

REGULATING STAFF

MAA David Edwards

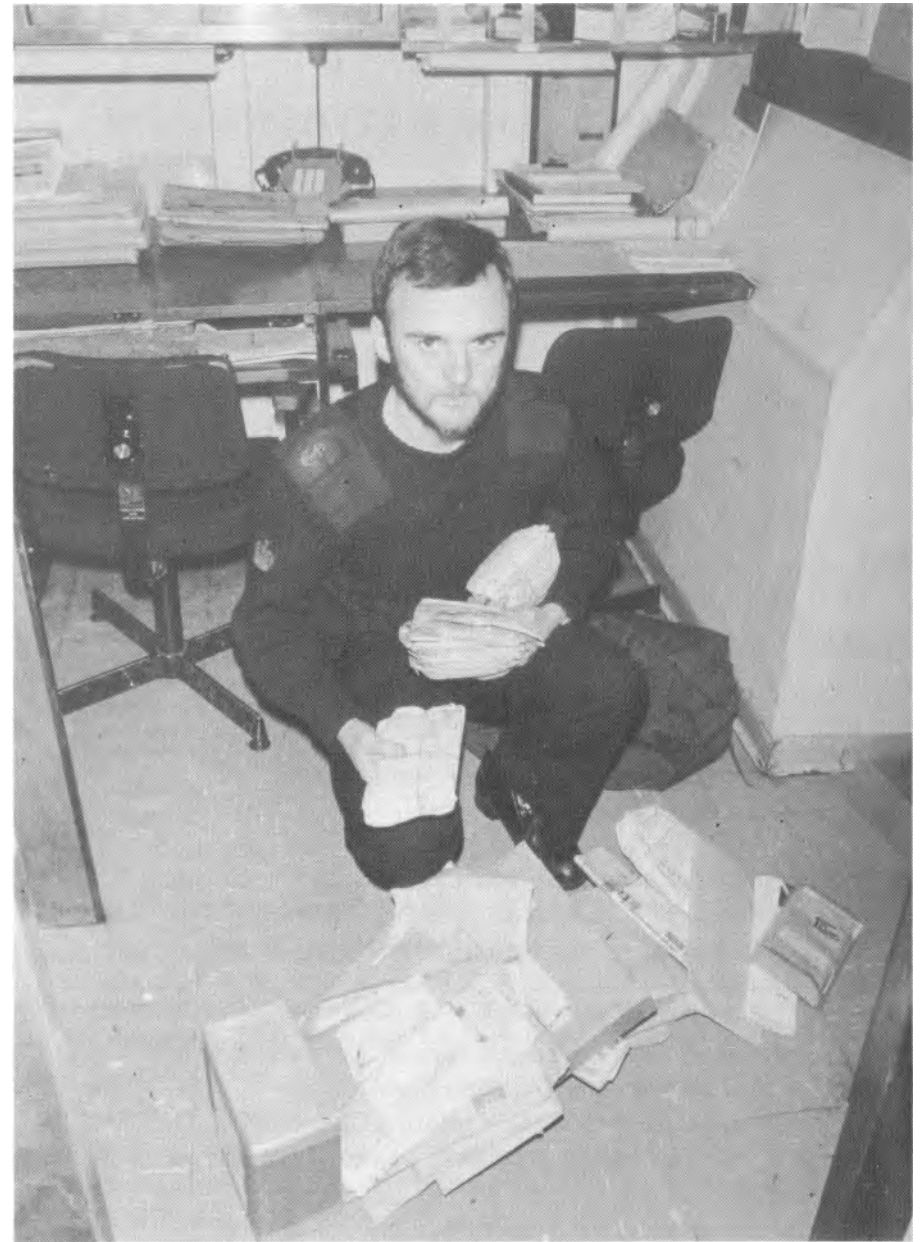
L.Reg. Simon Bottom

HAVING VOLUNTEERED to start from scratch on a brand new warship, the wish of every Regulator who has spent most of his career amending other peoples' systems to suit himself, it came as quite a shock when on that November morning back in 1980 I first sighted a part built, part painted hulk that slightly resembled a ship of the line.

" Yes, mate, that's the ' Southampton ', or it will be," said a Woolston Docky, "the shoreside offices are up there." It was quite a relief to find that Silvermere House (our shoreside offices) was a well furnished, comfortable building with a huge open fire sighted in a red brick grate. Suddenly, the build-up period became much more attractive.

At this stage of the game the Ship's Company consisted of a fairly small team made up mostly from the technical branches, and dotted here and there was an occasional sailor scratching his head as he tried to make sense of a BR that was no more than a cover and a pile of numbered amendments. The only things that appeared to be regular were the never ending stream of meetings and the coffee boat kettle.

I was handed a huge pile of draft orders, most cancelled, some amended, and even some fresh new ones. I was also warned that they would change as the programme slipped right with each meeting that took place. The front office, as the Regulating Office was affectionately known to those that sneaked in and out of the building by the back door, had been looked after by Nigel Pearn, the Chief Stoker. " Everything that I've actioned is in that drawer ", he said pointing, " and everything else that has come in is in that one. Oh! yes, and you can keep my coffee cup.", was his brief turnover. The one thing that was to prove to be my best friend was a huge PQ number chart that the Chief Stoker had compiled. Looking at it I could see the expected build up of the Ship's Company over the months to come. The challenge was on, what to do first? I think I joined the coffee boat in order to try out my newly acquired mug.



Leading Regulator Bottom sorting our precious mail.

The months went by with each week bringing new faces into the ship. By March, 1981, we had more people than we had jobs for, whilst the ship was being built in the Woolston Yard. So Ron Belcher, the Chief GI; "Bud" Abbott, the Chief PRI; and Jim Lyndsey, the Leading Regulator; were sent to HMS "Excellent" to run an intense training programme. This was the start of the Base Port Unit, and in this BPU over the coming months our ever growing Ship's Company was trained in Fire Fighting, Light Rescue, First-Aid and everything else that may or may not come in useful at a later date, but made it necessary for everyone to work as a team. This period was to form the basis on which the attitude towards life on board "Southampton" would be set when we finally got our ship complete with White Ensign.

On the 18th June, 1981, we took over our newly painted home. The piece of steel had now become the foundation of a community, a self-contained village in which everyone, from all trades, were checking and double checking their own areas. Claims were being staked, small areas marked as this store and that store, and the same question was being asked over and over again. "Is it 'Southampton' standard?" The unknown factor had been identified, every ship has a personality, no one knows where it comes from, but "Southampton" had decided she was going to be a winner.

The obvious difference between joining a going concern and starting from scratch that I had noticed were mainly that there were no cliques. It was a combined effort to get it right, and that more effort was put in, it needed to be right for the ship as a whole and not just right for one department. This situation still exists today, some 21 years on, and that has been the biggest single factor, I believe, in setting the tone of the atmosphere that we have lived in.

"Get your haircut!" "Is that the best pair of shoes you own?" "What time do you call this?" Were to be heard as I found my way around my new patch. "No problem, I'll fix that Master at Arms", came the smiling reply with that "you won't crack me" ring to it. "Good 'ere, ain't it, Joss?" said a voice as a body disappeared down into the engine room on yet another set of rounds. Not too bad, I thought to myself.

None of the 284 of us realised the changes we would go through during what is often referred to as our "First Commission". An expression frowned upon by members of the way ahead committee brigade, who brought us other gems such as non-port areas and good old American sounding names like Charge Chief and Chief Ops(?).

We were destined to exchange a deployment to the Far East for action stations in the South Atlantic not to mention five full fledged winters in rapid succession broken only by a few days of sunshine en route to the next one. Thoughts had switched from souvenirs to survival. How would this take its toll on the ship's morale I asked myself?.

The questions I was being asked in the office had changed, instead of "Am I entitled to go via London?" or "Are we getting summer leave?" it was "Have you got any Will forms?" "What does power of attorney mean?" and "What do you reckon my missus would get if . . . ?" Youngsters grew up fast and everyone looked closely at what they did for a living, looking to improve their input and increase the odds in our favour. As the standards went up so did morale, the older members thought back to cash in on past experiences, times and places gone by were mentioned: Aden, Malaya, Cyprus and Beira Patrol, but this was different, or was it? "They had better leg it before we arrive," was heard in the flats. "Hey, leave some targets for the afternoon watch to shoot down", was shouted into the Ops. Room. They had stopped, thought and decided, "Southampton Standard" can hack it.

Being a Policeman? I never had time really, too busy you see. Sure a few pounds were donated in fines and some people even found time to work extra hours by way of various punishments, mostly volunteers you understand, it saved time that way. No, the Navy hasn't changed. It could be said we've found the secret, that Naval discipline is only another word for self-discipline or to put it another way "Southampton Standard".

My relief joins in December this year, what can I tell him? I could point out that there have been four Commanding Officers, two Executive Officers, three Leading Regulators, the ship's company have changed over by about 80% and, no, come to think of it, I think I'll settle for "there's the keys, good 'ere ain't it, Joss?". I can't do a full turnover you see, I broke the coffee cup.



THE SAINT & THE SEAGULL

IN THE days when HMS "Southampton" was still building at Woolston, the emergence of the sixth warship to bear the name of the City came to the notice of Radio Solent, the BBC Local Radio Station based in Southampton. Radio Solent promptly adopted the ship and started a happy association between the two that has continued ever since, linking the symbol of the Saint with Radio Solent's seagull motif.

Although many members of the station's staff have contributed to the success of this connection, the driving force continues to be Robin Worman, presenter of Radio Solent's breakfast show. Robin — known to his colleagues as the "Navy Nut" who knows such facts as the date that the Navy

adopted the White Ensign for all its ships — has done much to keep the people of Southampton in touch with what their ship is doing, assisted by colleagues who also given special mention to our activities. This has had particular significance for the families and friends of the ship's company, many of whom live in the area.

Among the tokens of friendship Radio Solent has given the ship is the Golden Rivet — every sailor knows what that is, but don't embarrass him by asking — a barricoe (pronounced "breaker") of rum to warm the ship during the deployment of 1982, and during this year's deployment a RAS flag of style and dignity. But the greatest favour of all has been the exchange of tapes between Radio Saint and Radio Solent while the ship has been away, exchanging messages and music between the ship's company and those they left behind. Sandi Jones' voice on "Sunday with Sandi" has done much for morale and brought us all closer.



Tim Neale, Manager of Radio Solent, presents the Golden Rivet to the ship's first captain, Captain H. G. de Courcy-Ireland.

CHARITIES

S/LT. G. P. BOWEN

IT IS rare these days for a warship not to adopt a charity or organisation from that ship's adopted town or city. HMS " Southampton " is no exception and it became evident very early in the ship's life that choosing a charity to adopt would be no easy task. By the time the ship was commissioned we had received nearly 50 requests for adoption! The Welfare Committee decided that whatever charity we adopted, it would be one based in Southampton. This resulted in the drawing up of a short list of six charitable organisations. Each of these was visited and eventually it was decided that the ship would adopt two organisations. These were " The Southampton and District Spastics Association " and the " Children's Home at Kingsclere Avenue, Weston ".

The Southampton and District Spastics Association is based at Rose Road and incorporates Mordaunt School. The school is primarily a day school but also has a small residential unit for short term patients. The main aim of the residential unit is to care for spastic children for a period of up to two weeks to enable their parents to have a holiday and a break from the extremely demanding job of raising a spastic child.

The Children's Home at Kingsclere Avenue is run by Hampshire Social Services and is a home for children who have been placed in care. It can comfortably cope with about 10 children and the age range is normally 8 - 16 year olds. The aim is that the children should enjoy as normal a home life as is possible within the constraints of communal living.

In addition to the ship's official charities we have from time to time raised money for the Southampton Special Care Baby Unit. It was during one such fund raising event that the author met his fiancée so I think it's fair to say that: " Charity BEGAN at home!".

We have during the past two years managed to raise about £3,500 for charity. This has, in the main (or even on the main!), been raised by sponsored cycle rides, swims and slims, and the more usual ways of raising money such as tombola, horse racing and various draws. However, no matter how much money we raise, I'm sure there is always a little bit more that we could do. Remember, no matter how badly off we feel we are there is always someone a lot worse off than ourselves.

Finally, to all of you who have donated your talents, time and money for the good of others — " Thank You ".

AFFILIATIONS

Whilst the ship was building it became quite evident that a number of organisations wished to be affiliated to HMS " Southampton ". Whilst it would have been nice to have taken up all the offers it simply was not possible and so, regrettably, we had to turn down a number of organisations. However, two of the more obvious choices for affiliation were the Southampton Sea Cadet Corps and The Royal Hampshire Regiment.

The ship has maintained close links with Southampton Sea Cadet Corps and their associated Girls' Nautical Training Corps since the early days of the ship's life. They provided a valuable service as guides during the Commissioning Ceremony and since then have taken every available opportunity to spend some time at sea with us and it is hoped that we will be able to continue taking cadets to sea whenever the opportunity arises.

The Royal Hampshire Regiment also figured in the ship's Commissioning Ceremony when we were fortunate to have the services of the Regimental Band. Since then, unfortunately, the ship's programme and that of the Royal Hampshire's has limited our liason purely to correspondence. It is hoped, however, that we will be able to meet some of them before they leave for a two year tour in Berlin.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

CAPTAIN J. F. T. G. SALT

WE ARRIVED off the north entrance to Falkland Sound at first light on a clear, bright, still Autumn May morning to a spectacular sunrise and a thin fall of snow on the hills of West Falkland. All was totally peaceful and quiet. The only sounds that could be heard came from the mass of indigenous bird life that welcomed our silent arrival in San Carlos Water. The last few days of our 8,000 mile passage from UK had been rough; so by contrast this real tranquility and calm was all the more spectacular.

The area around San Carlos Water is not mountainous and yet is by no means flat; but it was the natural, wild, unspoilt, clean quality of it all that attracted me most — something that is difficult to find in Great Britain now. Falkland Sound is an attractive place to approach from seaward and the added isolation of the area with its massive collection of seabirds— unfamiliar to me — many different kinds of cormorant, albatross, duck, petrel, shear-water, skua and gull — made my first impression of the Falklands immensely favourable — but we had not yet seen Stanley.

The town of Stanley, situated on the side of a low, north facing hill, makes an attractive spectacle from a distance — with a variety of highly coloured rooftops clearly standing out. However, as one approaches, this impression of brightness and cheer rapidly fades as the real scene of the chaos, squalor and ruination unfolds. Defaced land, some bomb damage, wired-off minefields (apparently unlikely to be cleared in the near future), " dumped " stores and mud is what immediately strikes the newcomer to Stanley. The roads of Stanley — not exceptional but adequate before the conflict — have now largely been reduced to deep potholes, crumbling edges and mud grooved tracks made by military vehicles — numerous and heavy. Nowhere in or around the town can one walk in a pair of shoes — even on a fine day; gumboots are essential. On my first day ashore at Stanley I saw about five locals in all compared with the many hundreds of people I did see from the garrison forces. Outside of Stanley on either side of the road to the Airport (equally ruined) where there used to be peat moors there are now muddled, disorganised looking dumps of stores, empty containers, disused fuel cans, military gash and much mud.

I am not trying to " knock " the shore-based forces — far from it; this is the result of conflict. Nevertheless, my initial miserable impression of Stanley could not have been more different from my immensely favourable

impression of San Carlos. I was appalled that political conflict resulting in a military garrison should have caused such a depressing shambles for the locals who, sadly, are only the pawns in this great political game of chess.

They say that towns do not often reflect the true character of the country in which they are built. Thankfully this is true of Stanley in its present state. Whilst HMS " Southampton " was at Stanley, I had the good fortune to be able to fly by helicopter over East Falkland to West Falkland. Regrettably the clouds were down so the full impact of the country was not visible. Even so, the awesome bleak natural beauty of the land, the rivers, peaks, wide open moorland unfolding through the clouds was incredibly impressive — breathtaking. Small lakes, hill farms, sheep and the very occasional crofter's style but all added to the feeling of natural virgin real country. In just a few miles one can see the likes of Sutherland, the Cairngorms, Glen Coe, Western Isles, Lake District, Dartmoor, Exmoor and more besides, without the people or habitation to detract and not a road in sight anywhere. How much this natural beauty will have to change if tourism comes to the Falklands as some think it must.

To my mind, the real people of the Falklands live in the settlements dotted around the East and West Falkland and neighbouring islands — some thirty in all. My first visit to a settlement was memorable and made a great impression on me. Pebble Island was the location — north of West Island. The settlement consists of five families who cover four generations — from a five year old boy to his great grandmother. At thirty strong this is one of the larger settlements. During the conflict the Argentinians based some of their Pucarás on this island and a few of these — battle damaged— remain today.

The island, of 30,000 acres, farms 18,000 sheep, cows, pigs, hens and operates an extensive kitchen garden; the settlement people are very much self-sufficient. They need to be because what other supplies they require come by sea from Stanley about once every three months. If they wish to go to Stanley (the only shopping area in the Falklands — the barest necessities of life only — clothes come by mail order from UK), they have to travel by plane, a half hour journey costing £40/60 return. Hence, they seldom go.

Pebble Island settlement is run by the farm manager and his wife — a wonderful pair, both near to retirement age. Born and bred in the Falklands, their welcome was warm, genuine and hospitable beyond belief. For me personally this, my first settlement visit, was immensely heartening and meant a great deal to me. I don't think I expected such genuine and lasting appreciation for events of last year. For the manager it seemed to

mean a lot to him that I was interested in and approving of his country. It is difficult to explain but, particularly after the events of last year as they affected us both, it was a very reassuring meeting and I think we were both relieved that we could appreciate, understand and like each other as much as we did.

Some settlements, of course, are much smaller than Pebble. Beaver Island, for instance, to the west of West Island and open to cold winds and snow driving from Antarctica has a settlement of husband and wife alone. They chose to "retire" from Stanley and make their home on Beaver in all its isolation. Each settlement around the islands is linked by HF radio telephone — locally nicknamed "Farmyard" circuit. Through this "chatter" net the settlers manage to keep in touch; and in the bleak rugged isolation of mid-winter — particularly in the smaller settlements — this must be very reassuring; even though they may never see each other from one year to the next. The people of the settlements are an experience in themselves to meet.

The more remote the land, the more abundant seems to be the wildlife — penguins of many different types, seals, dolphins, sea lions, and thousands of fabulous seabirds — many of them extremely tame. Unquestionably the Falklands area is a unique photographic and ornithological paradise.

The media would have us believe, I feel, that there is decreasing local appreciation for what the people of UK did last year. Judging by the depressing state of Stanley today and the present vast overbearing of military personnel on the islands — 3 - 1, the media may be forgiven for thinking this. However, in my experience, this just simply is not true, and I have yet to hear a serious word of dissent even from the people of Stanley.

I count myself as extremely fortunate that I have now had the opportunity to see for myself the islands and people I never saw last year. Certainly it is true that Stanley has been severely defaced by the conflict; but one day it will recover — sooner, hopefully, than later. I have been immensely impressed by the genuine and welcoming appreciation of the Falklanders and the natural beauty of the islands in which they live so simply. I would like to see the islands stay British — quite apart from "principle and right" which I also happen to support. The dilemma must surely be that in the process of developing the islands to make this possible, their most priceless qualities of natural beauty and life-style are not destroyed — but rather preserved.

111 SQUADRON (The Tremblers)

AS WITH all Air Defence ships HMS "Southampton" is twinned with a squadron from the Royal Air Force. We have been lucky to have been twinned with 111 Squadron Phantoms RAF Leuchars.

The squadron has been involved with the ship's life right from the start when they provided a formation of four fighters to overfly the ship at her Commissioning Ceremony.

Since then, members of the ship's company have visited the squadron at RAF Leuchars on two occasions and two officers have, on separate occasions, visited the ship for a few days sea-going experience.

During the ship's trials in the North Sea, we were able to take part in Squadron TACEVAL (tactical evaluation) by providing a radar picket controlling the aircraft over the North Sea. This gave the fighter controller more aircraft to control in the space of a few hours than he normally gets in as many months. The exercise was much appreciated on both sides.

During a brief visit by the ship to Leith, a large number of the ship's company were able to sample the hospitality of the squadron after good natured soccer and rugby matches.

Flight Lieutenant Davey Jones was first to take up the return invitation and sailed with the ship from Leith to Portsmouth. A year later Flight Lieutenant Jack Thompson joined the ship for a trip to Hamburg, where he proved that the RAF can drink as much as the Navy without falling over but take longer to recover!

Later in the year we paid a brief visit to Rosyth, where the Wardroom was able to entertain the squadron and their wives on board.

Since our visit to RAF Leuchars in February, we have been operating at the opposite end of the world, but even in the Falkland Islands the liaison was maintained. Wing Commander Chris Colville, who is presently to take over as O/C of 111 Squadron, came aboard for a cocktail party whilst the ship was in Port Stanley.

In the future it is hoped to continue the liaison with more visits by all members of the squadron to the ship and return visits from personnel of all departments to see how the "other half" live at RAF Leuchars.

A VISIT TO SOUTH GEORGIA

CPO(SEA D. I. HALDENBY

THE SHIP was most fortunate to have a visit to South Georgia for a period at the end of June. South Georgia is a barren mountainous island about 800 miles ESE of the Falklands. The island is approximately 100 miles long by 20 miles wide, is very high and consists of very steep glaciers covering the mountains.



The ship with South Georgia in the background

FORTY-SIX

South Georgia is said to have been discovered by Amerigo Vesputi, who possibly sighted the island in 1502, but it was first explored by Captain Cook in January of 1775. The first sealers were American, who used the island during 1790 - 92. Whaling did not begin until the 20th Century and became highly specialised. The principal development took place in 1903 when C. A. Larsen founded the first modern whaling company. Factories were soon opened at Grytviken, Leith, Stromness, Husvik, Godthol and Prince Olof Harbour.

By 1961 only two companies remained, these were based at Leith and Stromness, and also at Grytviken and Husvik, but these were closed down by 1963. However, the Japanese re-established whaling after the 1962/3

season, this was run from Grytviken and Leith. Grytviken finally closed after the 1965 season although Leith continued to operate until December, 1965. These stations were then abandoned in readiness to an eventual return which never occurred.

South Georgia lies between the mean and extreme limits of pack ice throughout the year and small icebergs abound, larger tabular bergs are often seen but these invariably come from the Antarctic mainland. Our first landfall in South Georgia was Grytviken. Grytviken had been the only entry port into the islands and a custom post is still maintained at King Edwards Point, which is the Headquarters of the British Antarctic Survey Team, which in the winter is the home for some 20 scientists.

The scenery of South Georgia is magnificent, and anchored within a few hundred feet of precipitous snow covered cliffs which almost disappeared into the clouds, we had a grand view. The deserted whaling station nestling in the valley near the shore between towering cliffs, on which the updrafts

caused snow to spiral upwards past the summits giving the mountains an appearance of being on fire. The upperdeck on entry had been packed with sailors dressed in their warmest, with cameras clicking, marvelling at the view that opened up to us as we approached our anchorage. Throughout our few days visit, cameras would always be in evidence. Even in the worst snow storms photographs would be taken. On our arrival back in the Falklands one full mail sack of films was landed. This weighed in at 7.5 kilos (16+ lbs) which equates to nearly 300 films. The Canteen Manager just could not cope with the demand, such was the volume, that it was only a matter of time until a photographic competition was thought of, too.

Throughout our first day at Grytviken we ferried ashore our passengers and stores for the Army. This was followed by a few dedicated walkers to view the sights, the whaling station being the main attraction. This piece of dormant history was viewed with awe, questions of who, why and what bandied between groups as they searched for souvenirs of their visit. The draught of the ship increased as harpoon head after head came aboard. As the evening set in we sailed to sea, our task of patrolling was just beginning.

The next morning the upperdeck was placed "in bounds" as the Officer of the Watch enthused over the delights of the Ross Glacier, a two mile long glacier over 130 feet high, which was now on our beam. The upperdeck was soon crowded as we closed on this magnificent spectacle. It's huge sea wall a myriad of white, green and blue striations. The deck almost thundered to the clock of cameras as we "bumbled" towards the glacier at dead slow speed. In the water surrounding us were small growlers and bits breaking from this giant ice wall ahead of us. As if to emphasise our luck in the weather we were experiencing, the sun appeared low over the water illuminating the glacier, contouring the peaks and highlighting the snow.

We proceeded back to Grytviken one patrol finished, hopefully to give leave to another watch of walkers all eagerly waiting for a few precious hours ashore. The week followed a similar pattern of nightly patrols, spectacular scenery and walks in Grytviken. Our final day on the island changed by a visit to Leith Harbour, which unlike Grytviken had lain dormant and almost untouched since its desertion. We arrived in the middle of a blizzard, the weather very cold, visibility down to a few feet. Surely this would inhibit our erstwhile camera men? Not a bit of it. As our boats headed inshore on compass bearings, the walkers carried their cameras wrapped to protect them from the weather. Here was another scene from the past.

Leith was covered by six feet of packed snow and in moments when the weather cleared the massive vertical face of the mountain sheltering Leith could be seen. Even in the snow the whaling station could be explored.

All good things must come to an end, and as we recovered our weary walkers and sailed to sea heading west, our final sight of the island would be Bird Island. This small island is rich in all kinds of bird and animal life. Three scientists from the British Antarctic Survey Team live there studying them. We were to put a small team of amateur ornithologists to view the sights and give some home comforts to the team ashore in their extraordinary isolation. Dart flights were top of the list. Could we possibly supply? The ship was scoured and an abundant supply taken ashore with our walkers whilst the ship finished our last patrol. As the walkers returned with tales of birds, seals and penguins, loaded down with whale-bone, seal's teeth and used film, we finally left this snow covered rock in the South Atlantic to head back for that other island further east.

The opinion of the ship's company was an unforgettable experience of unsurpassable beauty made better by the extraordinarily good weather we had experienced. An even more rewarding experience for the author who had been fortunate to see Leith as a working concern back in . . . ah, but that's another story.

"THE SIXTH" WE SALUTE YOU