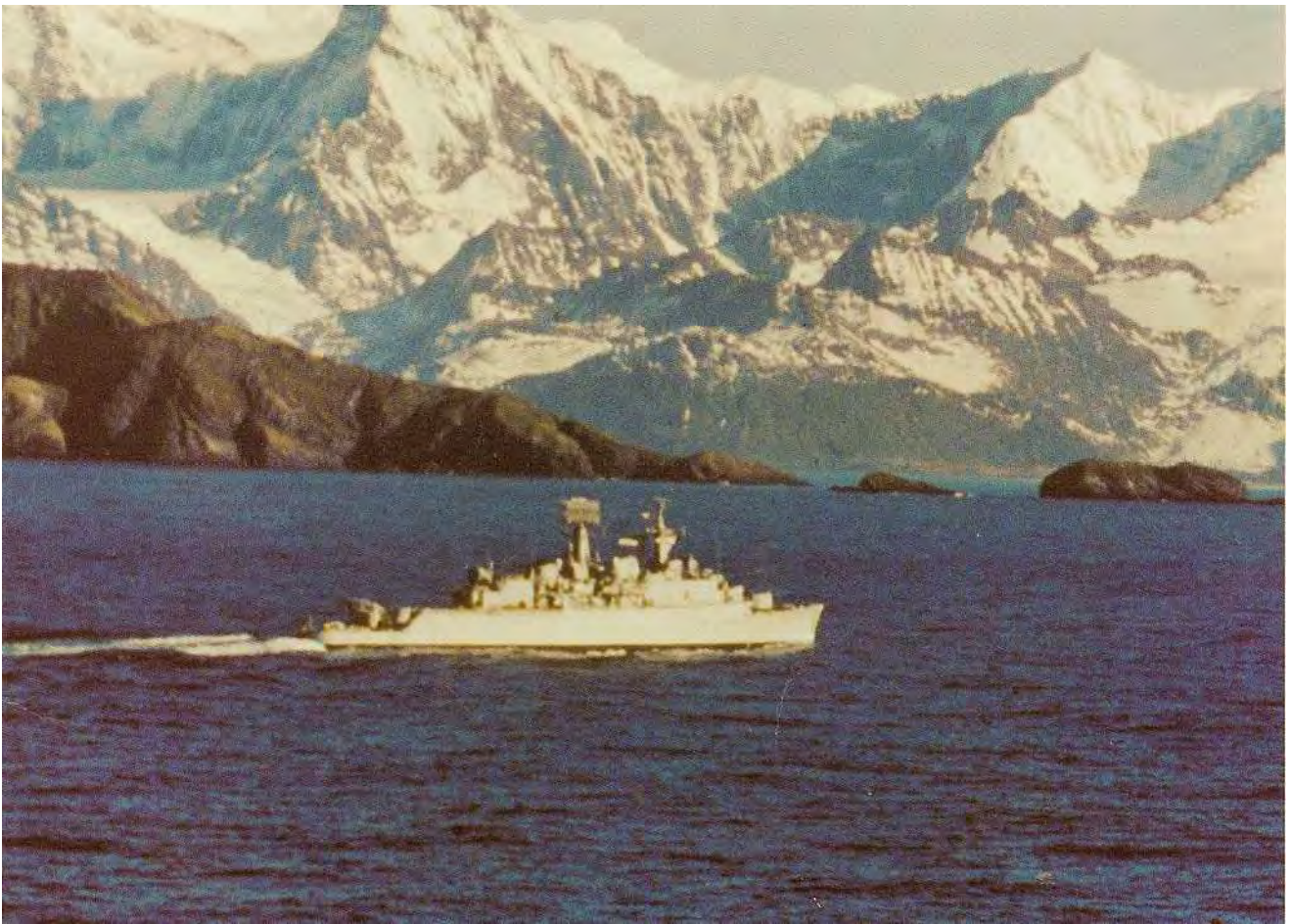


ANTRIM'S WAR



*A photographic record of HMS ANTRIM's contribution to the Falklands Campaign
April — June 1982.*

Compiled by Commander M R Morgan Royal Navy



Captain B.G. Young DSO. RN.

Commanding Officer H.M.S. ANTRIM 1981-3

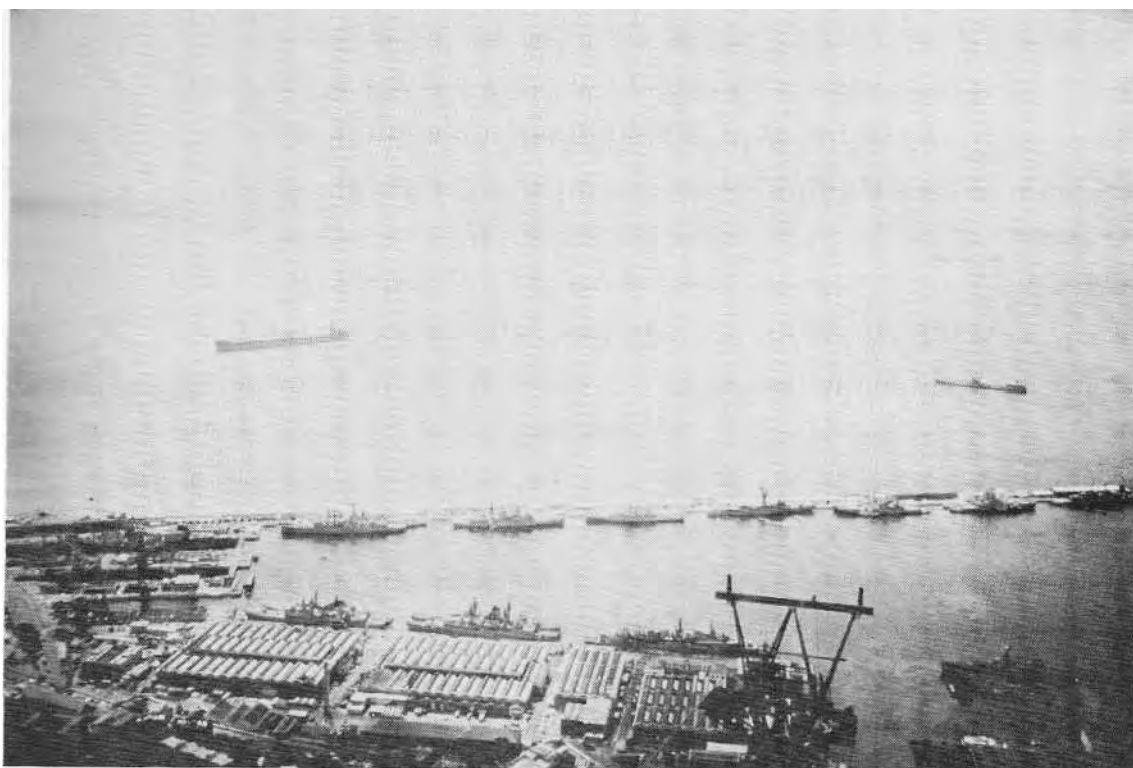
H.M.S. ANTRIM (Captain B.G.Young, DSO; RN) returned to Portsmouth on Saturday 17th July 1982 after a memorable four months in the South Atlantic. On the morning of March 17th ANTRIM sailed from Portsmouth to participate in exercise SPRINGTRAIN, as Flag Ship for Flag Officer First Flotilla, Rear Admiral WOODWARD, no-one on board could have foreseen what was likely to take place in the next few months. SPRINGTRAIN, the annual training session, was to last approximately three weeks in the Gibraltar areas before going home to Portsmouth for some leave. Holidays were booked and plans made for a relaxing period after the intensive training since January.

The passage to Gibraltar was a series of exercises to enable the ship to settle back into her role as Flag Ship and work up for the second phase on the return trip. A lot of hard work was put in and a lot of lessons learnt, and the break in Gibraltar was a welcome respite. During the weekend at Gibraltar the first inklings of a conflict were appearing. The landing of the scrap merchants at Leith in South Georgia and the diplomatic fencing was met with considerable expressions of indignation throughout the ship. Even at this stage speculation was rife as to the possibility of a Naval Force being dispatched to the South Atlantic. ANTRIM sailed on 29th March to start the final phase of Exercise SPRINGTRAIN. The exercise continued as planned to the west of Gibraltar. Two Seaslug missiles were successfully fired and the ship discovered an upturned and abandoned yacht which was blown up by the ship's demolition team as it constituted a hazard to navigation. The ship's company awoke on Friday 2nd April to the news that ANTRIM was now the Flag Ship of Commander Task Group 317.8 and that the Task Group was to sail for the Falkland Islands forthwith. That Friday will always be remembered as the most intensive day of storing and transferring that anyone had seen. At least a dozen helicopters were constantly in motion transferring ammunition and stores. Ships were joining each other to transfer by light and heavy jackstay before moving on to the next RAS. The activity continued well into the night as the monumental movement of equipment continued; eventually the ships had acquired everything they could possibly need from those returning to UK and passed on all unnecessary equipment, practice weapons, etc. As the ship led the group southward and the activity temporarily ceased, the realisation of the task ahead became more apparent. An air of quiet determination was obvious throughout the ship.

The passage to Ascension Island was one of continual training and preparation for war. The ship acquired a new warlike appearance as it was given an overall coat of grey paint, including the white bollards, red boats and pennant numbers. 406, the ship's Wessex 3 helicopter lost its yellow top and white lettering as the low visibility paint scheme continued. On the lighter side, a beard growing competition was initiated with 50p to enter; £1 if you shaved off before the judging! The newly sprouting beards and the fact that some people had not brought their tropical uniform for the intended three weeks away gave the ship a somewhat piratical appearance. Crossing the equator was celebrated in the time-honoured fashion. King Neptune and his courtiers were magnificent in their finery and the bears looked menacing in the pool. Successive offenders were dragged before the King before being dispatched to be covered in all forms of revolting looking mixtures and finally dunked in the pool. Despite the ever-increasing numbers of spontaneous swimmers everyone ended up soaked by a tropical downpour.

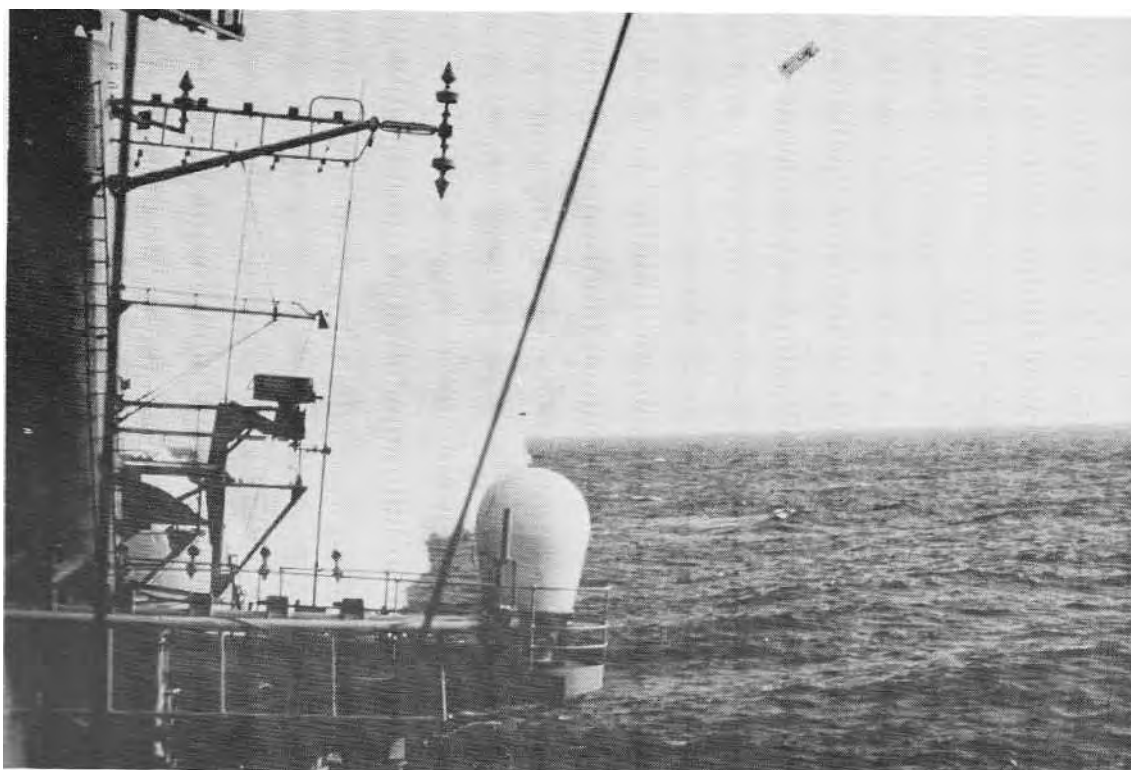
Shortly before the Group's arrival at Ascension Island **H.M.S. ANTRIM**, **H.M.S. PLYMOUTH** and **R.F.A. TIDESPRING** were detached to proceed immediately to Ascension, store, embark 'M' Company 42 Commando in TIDESPRING and proceed south as Task Group 317.9 to re-take South Georgia with Captain B.G.Young, RN as Commander of the Task Group. Throughout the passage south constant movement of troops took place between ships as the plans for the assault evolved. The two Wessex 5 helicopters of 845 Squadron C Flight embarked in TIDESPRING, and ANTRIM's Wessex 3 were in constant action with the Task Group training or load lifting. The Admiral's Cabin in ANTRIM was rapidly transformed from Flag Officer's accommodation to a military operations room and part-time messdeck. The embarked forces under the command of Major Guy SHERIDAN, RM comprised a selection of special forces i.e. SAS & SBS and 'M' Coy 42 Cdo RM.

On 14th April the Task Group rendezvoused with **H.M.S. ENDURANCE** fresh from her experiences at South Georgia during the Argentinian invasion. She was cheered by the ships of the Task Group as each passed her before forming up in the new formation for the continued transit south. As the southern latitudes increased and South Georgia drew nearer the ship's company steadily donned an increasing amount of cold weather clothing until the prospect of operating in near constant gales, sleet and snow was no longer unusual.



SPRINGTRAIN ships assembled in Gibraltar 24th — 28th March 1982.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



A successful Seaslug firing on 31st March 1982.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



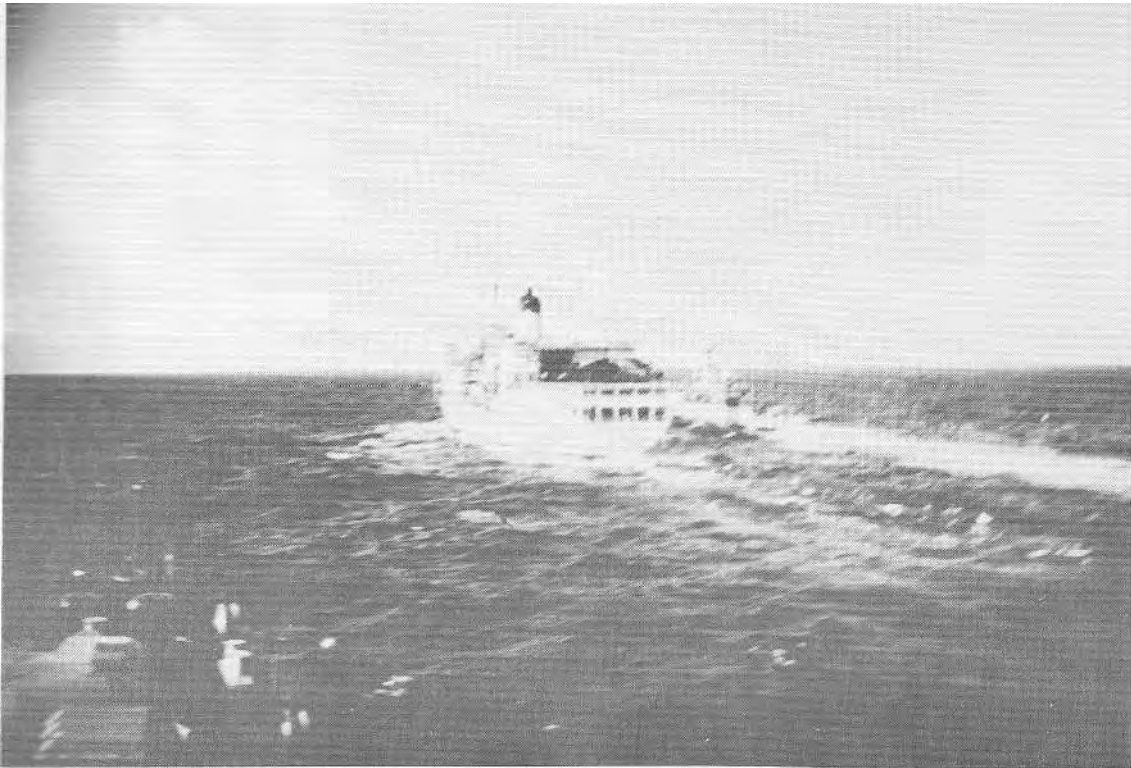
The replenishment of stores and ammunition from H.M.S. ARIADNE on 2nd April 1982.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



ANTRIM at anchor at Ascension to embark stores and Special Forces 10th April 1982.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



Rendezvous with R.F.A. FORT AUSTIN. H.M.S. PLYMOUTH is on the starboard side of the R.F.A.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



Rendezvous with H.M.S. ENDURANCE 14th April 1982. ANTRIM cheered ship on closing H.M.S. ENDURANCE.

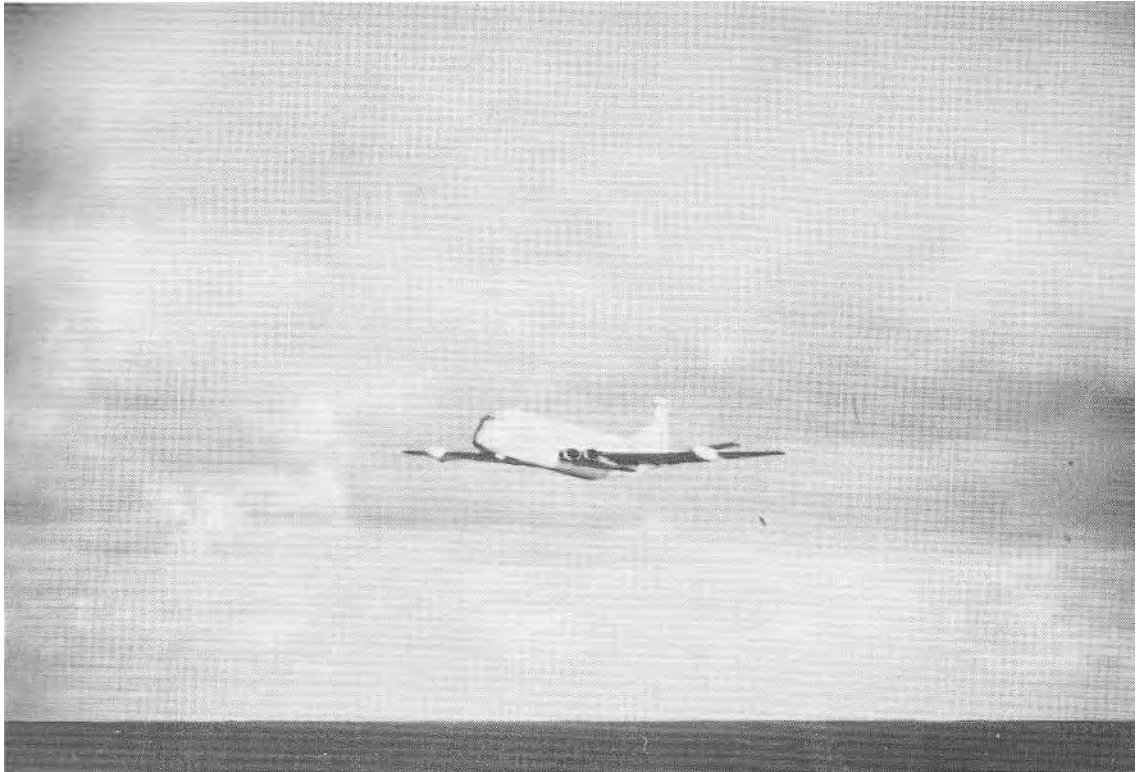
Lieutenant K.P. White RN.

The plan to recover South Georgia was to start by two recce parties being landed, one to observe the enemy at Leith and the other at Grytviken. The Leith recce party were to be landed to the north-west on top of Fortuna Glacier where a covert operation could be made by the 15 strong party of SAS. The atrocious weather delayed the initial dawn insertion, but later in the day, after an initial inspection of the possible landing site was flown by 406, the three helicopters, ANTRIM's Wessex 3 and TIDESPRING's two Wessex 5's, managed to slide up onto the glacier and deposit the troops on the top. The night that followed was horrific. Force 11 wind, heavy seas and snow storms made for a thoroughly uncomfortable night at sea. It was not surprising that on the morning of 22nd April a message was received from the recce party that they were in a bad way and might not survive another night on the glacier. An extraction flight was then mounted with the three helicopters led by ANTRIM's Wessex 3 again heading off into the gales and snow storms to try and find the troops. The Wessex 5's remained in the bay by the glacier while the Wessex 3 tried to find a way up to the top. It was impossible as all access was covered in snow clouds. After refuelling and returning to the scene a gap in the weather allowed 406 to lead the Wessex 5's up on to the top where the party was located. The aircraft landed and embarked the frozen troops. As one Wessex 5 was lifting off having embarked its men it ran into complete white-out conditions and, losing all references, crashed on its side in the snow. The other two aircraft lifted immediately and went to its aid where they discovered that miraculously no-one was hurt. The troops from the crashed helicopter were embarked in the remaining two and they took off with 406 leading the way off the glacier. Yet again total white-out occurred in the blowing snow and the remaining Wessex 5 eventually lost sight of the Wessex 3 ahead and it too ended up on its side in the snow. A somewhat shaken 406 returned to ANTRIM and disembarked her survivors. Two further sorties were flown by 406 to try to rescue the remaining men on the ice. The first effort was thwarted by cloud and snow but communication was established with the survivors and it was confirmed that no-one was injured. Eventually the weather cleared sufficiently to allow a landing on the glacier and the thirteen survivors were crammed into the back of 406 and lifted back to ANTRIM.

That night ANTRIM, fully darkened and silent, slid into Stromness Bay near Leith and launched a second recce party, this time by Gemini rubber dinghy. Five boats were launched in complete silence and the SAS party set off for the shore. Having seen them on their way, ANTRIM cleared the area to a position off the coast. The following morning a message was received that one of the boats had suffered engine failure and had been drifting helplessly throughout the night. Once again 406 was despatched to search for them and eventually they were located using radio homing equipment, drifting perilously close to Cumberland Bay and almost in sight of Argentinian observation posts. The four men were recovered into the aircraft, the Gemini sunk, and 406 returned to ANTRIM.

It was at this time that it was suspected that an Argentinian submarine was in the area so the Task Group withdrew to the north-west to reassess the situation. By 24th April the Task Group was in a full anti-submarine posture and again closed South Georgia, having replenished fuel. The final part of the drama started on the morning of 25th April when 406 detected the Argentinian submarine SANTA FE as she left Grytviken before dawn. The submarine was detected on radar by ANTRIM's Wessex Mk 3 at 0855z and attacked on the surface with depth charges at 0900z. The submarine was damaged by the explosions and turned back to Grytviken on the surface, unable to dive. A Lynx helicopter from H.M.S. BRILLIANT engaged on surface search to the north-west was summoned to deliver a torpedo. Meanwhile, further support was requested from AS12 missile-armed Wasp helicopters from H.M.S. ENDURANCE and H.M.S. PLYMOUTH. They subsequently attacked the submarine as she entered Cumberland Bay and Grytviken Harbour, inflicting a number of missile strikes on her fin. The submarine was abandoned alongside the British Antarctic Survey Pier at King Edward Point and subsequently sank on 28th April.

The submarine threat having been removed, the Task Group proceeded with the landing of the embarked forces to re-take South Georgia. The operation started with a Naval bombardment of the area around Grytviken. The gunfire, controlled by 148 Battery Royal Artillery spotters airborne in ENDURANCE's Wasp helicopters, ensured the fire-power provided by ANTRIM and PLYMOUTH was both accurate and effective. The first wave of troops was landed by helicopter from ANTRIM and BRILLIANT. As the bombardment of the proposed landing site was lifted, the troop lift continued under the umbrella of Naval gunfire laid down on the scree slopes around Grytviken. As the troops advanced towards Grytviken and



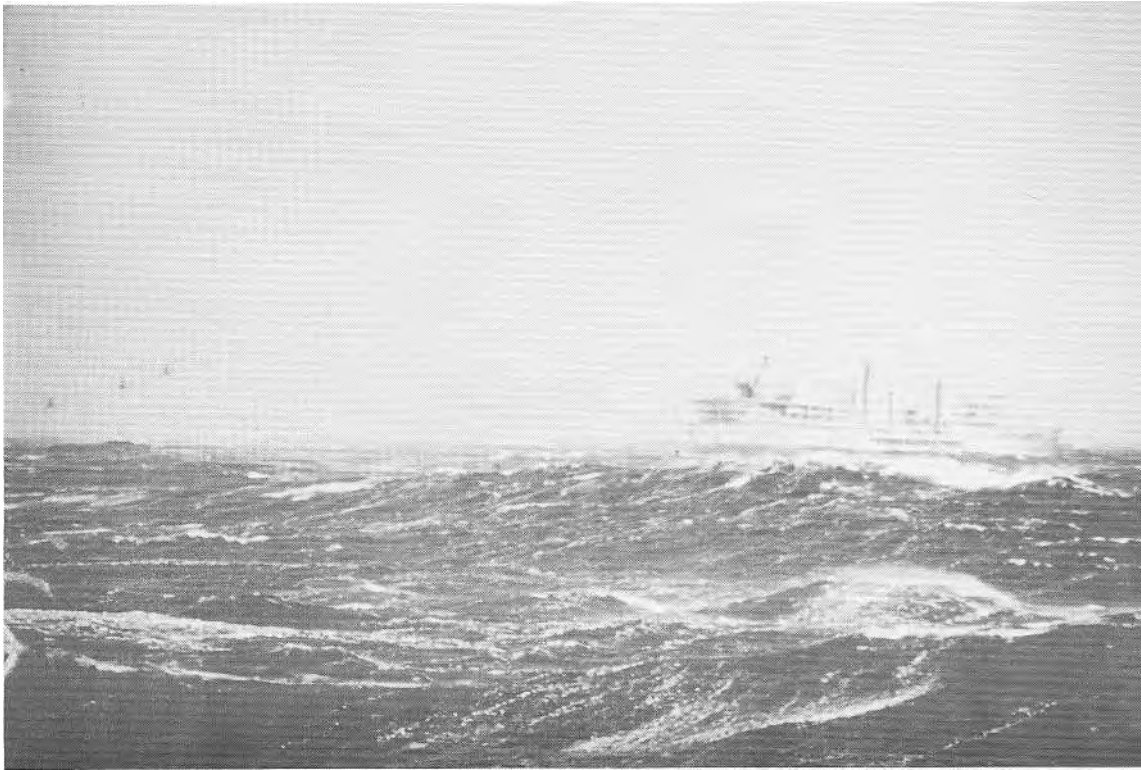
A Nimrod flying from Ascension delivering the Operation PARAQUAT orders.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



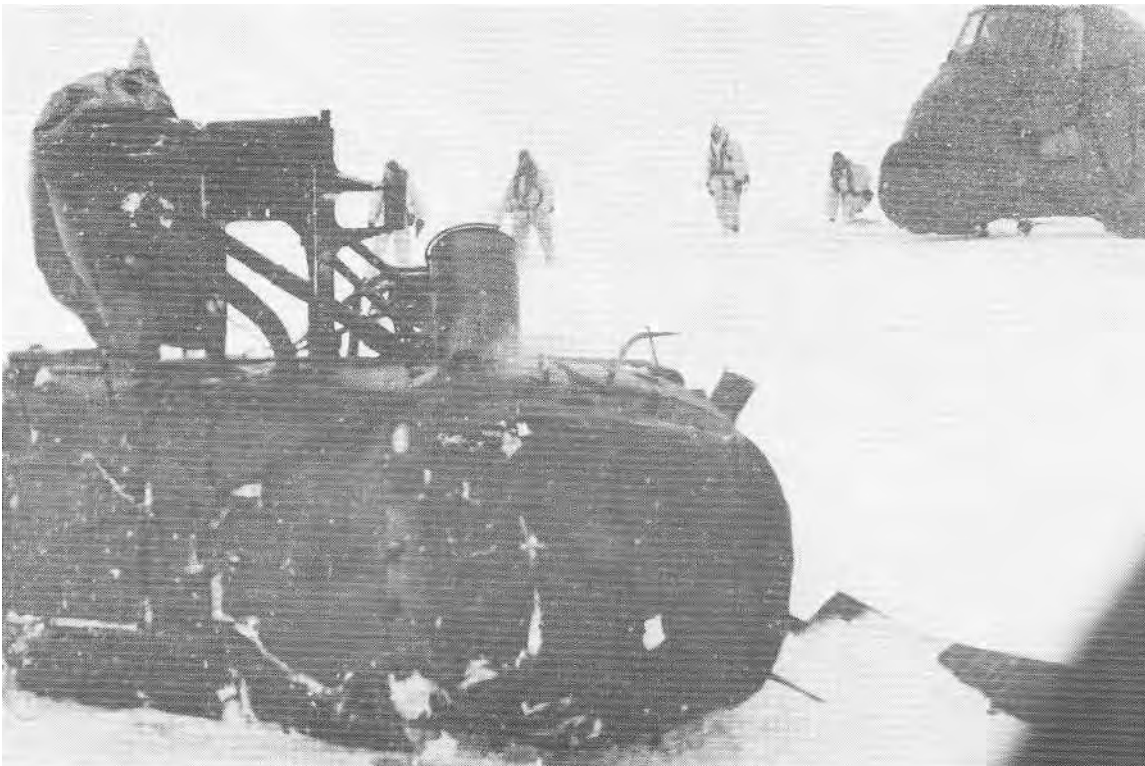
Preparations being made for the first Special Forces insertion onto Fortuna Glacier using 406 and two Wessex 5's embarked in R.F.A. TIDESPRING.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



Three helicopters led by 406 leave the force to insert Special Forces into South Georgia on 21st April 1982.

Lieutenant K.P. White RN.



One of the Wessex 5's crashed on Fortuna Glacier. Shortly afterwards the second Wessex 5 also crashed on take-off 22nd April 1982.

Sub Lieutenant S. Cooper RN.