

Tristan, like the other islands of the group, was, when first discovered, uninhabited. Its first inhabitant was Captain John Patten of the ship "Industry" of Philadelphia, who landed with a part of his crew in August 1790, and remained on shore until April 1791, collecting seal skins, in which he was very successful, shipping in that time no less than 5600 for the China market. At that time there were goats on the island, but how they got there is unknown; most probably they were landed by a passing vessel, but it is quite possible that they may have swum ashore from a wreck, for Captain Patten saw the remains of different wreck, such as the bowsprit and mast of a cutter, several spars, some of which were worm eaten, some iron hoops and other pieces of iron, but no remains or traces of huts or habitations. If they were landed purposely it seems strange that there should be no record of the fact.

From 1790 Tristan Island appears to have been deserted until about 1810, when three men landed and took possession of the island, intending to remain some few years there for the seal and sea elephant fisheries, and trusting to be able to dispose of their labours to passing vessels. By a singular and curious edict, Jonathan Lambert, an American, one of the three men, declared himself, on the 4th February 1811, the sovereign proprietor of the group, and set to work to clear the land on the northwest side of Tristan, planting about 50 acres with various kinds of seed, some of which were sent to him by the American minister at Rio Janeiro, but although some of the seeds sprang up and the settlement appeared prosperous, Lambert shortly after abandoned his possessions, leaving only one man behind, viz., Thomas Currie, a native of Leghorn, who had landed in December 1810.

In November 1814 Currie was joined by a Spaniard, Bastiano Poncho Comilla, a native of Mahon, but there appears to be no record of the vessel from which he landed. At this time there were numerous flocks of goats on the island and some wild pigs, but by whom these latter animals were landed does not appear.

Such is a short account of the history of the island to the time it was taken possession of by Great Britain.

In 1816, after the Emperor Napoleon had been incarcerated in St. Helena, it was deemed advisable to send a guard to Tristan, to prevent its being made a base of operations against the former island. Accordingly Rear-Admiral Sir Pultney Malcolm, K.C.B., despatched a frigate to take possession of the group and to land a detachment. On the 14th August 1816, Captain Festing, of H.M.S. "Falmouth," arrived at Tristan Island, and proceeding on shore annexed the islands to Great Britain with all the requisite formalities, and constituted, by Sir Pultney's orders, Lieutenant David Rich, R.N., as the first Commandant. The only people on the island were Thomas Currie and Bastiano Comilla.

On the 15th August 1816, the "Falmouth" landed a lieutenant of marines, four midshipmen, and thirteen men under the orders of Lieutenant Rich. This detachment