



# FOREWORD

by

**Captain M. S. Ollivant, M.B.E., D.S.C., R.N.**

Even the most vivid memories soon fade into hazy recollections and I am therefore glad to be penning a foreword to this magazine which will provide a permanent record of *H.M.S. Protector's* tenth Antarctic season both for ourselves and for our families.

The answer to the question "What did you do in the Antarctic?" is always difficult but the following pages will, I hope, provide some of the answers. We came, we saw - and if we did not exactly conquer - we achieved everything which we set out to do thereby helping to improve man's knowledge of this vast but relatively unknown frontier and the dangerous oceans which surround

it. We have protected British interests in the Falkland Islands and circumnavigated South America into the bargain.

These things have not been easily achieved and it is chiefly the skill, hard work and enthusiasm of everyone onboard, often in very testing circumstances that I shall remember. I should like to thank all of you for a job well done and to wish those who are staying on a happy and successful commission next year.



## H.M.S. PROTECTOR 1964-1965



# H.M.S. PROTECTOR 1964-1965

1964		1965	
AUGUST		JANUARY	
Monday 17th	The ship's company arrives to take over the ship from refit by Messrs. J. I. Thornycroft at Woolston.	Friday 1st	Sail from Port Stanley for HI-FIX operations.
		Thursday 21st	Return to Port Stanley for paint ship.
SEPTEMBER		Friday 29th	Sail from Port Stanley.
Tuesday 1st	Sea Trials.		
Friday 11th	Arrival at Portsmouth Dockyard.	FEBRUARY	
Thursday 24th	Commissioning Service attended by the Right Reverend Launcelot Fleming, D.D., M.S., the Bishop of Norwich. Ship's Company Dance at Kimbells.	Tuesday 2nd	Arrival at Montevideo.
		Tuesday 9th	Sail from Montevideo.
Monday 28th	H.M.S. Protector sails from Portsmouth.	Saturday 13th	Return to Port Stanley.
		Sunday 14th	Sail from Port Stanley for survey assistance.
		Thursday 25th	Protector crosses the Antarctic Circle.
OCTOBER			
Friday 2nd	Arrival at Gibraltar for work-up.	MARCH	
Wednesday 7th	Sail from Gibraltar.	Thursday 4th	Arrival at Leith for fuelling.
Friday 9th	Arrival at Funchal, Madeira.	Friday 5th	Re-embarkation of Expedition at Royal Bay and arrival at Grytviken.
Monday 12th	Sail from Madeira.	Saturday 6th	Sail from Grytviken.
Sunday 25th	Arrival at Rio de Janeiro.	Friday 12th	Return to Montevideo and embark new Royal Marines detachment.
Tuesday 27th	Sail from Rio de Janeiro.	Saturday 13th	Sail from Montevideo.
Friday 30th	Arrival at Montevideo - Embark Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia.	Tuesday 16th	Farewell visit to Port Stanley.
		Friday 19th	Protector retains Stanley Shield - Revue "Hello Stanley - Goodbye".
NOVEMBER		Saturday 20th	Sail from Port Stanley.
Sunday 1st	Sail from Montevideo.	Monday 22nd	Arrival at Punta Arenas, Chile.
Thursday 5th	Arrival at Port Stanley.	Thursday 25th	Sail from Punta Arenas.
Sunday 8th	Remembrance Day Parade.		
Monday 9th	Sail from Port Stanley.	APRIL	
Thursday 12th	Arrival at Grytviken, South Georgia.	Thursday 1 st	Arrival at Valparaiso - earthquake relief work.
Sunday 15th	Disembarkation of Expedition and stores completed - sail from South Georgia.	Wednesday 7th	Sail from Valparaiso.
Thursday 19th	Arrival at Port Stanley.	Monday 12th	Arrival at Callao, Peru.
Monday 23rd	Sail from Port Stanley.	Saturday 17th	Sail from Callao.
Sunday 29th	Port San Carlos.	Thursday 22nd	Arrival at Balboa, Panama.
		Saturday 24th	Sail from Panama and transit the Canal.
DECEMBER		Tuesday 27th	Arrival at Kingston, Jamaica.
Sunday 6th	Beauchene Island.	Friday 30th	Sail from Kingston.
Monday 7th	Return to Port Stanley.		
Tuesday 8th	50th Anniversary of Battle of the Falkland Islands.	MAY	
Wednesday 9th	Sail from Port Stanley for seismic operations.	Friday 14th	Arrival at Portsmouth.
Tuesday 22nd	Return to Port Stanley.		

# THE COMMISSION

Monday, 28th September was the day appointed for our departure from England and despite the normal upsets, the whims of a contract refit and the chaos of last minute storing, this day did materialise and saw us setting out purposefully on our tenth season in Antarctica. A brief look at the Dorset coast where we practised fuelling off Portland, and then on down the well-known track to Gibraltar.

As homage to our return, we fired a salute to the Flag Officer Gibraltar and spent a pleasant week-end in the calm and shelter of the famous rock. The next few days saw us exercising divers, climbing the Rock, landing the Royal Marines by helicopter and, with deadly accuracy, achieving two hits with the 4-inch gun on its annual moving target practice. Thus encouraged, we continued our long journey to the South, leaving Gibraltar in dense fog and reaching Madeira two days later on a Friday.

The holiday season never ceases at Madeira and, though for us, this was merely a fuelling stop, we found ourselves caught up with Portuguese hospitality in their colourful and friendly island. But after three days we were off again, bound on the longest southbound leg-across the equator and towards the throbbing capitals of South America. Our 3,000 mile passage was interrupted by an evening's sighting of the dusky Cape Verde Islands, the results of the British general elections, and for some the gradual but rewarding attainment of a palm beach sun-tan. This was the time to practice the seismic team, to exercise the helicopters and to sort out the hundred and one odd things set aside for such an occasion.

With airy grace the hirsute King Neptune, his haggard wife, Amphitrite, and learned court descended on us one Sunday and pursued their historic ritual with customary vigour and poetic elegance. He welcomed us to the Southern seas and the days that were ahead of us - though in such palmy conditions it was hard to believe that only a month would see us in the teeth of the bitterest gale fighting our way back from South Georgia. But this was all to come. Rio de Janeiro, largest city of Brazil, beckoned us over the horizon!

It would be hard to satisfy even the keenest American tourist in forty-eight hours, but this was all the time we had in Rio. We climbed the heights of Corvoca, swam on the fabulous Coppacabana and "programmed" ourselves for the way of life and the exciting customs of driving in South America. Our time was well spent and we even managed to embark 800 tons of much needed fuel as well!

Then on down the South American coast for another whirlwind visit - this time to the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo, which we reached on 30th October. The purpose of this visit, and indeed our slightly earlier

than usual departure from England, was to pick up the ten members of the Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia who had flown out from England and now awaited their onward shipment onboard *Protector* to South Georgia.

For half of us Montevideo was another new face but for those in their second commission this was the familiar port where *Protector* has made her name and where the British population welcome us with open arms. Here again we could only stay for forty-eight hours - time enough to renew acquaintances, to deliver a crushing blow on the local cricket team, and to take a last look at the sun before disappearing down South. As we sailed from Montevideo, the shallow waters of the River Plate, the wreck of the *Graf Spee*, and the approaching fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Falkland Islands were all reminders of the momentous and historic events that have taken place in these southern seas - and of the important part that the aged *Protector* still plays in the modern world. A long southerly swell greeted us as we steamed steadily southwards, every day getting closer to the Falkland Islands - a fact of which we were daily made more aware by the increasing strength of the voice of the redoubtable "Edith" passing her messages on the "Farmyard net" round the Falkland Islands!

And during the middle watch on 4th November we made our navigational landfall - not as the discoverer John Davis of the ship *Desire* in 1592 - but by radar on the dominating Heights of Wickham and the prominent North Coast. However, as day broke, the sight that greeted us must have been very similar to the sight that the Elizabethan discoverer encountered 372 years before - the bleak and gaunt islands, the treeless hill-tops, no sign of habitation, but a windswept and rugged charm reminding one immediately of the west coast of Scotland.





*Blimey - it works*



*The Court assembled*



*"Can you use this, Butcher?"*

We steamed into Falkland Sound to establish on Great Island the survey party amidst the astonishing variety of birds and wild beasts, and, on Thursday, 5th November, made our formal arrival and entry to Port Stanley. The customary round of calls, driving rain to remind us that the Falklands lie in the wake of the roaring forties, and ashore there was a genuine and warm welcome to greet old and new commissioners alike. We had travelled over 8,000 miles in thirty-nine days and had, as the Captain told us, "arrived on time in our operating area".

Our first task in the 1964/65 season was to establish the ten members of the Combined Services Expedition on the island of South Georgia. Sailing from Port Stanley on 9th November we had the pleasure of the company of the Governor of the Falkland Islands and his wife for this trip - it being their first opportunity of seeing part of their large Antarctic parish. Thick fog soon enveloped us as we set out and it remained like this all the way to South Georgia.

To those who have never seen South Georgia before, it presented a truly magnificent sight. As the fog lifted closer inshore, we saw towering mountain ranges, snow capped and precisely defined against a clear blue sky. We approached Cumberland Bay, and the mountains seemed to fall sheer into sea on either side; the sight of Mount Paget and Sugartop lying regally above the sheltered Grytviken must have been a challenging and inspiring sight for our ten intrepid explorers.

The first three days in South Georgia were relatively quiet - establishing stores dumps at Leith, Grytviken and Royal Bay, photographic reconnaissance flights, the official calls on this isolated community by the Governor and Mrs. Haskard, and for many of us our first experiences of two widely different activities - skiing and watching the whale industry. When we sailed from Grytviken on the 14th we planned to establish the final stores dump and to disembark all members of the expedition on the south-west coast of the Island on the following day.

The north-east coast had been relatively free from ice, but on rounding the southern end of the island we met a very different picture. Icebergs and growlers became more numerous, pack ice was showing on radar and as night fell, the wind increased. Slowly we steamed up the hazardous west coast "darning" our way through the ice strewn waters. By dawn a full gale was blowing and our chances of landing the stores high up above Jacobson Bight seemed remote. We felt our way closer to the shore and by six o'clock the wind had slackened enough for the first helicopter to fly a reconnaissance to find a suitable dump for this important consignment of stores - amongst them the Expedition's Christmas dinner! As luck would have it, flying conditions ashore were perfect and the helicopter landed all stores and equipment at a height of

1,200 ft. in under three hours - a fine achievement. So we pressed on up the coast, fed the expedition members their last civilized meal for four months and, around mid-day "nosed" into the impressive but totally uncharted waters of King Haakon Bay. There followed a busy afternoon's flying as the expedition and all remaining stores were ferried ashore - to the position where Shackleton landed forty-eight years before - in a hectic race against time and the ever deteriorating weather. The sight of the expedition members triumphantly dancing, as snow and hail lashed the ground and the last helicopter disappeared into the darkening evening must have been extraordinary - almost macabre. But the deed was done,



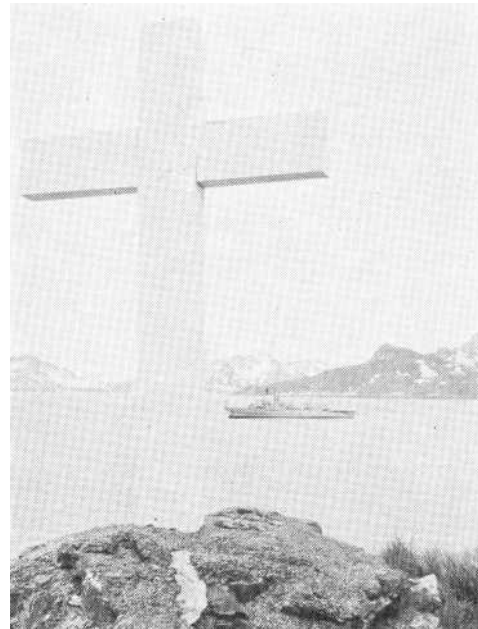
and we could confidently and accurately report that "all members of the Expedition, their stores and equipment had been landed on time and without mishap in South Georgia".

We set off westwards to return to the Falkland Islands and soon realized how fortunate we had been to achieve the landings so successfully. In twenty-four hours the barometer fell 50 millibars and on the forenoon of the day after leaving South Georgia we were "hove to" in mounting seas and gale force winds. There was little time to think of the explorers, finding their way on the island as we ourselves were lashed by violent winds and a sea which knew no moderation. After four days buffeting we arrived at Port Stanley.

By comparison with the first patrol, the second was less exciting. Sailing on 25th November we spent over a fortnight exercising in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. We practised the seismic team to perfection, landed the Royal Marines by helicopter and transferred the Survey team from their camp on Great Island to *John Biscoe* for their passage to the South



*Rio de Janeiro - Sugarloaf and Corvocado*



*Grytviken - Sir Ernest Shackleton's grave*



*The 50th Anniversary of the Battle of the Falkland Islands*

Orkneys. The highlights were a relaxed Sunday anchored off Port San Carlos and another Sunday at the lonely nature reserve of Beauchene Island. Here we saw in astonishing profusion albatrosses, penguins, seals, sea lions and shags of many varieties. Cliff faces made white by the very numbers of birds perching there; beaches so crowded out with albatrosses and rockhopper penguins that one had to tread warily for fear of crushing an unsuspecting animal; and everywhere the extraordinary sensation of an island where man has not made his mark and nature reigns supreme.

Tuesday, 8th December, 1964, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Falkland Islands. There are still people alive in the islands who can remember this remarkable occasion when Graf Spee's crack German squadron basking in the glory of their success at Coronel was brought to task and annihilated under the withering fire of Admiral Sturdee's dreadnoughts. In 1964 the occasion was marked by parades, church services, a broadcast on the radio and endless parties ashore.

But on the following day we sailed for Deception Island and our first patrol in the ice. The story of this seismic patrol is best told in terms of statistics. In eight days we exploded 324 charges while covering a distance of 567 miles. The longest run of seventy miles far exceeded *Protector's* furthest to date and was in itself a great achievement. Through the murk and the fog which surrounded us all day, we battled on in flat calm conditions accompanied by our enthusiastic escort *Shackleton* who listened for our explosions at the end of our lines. By the end of eight busy and long days we had completed the programme for which ten days were originally planned, almost exhausted our stock of charges and seismic cable, and earned an early and welcome return to Port Stanley, Christmas and mail from home.

Christmas at (Port) Stanley followed the normal channels of unlimited celebrations and hospitality,

#### UP SPIRITS



the robust and energetic amusement of the Stanley races, and, for those still alive, more celebrations at the new year.

We escaped in the afternoon of January 1st bearing with us the Governor, now Sir Cosmo Haskard, who came for a further look at his parish. This time we were treated to a gusting wind and a heavy swell as we tossed our way across the treacherous Drake Passage - just to remind us what it's normally like. But we reached Deception Island in good time and prepared for more seismic operations. The Governor landed at the ancient base camp, and we spent the day at anchor in Whaler's Bay yawning uncomfortably close to the lava cinders which form the mainland in this volcanic island. For two days it blew furiously; growlers and icebergs were hardly discernable from flowing white horses and the driving spray in the Bransfield Strait, so we decided, reluctantly, to abandon the seismic operations and to make for the South Orkneys.

Here our task was to help set up the Hi-Fix station for the survey party camped there since December. Glorious weather greeted our arrival and we were lucky in having three fine days with hardly a breath of wind, and the ship rode comfortably at anchor off the base camp at Signy Island. The helicopters were busily engaged in flying from hilltop to hilltop where the surveyors, perched dangerously, measured angles to resurvey the land. And at the same time some of us were able to go ashore to see the beautiful snow petrels and the host of biological activities carried out at the base; some to ski in the soggy snow and some even to dive beneath the icy waters.

When the weather did break and we were forced out to sea by an unwelcome iceberg which threatened to sit on our anchor, we were able to take a fuller look at the island and its astonishing features. But for the British base at Signy Island and the Argentinian one on Laurie Island, the South Orkneys are quite uninhabited - and small wonder! For the islands look as menacing and inhospitable as can be conceived. Sharp, rugged rocks rise out of the boiling sea only to fall away again just as abruptly on the other side of the mountain range. One peninsular looks like a monster killer shark's back with innumerable jagged fins sticking upwards! Nowhere is there any flat land, and indeed the only flat thing we saw near the South Orkneys was the remarkable iceshelf formed into a huge iceberg ten miles long and firmly aground off the south coast of the island. This vast iceberg was to become a close friend for us as we spent each night in its lee drifting slowly towards the coast.

We experienced all the varieties of weather that the South Orkneys had to offer during our week's visit and when we left, the survey team were well set up and eagerly awaiting the arrival of *John Biscoe*. Though we sailed before *Biscoe* arrived, there was a great



*Christmas Day and good cheer*



*The Stanley Races  
- the rank outsider*



*His Excellency the Governor goes calling*

meeting of the southern fleet when *Shackleton*, arriving from Deception, and *Kista Dan*, bound for Halley Bay, joined us at Signy. There was mail for us in *Kista Dan* and, having greedily collected this, we sailed, bound for the Bransfield Strait. By 15th we were off Deception and the next day saw us gliding down the Gerlache Strait towards Port Lockroy. We had heard that the American icebreaker *Edisto* was at Arthur Harbour, and it was reassuring to meet her as we steamed southwards into the narrow Neumayer Channel.

Alas for the camera enthusiasts, the cloud base was low as we nosed majestically into the Neumayer (Channel), so the sight of the vertical cliff face falling down from the lofty Copper Mountains had to be left to our imagination. We anchored for the night off Port Lockroy, but woke the next day to find the mountains bathed in brilliant sunshine, and framed against a clear blue sky - such a sight as one long remembers!

The helicopters took off on their long flight down to the Argentine Islands carrying with them the Governor as well as the base's first mail for almost a year. By mid-afternoon the helicopters had returned, and we set off back to Port Stanley. The weather had been up to its usual tricks while the helicopters were away and as they landed, so the visibility fell and the winds rose. The change from the glorious forenoon was violent and sudden; as we approached the entrance to the Neumayer Channel, the driving snow reduced visibility even further. Ice was being thrown about the sea, and falling off the precipitous glaciers; at the entrance to the channel a faint white line could just be made out - apparently blocking our path! Four times we approached the entrance and four times we had to turn back - unable to find a sufficiently wide opening to nose into the channel. But at last, in winds gusting up to 45 knots and visibility under half a mile, we poked our way through - avoiding the growlers where possible. By dusk we had cleared the formidable Neumayer Channel and were making our way comfortably out of the Gerlache Channel.

We returned to Stanley to find the Royal Marines well and truly settled in their new found homes. There was little doubt about it, they were quite happy where they were! On board the ship the next week was notable for the quantities of water, soap and finally paint which were liberally applied to the superstructure and ship's side. Day after day, in weather unusually fine for Port Stanley, the great work continued and the ship emerged "neat and trimly dressed, fresh as a bridegroom". We also found time to deliver a fine victory on the Stanley football team, thus squaring the series. Stanley won the first two matches to give themselves an impressive lead, but resolute play brought us victory in the third and fourth games, thus putting us on equal terms for the decider in March.

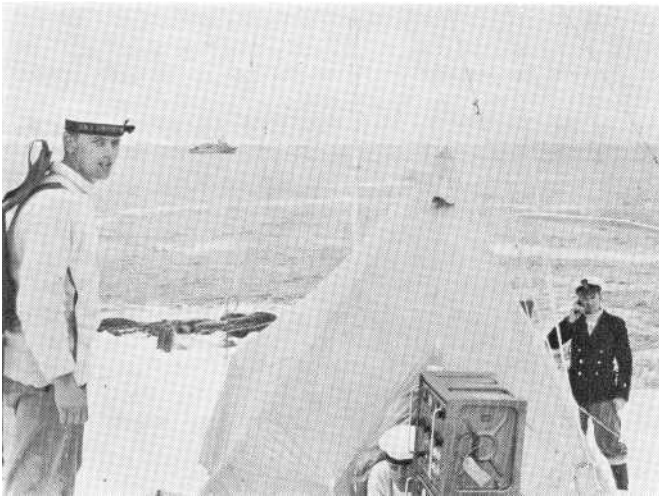
After spending a week of self maintenance and painting it was good to reach the warmth and the traditional welcome that the half-term week in Montevideo means to us. For the past ten years *Protector* has always made this pilgrimage to pick up stores, fresh fruit, mail, to enjoy civilization again - and everything that our Uruguayan "home" offers. We swam and sunbathed, absorbed the local customs and drank their wine; bargained with the reluctant shopkeepers as well as indulging in a host of other activities unrecorded in this journal. Even the ship's sports teams summoned up their wilting energy to do battle against the local sides - and usually with disastrous results due entirely to our physical exhaustion! But it had all been a marvellous run - a glorious contrast to the rigours of Antarctica and a fascinating introduction to the ways of life in South America. And when on Tuesday afternoon we reluctantly prepared to depart it was obvious that "Montevideo the Magnificent" had made its mark.

Three days later we reached Stanley - just long enough to recover from the exertions of the "rest week" in Montevideo. The Falkand Islands were cold and windswept, but twenty-four hours was long enough for our fuelling stop and then we were off - southwards again. We called at Deception to drop mail before reaching the survey party camped at Argentine Islands. As dawn broke on 18th February we nosed our way in cautiously to the ice strewn islands and set about our task of assisting the survey party. We remained here for ten days in the usual uncertain weather, steaming our eternal triangle between Argentine Islands, Bismark Strait and Victor Hugo Islands. Sometimes the weather thwarted us but we achieved the erection of two Hi-Fix stations, checking and initiating the triangulation of countless islands, photographing icebergs of every possible shape and size as well as all these islands, and successfully laying the foundation for the Hi-Fix survey which followed shortly after we left.

There were many other side attractions during this time. We met the Argentine ship *San Martin* who

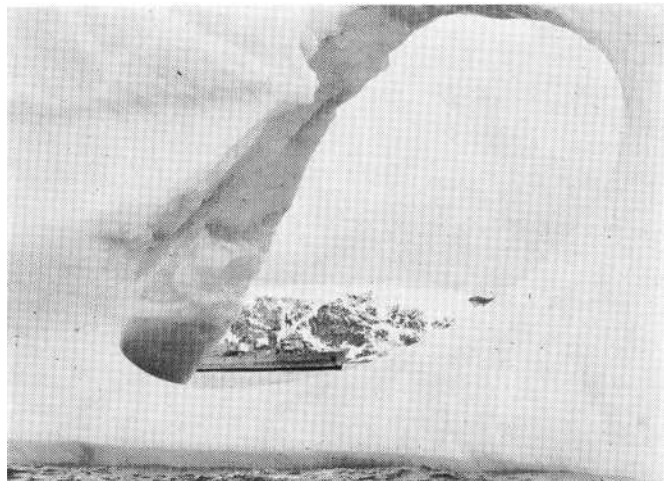


*Pilot's eye view*



*Establishing communication*

*Antarctic survey*



flashed morse enthusiastically at us but seemed reluctant to come any closer - or to send morse from any known code! The American icebreaker *Edisto* bristling with helicopters and sailors in colourful "ice-rigs" greeted us as she nudged her way into Arthur Harbour, and the Chilean *Piloto Pardo*, an old friend of *Protector*, announced her presence by landing both helicopters on our flight deck without warning! And then as a permanent background to all this, who could forget the sensational sights which surrounded us? The dominating peaks and the many icebergs set before the unusual backdrop of a copper blue sky. The sunsets when the snow on the mountains appeared to turn a brilliant red as though a crazed cook had poured red icing over everything. These were the highlights of our work but at other times, shrouded in fog, we waited in vain for a clearance. Once when thwarted by weather we carried our "ice patrol" duties further south than usual and crossed the magical Antarctic Circle - earning for ourselves the greeting of Neptunus Rex, a welcome from the mermaids and the treasured title of brine encrusted "bluenose"!

By the end of February our work in these waters was satisfactorily accomplished and we retraced our track heading north-east out of the Bransfield Strait. We passed close to Elephant Island and must have followed a track close to that taken by Shackleton and his five companions in the *James Caird* as he sailed to South Georgia. Our task was much the same as Shackleton's but hardly our circumstances. Shackleton took sixteen days to sail this perilous journey in a boat only 22 feet in length, and we sighted the regal peaks of Mount Paget only three days after passing Elephant Island. We called at Leith Harbour to berth alongside the Japanese factory ship *Kashima Mara* and to take on fuel from the Admiralty stocks. The Japanese and Norwegians, pleased to see new faces, made us very welcome; the fog and snow which greeted us soon gave way to blue skies and a clear evening. However we sailed that same evening and spent the night off Royal Bay where the ten members of the Combined Services Expedition were camped for their surveying phase. March 4th - the day arranged for their recovery - was a crisp and clear day and we anchored in Moltke Harbour at 0600. Within an hour the expedition, looking rugged and worn with their "apostolic" beards, had been ferried back to the ship with all their stores and gear. Their recovery had been miraculously simple compared with their involved landings, and we steamed round to Grytviken for everyone to take their final farewells from the island.

On Saturday 6th we sailed and soon South Georgia had disappeared into the gloom astern of us; and at midnight we passed the last iceberg of the 1964/65 season. A great relieving occasion!

The meeting with the C.S.E. in South Georgia had been advanced a few days so that we could call at



Montevideo to collect the replacement R.M. detachment who were flying out from London. So we gained an extra visit to Montevideo - which harmed no one and within the space of only twenty-four hours we were able to do almost everything in the half-term visit. Arriving at Montevideo on 12th March we collected the new R.M.'s - pallid after their English winter - with all their kit and ammunition and set off once again for Port Stanley and our final visit. Goodwill and good wine flowed at the many farewell parties in our honour; we played the deciding match of the Stanley Shield and so retained the trophy for another year; there were dances galore and to cap it all we put on a highly successful and entertaining show called "Hello Stanley - Goodbye". In this festive mood we sailed from Stanley on 20th March after a fitting climax to our farewell visit.

We had made indirect contact with Punta Arenas at many times during the season. Mail and stores arrived via Punta Arenas and we had often spoken to their enthusiastic radio amateurs. So it was interesting to see the town of Punta Arenas - most southerly town in the world - and we arrived there in the morning of Monday, 22nd March, after a night passage through the Magellan Straits. Our stay was pleasant but uneventful - particularly for those fortunate enough to drive outside the town to see the limitless countryside and to visit the rambling sheep farms. But we got a better view of the countryside when we sailed from Punta Arenas and continued the passage to the west through the famous Straits of Magellan. We passed Port Famine with its fine old American style fort which used to control the Straits and thereby to bring any pirates to law and order. Here too the unfortunate captain of the *Beagle*, who made so many of the charts of these waters, committed suicide on learning that the Admiralty had reappointed him to his ship to serve a further seven years in these inhospitable waters!

For the next four days we slowly and carefully steamed through the tortuous waters of the Patagonian Channels. Moderate weather accompanied us and



*Receiving his Blue Nose Certificate on the spot*



*Better than Switzerland*



*Earthquake relief*

although this blotted out some of the more striking sights, there were still plenty of magnificent views to see. One morning we were surprised to find ice floating in the main channel, and we then passed through the Chasm Reach said to be only three-quarters of a cable wide and certainly impressively steep! The ship seemed hemmed in with no visible escape passage - only the sky directly above! Eventually the channel widened and to the chorus of clicking cameras we steamed on through these remote and apparently uninhabited islands. However, this idea was quickly dispelled when we saw someone rising from a "shack-like" habitation and people waving frantically to us. These were the native Indians living in their "all mod. cons., semi-det., semi-rural bungs" and quite free from mortgages too! Excitement continued on that day when we were approaching the tortuous passage through the English Narrows. Convention requires each approaching ship to "hoot" on the siren to give warning to any ship coming the opposite way. We were about to sound off when - quite unannounced by a warning blast - there appeared a largish German ship in the channel. Fortunately there was just time and sufficient water for us to stop and allow her to pass.

By the last day of our passage through the Patagonian Channels we were quite blasé about narrow passages and in fact we decided to cut short our passage and steam direct for Valparaiso. We learned that disaster had struck central Chile in the form of a violent earthquake causing untold damage. As usual in these grave circumstances, information about the damage was scarce and confused. Later we discovered that a dam had broken above the mining village of El Cobre which had been flooded in a sea of mud causing appalling loss of life. The shadow of this national disaster hung over us during our week's stay. Even more frustrating was the apparent difficulty to give assistance where it was obviously needed. In other fields we were able to put this visit to good account, and many visits to Santiago, to Vina del Mar, and even to see the Andes

showed us the fascinating variety of the Chilean countryside. Despite the dreadful effects of the earthquake our Chilean hosts were kind and generous and only too keen to welcome us. After an exhausting six days we sailed away with many colourful memories and some generous signals from the Chilean authorities which showed clearly that our help and efforts with the disaster relief had been much appreciated.

From Valparaiso we steamed up the coast often only seven miles from the shore. We had a wonderful view of the gigantic Andes mountains plunging sheer into the sea, and with snow-topped mountains in the background this was a sight comparable to Antarctica. As we approached Peru and the Equator it got hotter and hotter. The news that the last heavy rainfall in the country occurred in 1931 was hardly encouraging and the rumour that, despite this heat, the Peruvian Navy might be wearing blue uniforms was plainly frightening! But our fears soon melted in the light of a very warm welcome at Callao. We soon got to know the bumpy track from Callao to Lima, which the local taxi drivers insisted on driving like an international car rally, but the journey was worthwhile for Lima proved a joyous contrast to the appalling squalour of the seaport Callao. Many were the gold and silver ornaments, the varied furs and rugs which found their way into the ship from the Peruvian capital.

After five days we were on our way again and as the sun rose higher and higher, so afternoon's work gave way to sun worship and sleepy contemplation. We passed close to the coast of sticky Ecuador and were amazed at the abundance of sea life from turtles to whales which helped us on our way. Soon the equator was astern of us and on 22nd April we arrived at the American naval base at Rodman on the Pacific end of the Panama Canal. Here we spent two relaxing days, shopping at the American services' store and preparing for the transit through the canal. This proved to be another fascinating experience as the ship was pushed and hauled in the superbly run locks. On 24th April we steamed into Caribbean waters and made our way to Jamaica, island of the sun and the final call before Portsmouth. But by now there was no stopping us and the three-day visit to this tropical haven went all too fast before we were once again at sea steaming eastwards, homeward bound.

The long passage across the Atlantic gave us time to sort out reports on the southerly season, to think about the varied sights and experiences and perhaps to reflect on one's own remarkable fortune to have done it all. From howling gales in the Neumayer Channel to the glassy Caribbean, from the night life of Rio to the mysterious vastness of Antarctica, we had gathered an astonishing fund of memories. And as we berthed alongside at Portsmouth on 14th May having steamed nearly 36,000 miles who could deny that this had been an experience both fascinating and unique?

