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The Darien Disaster

By John Prebble

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John Prebble's account of the Darien Disaster chronicles Scotland's attempt to acquire it's own South American colony and establish a trading company to rival England's East India Company. However it was to end badly with lives and reputations as well as a great deal of money squandered and the eventual union with England. The Darien scheme was an unsuccessful attempt, backed largely by investors of the Kingdom of Scotland, to gain wealth and influence by establishing New Caledonia, a colony on the Isthmus of Panama, in the late 1690s. To be located on the Gulf of Darien, the plan was for the colony to establish and manage an overland route to connect the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. From the scheme's inception until today, rival claims have been made suggesting that the undertaking was beset by poor planning and Verified Purchase. The Darien Disaster should be read by all Scots. Read more. Report abuse. **Cssor**. 4.0 out of 5 stars I was interested in this time and of this particular Reviewed in the United Kingdom on August 13, 2014. Verified Purchase. Verified Purchase. Good explanation about the disaster. Read more. Report abuse. **David Webster**. 5.0 out of 5 stars The Forgotten Tragedy. Reviewed in the United Kingdom on April 24, 2013. Verified Purchase. From the maps, Darien, near what is now the border between Panama and Colombia, looked to be the best spot to start a settlement. It was on the narrowest part of the isthmus so that meant less work building a path to the Pacific. But, none of the colony's planners, including Paterson, had ever been there. The Scottish climate is cool, wet, and changeable. In Darien, it is swelteringly hot all year round, with some places getting well over 100 inches of rain a year. Scotland has clouds of irritating midges; tiny biting insects. Historically Darien, Panama, has vindicated Pirate Partan's estimate of it in Warburton's seventeenth century Darien: "Ye little ken, leddie, what it is tae crass the says, and what a sair land is ayont 'em. It is wha' auld Tam hae called a painted sapulker, fair 'ithout but 'ithin o' corruption." It contains the completely obliterated Ada, the 1515-80 Atlantic terminus of Balboa's and other overland routes to the Pacific.