

We arrived in the South Shetlands early on the Monday morning, and after the flight prepared the first helicopter to make a reconnaissance flight a snow storm delayed the start of a busy day. Owing to the unpredictable weather it was decided to anchor in Harmony Cove, close to the proposed site of the Survey Camp Party. The Camp Party's task was to survey Harmony Cove, and, assisted by the ship, to survey Nelson Strait, the only suitable passage between the South Shetland Islands for large vessels. After the very busy day of landing the camp and erecting the necessary markers, with the surveyors and their assistants established ashore in their gaily coloured tents, we sailed from Harmony Cove across the Bransfield Strait, and south into the Weddell Sea. The Weddell Sea was far from kind to us and as we passed from the Bransfield Straits into Antarctic Sound, with ice-bergs all around us the upper deck was becoming quite picturesque with the addition of many icicles formed by frozen sea spray. It was in the Weddell Sea that Shackleton's ship ENDURANCE became beset by pack ice, eventually causing her to be crushed and sink. It was across this sea that Shackleton and his companions made their epic sledge and boat journey back to civilisation, enduring 5 months under atrocious conditions, without losing a single man. We entered the Weddell Sea to investigate sea and weather conditions, and then returned through the Antarctic Sound this time to head southwards down the west coast of the Graham Land peninsular.

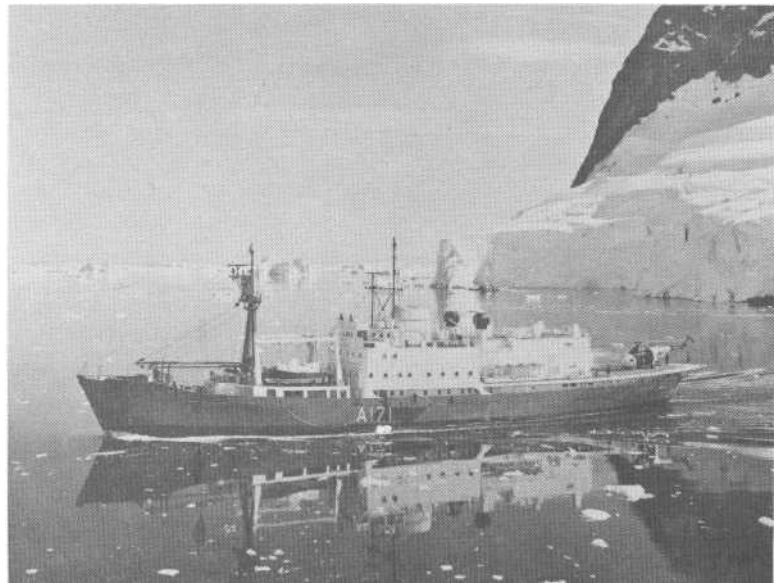
The weather quickly improved as we passed through the Gerlache Strait, icebergs were plentiful and sight-seeing was the order of the day. The Neumayer Channel was next on the sight-seeing tour, with snow clad mountains and glaciers close on both sides of the ship, the sun shining from a clear blue sky. Unbelievable as it may seem it was warm enough to be on the upper-deck in shirt sleeves. We visited Palmer Base, an American research station on Anvers Island, on the evening of Wednesday 15 Jan, and some took the opportunity of a boat trip around the nearby island to view a large penguin rookery. We stayed at anchor all night in a small bay surrounded by ice cliffs, and, starting early the following morning we passed through, what is probably the most stunning of all the Antarctic scenery, the Le Maire Channel. Ice was more prominent in the confined waters of the channel, but we still could not claim to have entered the 'pack'.

The same day we anchored at the British Antarctic Survey base in the Argentine Islands. The opportunity for an hour's leave was accepted by many, while others stood about the focsle, watching the antics of the Antarctic Terns and patiently waiting for an ice-flow, complete with a Leopard Seal basking in the sun, to come near enough to be photographed.

We sailed from the Argentine Islands in the early afternoon headed out to sea, and then south, crossing the Antarctic Circle at nine minutes past five on the morning of Friday 17th. It was shortly before crossing the Antarctic Circle that we entered some open pack ice, off Adelaide Island but we were in it for a short time only. A 180 turn saw us with our bows heading north. With a clear blue sky and crystal clear waters, conditions were more like the Mediterranean than the Antarctic.



The camp at Harmony Cove



In the Ice.



The Le Maire channel

On our way back to the South Shetlands, we called at Deception Island. Deception Island is a live volcano open to the sea, we anchored inside the volcano close to the derelict BAS base which had to be evacuated when the volcano erupted in 1969. Leave was granted and once again the enthusiastic photographers were eager to go ashore and use up even more yards of magic celluloid.

On Saturday 18th we picked up 2 BAS geologists and we passed Sunday 19th at anchor in a small harbour in the South Shetland Islands called Potters Cove, here some members of the ship's company took the opportunity of the nearby snow to try their hand (and Feet) at skiing, with varying degrees of success.

The 'jolly' into the ice finished the ship returned to its survey duties on the Monday. This meant ferrying the geologists ashore each day to pick up rock samples, carrying out aerial photography and also ship sounding in the Nelson Strait. Our first hic-cup occurred that afternoon when the ship received a call for medical assistance, the story of this is well told in various other sections but it is worth reprinting here, if only for the number of crew mentioned, the bogus press release which appeared in the Red Plums next issue:

PRESS RELEASE: ENDURANCE HELICOPTERS IN MERCY DASH IN ANTARCTIC

1. HELOS FROM HMS ENDURANCE FLEW SHIP'S DOCTOR TO US RESEARCH VESSEL HERO TO ATTEND TO INJURED CREWMAN AFTER CALL FOR ASSISTANCE IN SOUTH SHETLANDS AREA OF ANTARCTICA. DATELINE - 20 JAN 75.
2. IN RESPONSE TO A CALL FOR ASSISTANCE INTERCEPTED BY RADIO SUPERVISOR MELVYN ANDERSON, OF TOW LAW, COUNTRY DURHAM, ON HIS RADIO EQUIPMENT, MAINTAINED AND SERVICED BY RADIO ELECTRICAL ARTIFICER 1ST CLASS GLENVILLE IAN VICTOR PACK, OF STUBBINGTON, HANTS, AND LEADING RADIO ELECTRICAL MECHANIC TREVOR NEALE, OF FAREHAM, HANTS. THE MESSAGE WAS PASSED TO LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ROGER PORTEOUS, OF OLD PORTSMOUTH, HANTS, WHO IN TURN TOOK IT TO THE CAPTAIN, CAPTAIN NOEL BEARNE, ROYAL NAVY OF PAIGNTON, DEVON.
3. THE CAPTAIN IMMEDIATELY ORDERED THE OFFICER OF THE WATCH, SUB LIEUTENANT MIKE WINCHURCH OF PORTSMOUTH, HANTS TO SEND FOR THE MEDICAL OFFICER, SURGEON LIEUTENANT ALAN BRAY OF EXETER, DEVON, AND INFORMED HIM OF THE CRISIS. THE SHIP WAS PIPED TO FLYING STATIONS BY ABLE SEAMAN WILLIAM SHEEHY OF DUBLIN, IRELAND. THE SHIP AT THIS TIME WAS BEING STEERED BY AWE TOE, OF COPENHAGEN, DENMARK. PASSAGE SOUNDINGS WERE BEING CARRIED OUT BY CORPORAL MIKE VARLOW OF BLACKPOOL, LANCs.
4. THE CHIEF OF THE WATCH IN THE ENGINE ROOM, MARINE ENGINEERING ARTIFICER FIRST CLASS (PROPULSION) DENNIS RAYMOND CLARKE, OF TURKTOWN, GOSPORT, HANTS, PUT ON ALL POSSIBLE REVOLUTIONS, ABLY ASSISTED BY THE STOKER OF THE WATCH, MARINE ENGINEERING MECHANIC 1ST CLASS FRED FREESTON, OF GOSPORT, HANTS. LEADING MARINE ENGINEERING MECHANIC IAN THOMSON, OF TIPNER, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS, WAS ALSO CLOSED UP, BUT CONTINUED PRACTISING ON HIS ACCORDION.



The mercy dash

5. AFTER CLOSING AT TOP SPEED, ENDURANCE HELICOPTERS WERE LAUNCHED BY THE FLIGHT DECK OFFICER, CHIEF AIRCRAFT ARTIFICER RANDOLPH ROWLAND PEARCE, OF HELSTON, CORNWALL WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF THE FLIGHT DECK CREW CONSISTING AIRCRAFT ARTIFICER FIRST CLASS DAVID F SAMPSON, OF TIVERTON, DEVON, PETTY OFFICER RADIO ELECTRICIAN (AIR) JOSEPH FALLEN, OF LOWESTOFT, ELECTRICAL MECHANICIAN (AIR) SECOND CLASS TONY WORTON (FD02 FAILED) OF ROWNER, GOSPORT, HANTS, AND NAVAL AIR MECHANIC FIRST CLASS JOCK McGREGOR OF DUMBARTON, SCOTLAND (ENGINEER OF THE FLIGHT). THE REMAINDER OF THE FLIGHT CREW NOT ACTIVELY INVOLVED WERE CARRYING OUT MATTRESS TESTING EXERCISES IN THE ROYAL MARINES BARRACKS.

6. ON ARRIVAL AT THE HERO, SURGEON LIEUTENANT BRAY WAS WINCHED DOWN SAFELY WHERE HE RENDERED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE TO THE INJURED MAN, STOPPED HIS BEER RATION FOR 38 DAYS AND PLACED HIM ON A DIET. HE WAS ALSO INFORMED THAT HIS LEAVE WAS STOPPED UNTIL SUCH TIME AS HE HAD COME TO TERMS WITH HIS OBESITY. OPERATING THE HELICOPTER WINCH WAS LEADING AIRCREWMAN ROY 'WINCHWAY' TARRANT, OF OLD COULSDEN, SURREY. THE AIRCRAFT WAS EXPERTLY PILOTED BY LIEUTENANT ARTHUR FRANK SWAIN, ROYAL NAVY, OF WEYMOUTH, DORSET. THE ACCOMPANYING AIRCRAFT CARRYING THE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, VARIOUS MEDICAL PUBLICATIONS RANGING FROM BASIC MIDWIFERY TO MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE, TRAVELLING EXPENSE AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE CLAIM FORMS AND A CASH REGISTER, WAS PILOTED BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER PETER HOST OF YEOVIL, SOMERSET, AND OBSERVED BY LIEUTENANT ROGER EDWARDS, OF ROWNER, GOSPORT, HANTS.

7. THE SPARES FOR BOTH HELICOPTERS WERE PROVIDED BY THE SUPPLY DEPARTMENT OF THE SHIP LED BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ROGER CLIVE PAINE, ROYAL NAVY, OF LONDON, CHIEF PETTY OFFICER STORES ACCOUNTANT MICK MOTTASHED OF FAREHAM, HANTS, LEADING STORES ACCOUNTANT STEWART NEVILLE-RUTHERFORD OF HILSEA, PORTSMOUTH. LEADING STORES ACCOUNTANT JEFF BAXTER USED TO HELP T00 BUT HE NOW WORKS FOR THE CATERER. HE COMES FROM PORTSMOUTH TOO. IN FLIGHT SNACKS WERE IMMEDIATELY ORGANISED BY PETTY OFFICER CATERER TOM SAWYER, OF COVENTRY, WHO ORDERED HIS TANKY, ABLE SEAMAN BRIAN DUDLEY, OF SYDENHAM, LONDON TO DRAW THEM FROM THE NAFFI MANAGER, MR DON LUCKETT, OF NOTTINGHAM.

8. INJURED MAN LATER REPORTED TO BE SUFFERING FROM A BROKEN CLAVICLE, TOOTHACHE, DHOBI ITCH AND WARTS. THE LATEST MEDICAL BULLETIN REPORTS THAT THE CREWMAN CONTINUES TO SUFFER FROM A BROKEN CLAVICLE AND TOOTHACHE, BUT THE DHOBI ITCH IS NOW UNDER CONTROL AND THE WARTS HAVE BEEN SENT TO GREAT ORMOND STREET FOR RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION. THE MIDWIFERY BOOK HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY LOANED TO THE US BASE AT PALMERS ISLAND IN CASE IT IS NEEDED.

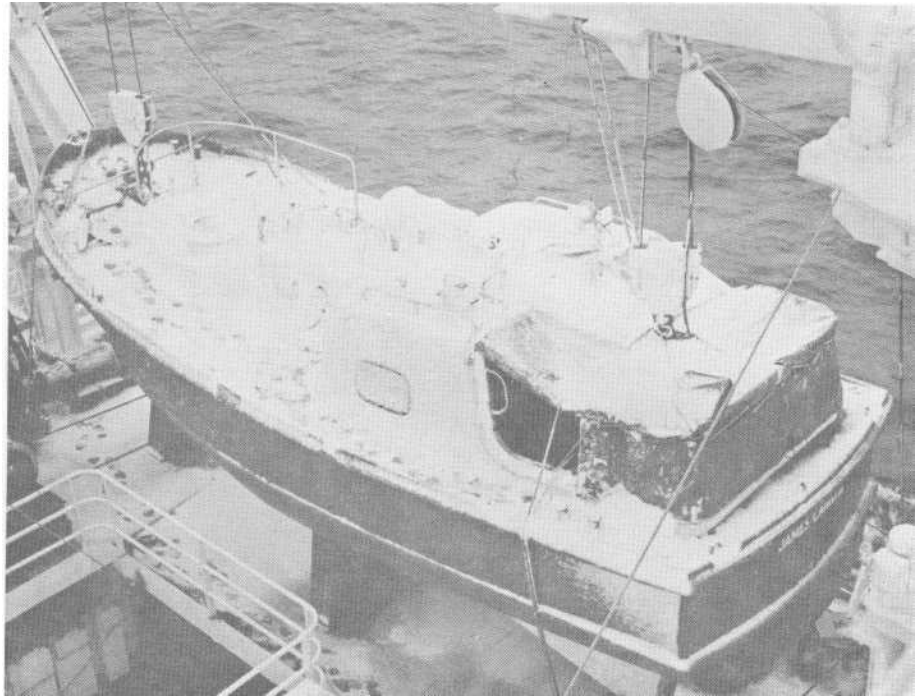
9. THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE OPERATIONS ELECTRICAL POWER ON THE SHIP WAS SUPPLIED INTERMITTENTLY BY THE SHIP'S WEAPONS ELECTRICAL DEPARTMENT LED BY LIEUTENANT 'JOCK' DAVIDSON, ROYAL NAVY, OF LITTLEHAMPTON, SUSSEX AND ASSISTED BY CONTROL ELECTRICAL ARTIFICER FIRST CLASS MICHAEL LEACH (EX OA AND PART TIME TEACHER), OF WATERLOOVILLE, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS. ORDNANCE ELECTRICAL MECHANICIAN FIRST CLASS JOHN COPE, OF HORNDEN, HANTS SHOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN THERE TO HELP BUT UNFORTUNATELY HE IS AWAY FROM THE SHIP SOUNDING THE SOUTH. ACTING UNDER ORDERS FROM CHIEF PETTY OFFICER LEACH, ORDNANCE ELECTRICAL MECHANIC FIRST CLASS PAUL 'PIGGY' MARKHAM, OF BRANSHOLME, HULL, YORKS, OPERATED ALL THE RIGHT SWITCHES AT THE RIGHT TIME, AND THE RESULTING FUSE WAS REPAIRED BY LEADING AIRMAN PHOTOGRAPHER 2ND CLASS WILLIAM 'SNAPS' TIMKEY, OF ROWNER, GOSPORT, HANTS, AN EX-ELECTRICIAN.

10. THE DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO M.O.R. (OUT) THE MEDICAL OFFICER WAS TAKEN AFTER A DEBATE INVOLVING THE FIRST LIEUTENANT , LIEUTENANT COMMANDER CHARLES ERRINGTON, ROYAL NAVY, OF HAYLING ISLAND,. HANTS, MASTER-AT-ARMS ROY McKIE OF WORTHING, SUSSEX, AND PETTY OFFICER STEWARD MAURICE MULCAHY, OF BIRTLEY, COUNTRY DURHAM. ANY RESULTING CLAIMS FOR SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE OR TRAVELLING EXPENSES WILL BE ASSESSED AND PAID BY CHIEF PETTY OFFICER RAY FAIRBANK OF STAMSHAW, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS , AND ANY MAIL TO BE REDIRECTED WILL BE DONE BY LEADING SEAMAN KEN SOUCH, OF OXFORD.

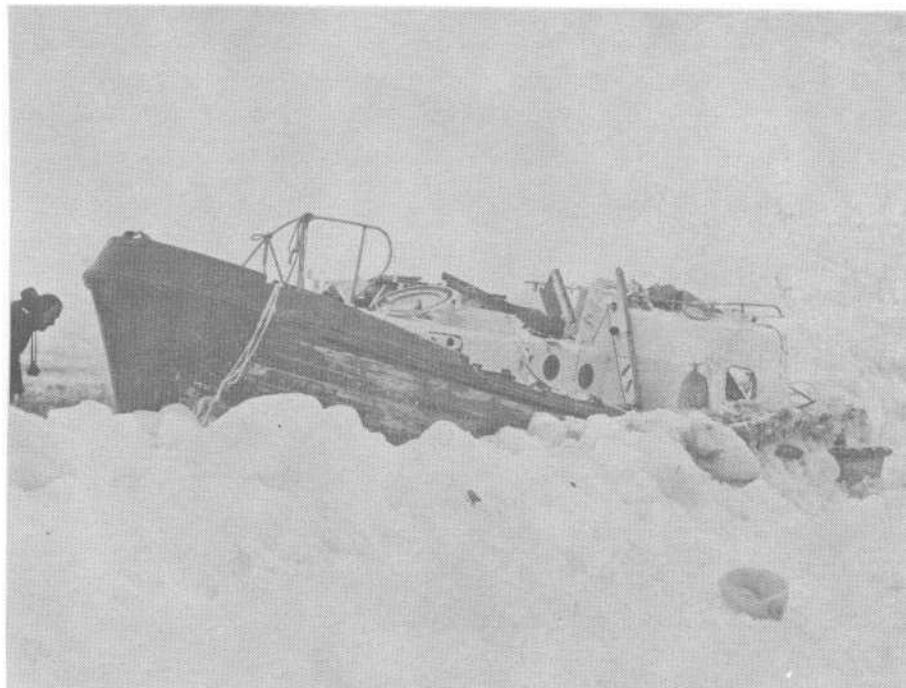
11. MORAL SUPPORT WAS RENDERED BY THE REMAINDER OF THE SHIP'S COMPANY. A NOMINAL LIST OF NAMES AND ADDRESSES WILL BE FORWARDED.

12. HMS ENDURANCE IS CURRENTLY CARRYING OUT A SURVEY OF NELSON STRAITS, AND GIVING 20 MINUTE BOAT TRIPS AROUND PALMER BASE WHENEVER POSSIBLE:

The MO in fact spent the night at the Russian Base of Bellinghausan, after the geologists, and their 2 volunteer helpers (Ray Philpott and Baz Kelso), had been landed the helos recovered the MO. Fate once again reared its ugly head as a force 8 gale blew up making it impossible for the helos to recover the geologists and their helpers. On Wednesday 22nd the helos were eventually launched in barely acceptable circumstances to 'rescue' our stranded friends. With the sea very rough and winds gusting to 60 knots there was little for the ship to do but ride out the storm. On Thursday evening when the Harmony Cove camp party came up on radio schedule they reported the James Caird had broken her moorings and was beached, the full extent of the damage was then unknown. It was hoped to recover the camp party on Friday, but once again weather conditions forbid flying, and on the evening schedule the camp party reported the James Caird to be a 'write-off'. The weather abated sufficient on Saturday morning to recover the camp party and as the withdrawal neared completion a further call for medical assistance was received. The Russian nurse had been assisting the patient to dress and had managed to re-dislocate his shoulder, again the MO did his mercy dash, to reset the shoulder. We said goodbye to the geologists that afternoon and the flight took advantage of the better weather to take yet more aerial photography. On Sunday we rendezvoused with the RRS John Biscoe again, this time to exchange some of our movies, after the R/V we sailed for Stanley.



BEFORE



AFTER

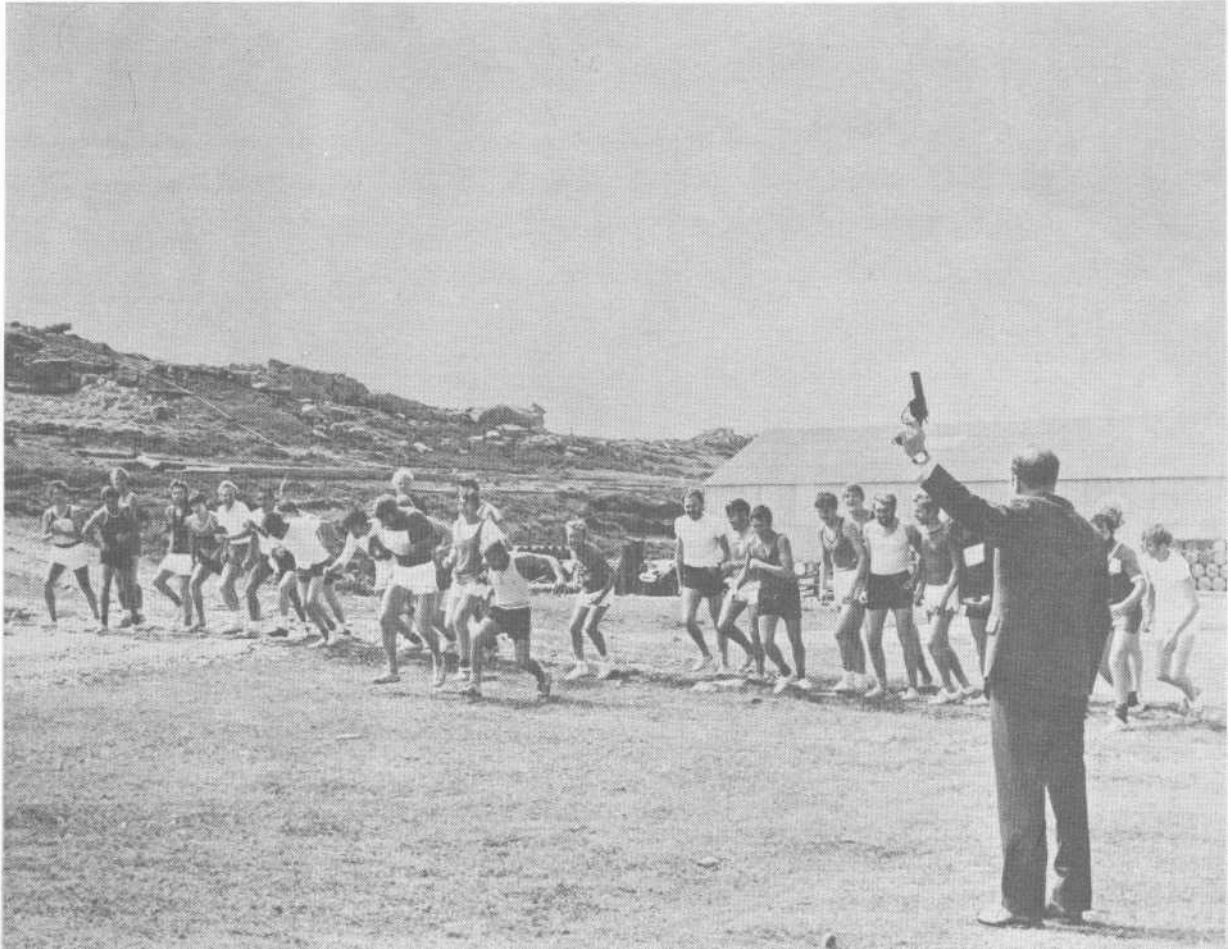
The trip back to the Falklands was uneventful, though the sea and weather seemed to want to make up for the rough week we had just had. Our return to Stanley, on Wednesday 29th, was for fuel only, and we then set sail for Montevideo. The seamen took full advantage of the good weather on the trip up to Monte, and gallons of paint found its way onto decks and bulkheads alike. The fine weather meant we could get ahead of schedule and this gave us the chance to anchor just off the River Plate on Sunday, volunteers being called for to assist with the paint-ship. We weighed anchor at six on Monday morning and moved up to, and anchored just off, the beaches of Punta-del-Este, the beaches of Monte.. Painting progressed while we awaited the arrival of the new NP 8901 along with the new Chief Tif, Bill Thompson and Dave Rutland also engine room staff. The 'Royals' arrived at 1600 and we were underway by 1700. Once back at sea a distinct change in the sea state was obvious, we were back to gale force conditions. With over 20 extra people onboard to say things were crowded would be an understatement, camp beds were used in passageways and it was like an obstacle course to move about. The following morning saw some very green faces, the new NP 8901 were not enjoying their journey at all. It was on this first morning that No 1, Chas Errington, made his famous pipe 'The focsle is out of bounds due to WET WATER', he did not even say 'I say again' either.

The weather had improved slightly by Wednesday morning and the helos did troop drills with the NP 8901, some of whom were still suffering. On Thursday night was the long awaited Pantomime, a definite success, and we arrived to disembark NP 8901 at Stanley (their home for 14 months - and they are welcome) on Friday morning. Saturday saw the 'round the island road race' and 'charity soccer match', another definite success (a report from the pantomime producer covers both this and his stage epic).

His Excellency the Governor of the Falkland Island and Mrs French, the new Governor and his wife, embarked on Sunday morning and we were off to do the annual Governors tour of the settlements. By half three we were anchored at Goose Green, the next biggest settlement only to Stanley, and after a small Cocktail Party in the Wardroom we sailed again to arrive at North Arm by 1000 the following day. North Arm had prepared food for as many of us that could go ashore, but once again the weather had an answer to this happening. During the afternoon we dragged anchor and had to weigh and re-anchor. It was decided too risky to allow shore leave and the people ashore were as disappointed as us. A few people from ashore attended a buffet and cinema evening in the wardroom, but when it was time for them to disembark it was too rough and we had to proceed to sea with our guests, including 3 women, still onboard. We returned to North Arm at six the next morning, and after our guests left, with the weather still very unsettled, it was decided to cancel the third and last day of the tour. We returned to Stanley via the Falklands Strait, arriving to disembark HEGFI and Mrs French at 1000 on Wednesday 12 Feb, this was our last visit to Stanley for the season.



The Captain presents the trophy for the Stanley Road Race



The Start of the Road Race



Community singing before the big kick-off

HOMeward BOUND

On Thursday we embarked the former Governor's Mini, for safe (?) return to UK, and then on Friday morning we embarked the outgoing NP 8901 and set sail once again for Montevideo. The same problem of sleeping occurred en route to Monte, but luckily the weather was more favourable to us. On Monday 17th we had a full power trial as part of Bill Thompsons turnover, and on Tuesday we again arrived off Monte for the NP 8901 to disembark, Ken Beales and Terry Rycroft flying home with them. The TQ of NP 8901, Tony Mendoza had chosen to return to UK with us, and I would like to say thank you to him for all his valuable assistance with this book, thank you Tony. We picked up the river pilot shortly after 8901 had disembarked and entered Canal Punta Indio, the navigable channel up to Buenos Aires. Shortly before 2000 we anchored at Intersection for the night.

At six on Wednesday morning the ship weighed anchor and with the harbour pilot to guide us we entered Canal de Acceso al Puerto Buenos Aires, we fired a 21 gun National salute and then berthed alongside at 0900, to see the berthing was an experience, we were squeezed into a berth only feet longer than our length.

Bs. As. was enjoyed by most of the crew, the missions once again opened their doors to us and the dance proved very popular, Charlie and Mary of the onyx shop were often onboard as they were doing a roaring trade in 'rabbits' and some enjoyed the nightly bar-b-que on a nearby island. It was hot and sticky in Bs As and it was with some relief that we put to sea on Monday 24 Feb, our last visit in South America over and only one more port of call before we would be reunited with our families and friends. The same routine of pilots was necessary to go down river to Monte, but when we eventually arrived off Monte, it was too choppy for the small pilot boat to come alongside and we had to anchor for the night. Some took advantage of the stop to fish, and when Scouse Mainwaring pulled in a dog-fish Buster Brown volunteered to remove it from the hook for him, I do not think Buster will volunteer again because he was unfortunate enough to receive the barb of the fish in his hand, and Scouse then had to do him a favour (Scouse being our POMA).

The trip across the 'pond' started very cloudy and cool, and the sun worshippers were disappointed to say the least, we appeared to be heading in the same direction as, and at the same speed as a cloud bank, we did eventually see the sun and last minute tans were acquired ready for our return home. Shortly after leaving Bs As we had a weigh-in in the hangar at the start of a (charity) sponsored-slim, several eager to lose the pounds their stomachs seemed to have acquired were duly weighed-in, and for the next 2 weeks tried desperately not to give in to the temptations the chefs kept producing. The results of the eventual weigh-in proved encouraging to most and the benefits helped to swell our charity purse. The annual Horse Race was held on the flight deck shortly before our arrival at Madiera, this was very popular and once again helped to boost our charity purse which finished at the end of the season as follows:

Stanley road race and soccer match	£234.03
Horse racing	£246.11
Sponsored Slim	£ 91.68
Spare Ickies	£ 9.18
	<hr/>
	£581.00
	<hr/>

We crossed the equator at 0237 on 6 Mar, back at long last in the Northern Hemisphere. On Saturday we heard that an Argentine ice breaker was stuck in pack ice and that an American ice breaker who had gone to her assistance was also stuck, we were glad to be many thousands of miles away. By 10 Mar we had returned to GMT and on Thursday 13th at 0945 we arrived at Madiera. Madiera proved an excellent last run, with sufficient range of rabbits for the ones we had forgotten and plenty of Madiera factories where tasting all the different types, without buying, was the recognised afternoon shopping spree.

We sailed from Madiera on Saturday 15th with 1,310 miles to go to Outer Spit Buoy at Portsmouth. Two new air Senior Rates had joined at Madiera and this meant a turnover which included flying. On Sunday we advanced our clocks for the last time, this was to coincide with England's change to BST, and on Monday No 1 surprised us with an NBCDX. The bay proved to be fairly calm and on Tuesday we sighted an RAF Nimrod reconnaissance plane. We broke down (a panic so close to home on Tuesday evening and had to wallow for 4 hours while the engineers performed their magic, underway again and by Wednesday mid-day we were 40 miles South of Plymouth, and back in the English Channel.

We arrived off OSB, and anchored at 0730 on Thursday 20 Mar, Customs Officers boarded to customs clear us, the flight disembarked, the boats were lowered and sent ashore and we entered Portsmouth harbour at 1115. Berthing on FLJ5 at 1125 we had our first glimpse of our families and friends for 5 months, it was really great to be back in England. After happy reunions the ship soon became deserted. England decided to have its winter the following week and we were all soon shivering as we contemplated a white Easter. Easter weekend found the ship as deserted as the previous weekend, and the chef cooked his last breakfast on Tuesday 1 Apr. The ship's company were accommodated in HMS NELSON from the 1st and by then the refit was already underway, with hardboard down and refit hoses appearing this is where it all began.

THE SUPPLY AND SECRETARIAT DEPARTMENT

Scene: Buffet Car of the 1220 pm train from Portsmouth to Waterloo on Thursday 20 Mar 75.

"Hullo, mate, didn't expect to see you here."

"You neither, where have you been lately? Which ship you on?"

"Me I've just come off ENDURANCE. We arrived in Pompey this morning. Bin away nearly 6 months."

"Oh yeah - what's it like on there then?"

"Pretty good. We had a good run I know that, and I had a good number."

"What job did you do then? Part of ship? Or what?"

"No: no: not me - I was tanky; used to work with the S and S all the time."

"Cor blimey, mate: How did you get on with that lot?"

"Oh not so bad, y'know; after you got used to 'em. Our boss was a 2½ called Lieutenant Commander PAINE. He was certainly keen on the old work bit but he could be quite a good laugh too. He produced this pantomime 'Dick Whittington? which I was in as the Lord Mayor of London. Imagine me in a Mayor's chain made of beer can tops and a big 'at - still everyone thought it were great. But the boss didn't bother me much - except he used to insist on tasting the milk I made each day with the mechanical cow. 'Very naice, today' he would say. Well, of course it was, I don't know what 'e expected me to do 'bout it! 'E used to give the lads a bit of a 'ard time some days but otherwise he was OK."

"But who did you really work for?"

"Oh, the PO Caterer, Tom SAWYER. He was a nice bloke, if you did what you were told. Used to run around all day with one o' them pocket computers. Always weighing rashers of bacon and counting out mushy peas. Some of the Senior Rates said he even used to click away on that computer in his sleep: But 'e were a good Caterer, you should 'ave seen the Christmas Day nosh he organised and a fancy menu too. Then my mate at work was LSA Bill RICHARDSON. 'E was alright too, we used to hump the stores up together. He was a good cartoonist as well and 'e used to draw all these sexy pictures for the ship's newspaper. Used to be an SRE operator as well. Yeah, 'im and me got on well together. I reckon I learned from him about what a Jack Dusty's job is really like."

"You said something about a ship's newspaper, what was that?"

"Yeah, it was called the 'RED PLUM' - which was what the ship was called, like it's painted red, see. Anyway the Editor of this 'ere newspaper was the Chief Writer, Ray FAIRBANK. He wasn't much like some of them old Chief Writers for he used to run the ship's soccer team and be the kingpin of the ship's anglers as well. Very helpful too. I used to have all my pay sent to the bank, like lots of the ship's company, and 'e'd always cash a cheque for you - well, 3 in a month were the rules - and you always got whatever information you wanted from the Ship's Office. When we were down in the Falklands we all used Falkland Islands money, called it FID notes we did. Funny looking stuff like washing powder coupons. There was a Leading Writer too, Taff MAGILL. 'E was very good at sport, used to play in both the ship's soccer and rugger teams. I 'eard it said once though 'e used to write to so many girls that very often 'e put the wrong letter in the wrong envelope and that was the end of that romance. Hey, by the way, I'm doing all the talking, how about you buying the beer?"

"Yeah, sorry, mate. So, if you were tanky you must have had a lot to do with the chefs - what were they like?"

"Great bunch, mate: And the food they turned out was really smashin , too. You could always take as much as you wanted - every meal. They used to carve these great big legs of lamb we got in the Falklands on the counter, and then there were the steaks we bought in Montevideo. You should 'ave seen 'em. Then one day we even got 2 great big whole cows in the Falklands. No I reckon the food was one of the best things about the ship - anyone'll tell you that. The bloke in charge was a PO Cook called 'Phil' PHILPOTT. He was near to his pensh, but he didn't 'alf dig out in the galley. He used to make and decorate these cakes too. Fantastic they were, never seen anything like 'em, you've probably seen pictures in the Navy News. Then there were 3 killick chefs - Frank NOLAN, Dusty RHODES and Les LAVENDER, they all used to work like 'ell and old Frank's 'Chinky noshes' were what everybody used to look out for. Dusty used to be the Wardroom chef most of the time, and was always dashing about getting little extras for the Officers - you know, the luxuries of life, like cranberry sauce and parmesan cheese, without which I think they would all 'ave died. Then Les decided he'd grow a beard, he started the day we left Pompey and it just about covers his chin now, that is if he combs it out. We had 2 cooks mates too - Robbie ROBINSON - he's going outside PVR, proper Cockney too like me, but from the other side of the river. Used to support Tottenham Hotspur, and young Ziggy WEST - it was 'is first ship but he learned alot from the others. We even 'ad a Bootneck Chef called George COVILL. When he was playing for the ship's football team in Mar del Plata he scored 3 goals - 2 for them and one for us: That caused the biggest laugh of the day."

"Sounds like a good set-up. Did you lave a Canteen onboard too?"

"Yeah, Don LUCKETT was the manager. He'd been on the ship about 3 years already so this was his forth trip. He was the sort of bloke you don't think is around anymore - he'd do anything for you and the Canteen had stacks of gear. He had an assistant too, Graham GREENWOOD. 'E only joined the ship and NAAFI the day before we sailed but 'e didn't 'alf catch on quick. A few more NAAFI blokes like them around and we'd lave no problems."