

## ISLAND LINKS

by Trevor W. Hearl

Athletes from St Helena have been invited to compete in the unique Year Of Sport being held throughout 1985 on the Isle of Man. When the Hon. Eric Benjamin was representing St Helena at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Douglas recently, he met his former tutor at St Paul's College, Cheltenham, Geoff Corlett, now Director of the Manx Games. They agreed to try and make it possible for a St Helenian team to join the Inter-Island Games in July. Though lacking facilities, St Helenians are fine sportsmen - in all senses of the word - and have been among the Commonwealth's best marksmen - and women!

Members of the St Helena and Dependencies Philatelic Society will know better than most that St Helena and the Isle of Man historically share a common link in the person of Col. Mark Wilks, the East India Company's popular Governor of St Helena 1813-1816, and later, Speaker of the Manx House of Keys, the oldest Parliament in the world. In 1981, the Isle of Man issued a set of Wilks commemorative stamps, one of which, the 22p value, showed him as Governor of St Helena and conversing with Napoleon. The exiled Emperor briefly enjoyed the company and conversation of the accomplished Manxman and deeply regretted his replacement by the Government-appointed Hudson Lowe. Wilks brought home a young freed St Helenian slave who, unfortunately, died young. Wilks raised a stone to record the fact, a stone which can still be seen in Old Kirk Braddon churchyard, Douglas, today. The stone reads:

“SAMUEL ALLY

“An African, and native of St Helena  
Died 28 May 1822 aged 18 years  
Born a slave and exposed in early life  
To the corrupt influence of that unhappy state  
He became a model of truth and probity for  
The more fortunate of any country or condition.

“This stone is erected by a grateful  
Master, in the memory of a faithful servant  
Who repaid the boon of liberty with  
Unbounded attachment.”

A remarkable and quite touching sequel attends this story. Visitors to the old churchyard today will find only one grave always bedecked with flowers. It is that

of the faithful St Helenian servant who, every month, is still honoured with a floral tribute, a tradition kept alive by the local Girl Guides.

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