

Geocaching in Tristan da Cunha

By iLaria Marengo

First published 14th November 2016

Learning about projections and coordinate systems, navigation techniques, compass and bearing, and the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS) nowadays can be a bit funnier thanks to geocaching, a modern version of the traditional treasure hunt.



In brief, geocaching consists in getting a pair of coordinates, loading them into a GPS and using the device to navigate to the point where a small box, the geocache, has been hidden. The cache is a small waterproof box and generally contains a logbook and the treasure, which usually are tiny items that have a particular meaning for the person who placed them. The people who find the cache are free to take its objects (except the logbook) but they must leave something of similar value.

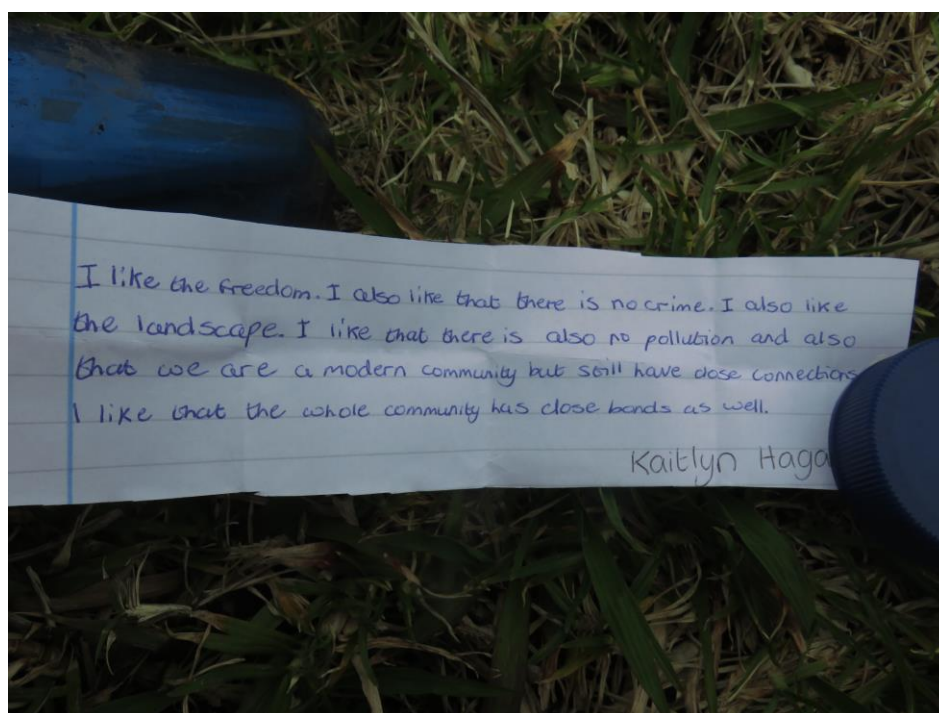
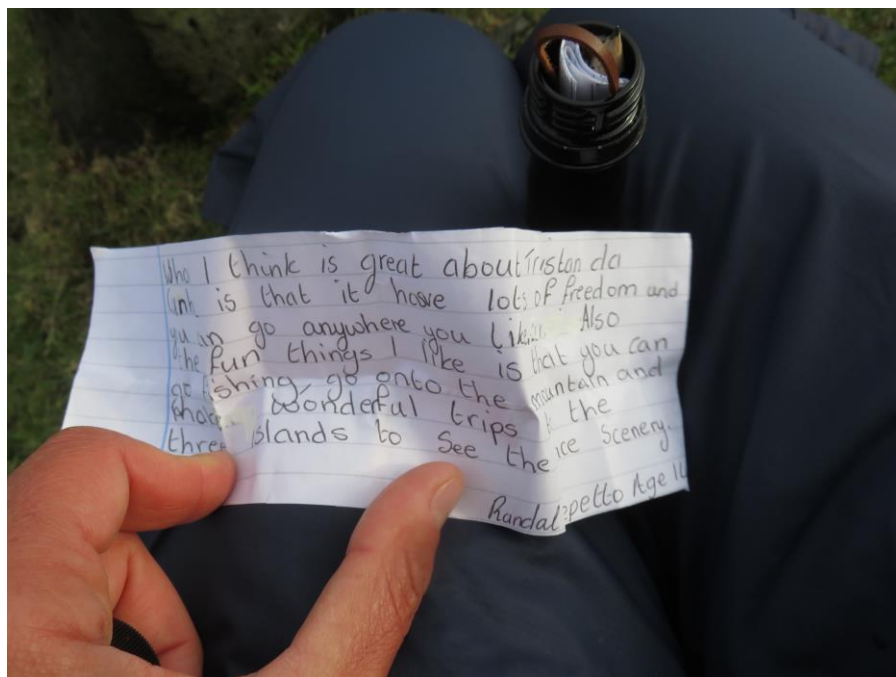
It was an unexpected but pleasant surprise to find out that in Tristan da Cunha, the remotest inhabited island in the world, a series of caches had been hidden by the local [tourist office](#) as part of a commemorative geotrail. The 200 anniversary of the British Garrison in Tristan da Cunha was celebrated with parties and various initiatives and setting up a geotrail was one of these.

The opportunity of being the first to do the geotrail was then seized and seen as the best way to engage the oldest students of Saint Mary's School to have an open air geography lesson about projections, maps and the use of GPS for navigation and marking spatial objects. Thanks to Anne, the head teacher who authorised the half day out, and the help of Sarah, fisheries officer, the kids in class 5 were taken around the settlement to learn how to use a GPS, how to mark a waypoint, enter coordinates of a point and navigate to it in order to find it. The day before the "hunt", the six pupils were asked to write on a small piece of paper why they



SAERI NEWS

enjoyed living in Tristan. The papers would have placed in each cache as treasure for the next geocachers.



SAERI NEWS

A map of the settlement with a sketch of the geotrail, the coordinates of each cache and a description of the importance of each site in the context of the British garrison period was given to the kids for reference.

1 We believe the Old Flagpole was erected by the British Garrison in situ and overlooked Big Beach. From here any arriving ships could see that the island belonged to Britain. The Flagpole was still in existence in 1911 and it was said the volcanic eruption of that time raised it by about three feet. When the islanders arrived back to the island in 1911 the Flagpole was re-erected. As you leave the Flagpole on your left you will see what is known as the Mission Garden (53° 02.855' 00.12" 18.347) this was formerly known as Fort Malcolm by the British Garrison from the 2nd Light Dragoons that arrived in 1816. The Garrison arrived aboard HMS Falmouth on 14th August 1816 and took possession of the island on behalf of King George III. This fort was established to secure the island as there were concerns that the French may use the island as an escape route for Napoleon, who was imprisoned on St Helena after his defeat in the battle of Waterloo in 1815, and as a deterrent against an American settlement.

2 Sully in this area is the bodies of 33 men from the wreck of the HMS Julia. In May 1817 the HMS Julia visited the island and anchored in a small bay called Falmouth Bay, on the north side of the island, close by the settlement. The Captain and a few crew proceeded ashore for some water and stores, weather being calm with a light northerly wind. Unfortunately, towards midnight a heavy swell set in from the north and before the crew had time to react, the ship drifted from her anchor and drove inland onto the beach. She struck a rock, and owing to the darkness, and the heavy surf, 33 people perished. The remainder got safely to land and ran up from the beach to notify the Captain and crew that had remained ashore. Following this event the garrison was withdrawn from Tristan aboard HMS Enderbee in November 1817.

3 This is the island's main water source. Rain water percolates through the volcanic rock and emerges as a strong spring at the base of the cliffs. The pure water free from preservatives and chemicals is very refreshing to drink. The water continues to flow in a stream known as 'The Big Watson' to the sea, as this was where the Garrison obtained their water. In the old days streams of fresh water ran throughout the village past every house and it would have been at these points that the Garrison collected their water.

4 This area got its name from the Cape Hottentot Soldiers that arrived with the Garrison in 1816. It was believed that they used to live in this area while residing on the island. The crossing of Hottentot Gully is the gateway to the Potato Patches where the community grows their potatoes.

5 This would have been the closest beach for the Hottentot Soldiers and the more would have been used as a good fishing ground. Still used as a fishing area today anything from 2-3c fingers to soldiers can be successfully caught here.

6 Here lie the remains of the founder of our community. After the Garrison left the island in 1817 William Glas and his family, along with two stone masons, stayed to stay. Sully after building up our small community, William died in 1817 from skin cancer. It was told that the cancer ate the side of his face away and he lived for three days without food or water. After his death, his wife and all his children left the island for America. This marble Headstone was sent to the island sometime later and erected on his grave site.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Name

Street

Town

Country

Geocaching name

How many people are in your team?

YOUR VISIT TO TRISTAN DA CUNHA:

Length of stay?

Where did you stay?

What did you enjoy most about your visit?

ON THE TRAIL DID YOU:

| | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| See a Yellow Nosed Albatross? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wash your hands in the reservoir overflow? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Talk to a cow? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lie in a field? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pick a wild flower? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have your photo with a Rockhopper Penguin? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dip your toe in the sea? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sit on the sand? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Put a flower on William Glass's Grave? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Enjoy this trail? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

CONTACT DETAILS:

Address: Tristan Tourism Centre
Tristan da Cunha Island
South Atlantic Ocean
TDCU 1ZZ

E-mail: tourism@tdc.gov.mt

Phone: 0044 203 014 2037

THE
BRITISH GARRISON
Geotrail

TRISTAN DA CUNHA

The kids of class 5 learned very quickly how to use the GPS in the two hours of cache hunting and navigation. The day before rained heavily, however the muddy and soaked fields did not spoil the day and the amusement of the kids. The hope is to have passed to the kids a new skill which they can well use in Tristan and in any job with conservation, fisheries and public work.



It would have been great to show the kids how to map the points in QGIS. However, there was not enough time to plan for a GIS lesson, which was instead given to some of their parents!