



Museum of Saint Helena

Fact sheet: Getting Connected

Radio St Helena began operating in 1967. St Helena's landscape and remoteness made communication a challenge.

Communication with the outside world

Letters sent sailing ship took several months to meet their destination. This delay continued until 1863 when Steam-powered mail ships began monthly trips from Cape Town. The island was connected by submarine telegraph line to England in 1900, allowing short coded messages to be quickly sent and received. 1990s satellite technology created new options such as faxes, television and international direct dialling. Today, the Internet provides instant global communication.

Communication on the Island

Early settlers communicated on foot or by cannon. When a ship was spotted from a lookout point, alarm guns would relay the message to Jamestown. Semaphore was used in the 19th century but little changed until electric telegraph was introduced in 1867, followed by the telephone in 1898, but these were only for official and military use. In 1953 the telephone system expanded to all districts and the installation of an automatic exchange in 1983 made telephones accessible to almost all Saints.

The first printing press was brought to the Island in 1806 by Saul Solomon. Since then many independent newspapers and journals have been produced and discontinued. The Government has sponsored a regular newspaper for the last 50 years.

Radio began during WWII with limited broadcasts of war news and continued to develop until Radio St Helena began operating in 1967.