



years of history



# 100 years of serving the Isles of Scilly

In 1920, the people of the Isles of Scilly came together to form a company to deliver a reliable transport link to the mainland. We are that company.

The Certificate of Incorporation of the Company was dated 26th March 1920, and that of the right of the Company to commence business, is dated 27th April 1920. Our first ship was an ex-Royal Navy ship renamed 'Penninis'. In 1925, plans were drawn up for a purpose-built ship for the islands. There was much discussion over what she should be named, but a unanimous vote was carried at the annual general meeting and she was named, 'Scillonian'.

Today, the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group is a little bigger. As well as transporting passengers, we deliver luggage and carry freight. We operate planes and ships. We run an airport and a Dry Dock. But our aim is always the same: to deliver for Scilly.

In 2020, we, the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group celebrate 100 years of history.



*The first purpose built 'Scillonian', launched in 1926.  
Powered by steam, she could carry 165 tons of cargo and 390 passengers.*

## FLOWERS

In the early days, the launch of Scillonian was a great asset to the islands' flower exports, allowing regular passage to the mainland for onward transport to meet flower markets.

By the 1950s, Scilly's flower trade had flourished, flowers were loaded overnight and every bit of undercover space aboard Scillonian was filled. Skybus, provided another fast route to transport flowers from Scilly.

The inter-island post boat named 'Swift Lady' was added to the fleet in 2000, to supplement the islands freight vessel and support the flower trade.



## WAR

As well as serving islanders, 'Scillonian' carried large numbers of land, sea and air servicemen to and from Scilly. Remarkably, Scillonian maintained a near-perfect sailing record throughout the war.

Between 1939 and 1945 Captain Reseigh and his crew completed 1,552 crossings. Scillonian survived the war without serious damage and no loss of life.

The ship's master, Captain Reseigh, and Chief Engineer, Mr A Nicholls, were both awarded the MBE by King George VI.



## PEOPLE

Since inception in 1920, the people behind the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group are what made it what it is today.

With descendants of the founding directors, devotedly serving the company today and frontline workers going above and beyond to fulfil their duty to the islands; engineers keeping ships and planes in top condition, office staff busily working behind the scenes and captains proudly commanding their vessels.

The foundation of any successful company is the team behind it.



Daphne Chudleigh



Captain Reseigh



Fred Ward



Marcia Still

1919

**15th May 1919**  
A public meeting at the Town Hall on St. Mary's considers if it's possible to maintain or arrange for a Steamship service between the islands and the mainland. Some 95 people attend and they vote for Mr FR Ward as Chair.

**22nd November 1919**  
Mr JC Rogers proposes forming a limited liability company with a nominal capital of £25,000. This would be funded by selling shares at five shillings each – with a limit of £5,000 for any one shareholder. Mr Jeffery seconds the idea, and it's agreed unanimously.



Scillonian I

1926

'Scillonian' makes her first official voyage on 2nd February 1926. Soon she's ready for service, and passengers are stepping aboard to discover the islands.

1932

In our early days we also ran launch boats, carrying islanders and freight to St. Martin's, St. Agnes, Bryher and Treco. The return fare to St. Mary's is one shilling and school children travelled for free. We buy a formal Royal Navy trot boat and rename her 'Nor-Nor'. Nor-Nor and her companion 'Gugh' were frequently chartered in cases of medical emergency for the conveyance of patients to Penzance hospital.



1938

Our expanding company needs a new home and the Duchy of Cornwall offers a site in Hugh Street. We still use the same office today.

1956

Scillonian starts to show her age and becomes slower as the company struggles to find coal stokers. So, in 1952 we order a replacement ship, 'Scillonian (II)', from Messrs Thornycroft at Woolston, Southampton. She's launched in November 15th, 1956 and sails faithfully for 25 years.



1965

We commission a new passenger and cargo ship, 'Queen of the Isles,' to add to our Scillonian service. Launched on November 16th 1965, she runs for five years until a decline in the tourism industry means it's time for her to move on.



1984

We took our first step into air travel and developed the Skybus airline as a faster way to transport passenger and freight to the islands. By 1987 this expanded to offer scheduled and commercial flights. Today, Skybus has a larger fleet and offers regular flights to and from the Isles of Scilly from Land's End, Newquay and Exeter airports.



2009

After many years of having our ships maintained by the former Holman's Dry Dock in Penzance, we took over its lease. Penzance Dry Dock is the oldest in Europe and means we have the engineering facilities and expertise to look after our own ships – and others too.



2011

We add Nike Engineering at Porthmellon to our range of marine and mechanical engineering services. The site continues to run until 2018.



2013

We built a completely new terminal at Land's End Airport. In 2014 we invested a further £2.6 million, surfacing the grass runways and adding new drainage and lighting to improve reliability and comfort.



2017

We celebrate 40 years of faithful service from Scillonian III, our longest serving ship to date.



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2019

We welcome our 4.5 millionth ferry passenger aboard Scillonian III.

1920

**27th April 1920**  
Certificates proving the company's incorporation and right to start business are laid out on the meeting table, along with a list of shareholders. The official date on the incorporation certificate is 26th March 1920 and we begin trading from 27th April.

**22nd July 1920**  
After careful consideration, our new company chooses its first directors.

We bought a Royal Navy steam cruiser called 'HMS Argus' and rename her 'RMS Peninnis'. A former coastguard ship, she carries passengers to and from the islands for six years, before costly repairs mean it's time for her to retire.

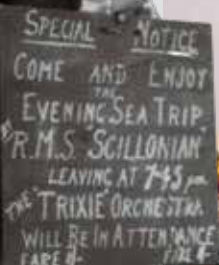
1925

To follow Peninnis, we ordered the first of our purpose-built Scillonian passenger ferries from the Ailsa Shipbuilding Company in Scotland.

A grand, steam-powered vessel, Scillonian can carry 165 tons of cargo and 390 passengers. She cuts the journey from Penzance to the Isles of Scilly to a little over three hours.



Peninnis



Company House Shield

The upper left panel shows the steamer coming into St. Mary's; the upper right-hand is a scroll, inscribed with the initial letters of the Company – ISSSCo. The bottom left is a sheaf of Soleil d'Or narcissi; the final panel shows the outline of the five inhabited islands.

1958

The crest which can still be seen on Scillonian's bow is designed by Mr RW Gillard from Penzance. It's a shield, made of cast brass and divided into four panels.

1975

We ordered our third Scillonian ferry. 'RMV Scillonian III' carries up to 485 passengers to and from the Isles of Scilly. She is powered by diesel and has two on-board cafes to choose from. The new ship is built in Appledore, North Devon, and is launched on May 17, 1977.



1989

In 1987 Scillonian III has a well-earned rest from service – her first ever – and a coaster is chartered to carry freight. Then in 1989 we purchased the Norwegian freight ship 'Gry Maritha' so we could provide the islands with a year round cargo service.

To support this service, we added an inter-island freight vessel, 'Lyonesse Lady', and a small post boat called 'Swift Lady'. In 1991, Scillonian III starts evening coastal trips up the River Fal and around Penzance.



2015

Island Carriers, which provides haulage and courier services on St. Mary's, joins our company to provide a seamless cargo service from door to door.

2015 saw the launch of our Community Fund. This supports not-for-profit projects benefiting the communities of the Isles of Scilly and West Cornwall, with grants of up to £10,000. So far, the fund has donated a total of £82,214 to 53 good causes.

During this year we purchased a larger freight ship 'Mali Rose' as the first step in a strategy to renew all our vessels. Following extensive trials we decided that she wasn't fit for the route and the vessel was sold.

2018

We launched a new service at Land's End Airport: an AW169 helicopter flying into St. Mary's Airport. Island Helicopters was operated by Gloucester-based Specialist Aviation Services, but the service ceased in November 2018 due to lack of demand.



2020

The Isles of Scilly Steamship Group celebrates 100 years of service, providing essential transport links for both passengers and freight between the Isles of Scilly and the mainland.





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