

History of the Word : St Malo and the 'Malouins'

St Malo and the 'Malouins'

On the 9th January 1982 the British Ambassador to Argentina lodged a formal protest against the unauthorised landing on South Georgia, a few days before Christmas, of an Argentine scrap-metal merchant called Constantino Davidoff.

This relatively minor diplomatic event was soon to be hideously amplified when in April 1982 Argentine forces landed **near Stanley**, in an attempt to take the Falkland Islands from the British.

Throughout the conflict, with place names such as Goose Green, Pebble Island, and Mount Longdon becoming well-known, perhaps for the first time, the impression was given of a very British group of islands being invaded by some wrong-headed foreigner.

It was indeed the British who first **sighted** the Falklands, in modern times, at least, in 1592. But it was not until a century later that the first **landing** was made, at Bold Cove, in 1690, when Captain John Strong's expedition went ashore to replenish water supplies. It was Strong who named the water

History of the Word : St Malo and the 'Malouins'

between West and East Falkland 'Falkland Sound', after Lord Falkland, one of his financial backers; and the whole archipelago took on the name from 1708.

But if Strong was the first to **land** on the islands, it was the French who first **settled** there, under the leadership of Antoine Louise de Bougainville, in 1764 – the man who gave his name to the Bougainvillea. He renamed the islands after St Malo, the port from which his expedition had set sail, as the **Iles Malouines**. But he was forced to **sell** the new settlement to the Spanish three years later, for political reasons. The new owners retained the name, albeit with a Spanish accent – which explains why, throughout the Falklands conflict, they were still known in Argentina as 'Las Malvinas', or the St Malo Islands.

Thanks for listening. A bientôt!