

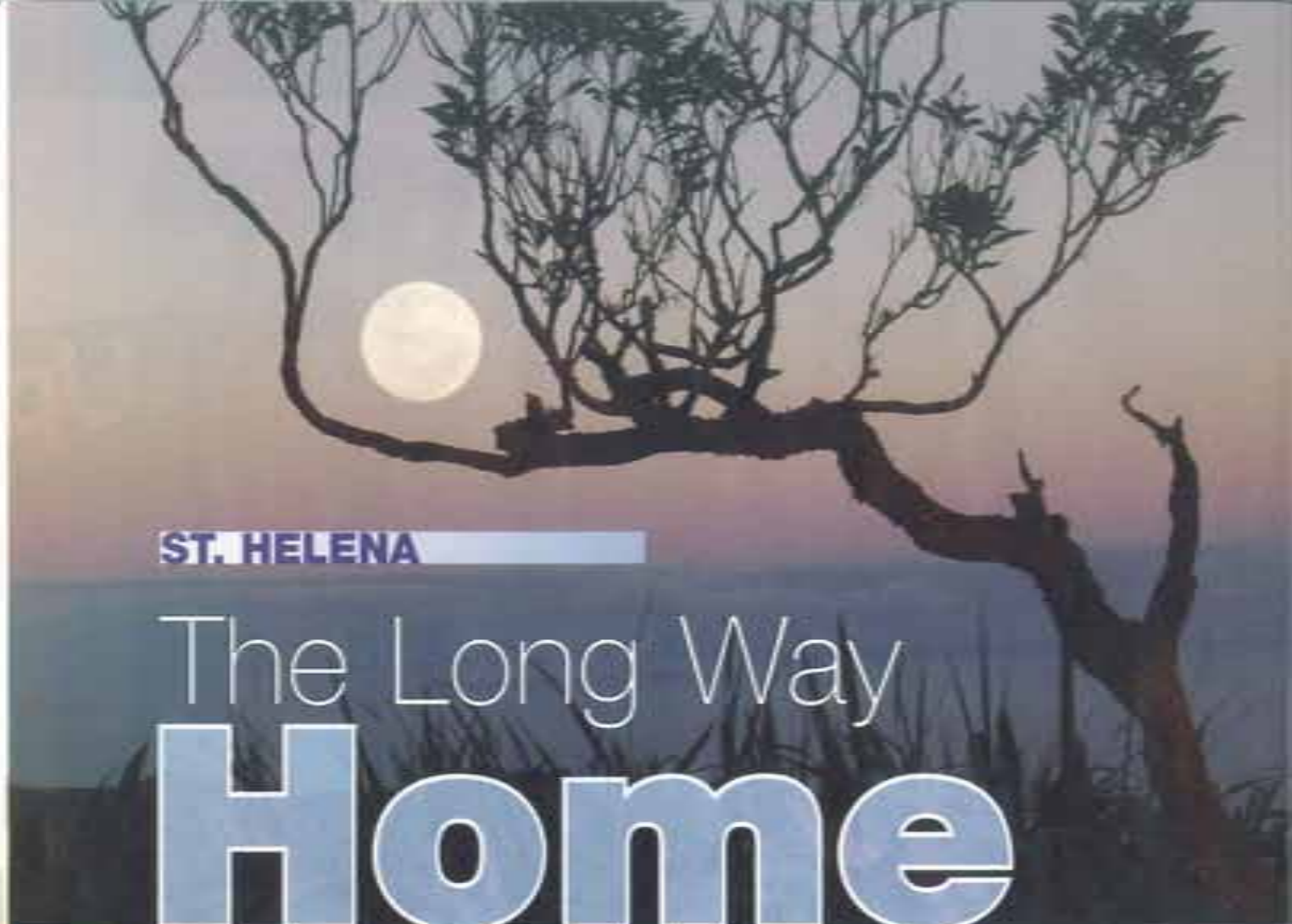


### Glossary

- 1 RMS - Royal Mail Ship (a box)
- 2 stands moored - è ormeggiato
- 3 Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom - V. Speak Up explains
- 4 were put on hold - sono stati sospesi
- 5 there has been no decrease in the demand - non c'è stato un calo nella richiesta

#### THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN...

- 1 cargo and mail ship - nave postale e cargo
- 2 critical - essenziale
- 3 container cargo - nave-containere
- 4 bosun - nostromo
- 5 assistant purser - vice commissario di bordo
- 6 on leave - in licenza



## ST. HELENA

# The Long Way Home



L'isola di Sant'Elena è citata solo nei libri di storia per aver ospitato Napoleone durante il suo ultimo esilio. Questo remoto paradiso nel mezzo dell'Oceano Atlantico è territorio britannico, ha 4000 abitanti ed è collegato alla madrepatria solo via mare. L'ideale per una vacanza davvero insolita! *by Julian Easwaker*  
**LANGUAGE LEVEL B1 (LOWER INTERMEDIATE)**



The RMS<sup>1</sup> St Helena stands moored<sup>2</sup> in the dark, deep water of Portland Harbour in Dorset, England. This 105-metre-long ship is a very long way from home. The remote volcanic island of St Helena is located in the South Atlantic Ocean, 1,900 kilometres from the west coast of Africa. It is an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup>, lying between Ascension Island (1,300 kilometres to the north) and Tristan da Cunha (2,400 kilometres to the south). St Helena has no airport and plans to build one were put on hold<sup>4</sup> earlier this year, due to the global financial crisis.

The only way to and from the island is by ship. It takes a special kind of ship to serve this isolated tropical location. Built in 1989, the RMS St Helena is uniquely designed to carry both cargo and passengers. Although the population of St Helena has fallen to just over 4,000 inhabitants over the past decade, there has been no decrease in the demand<sup>5</sup> for the goods carried on board the RMS St Helena. Anything from motor vehicles and building equipment to Christmas puddings and chickens is transported. The cargo is sometimes

**LANGUAGE LEVEL C1 (ADVANCED)**  
**TRACK 7**  
 Speaker: Justin Ratcliffe  
 Standard British accent



**Captain Rodney Young**  
 (St. Helena accent)

### This is Your Captain Speaking

As Napoleon discovered when he was exiled there in 1815, the small island of St. Helena in the Atlantic Ocean is a remote place. Its main contact with the rest of the world comes in the form of the RMS St. Helena, a cargo and mail ship<sup>1</sup> which came into service in 1989. Captain Rodney Young, who grew up on the island, has been sailing with the ship since then. He says that the relationship between the ship and the island is critical<sup>2</sup>.

Up until, I would say five years ago, the mail was everything. Now, of course, with email, and container cargo<sup>3</sup>, you might be lucky if you're carrying ten or twenty bags. I've got memories and photographs of taking out, from the UK, 150 bags of parcels and it was a massive job to count the mail. And when the ship arrived, that had to be the first thing off because... the parcel post, and on... on this Christmas sailing, you know, say, ten years ago, parcels and parcels: it was everything. Now, it's all in containers: nothing.

### CLOSE QUARTERS

We then asked him whether life on board the ship got to be intimate:

**Captain Rodney Young:**  
 Oh, very much so, very much. We all know each other... the crew, I went to school with some of them. You know, this is the thing, we all... and we know their families, or their mums and dads, or their sisters and brothers. There's family on here. The bosun<sup>4</sup> and the assistant purser<sup>5</sup> is father and daughter. The second officer, who's on leave<sup>6</sup>, her mum is the wine waitress, we've got two brothers, there's a sister and two brothers. There's everybody, everybody knows each other on here.

**ST HELENA**  
 LONDON





## Glossary

- 6 fire engine - autocarro
- 7 voyage [ˈvɔɪdʒ] /travelsata /c. Speak Up explains
- 8 132-berth liner - transatlantico da 132 cabine
- 9 crew [kruː] /membri dell'equipaggio
- 10 goat curry [ˈkɔːt ˈkɜːri] /capra al curry
- 11 likely - probabile
- 12 heritage [ˈherɪtɪdʒ] /tradizione

### DID YOU KNOW?

- 1 burial [ˈberɪəl] place - luogo di sepoltura
- 2 defeat [dɪˈfiːt] /sconfitta
- 3 currency [ˈkʌrənəsi] /valuta
- 4 wirebird - pivasca
- 5 pumpkin - zucca

Below: cars in Jamestown, the St. Helena capital. They also reach the island by ship.



unusual, says the ship's Captain Rodney Young (a native of St. Helena): on one occasion two live crocodiles travelled on board from Cape Town to Tenerife! In October this year a fire engine<sup>6</sup> donated by the Dorset Fire Service for use on the island was transported by the RMS St Helena on its Christmas voyage<sup>7</sup>. It's not only goods that the ship carries, of course, but passengers, too. This 132-berth liner<sup>8</sup> offers holiday cruises to

tourists as well as transport for "Saints", as the islanders of St Helena are known. Around 30 tourists and 100 islanders usually travel on each cruise, looked after by the 56 crew<sup>9</sup> and officers.

### CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Christmas on board the RMS St Helena is a special occasion. It is celebrated with a mix of cultural traditions – including a Christmas turkey and St Helenian dishes



### Did You Know?

- The uninhabited island was first discovered by the Portuguese in 1502.
- Britain colonised St Helena in 1659.
- The island was the last place of exile (and original burial place<sup>1</sup>) for Napoleon after his defeat<sup>2</sup> at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.
- St Helena measures just 122 square kilometres in area.
- The island has its own currency<sup>3</sup>: the St Helena pound.
- The volcanic island is covered by a large area of tropical forest full of unique plant life

- there are at least 40 species of plants here unknown anywhere else in the world
- St Helena is a birdwatcher's paradise. The national symbol, the wirebird<sup>4</sup>, is the only endemic species
- St Helenian coffee, first planted in 1733, is very rare and is reputed to be one of the finest coffees in the world
- Pumpkin<sup>5</sup> and fish are popular in the island's cuisine, which is a mixture of Malay, African, British and Chinese influences.

### Getting There

Departing Portland, Dorset, twice a year, the RMS St Helena visits Tenerife and Ascension Island on its long voyage to St Helena. Cruises vary between 14 and 31 days in length, and may also include stops

at Walvis Bay (Namibia) and Cape Town (South Africa). Cruises for 2010 include a 21-day Napoleon-themed cruise costing £2,934 per person. [www.rms-st-helena.com](http://www.rms-st-helena.com) [www.aws.co.uk](http://www.aws.co.uk) [www.discoveroursecret.co.sh](http://www.discoveroursecret.co.sh)

### Unique Service

The RMS St Helena is one of only two remaining ships in the world operating as "Royal Mail Ships" (the other is the Queen Mary). The prefix "RMS" was introduced in 1840 to indicate that ships operated under contract with the Royal Mail. "RMS" was a prestigious title for ocean-going liners including the Queen Elizabeth – and the Titanic!

such as goat curry<sup>10</sup>. From Britain the ship heads south towards the equator – and into summertime! The tropical climate of St Helena is a long way away from the cold British winter. This makes the welcome in the capital of Jamestown even warmer when the RMS St Helena arrives in port.

The ship celebrated its 100th voyage in May 2007 but, with the construction of a new airport still likely<sup>11</sup>, the future is less certain. For the time being, however, the RMS St Helena remains very much part of the island's heritage<sup>12</sup> – and the only way for islanders to make the long journey home.

Above: a cabin on the RMS St Helena and (above) a game of cricket on the ship's deck. This "Royal Mail Ship" is the island of St Helena's main form of contact with the rest of the world. Elsewhere on these pages life on this remote volcanic island, which is most famous for being the place where Napoleon was exiled after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 (he had previously escaped from Elba).