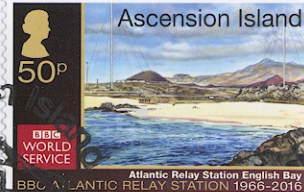
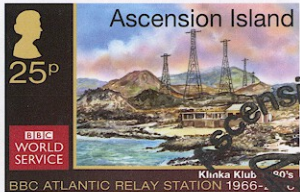
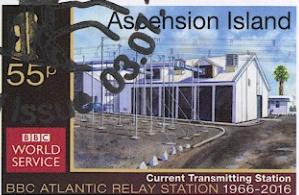


Ascension Island

BBC ATLANTIC RELAY STATION



Ascension Island
First Day of Issue



Official First Day Cover

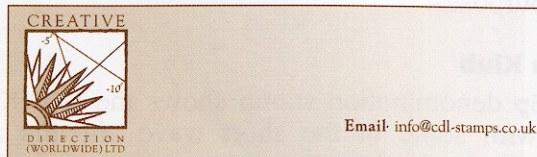




TECHNICAL DETAILS

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Process: Stochastic lithography
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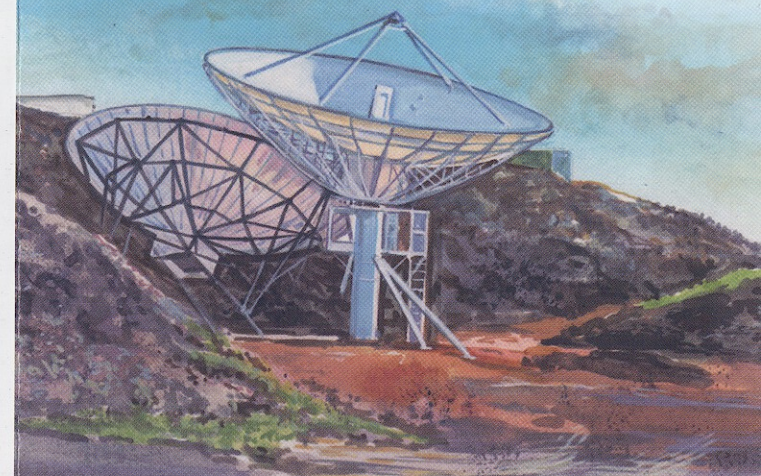


ASCENSION ISLAND

BBC ATLANTIC RELAY STATION



trusted to deliver™



50 years of the BBC on Ascension Island

Way back in 1964 a party of BBC engineers set sail on the Union Castle line from Southampton to Ascension Island to carry out a site survey for a Short Wave Relay Station to be located on Ascension Island. Their findings were favourable, Ascension Island being ideally located in the centre of the South Atlantic Ocean roughly midway between the continents of Africa and South America. They located an ideal reasonably flat site on this volcanic island on the Northern Coast of the island, at English Bay, and a suitable location for a short wave receiving station in a screened valley at Butt Crater. The power requirements for the transmitters required a large diesel fired power station to be constructed. A village at Two Boats was constructed to house the new influx of BBC Staff.

Some two years later on Sunday 3rd July 1966, the first short wave broadcasts from the BBC Atlantic Relay Station were heard in Africa and South America.

Original Control Desk

The 20p denomination stamp features the operation of the receiving station control desk with the Presentation and Administration Officer at work in the recording studio. The scene dates from the very early days of the station operation. Programmes broadcast on short wave radio from the UK were received off air on Ascension and then re transmitted from the transmitting station at English Bay. These live news programmes were supplemented by programmes shipped to the Island on magnetic tape, together with local interval announcements recorded in a small studio on tape cassettes. These facilities were all housed at the Butt Crater Receiving Station. A rudimentary relay control system programmed using links plugged into a pegboard selected the correct receiver to the correct transmitter chain and fired off the tape machines



and cassette machines at the correct times. This arrangement continued virtually unchanged until 1979, when the receiving station became remotely controlled from the English Bay transmitting station. The original building still remains on the Island, but is now used for other purposes.

Klinka Klub

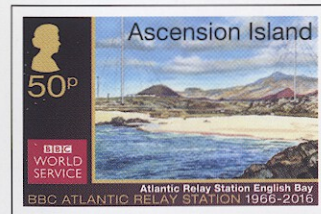
The 25p denomination stamp shows the BBC Klinka Klub, with some of the short wave antenna array towers in the background. After a long shift at the transmitting station staff and their families could relax at the nearby BBC staff social club, named the Klinka Klub, after the volcanic rock deposits that are common on the Island.



This beach hut was constructed close to English Bay and contains a collection of engraved plaques as a who's who of former staff who have served the BBC on this island during its 50 years. It is a popular haunt for evening BBQ's close to the beach. The building remains today as a social club for the benefit of all Islanders and their families.

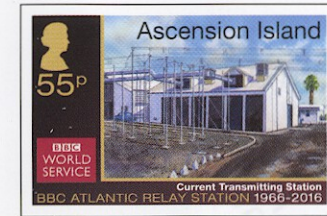
Atlantic Relay Station English Bay

The 50p denomination stamp shows a scene almost unchanged throughout the life of the station, a view looking over English Bay Beach towards the BBC station. The transmitting station was originally constructed in 1966 with 4 high power Marconi shortwave transmitters and 20 short wave antennas, broadcasting short wave radio programmes to Africa and South America. The site underwent its first major refurbishment in the mid 1980's. Two additional Marconi transmitters and 4 new antennas were added to the site, a satellite dish was installed to allow direct satellite reception of BBC programme feeds from London, bringing about the closure of the Butt Crater receiving station. The site was again re-engineered in 2007.



Current Transmitting Station

The 55p denomination shows a view of the new transmitter building which was refurbished in 2007 and houses 4 state of the art fully automatic high power short wave transmitters. These transmitters together with a fully automated station control system allow the site to be completely unattended, and the site operates with only a maintenance team on Island, all routine transmitter and antenna operation being fully automated. Today the station broadcasts BBC short wave radio programmes to large audiences in Africa in English, French and Hausa.



BBC Wind Turbines

As part of the 2007 re-engineering the BBC invested in a Wind Farm which is shown on the 65p denomination stamp. Ascension is blessed with a near constant cooling wind being located directly in the Trade Winds. Formerly totally reliant on diesel fuel for electricity generation, five 330kW wind turbines located close to the shore at English Bay provide an average of 25% of the island's electricity demands.



Current Transmitting Station

The £1.60 denomination shows the main office of the transmitting station. The site is now operated and maintained by our contractors Babcock International. The scene shows the BBC flag – only flown when BBC visitors are present on the island. The Babcock Station Manager has an office with possibly the best office view in the world – overlooking the wide expanses of the South Atlantic Ocean where dolphins can often be spotted offshore.



Text by Robert Hammond, Manager Developments, BBC World Service Group.

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