

Tristan Da Cunha 1961 Volcano Relief Stamps

In 1961, Tristan Da Cunha was plunged into chaos as the volcano erupted, and the inhabitants had to flee for their lives. The Governor of St. Helena, on which stocks of Tristan stamps were held, made the decision to overprint and surcharge four values, with the intention of the extra revenue going to help the Relief Fund.

The big mistake came when the governor went ahead with the idea without proper authorization, and he duly sent a postcard containing three of the stamps to Reginald Maudling, who was then Secretary of State, on October 12th 1961.

The overprinting was inspired by the fact that a ship had called at St. Helena, and the relief stamps could be sold to the passengers. However, it all went wrong, as the Colonial Officer was furious that the designs had gone ahead without his permission. He then instructed the Governor to destroy them.

After a while, the Colonial Officer relented, but not before most of the stocks had been destroyed. Records show that only 434 complete sets were sold.

Mark Steele.