company treasure (an appropriate word since it was in a chest) before making their way over the horizon into obscurity in a ship whose use they had obtained by the taking of hostages. In 1695 there was a potential revolt by the African slaves, who were always subject to harsh treatment. The slaves were betrayed by one of their number who was rewarded with tobacco, her fellows being punished severely, some executed horribly. Despite such terrors, the settlement survived and an account at the end of the seventeenth century is of “a Country fertile, hills improved by Labour, Plantations well fitted, abounding with many good things, brave droves of cattle grazeing in many parts, with many flocks of goats, Herds of Swine and some parcels of sheep.”[8] St Helena remained in the hands of the East India Company until 1834, when it became a Crown Colony.[9] Its people, already of mixed descent from European and African origins, were further broadened by St Helena importing some Chinese, and more Africans had come to the island when it was used as a base in the suppression of the slave trade. Some French genes came from the party surrounding Napoleon Bonaparte, who was imprisoned here from 1817 until his death in 1822, and some from Boers, when the island was used as a prison camp during the South African War in 1900–02.[10] Ethnically the 4,000 or so resident Saints, as the islanders are often called, are the product of this melting pot, with almost every person being a mixture of the variety of peoples that came or were brought to this small, isolated place, the lack of partners ensuring that much miscegenation had to occur.

What then of the Saints' identity? Visitors, including this author, have been struck not just by how British the island seems, but how English, and not the multi-cultural England of today, more an England from sometime before the social revolutions of the 1960s. The language is English, most people belong to the Church of England and a major sport is cricket. Even on the voyage to the island cricket is played on deck. Beer is drunk, and tea. Only the use of evaporated milk rather than fresh milk is different. There are some local delicacies that might be seen as an expression of island identity, especially fish cakes, and St Helena Day, May 21, is a public holiday. However, so, too, is April 19, Queen Elizabeth II's birthday, and under "culture" on the website of St Helena Tourism appears first pictures of the celebrations of the Queen's birthday and only then photographs of festivities on St Helena Day.[11] Journalist Simon Winchester concluded that "in every apparent way, then, St Helena is or seems to be British. The people, from whatever ethnic origin, all sound like friends of Sam Weller . . . People . . . stop in mid-afternoon for tea."[12] Andrew Gurr, the St Helena governor, has written more recently that:

> Many visitors comment that the island is strangely British. Yet it reflects Britain as it once was, being virtually unchanged for centuries and showing the footprints of previous generations with remarkable clarity. The feeling of security and peace that we enjoy is highly prized and yet we also have many aspects of modern life including broadband and fervent support of English soccer teams.[13]

St Helena is a place which many have never left given the island's astonishing isolation, it being one of the few places in the world to which travel times to the nearest settlement are measured in days. There is no airport (although one is planned), only one government ship, *RMS St Helena* that services the island, and that infrequently, only a few times per year and, given the distances/times involved (two days to Ascension Island; five days to Cape Town), expensively, despite subsidy. On the St Helena Government website a thirteen point vision for St Helena is set out.[14] Improved access is top of the list, an island issue everywhere and particularly acute here, and many other points are, of course, concerned with universal concerns such as education and economy. There is a desire to "protect and cherish the culture on St Helena," which suggests a local identity but of significance for this chapter is point 11, to "strengthen links with the mother country, Overseas Territories, the Commonwealth and internationally." The use of the term "mother country" is telling, making a clear statement about identity. A factor in this identification with the UK might be that St Helena is dependent upon its colonial power for economic support. Its anyway waning utility for shipping ended with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and especially since the ending of its flax industry in the 1960s, which had supported the island for some decades in the twentieth century, St Helena has needed relatively high levels of aid from the UK. It would be patronising and facile to suggest that the Saints' loyalty to and identification with the UK is based on a sense of gratitude for such support. Indeed, what has been a longstanding and disputatious saga about the building of an airport, still not yet started after decades of anticipation, has certainly seen Saints express resentment about the British government, without negating the realization that St Helena needs the British link for its economic support.

St Helena identity in recent years became caught up in a bitter dispute about the *British Nationality Act* of 1981. This legislation was certainly drafted in response to fears that the UK might be impacted by large numbers of Hong Kong Chinese migrating to Britain in the run up to that colony's reversion to China in 1997. The act removed the right of abode in the UK from not just the Hong Kong people, but to provide a fig leaf that could be used to counter charges of anti-Chinese prejudice, from citizens of other dependent territories, including St Helena. To be stripped of full British citizenship for whatever reason caused absolute outrage on St Helena. Simon Winchester visited soon afterwards and reported on meeting an old lady who had a bitter complaint that "The government . . . won't admit we are full citizens. It is very unjust. We were colonized by British people, from Britain. And now they turn us away."[15] Later, another visitor, Harry Ritchie, who despite a dislike of St Helena, nonetheless after watching a parade of scouts and guides along the main street of the island's capital, Jamestown, wrote of: "this sweetest of British ceremonies, enacted by people who knew they were British although Britain wouldn't acknowledge it, whom its colonial power was treating like scum."[16] The outrage was partly predicated upon the fact that the British Nationality Act countered promises made to the people of St Helena in the charter issued by King Charles II in 1674 after the restitution of the island to the East India Company following its recapture by the navy from the Dutch:

> Our Pleasure is, and We do, for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, declare, by these Presents, that all and every the Persons, being Our Subjects which do or shall inhabit the said Port and Island, and every of their Children and Posterity, which happen to be born within the Precincts and Limits thereof, shall have and enjoy all Liberties, Franchises, Immunities, Capacities, and Abilities of free Denizens and natural Subjects, within any of Our Dominions, to all Intents and Purposes, as if they had seen abiding and born within this Our Kingdom of England, or in any other of Our Dominions.[17]

The passage of the *British Overseas Territories Act* in 2002 rescinded the provisions of the *British Nationality Act* and finally restored full British citizenship to the people of St Helena and a celebratory plaque was erected in the church in Jamestown. However, restoration meant the right of abode in the UK was once more in place and since 2002 there has been a loss of many of the island’s young people to their “mother country” in addition to more established streams to the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island, where Saints fulfil the civilian labour needs of the relatively prosperous Falklands and the military bases on Ascension.

## Bermuda

Bermuda is a 53 sq. km. archipelago of aeolianite located atop a basaltic seamount in the western Atlantic, its nearest land being North Carolina. Like St Helena it was uninhabited upon discovery and was also the possession of a company before being transferred to the Crown. Discovered by the Portuguese, perhaps in 1503, Bermuda was used by that nation and Spain to resupply ships. Then the Virginia Company in 1609 lost a ship, the *Sea Venture*, on Bermuda, when it was beached to escape a severe storm (an event thought to be the inspiration for Shakespeare’s *Tempest*).[18] The crew used island trees to build a new ship and continued to Jamestown, Virginia, their original destination. The strategic value and agricultural potential of Bermuda was realised and settlement was organised there under the Somers Island Company.[19] Settlers were encouraged, with many African slaves brought in to form a labour force, largely for the production of vegetables and tobacco. As with St Helena, there was tension between company needs and those of the settlers, not well handled by inept governors, one of whom had also been governor of St Helena. Fear of this man, Richard Coney, betraying the island to the Spanish was one of the reasons why fractious Bermuda was transferred to the Crown in 1684. Such lack of allegiance to the colonial power—an identity issue—resurfaced during the American War of Independence and the War of 1812, some islanders siding with their main trading partners, the Americans, and not with their "mother county."

Another postcolonial impact on identity is that the majority of Bermuda's population descend from the slaves; some 5,000 of 9,000 residents upon emancipation in 1834 were categorised as being of African descent. People who themselves or whose ancestors were torn from their homeland to work in bondage in another land are less likely to develop and transmit feelings of loyalty than other groups. And such identity as they do express might well be to their home, the island where they grew up, rather than to the distant colonial power they were unlikely to have visited. Further, Bermuda's population, now about 67,000, is well over ten times that of St Helena, a scale which has allowed the different ethnic groups on Bermuda more chance to find partners within their group, something not always possible on the smaller island. This may have had a bearing upon the development of a unitary Bermudian identity, a factor in the discussions about independence.

Unlike St Helena, Bermuda is wealthy: its offshore finance and tourism industries, advantaged by relative proximity to USA, have seen it develop a GDP p.c. of about $70,000. It certainly has the strength of economy and size of population to be independent—Bermuda's per capita wealth is exceeded only by Luxembourg, Qatar and Liechtenstein and it would not be the smallest independent country, exceeding the population of most European microstates and some island nations in the Caribbean and Pacific.[20] Further, there is no strongly expressed British identity or culture of loyalty to the mother country to hold back independence. There has been pressure, even violence, pressing for this to happen. In 1973 Erskine Burrowes, associated with black power militants, assassinated Sir Richard Sharples, the British governor. Burrowes was hanged, following which there were three days of rioting. The British authorities have over many years shown themselves to be obdurate in the face of violent protests. A better strategy would have been to ask for independence; indeed the British were expecting this in the 1960s. Independence has certainly been debated, in 1995 there was a referendum on the topic, but the poll became enmeshed in a political wrangle largely about racial and class matters and just 27 percent of the electorate voted in favour of independence in a low turnout, one party having boycotted the process.

Later, Alex Scott of the Progressive Labour Party who was premier from 2003 established the Bermuda Independence Commission in 2004 as part of what proved to be an unpopular campaign for independence, one reason why he was ousted as leader by his party in 2006. His successor, Ewart Brown, accepted that Bermudans wanted a leader stubborn enough to move them towards independence but this was unlikely even in the medium term. This was confirmed by a parliamentary delegation from the UK in 2008, which found that although there were people holding strong views on independence, it was not a core issue. Two reasons might be advanced for this. Firstly, there might be a social cost of independence insofar as latent racial tensions could be released; anecdotally it has always been assumed that Bermuda's black population is more in favour of independence than the white, the latter being comfortable within the status quo. Secondly, for its major economic sectors of offshore finance and tourism Bermuda has to be stable—the UK link helps the probity of its financial sector, whilst judicial appeals can be made to the Privy Council, something seen as important to foreign companies registered on Bermuda. One analysis of Bermuda's independence prospects addressed concerns about independence "killing the golden economic goose." The same authors revisited a well-known pragmatic reason for Bermuda remaining an Overseas Territory. Having had internal self-government since 1620, "Bermuda enjoys all but complete sovereignty, save a few, but costly, functions like conducting its foreign affairs and defence."[21] What seems not to be a factor in the debate is any relict of British identity. In complete contrast to St Helena, Bermuda does not strike its visitors as being British. Here Queen Elizabeth's birthday is not a public holiday and on May 24 what was Victoria, Empire, Commonwealth, and Heritage Day is just now Bermuda Day; other holidays are National Heroes' Day and Emancipation Day. There is no British identity here; Bermuda's continued link to the UK seems pragmatic, of the head not the heart.

## Conclusion

There is parallel pragmatism in other of the "other British Isles." Montserrat requires external support after the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano; Pitcairn and Tristan da Cunha are tiny and could never sustain independence and express no desire for it. Neither do the Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic, but here identity does seem to be changing. The Falkland Islands have a small population, around 3,000, and a continued need to be defended after the conflict with Argentina in 1982. The author has been visiting the Falklands at irregular intervals since

1993, his latest visit at the time of writing being in August–September 2011. In the years after the 1982 war (the term 'conflict' is little used there) there was an urgency amongst the islanders to be recognised as British, distant and offshore maybe, but possessing a British identity and culture of loyalty, reinforced by icons such as the red telephone boxes and pillar box outside the post office in Stanley.[22] By the 2011 visit, whilst the icons remained, attitudes seemed to have altered. Not towards Argentina, even people born well after 1982 displayed the standard antipathetic opinion and the primary identifier remained a negative: people were not Argentine; the islands were not *les Islas Malvinas*. What was different was the nature of the secondary, positive identifier—a growing sense that the people were seeing themselves as Falkland Islanders (never just 'Falklanders') rather than offshore British. Phrases, descriptors, appropriate to a nation were heard. Further, wishes were expressed that the islands could pay for their own defence at least in a normal situation, meeting the running costs of the Mount Pleasant air base etc. This palpable change in attitude perhaps reflects a period of relative prosperity in the islands and also a rise in the contribution made by local people to both economy and government. The agricultural sector, important culturally as much as economically, is now largely in local hands rather than held by large off-island estate companies. The one town of Stanley now has a series of businesses, with the significance of the once overweening Falkland Islands Company having diminished. The government system has changed, with more decisions made by members of the islands' Legislative Assembly. In sum the islanders, whilst recognising the need for the continued British link seem to have developed more of a collective island identity. Identity in the "other British Isles," then, seems to be a more complex issue than it might at first sight appear to be.

## Notes

1. Carol Corbin and Mike R. Hunter, "The Centre-Periphery Dialectic in Cape Breton: A Discourse Analysis," in *Doing Development Differently: Regional Development on the Atlantic Periphery*, ed. S. Hodgett, D. Johnson and S. A. Royle (Sydney, Nova Scotia: Cape Breton University Press, 2007), 172–186.
2. David Johnson, "Regional Development as the Work of Prometheus: A Critical Analysis of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation," in *Doing Development Differently*, ed. S. Hodgett, D. Johnson and S.A. Royle, 150–171.
3. Alistair MacLeod, "The Tuning of Perfection" in A. MacLeod, *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 127; 123.
4. Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith, editors' introduction to *Islands in History and*