

# THE PRINCIPALITY OF SEALAND



## BASICS

Sealand was founded as a sovereign Principality in 1967 in international waters, six miles off the eastern shores of Britain. In late June of 2006, the island suffered a devastating fire which destroyed much of the country's administrative centre and the main power generation facility which serves its population and industries. Fortunately, back-up systems exist which permit its activities to continue but the disaster has compromised significantly the quality of life of its inhabitants and the continued development of the island's economic and social growth.

The history of Sealand is a story of a struggle for liberty. Sealand was founded on the principle that any group of people dissatisfied with the oppressive laws and restrictions of existing nation states may declare independence in any place not claimed to be under the jurisdiction of another sovereign entity. The location chosen was Roughs Tower, an island fortress created in World War II by Britain and subsequently abandoned to the jurisdiction of the High Seas. The independence of Sealand was upheld in a 1968 British court decision where the judge held that Roughs Tower stood in international waters and did not fall under the legal jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. This gave birth to Sealand's national motto of *E Mare Libertas*, or "From the Sea, Freedom".

The official language of Sealand is English and the Sealand Dollar has a fixed exchange rate of one U.S. dollar. Passports and stamps have been in circulation since 1969 and the latter decade of the 20th century saw an impressive expansion in its activity both socially and industrially as it began to develop a growing economic base which underscored its long-standing membership of the international community of States.

## **MORE FACTS**

During the 1939–45 War, Great Britain established an artificial island on the High Seas. This island was equipped with radar and heavy armaments and occupied by some two hundred servicemen. The task of the island and its inhabitants was to guard the approaches to the Thames Estuary, where large and vulnerable convoys of shipping were assembled. Some time after the cessation of hostilities, the island was derelicted and abandoned by the British Government.

In the winter of 1966, a British family took possession and commenced the task of equipping and restoring the island. On 2 September 1967, they hoisted their own flag and declared the existence of a new state – the Principality of Sealand. Their rights and claims of Sovereignty over the island and its territorial waters have been ratified time after time over the intervening years by National Courts and leading international Jurists.

European states, during disputes involving Sealand, have stated that they have no rights or authority in Sealand and the major European states have repeatedly given de facto recognition to the existence and the Sovereignty of Sealand.

Over the years since the declaration of Statehood by Sealand, the family lived a free–frontier lifestyle. They made and enforced the laws of Sealand. They faced and drove off armed attackers and on one occasion, a member of the family was actually kidnapped by armed men and taken to a foreign country against his will. Sealand came under threat from hostile naval units from other states and, in the early days of independence, there were the most determined attempts made to isolate and starve out the island.

The elements and the sea had to be fought constantly with a relentless determination. It was a very busy, active and adventurous life for the family and their fellow Sealanders and they all thrived on it.

Gradually, over the years, Sealand has become increasingly secure and internationally accepted. More and more, the international Lawyers and other Jurists stated that Sealand fulfilled all the legal requirements of a State and that the Sovereignty of Sealand was absolute and unquestionable. The major states of Europe have now accepted this as a fact.

### **ASSIGNMENT – IS SEALAND A STATE (COUNTRY)?**

**Write a one page essay using this summary, class discussion, and any further research that explains why Sealand should, or should not, be considered a state.**