

Antarctic Heritage Trust Information Sheet

Port Lockroy, Base A

Goudier Island, Wiencke Island 64°49'S, 63°29'W

Historic site and Monument No 61

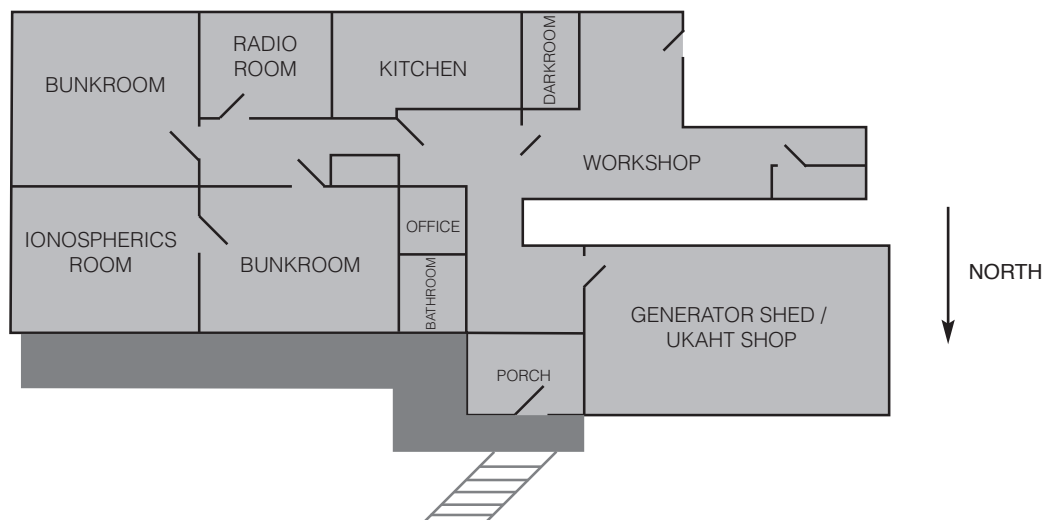


History of site

- Discovered in 1904 by Jean Baptiste Charcot, captain of the 'Francais', during the first French Antarctic expedition. It was named after a French politician who helped fund the expedition.
- The Port became known as a safe harbour and secure anchorage and was used by the whaling industry from 1911 - 1931. In those days they needed a good supply of fresh water to process the whales so proximity to the glacier was important.
- The base at Port Lockroy was established in 1944 during 'Operation Tabarin', a British World War II expedition (named after a famous Parisian nightclub of the time). The purpose of the Operation was to observe wartime enemy activities in and around the Peninsula.
- Following the end of the war the base was handed over to science. The British Antarctic Survey (BAS) operated the base as a science research station until 1962.
- The primary scientific work at Port Lockroy was ionospheric research (the study of the upper atmosphere) which was critical in understanding high frequency radio. Other scientific work included the study of how lichens, birds and mammals survived the harsh conditions of the Antarctic.
- The base closed in 1962 as the British had established other stations along the Peninsula.
- Port Lockroy's historical importance was recognised in 1995 when the Antarctic Treaty designated the site as Antarctic Historic Site and Monument (HSM) No 61.
- In 1996 a small team of four carpenters spent two to three months restoring the base as much as possible to its 1962 condition.
- The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT) took over management of Port Lockroy in 2006 and maintains the base on behalf of the UK.
- The UKAHT, a not-for-profit charity, employs a small team during the summer months to operate the base and welcome visitors. It is operated as a museum and representative British Antarctic base from the 1950s. The small gift shop and post office help to finance the operation of the museum, ongoing maintenance work to the buildings at Port Lockroy and all the conservation work that is carried out at other Historic Sites and Monuments on the Peninsula.

Building and structures Guide

- The main base building is Bransfield House constructed in 1944. It was enlarged in 1952 and 1953. In 1958 the generator shed was added to the main building.
- Today the generator shed houses the gift shop and post office that funds the UKAHT. The whole building is operated as a museum and as a representative British science base from the 1950s. Visitors are encouraged to explore the building. A number of interpretation posters are on site and the Port Lockroy team are on hand to answer any questions.
- The smaller structure to the north of the island is the boatshed, constructed in 1958. Nowadays it is used for storage.



Nissen hut (staff accommodation)

In 1944 a Nissen hut was built at Port Lockroy and used (for storage) throughout the bases operation. The original building collapsed sometime in the 1990s. The Nissen hut now on site is a replica of the original and was reconstructed in 2010 as accommodation for the seasonal staff. It is not part of the museum and therefore there is no entry to visitors. We ask that you please respect the privacy of the team.

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Gentoo penguins

- When the base was established and during its operation until 1962 there were no nesting penguins on the island. It is thought that the gentoos that currently breed on the island first established a colony in 1985.
- The UKAHT carries out annual monitoring of the breeding success of the gentoos on behalf of the British Antarctic Survey. The study is ongoing since 1996 in order to determine the impact of tourism on their breeding success. Results from the study show that there is no discernible impact.
- As part of the penguin study half of the island is off-limits to staff and visitors. Please ensure that you do not enter the control colonies. The Port Lockroy team will be happy to advise.

Visiting Port Lockroy

- Visits to Port Lockroy are scheduled via the IAATO ship scheduler. During the summer months visits and changes to schedules should be coordinated with the Port Lockroy Base Leader. The team can be contacted by email lockroy@ukaht.org and also on VHF channel 16.
- If possible, a member of the Port Lockroy team should be invited onboard prior to the landing to provide an introduction to the base and brief the visitors. The Port Lockroy briefing film should also be shown to visitors prior to landing.
- The main currency in the gift shop and post office is US \$ although UK £ and Euro € are also accepted. Credit cards (MasterCard and Visa only) are accepted and the minimum spend is US \$10 (all transactions charged in US\$).
- Visitors are welcome to write postcards in the lounge where there are table, chairs, pens and decorative stamps available. Postcards/letters should be posted in the red letter box by the main entrance to Bransfield House.

Please take note of the following during your visit*:

1. The preferred landing site is to the west of the island, near the old whaling mooring chains. There is a path that leads directly to Bransfield House.
2. Ensure all outdoor clothing and boots are clean before entering the building. Please use the boot scrubber provided.
3. The site is a historic site and monument and therefore overnight stays should not be made. Please do not handle, use or remove any artefacts.
4. Please do not smoke or use matches, candles or stoves in or around the building.
5. As part of the penguin monitoring study, half of the island is off limits. Please refer to the Antarctic Treaty visit site guide and ensure that visitors and staff do not enter the control colonies. The Port Lockroy team is also happy to advise.
6. Leave a record of your visit in the visitor book and please report any damage to the hut or its contents or maintenance required to the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust: info@ukaht.org
7. If the Port Lockroy team is not on site then a cleaning kit will be left in the porch. Please ensure that the hut is clean on your departure and that snow/water is mopped up from the floors.
8. Please ensure that all doors and windows are securely closed when you leave.

* For all official guidelines and specific instructions please refer to the Port Lockroy Antarctic Treaty Visitor Site Guide

Thank you for visiting!