



The Land of Eternal Snows

by WRITER COCHRANE

My story starts early on the morning of 28th October, when we commenced passage of the Trinidad channel. On the weather deck, it is icy cold with alternate mist, hail and snow. Even I, being a bit of an upper deck ranger, spend very little time up top now.

The scenery, when visible, is to say the least quite spectacular. Rocky, snow capped hills coming right down to the water's edge, gradually give way to soaring mountains, their summits half hidden by cloud and falling snow. All this conveys an impression of utter desolation, a land completely devoid of life and of no material value to man.

Here, you tend to think of the mariners of years ago, who navigated the same seas in ships described as floating hells, who spent most of their time on watch on the upper deck or in the rigging, and you only have

to contrast all this with our own passage to arrive at the hackneyed term 'when sailors were sailors'.

There were quite a few on board who photographed the mountain ranges and I was at this time not a little envious of our chopper crew and 'Snaps' who had the opportunity of seeing and photographing areas on which man had not yet set eyes, let alone feet.

Leading the squadron, flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Talbot, H.M.S. *Tiger* feels her way and astern H.M.S. *Penelope* gives the impression of gliding through the water. Towering cliffs looking down on us give the impression of the very insignificance of our ships.

What surprised me most about Punta Arenas was the complete lack of snow or icy blasts which I had been led to believe was associated with this, the Southernmost port in the world. Even the local inhabitants were surprised with the spell of really sunny weather which accompanied our stay.







Tristan da Cunha

1st December 1964

Breaking through low cloud the Wessex touched down on a green sward below the village, flanked on one side by crops of New Zealand flax and on the other by 60 foot cliffs leading to the landing place. Over on the left lay the menacing remains of the huge lava stream which caused the evacuation of the island in 1961.

The Union Jack was much in evidence when the C. in C. and Lady Talbot stepped out to be greeted by the Administrator Mr Peter Day and Senior Villager Charlie Repetto ; even the windsock was red, white and blue. Mr. Flint the parson was there and also Dr. Gooch the Government doctor, but it was obviously a touch early for the villagers and there were only one or two children hanging around.

The Commander presented the head man with a Christmas turkey and some sweets for the island children. The buzz was not long in getting around and in a few minutes children were to be seen emerging from all over the place heading purposefully for the village hall with tins in their hands.

There are about 250 islanders on Tristan da Cunha, living in tiny crofts consisting of two rooms at the most with walls made of great two-foot blocks of lava rock. The houses are built into the side of the green slope and building one is no problem. We saw a team digging a hole at the back of one house; this was a new bedroom for the latest addition to the family. The roofs are thatched with reeds from the New Zealand flax plants.

To look at the island it is similar to the Outer Hebrides, stark and windswept, but not as bleak as one might imagine. The cluster of crofts with the Government cottages on one side give the island considerable character and homeliness.

The lava eruption of 1961 destroyed the only reasonable landing place in the island and also the Crayfish freezing factory, crayfish being one of the few exports of the island, but remarkably it stopped short of the houses which were still in good repair when the islanders returned. It has been a hard year, however, the potato crop has not properly got under way, and fishing has been strictly curtailed by the lack of a proper landing place. Most of the villagers have been living on their savings put aside in U.K.

The natives were very friendly and quite prepared to pass the time of day. Ships call about 2 or 3 times a year and they did not seem unusually stirred by our visit; they appear much too engrossed in their own

lives. Dark skinned and rough looking, their language is quaint. 'How you is' is the customary greeting. They are obviously capable of enormous feats of strength and seamanship. As one of them said, 'If you make a mistake in the surf, you've bought it'.

This particular character described with great nonchalance how he and a friend were returning one day from a visit to a neighbouring island in one of their 15 foot canvas dorys when the wind blew up and carried them offshore. They were unable to return for five days with no food or water in the boat. This appeared a normal occurrence in Tristan life.

The village had woken up when the time came for us to go and we were seen off by a strong team in brightly coloured jerseys supported by a host of dogs, donkeys, sheep and cattle. The Navy were here in the last war and might come again—Draft chit, anybody?



Cape Town

For many, the visit to Simonstown (coming soon after a most enjoyable visit to Rio de Janeiro) was the highlight of the cruise. The hospitality which was extended to the ship was truly overwhelming.

It was the first time that we enjoyed practically uninterrupted sunshine, with the heat being tempered by the south-easterly wind, referred to by the locals as the Cape Doctor since it kept the air free from germs. The sea was still a little on the cool side but the beaches and scenery were marvellous, the inhabitants extremely friendly and Cape Town was within easy reach, but for most this was not a night club city.

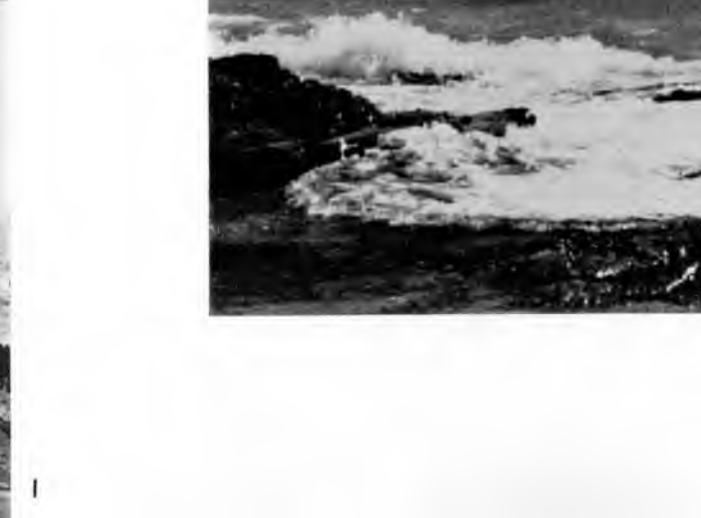


Overlooking Simonstown

Soon after we arrived, a large party was whisked away in twenty private cars (led by Mr. Gay, the Mayor of Simonstown) to Paarl, some 40 miles from Cape Town, where we had our introduction to braai flesch, which was lunch cooked over glowing charcoal. Wine and beer helped delicious chops, steaks and sausages on their way, with no ban on 'seconds' or even 'thirds'. After a walk through the gardens, we wended our way to the KWV wine and brandy factory where, after a most interesting tour, a scented honey child filled our glasses so that we might taste the local produce. There followed a reception in Stellenbosch given by the Mayor and Council after which we were driven back to the ship.

This was the beginning of the open handed hospitality which the warm and generous people of Cape Town and Simonstown gave to us during our three week stay and which softened immensely the prospect of spending Christmas away from home. Invitations for weekends, beach parties and tours flooded into the ship, those for Christmas Day were so numerous that everyone who could be spared was looked after and many were 'adopted' by a family for the whole visit.

When our sailing was delayed for 24 hours by a strong wind, which would have made a turn in the small harbour rather hazardous, the buzz got around so quickly that people were changed and ready to go ashore again inside ten minutes. Unfortunately, the following day the wind had dropped and so we said farewell to Kaapstad and set course for Mauritius.



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- 1 Seal Island
- 2 Bikini Beach
- 3 Windmill
- 4 Simonstown,—Cape Town Road
- 5 Old dutch house
- 6 Cape of Good Hope
- 7 Rhodes Cottage
- 8 The Lion's Head
- 9 Foreshore, Kaapstad
- 10 Muizenberg Beach
- 11 Table Mountain



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Christmas Day



The Flight Saga

by LT. CDR. WHITE

'You're keeping Gertie in the dogbox, I hope'.

'Nope ; flying at 1030—Jumpex'.

'Hell, George, seriously, can't you give it a rest for a bit?'. So goes the Daily Order meeting each day.

No, I'm afraid we're unsatiable. Rationed, of course, to help the long range planners, but take a few days off and it all seems very strange.

Like that day back in November (the one before last)—that was the first time we had an airborne view of the ship.

I could not have asked for more perfect conditions: wind—red 30, 15 knots; visibility—excellent (for Newcastle); sea state—flat calm. We arrived right on time and barely drowned the click of press cameras as we landed. We were ranged resplendent for the ceremony and got a hole in the nose for our trouble. We emerged from the commissioning and finally plucked up courage to push the cab once out of the hangar, and back in again, during a two day visit to Loch Ewe. It took us nearly an hour and a half.

We survived our first passage of the Irish Sea with no more than the average degree of seasickness and returned to Culdrose as we passed the Lizard.

We only saw the ship once during the next four months when we paid a visit to the Portsmouth area to do some Deck Landing Practice and to participate in the mass D.L.G. photograph. Meanwhile, we worked ourselves up at Culdrose and Portland in time to embark when *London* went north again for her final acceptance trials and Seaslug firings.

We did our first night flying on our way up to the Moray Firth and by the time we arrived back at Portland we were well practised in flying from the ship, having worked up to the limits of wind and ship movement. On deck, our 90 minutes had dropped to a most impressive scramble time of 6½ minutes from fully secured in the hangar to engine running.

The novelty wore off during the work up and our operations ceased attracting the hordes of amateur photographers who tried to invade every vantage point—illegally.

We tried everything that anyone thought of, including passing tows and delivering boarding parties and were the first crew to try out the 'tied swimmer' form of night rescue.

We volunteered to carry Royalty but the R.A.F. screamed so loudly we left it to them—just to preserve the peace.



Not our usual habitat, but *Ulu Langat* makes a good surround



The first birthday of the flight

President Belaunde of Peru
meets the flight

Our progress round the world has been amply chronicled in other articles and our task was the routine one of keeping in flying practice. However, there was usually something outstanding wherever we went, such as the day in Valparaiso when a certain aircrew member ate the Geraniums at a lunch party with the Chilean naval aviators. In fact, we tried to make a liaison with the naval aviators in each country we visited.

At Callao we succeeded in breaking the hangar windows with our slipstream. Sheepishly, we went to apologise, but found the C.O. in raptures. 'Ah, such power—if only we had a helicopter like that'.

We took our Admiral to an Estancia about 60 miles from Punta Arenas and spent the day on horseback. I almost had to be lifted into my cockpit for the flight back and was observed decidedly bow legged around the ship for a week afterwards.

The Brazilians demonstrated the rivalry between the services to an extent where naval aviation was considered illegal (no need for the Routine Office to cheer). We narrowly evaded arrest ourselves when we went to the civil airport to give a demonstration.

The high veldt of South Africa



Camping at Wemmershoek



Part of a vertical R.A.S.