



DISTEX at Portland



Exercise night flying at Portland

On Tuesday we took on the last of our ammunition and in the evening it was a very successful Ship's Company Dance at the Port Royal Restaurant. A vote of thanks to the dance committee who organised this annual event, they were Pete Randall, Mike Varlow and Mike Kennard. The following day was our Commissioning Ceremony, the service being taken in the hangar with all our families and friends present. The cake was cut by Mrs Alexandra Bergal, grand-daughter of Sir Ernest Shackleton, ably assisted by our youngest member of the ship's company JOEM Tug Wilson. On completion of the ceremony the ship proceeded to sea, we were unfortunately delayed slightly by an accident on the focsle, it was here that Baz Kelso proved how good he was at ministering Tender Loving Care, he would be an asset to any first aid team. The trip to sea with the families included a hovercraft display and a SAR display by our flight, the families had lunch onboard giving Ray Philpott and his chefs a chance to show their expertise. The ship returned to FLJ5 at 1600 and our last night's leave in England started.

HEADING SOUTH

The morning of Thursday 3 Oct started with our last of many inspections. It was a sad day for most as we prepared for our 5 month deployment. The inspection safely behind us HMS ENDURANCE left Portsmouth harbour at 1245 heading for the south. Many wives and sweethearts packed the round tower at Old Portsmouth for the last look at their loved ones as they sailed away. We were lucky to have a good sea and a good day, and as we proceeded down channel the ship went to flying stations off Portland for the Work-up report to be flown onboard. The following morning found us in the busy shipping lanes of the channel, and at half past eight we turned to head South. The Bay of Biscay was calm and this gave the flight a further opportunity to exercise deck landings. During the morning 2 BANGS were heard and they were thought to be Sonic Booms from Concorde, that evening we gained an hour on our first change of time zone (only one day out and already working 25 hour days).

Saturday 5 Oct being our first Saturday at sea we had our first of many Captains Messdeck Rounds. During rounds a Russian Cargo (?) ship overhauled us, coming close enough for their cameras to be active. It was already becoming warmer and tropical kit was being inspected and prepared for use. During the afternoon and evening the guns crew had functioning trials and at 1800 we heard for the first time John Copes now famous 'Radio 171' with 'The Sound of the South heading South'. On Sunday as we had our first Church Service onboard we passed the Straits of Gibraltar, still a good calm sea and most definitely warmer. Many took the first opportunity on Sunday afternoon of our first Flight-deck shooting.



Cutting the commissioning cake

By Monday 7 Oct we were in shorts, our knobbly knees being exposed for the first time. Routines were settling down, and our passage south was used to further exercise the helos, the Officers of the Watch and the swimmers of the watch. Clubs Arthur Tippet started his first light PT classes on the flight deck, with many regretting their run down state and vowing to give up both cigarettes and drink least ways until they had regained their breath. The sea remained calm and sun-bathing became the favourite lunch time pastime. We made very good time and were soon well up on schedule. Thursday seemed to be wildlife day, we sighted 2 finwhales in the morning, a school of porpoise appeared at lunch time, and the first flying fish were sighted in the afternoon. We had our first clay pigeon shoot that evening after the start of the inter-mess deck hockey championship. By the early evening we were obviously close to land as the lights of the ship attracted hundreds of moths. By Friday we were so far up on schedule we were down to 8 knots in the morning and spent the afternoon stationary doing a sextant swing with the aid of the sea-boat, it was really hot in the afternoon and Duds Dudley, who coxswained the sea-boat, was burnt to a nice plum colour. That evening Lt's Arthur Swain and Nigel Crocker had an unexpected guest in their cabin, a locust at least 4 inches long.

We arrived at our first foreign port of call, Dakar in French Senegal, at 0900 on Saturday morning. Our arrival was followed by all the usual calls and the first Captains Official Luncheon. A bus trip was organised for the enthusiastic photographers, but unfortunately the bus did not get very far before it broke down, one consolation being it broke down outside a bar. It was very hot and sticky in Dakar and generally speaking it was not the run everybody had expected. On the Sunday the local Naval Base laid on a landing craft and many accepted the invitation to swimming on the island of Goree. The swimming proved so popular a repeat run was made on Monday, though this was not possible for the football team, for them it was a hot game of soccer and a 5-0 defeat. Ray Fairbanks their team manager was not disheartened though. The night before we sailed was the official Cocktail Party, bad planning as far as the Grippos were concerned.

We sailed from Dakar on Tuesday morning, we had 2,100 miles to go to our first South American port, Salvadore in Brazil. It was good to be back at sea, to lose the flies and to get a cooling breeze passing through the ship, many took to the upper deck and hangar doorways for their sleeping billet.

At 1908 on Friday the ship entered the domain of King Neptune and his messenger boarded and delivered the King's proclamation. We cross the equator at 0300 on Saturday 19 Oct and at 1415 King Neptune himself arrived onboard with his court, all novices were duly called before his court to face their charges, and were then shaved and ducked in true tradition. The court over King Neptune returned to his watery deep and camera shutters were silenced. That evening we enjoyed a Bar-b-Que on the flight deck, a pleasant change from eating in the airless dining hall.



Upper deck Bar-b-que

The voyage progressed, and once again the sea conditions allowed us to be ahead of schedule. On Monday and Tuesday we gained an hour each day to bring us up to Central South American Time, and we arrived off Salvadore-De-Bahia on the Wednesday morning. Both helos were launched, one flying the Brazilian Flag and the other flying the White Ensign, while the pilot boat was trying desperately to get alongside. We arrived alongside at Salvadore at 0915 and once again the formal calls were made, and a press conference was held on the bridge.

Salvadore proved to be a very popular place and the bus trips to a local surfing beach were very well patronised. Night life was hectic and the truth about the good runs in South America was well proved. Semi-precious stones and jewellery were the best buys and naturally coffee. It was in Salvadore that the football team produced ENDURANCE's first ever victory on South American soil, with a 3-2 victory and Jock Dobie scoring a hatrick. On Saturday, our last day in Salvadore, the ship opened to visitors and it was all the duty watch could do to keep an eye on all the visitors.

We sailed from Salvadore on the Sunday, an ideal day for recovering from a hangover. The trip down the coast to Montevideo was used to practice Damage Control in slow time and the Royal Marines even camped out on deck in practice for their detachment in the South. Also during the week a great publicity campaign was launched by the technical office who were collecting defects, ready for the next refit would you believe.

We returned to long trousers ready for our arrival in Montevideo on Saturday 2 Nov. The rugby team played against Montevideo Cricket Club, with a rather embarrassing result, and were afterwards well entertained in true Rugby tradition. The Missions opened their doors to the ship once again and the dance at The Apostle of the Sea on the first night in proved a great success. On Monday the Buffer and his merry band gave up a make-and-mend to assist the Mission with their decorating. The famous Shell Esaldo also took place on Monday, and the unanimous verdict of the lucky 30 who went was GREAT - that was about all they could say. On Tuesday 200 local school children watched the President of the Uruguayan Antarctic Institute present the Captain with a floral tribute. In the afternoon the arrival of 30 orphans for the 'kids' party was heralded by the children singing as they walked along the jetty, with their National flag and ours held about their heads. Casa Mario a local trader in furs and leather goods made a roaring trade but the rumour that he can retire after only one more visit from the ENDURANCE is unfounded, fluffy dogs, sheepskins, hides, leather and suede coats were all bought in abundance, Montevideo can definately go down as one of the better 'rabbit runs'.



Floral tribute at Montevideo



'Kids' party at Montevideo



Rugby at Montevideo



Buffer and his merry crew assist the mission with the decorating

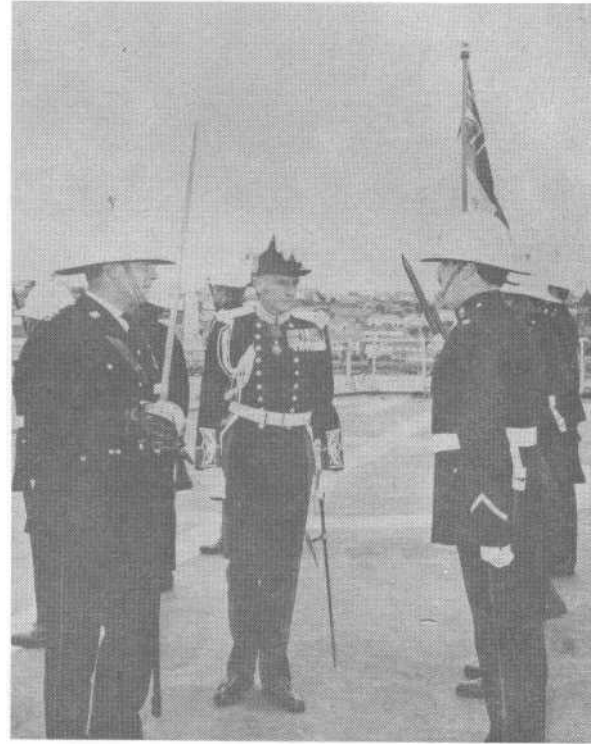
We sailed from Montevideo on Wednesday morning, having to anchor in the River Plate to free the anchor cable which had become fouled by wire. At mid-day the Seamen and Royal Marines job changes took effect and the new QMs had to be initiated into hand steering. On Thursday with a marked drop in temperature, we were all issued with a 'once only' suit, an aid to survival in the cold waters we were to encounter. On Friday we stopped to investigate a UFO which turned out to be a dead whale, and the Royal Marines practiced landing by helo, during this exercise Paddy Hunter, the gunners yeoman, managed to drop his rifle and bend the barrel slightly. We eventually sighted the Falkland Islands during the first dog on Sunday, and we entered Stanley harbour at 1800. We had arrived on station, Stanley was to be our southern base for the next 4 months.

IN THE SOUTH

No sooner had the ship anchored than the seniors of Naval Party 8901 boarded to renew friendships and to meet the new crew. On Monday we fired the 17 gun salute to His Excellency The Governor of the Falkland Islands, who boarded to inspect the guard. The Falklands are a rather barren group of islands, and Stanley, its Capital, is far from modern, with 6 shops, 4 bars and a dance on Saturday nights it is not much to write home about. The Captain took to the air on Tuesday to survey the islands, probably not believing all the stories he had heard. We soon found out there is not very much to be achieved in the Falklands and it was with a certain amount of relief that we sailed from Stanley on the Thursday morning and set sail for South Georgia. Two days later found us at Shag Rocks in the hope of obtaining rock samples, but due to poor visibility this had to be postponed. The ship had closed to within half a mile of the rocks but all that could be seen was the shags flying round above us. On to South Georgia and the British Antarctic Survey base at Grytviken, where our helos did some aerial photography and lifting of stores to one of the many glaciers which are being studied by the BAS scientists. Some of the ship's company took the opportunity of a few hours ashore to stretch their legs and see the local population of Elephant Seals, these being remarkable beasts. Here also we left the Royal Marines Detachment to do some cold weather survival training and skiing in the rugged mountains.

On Monday, 18 Nov we moved to the South of the island to Cooper Bay, where the main work of the period was carried out. The work involved an inshore survey of the bay by the ship's survey boat the (James Caird), an offshore survey by the ship itself, coastlining by aerial photography, assisting BAS geologists ashore and an underwater survey by divers. The ship's divers assisted the BAS marine biologists in the latter task.

The routine whenever possible, was to anchor in Cooper Bay by day and proceed to sea each night. By day the divers progressed their survey and the ship's surveyors were kept busy on the inshore survey, while the flight had some busy days assisting with all projects as well as carrying out the aerial photography. The weather was the ruling factor on our programme and progress, and more than once we had to put to sea, at short notice, leaving divers and surveyors to fend for themselves and rough it overnight.



His Excellency the Governor of the Falkland Islands inspects the Guard of Honour



Troop drills

The divers successfully completed their programme by the 26th, and the following day we were all smiles as we rendezvoused with the RRS

John Biscoe who had brought some of our mail with her from Stanley. We progressed the offshore survey, frequently having to increase the water-tight integrity of the ship as we surveyed uncharted waters. On the 28th we landed BAS geologists on Clerk Rocks and the 800 ft peak on the charts proved to be nearer 1,100 ft if the helos altimeter is to be believed. The helos were kept busy during the day on Friday, completing their aerial photography, and we then returned to Grytviken in a snow storm. This time we went alongside the old whaling station jetty to find the Royal Marines eagerly awaiting our arrival. The weather had not improved and by Saturday morning and, unable to use the helos to retrieve the Marines base camp the James Caird had to be used instead. The weather did not deter the ship's company from investigating the old whaling station at Grytviken, a few went skiing and many just went hiking with their cameras strapped around their necks. On Sunday I was lucky enough to join a party being shown around the whaling station by Doctor Nigel Bonner, he gave us a guided tour and explained how the various processes would have progressed when the station was open. Dr Bonner was in fact a sealing inspector at Grytviken, now with BAS, he was persuaded to write an article for the Red Plum, the ship's Sunday newspaper, it is repeated towards the end of the book along with some general information about BAS and a technical report on the diving project.

We sailed from Grytviken on 2 Dec taking passage with us were a few members of BAS on their way back to Stanley. Among our passengers was a rather portly gentleman, Big Al (Smith), whose brother is the famous show jumper of the V-sign fame' Harvey Smith. The sea was not too good and, as we headed for Bird Island, on the northern tip of South Georgia, it was thought that we might not be able to land BAS geologist as planned. The sea was a bit calmer in the shelter of the island, and the helos managed to lift the geologists onto the rocks. Bird Island home of literally thousands of birds, being separated from the mainland of South Georgia the rats have not been able to reach the island, this means the birds can nest here safely. The following morning the helos flew for yet more aerial photography before we set sail for another attempt at landing on Shag Rocks.

On Wednesday 4 Dec Bill Oxberry and Jan Prior found their way into the History Books when they made the first known landing on Shag Rocks, they were lowered to the top of the highest of the rocks while OCRM Simon Hill and Ginger Walsh (on loan from NP 8901) were lowered to one of the other rocks also to collect samples. After the historic event the helos once again took some aerial photography for the surveyors to accurately plot the position and shape of the rocks. We then headed back to Stanley, we had seen many icebergs, of all shapes and sizes, and we had seen many types of wildlife, a very rewarding period had been spent in South Georgia. We arrived back in Stanley on Friday morning, with yet more mail from our loved ones waiting for us. We spent the weekend in Stanley, taking part in the ceremony to commemorate the Battle of the Falklands on Sunday 8 Dec. We received a pleasant surprise that day when an unscheduled plane from Argentina brought our mail a day early for us. The cruise liner Limbladt Explorer and an Argentine Naval Ship also arrived that day, the passengers off the Limbladt clambering ashore to buy what little luxuries the local stores had.



Diving at Cooper Bay

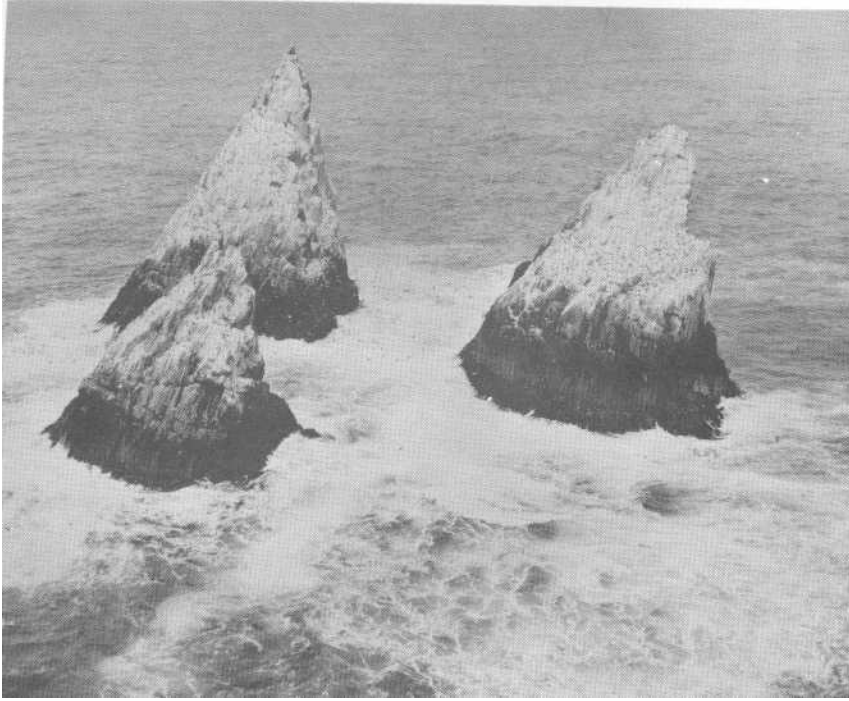


Alongside at Grytviken

The normal scheduled flight on the Monday brought 2 Officers from FOCAS to do a flight inspection, and with Jack Solis the skipper of the FORREST onboard, we sailed for the North West Falklands and our next major survey task. The FOCAS inspection proceeded as the helos were used to establish the camp party, and after many questions and exercises the flight were not sorry to see the back of the FOCAS staff when they departed on the 13th. The surveying inshore by boat and at sea by the ship progressed well with not much to break the monotony onboard, though 5 so-called 'cowboys', myself included, had a great day ashore purchasing 2 cows for the ship, Jumper Collins and Dixie Dixon, both butchers, now know all about killing and cutting up from start to finish. On the 21st of December, with Christmas drawing near, we replenished the survey camp ashore, changing one or two of the camp party over, and waved them goodbye as we headed for Stanley for Xmas. We arrived in Stanley on the 23rd, and the following day was chosen for the Xmas feast, once again the chefs proved how great they were and produced a meal fit for a king. The Xmas feast over this gave the chefs and stewards a chance to celebrate along with everybody else. The bar opening hours in Stanley on Xmas day are from 1200-1300 but a considerable amount of drinking can be concentrated into that one hour. On Boxing Day it was the start of the annual Stanley Races. With the bar open all day what starts as serious racing soon turns into comedy, but with Stanley enjoying its hottest day of the year, a most enjoyable time was had by all.

We sailed from Stanley on Friday 27th, missing the second day of the races, and headed north for our mid-term break in Mar-del-Plata, Argentines main seaside resort. The trip up was uneventful, the sea was good to us, and we arrived at Mar-del-Plata on 30 Dec. We had changed into shorts for the visit, but it was so cold for our arrival, and after breaking a tug rope and having to be pulled across a mud bank to get alongside, it was a great relief to find the stand-easy tea wet when we came down from up top. The next day was New Years Day and most took the opportunity of celebrating the UK new year at nine and then the Argentine one at midnight. There were no organised trips at Mar-del-Plata, but everybody found sufficient to occupy their minds. It was the start of the resorts summer season and many girls in mini-bikinies could be sighted sun-bathing on the many beaches. Night life was varied, though generally quite expensive, and the beef steaks were some of the biggest ever seen. Rabbits were expensive but most had the common sense to wait until Buenos Airies where onyx and again sheepskins and leather goods were cheap.

We sailed from Mar-del-Plata on 6 Jan and once again headed South. On the Tuesday during a general flying practice a fire developed in 435, but this was more smoke than flame and the aircrew had it under control before the Damage Control Section arrived. We returned to the Falklands and picked up the camp party on the 9th, arriving once again in Stanley on the 10th. We only stayed long enough to fuel and we were off again, this time to the South Shetlands and the real Antarctic. Our trip from the Falklands to the South Shetlands started with rough seas and only slightly improved after crossing the Antarctic Convergence Zone, the area where the cold waters of the South meet the warmer waters of the North.



Shag Rocks



Stirring the Christmas cake