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K. Thomas, Shpt 1
A. E. Chaplin, Shpt 1
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D. W. Stevenson, ERA 1
B. Kay, ERA 1
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C. J. May, M(E) 1
T. J. Williams, M(E) 1
M. Hodgkins, M(E) 1
A. A. Blow, M(E) 1
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R. Gee, LM(E)
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I. S. Watson, LA(Phot)
G. V. F. Coates, LAM
P. D. Kemp, NAM

G. B. D. Herft, LA
D. Stanley, EM(A)

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A. S. M. Paul, Cpl
R. C. Rawlinson, M.M., Cpl
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Mr. B. James (Manager)

Mr. C. Mason (Assistant)



"So this is Protector!"



"So this is Antarctica!"

Chilean visitors



R.S.S. John Biscoe

Leith Harbour, South Georgia



COMBINED SERVICES IN SOUTH GEORGIA

by Major J. D. C. Peacock, M.A., R.E.M.E.

"How big is she, d'you think?"

"Protector ... Oh! Must be all of 300 feet, I should say. Probably much the same as this tub."

It was last summer. Two of us were on the cross-channel steamer making our way to the Alps for a climbing holiday, two weeks which we hoped would be useful training for mountains in another hemisphere. As so often before, our talk centred on South Georgia and our forthcoming expedition; equipment, technical problems, training ... and, of course, Protector. She was to be our home for many weeks and as yet we knew little about her. So much planning had passed that now most of the stores had been seen on board Protector it was difficult to believe that we should at last be joining her ourselves. There were ten of us, volunteers from all ranks of the Services, to join what was said to be "the most ambitious Services expedition since the war". It was an exhilarating prospect overshadowing everything else.

And then, quite suddenly, we were in South America, Boeing'd to Uruguay and eagerly watching Protector as she steamed across the bay into Montevideo harbour. We went aboard and found ourselves in a maze of gangways and flats, our sense of direction successfully defeated for many days to come. Busy days with stores of all kinds from socks to ski sticks to be issued and sorted into dumps, final adjustments to equipment, last letters home. And then, one brilliant November morning, we awoke in Cumberland Bay. All around lay the mountains of South Georgia, a glittering fairytale of icy peaks mirrored in the clear green of the fjord. Two of these virgin summits we planned to climb and somewhere, we knew, we had to find a way across this range. We gazed ... and wondered. Yet there was little time now for conjecture; the first boat-load of stores was due to go ashore and there were countless other details to be seen to. A catcher creamed past, enormous carcasses strung like scalps round her belt as she hurried to the whaling factory. A new smell drifted over the water, all-pervading ... whaling!

Just over half-a-century before, Shackleton had landed on the south side of the island after an 800 mile journey in an open boat. Between him and safety lay a tract of unknown and seemingly impassable mountains, yet with two of his men, he did find a way through and in one of the epic journeys of Antarctic history crossed from King Haakon Bay to Stromness. After fifty years we were to repeat Shackleton's crossing in an attempt to discover the details of his route.

Peering through the cine view-finder as I perched in the helicopter doorway I could see black dots moving on the snow beneath. Already three tents were up and beside them a growing pile of boxes, skis and oil-drums - all the paraphernalia that goes with a modern expedition. We had arrived. And by way of welcome the island treated us to a blizzard which matched any we were to experience later. But South Georgia weather seldom lasts for long and thirty-six hours later, as the sun

gleamed weakly down, we crawled out of our tents to think about sledging.

The trouble with a camp at sea level is that the only way inland is "up"; and with a heavily loaded sledge and soggy snow underneath it tends to be rather more "up" than usual. However, it was a good introduction and we learned quickly enough that you can't talk and pull at the same time; at least, some learnt and those of us who did not had it gently explained by the others. The other side of the penny saw us chortling back down the hill again on empty, uncontrollable sledges to the discomfort and loud dismay of the seals at the bottom.

Another blizzard, and then, not far away, we could see the range of peaks which formed the first landmarks in Shackleton's account. They were our first major obstacle. The peaks were separated by cols the far side of which proved to be a steep descent to the Crean Glacier. Inadequately equipped and driven by the urgent need to reach safety, Shackleton and his companions had launched themselves over the edge in a breath-taking "chute" to arrive safely, seconds later, on the gentle slopes a thousand feet below. Snow conditions precluded a repeat performance by our expedition; we lowered sledges painfully and slowly and wore through gloves in the process.

The Crean Glacier proved a sledger's delight; miles of smooth, firm going until a storm and an igloo and several days later we looked down on Fortuna Bay. Only a short march separated us from Stromness and after two more days we were greeted there with whisky and smokes enough to keep us happy for several hours. A boat took us to Leith and there we stayed for a couple of days to dry out.

Holidays are always too short and in no time we were being taken back by Japanese tender to Fortuna Bay to begin the second phase of the expedition. Left on the beach, we were surrounded by enough stores, it seemed, to feed an army. Behind lay the Konig Glacier and between glacier and beach lurked the moraine: steep, slaty scree lying at improbable angles. Back-packing began and with it instant pain!

Once through the moraine, we reverted to sledges and put on the skis that were to carry us for many weeks to come. Our aim now was to climb the highest peak on the island, Mount Paget, and Sugartop, another major summit in the Allardyce Range. The way into the mountains seemed endless as for days we relayed sledges in conditions of almost zero visibility. Heavy crevassing at times forced us to make careful reconnaissance and only occasional breaks in the mist gave much idea of our surroundings. When at last the clouds lifted we found ourselves in a wonderland of high glaciers and tall peaks beautiful beyond description.

By mid-December we had established our base in the midst of the mountains and could afford time to relax and celebrate an unforgettable Christmas. Morning carols in a snow-house decorated with streamers of every colour; willing cooks in an aura of steam as they

conjured with legions of "Primus" perched on up-ended packing cases; and the result a feast so noble that it left even the most noted trencher-men gasping. Cheers for the Victuallers back in the Admiralty! And nostalgia, too, as thoughts flew back and forth eight thousand miles. A strange and wonderful Christmas so far away. It affected us all deeply.

Boxing Day dawned brilliant and clear, a good omen, perhaps. We seized the opportunity offered by the weather to get the three Paget boys well on their way. Twelve days' rations for three men, together with tents and equipment made a tidy load, but after sledging and later back-packing on skis, early evening saw us all high on the Christopherson Glacier in thickening mist. We left the assault party there to relay their loads a bit further and, bidding them "Good Luck", sped back to camp. The mist continued and for most of the next two days the three made slow progress. Eventually the clouds cleared and they were able to see their way on to a ridge leading to the main summit mass. The following day took them in blazing sun to a perch just under the west summit and there they camped at 9,000 feet, within two miles of the main summit. An early start-and by dawn the next day they were on the top, awestruck by a sunrise which held them spell-bound as peak after shadowy peak sprang awake at the golden touch of the sun. It was 29th December and only the descent remained to complete their Old Year.

Meanwhile the rest of us had not been idle. An awkwardly-sited dump had been cleared and various ways over the range to Grytviken explored tentatively but without success. After days of waiting in bad weather in a high camp another exploratory party of three had found itself, somewhat surprised, on the summit of Sugartop. The day after this only deteriorating conditions cheated the expedition of two more unclimbed peaks. As it was, the respective parties got within a few hundred feet of each summit.

We were well into January by now and, as a result largely of the weather, somewhat behind schedule. Food was getting short. At this part of the Allardyce range the glaciers on our side, the south side, reach steadily up to a height of some 5,000 feet while their counterparts to the north or Grytviken side, stop abruptly hundreds of feet lower. The problem facing us lay almost entirely in the descent of those precipitous few hundred feet. Yet in spite of several reconnaissances we had so far failed to force a safe passage. There was, however, one remaining possibility. A determined and, at times, almost desperate reconnaissance proved that one col only would "go". Our hopes rose and, ditching all but the indispensables, we moved up to the edge of the ice precipice ...

We are camped just back from the edge. The weather has clamped down again and operations cease: on half-rations we lie and listen to the blizzard raging outside ... A few days later we are able to make a start lowering the stores in reduced sledge-loads. Each load is accompanied by one man who must then return on the rope with the empty sledge. Three loads are lowered in this way to a dump 600 feet below before worsening weather and failing light drive us back, soaked and shivering, to our two-man tents; "Not so bad as Haakon Bay!" says someone. The following evening

it looks like clearing and someone goes up to the edge and looks over: an avalanche has scattered our dump. We sleep.

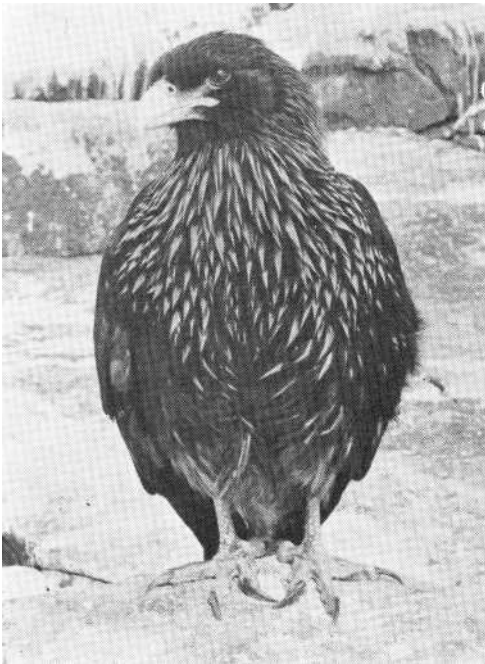
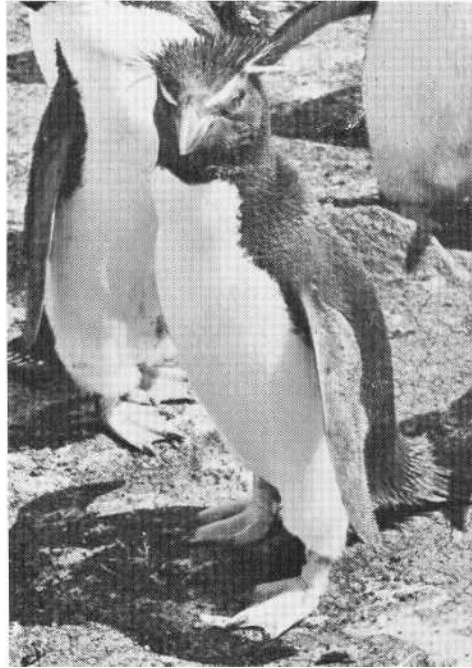
4.00 a.m. and yesterday's rain has given way to a clear, cold night so that our tents are clad in an armour of clear ice. Sledge-load by sledge-load the remaining stores go down and only we are left on top. But as the hours go by the ice wall gets softer and seracs above begin to drip. As the first man abseils down an ominous little chute of ice-particles slithers past. Soon, shouts from below indicate that the stores, scattered by the avalanche, are not too badly damaged. As more men descend we watch the tiny figures crawling over the avalanche debris; gradually the dump takes shape again. At last we are all down. It is late afternoon and we are very tired so that we move only a short way down the glacier before making camp. Each Sunday we have held a short service. Today is not Sunday. But we hold our service all the same. To us it does not seem inappropriate. It is 7.00 o'clock ...

A week later we walked into Grytviken to a welcome that can seldom have been surpassed. Nothing was too much for that friendly little community and for three days we lived like kings.

But work beckoned still. With most of the scientific objects of the expedition still to be achieved we learnt that *Protector* must needs arrive a week early to collect us. Not only this, but the boat we had hoped would carry us thirty miles down the coast could not be provided. In a hurry we moved off in two parties, the main group to walk overland to Royal Bay and start the survey work, the other smaller group to take a round-about route, geologising and working on glacier surveys. The coastal environment proved a refreshing change after the barren glaciers. Penguins, albatrosses and petrels of many kinds afforded the zoologist plenty of material for study, while our botanist, somewhat inadequately clad in long-johns, frequently presented an unusual view as he stopped to examine yet another specimen. Reindeer augmented the rations at Royal Bay and, for once, a static camp encouraged ingenious home-comforts of every kind. The days flew by as peak by peak was occupied by the survey parties and the mass of theodolite-readings mounted up. Sometimes they would be held up for days as an infuriating sea mist crept in over the coast, blotting out everything below 1,000 feet. But the survey was completed on the last evening and, early the next morning, as *Protector* steamed into the bay, we were packed and ready for the first helicopter.

Big grins on the flight-deck; batteries of cameras and friendly, shaven faces to welcome our bearded ones. Baths and shaves, toast and fresh fruit. The transition to civilisation is too sudden, almost overpowering. They tell us the same could be said of our smell!

As South Georgia slips below the horizon, normal routine returns. We settle down to days of report writing, then more days of learning how *Protector* works. Hours spent on the bridge or in the wheelhouse. We learn exactly the length of *Protector* and several other details; and some of us learn to splice. Finally, in South America, we are introduced to the gentle art of "Baron-strangling" . . . and deck hockey ... but that's another story.



BEAUCHÊNE AND IT'S BIRDS

Beauchêne Island which lies forty miles south of Driftwood Point, East Falkland is about one and a half miles long by a quarter mile wide, and rises to a green mound of tussock grass nearly 300 foot high to the north and a smaller rocky headland to the south. The intervening saddle contains the main nesting area for birds, and it is estimated that on our visit on Sunday, 6th December, there were over 5,000,000 birds on the island. This vast number can exist on the island successfully because there is no safe anchorage for ships and no protected landing place for boats, and therefore man has not been able to interfere or introduce other animals such as cats or rats. In fact we in *Protector* are the only people known to have landed for several years - once in 1961-62 and again this season.

The most striking birds on the island were the Black Brewed Albatrosses (*Diomedea Melanophrys*). These are large birds, about the size of a goose, but with long thin wings spanning about 10 ft. They are basically white, with black uppers to the wings and a dark "eyebrow", and have large orange-yellow bills and feet. Their nests are "eggcups" built of mud and vegetation up to 18 inches high in which one egg is hatched in December. The young birds leave the nest in April and thereafter only return to land to breed. Birds ringed as young in the Falklands have been recorded as far away as Africa, nearly 4,000 miles away.

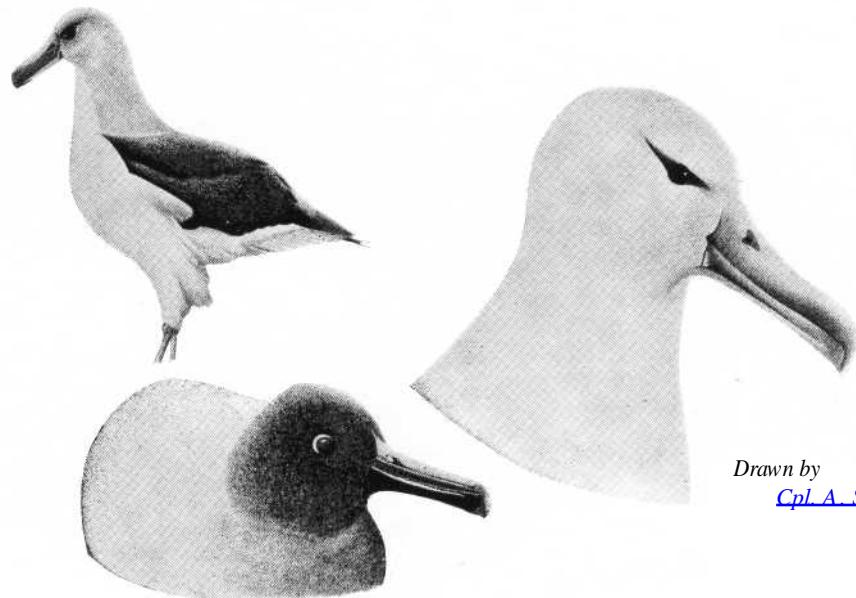
Outnumbering all other species on the island are the penguins - mainly Rock-Hoppers (*Endyptes Crestatus*) and Gentoos (*Pygoscelis Papua*) (or "Johnny" to the Kelpers). The former birds stand about 2 ft. high, have blue-black backs and white fronts, and a short red bill and feet. They also have prominent yellow eyebrows ending in pronounced yellow plumes, and as they also have a rather fluffy "hairstyle" they have a distinctly clownish appearance. These birds nest in cracks and

crevices in the rocks, where eggs and young can get protection from birds of prey, and, as their name implies, they progress on land in a series of hops anything up to 3 feet in height. They also seem able to survive a drop of several feet without damage.

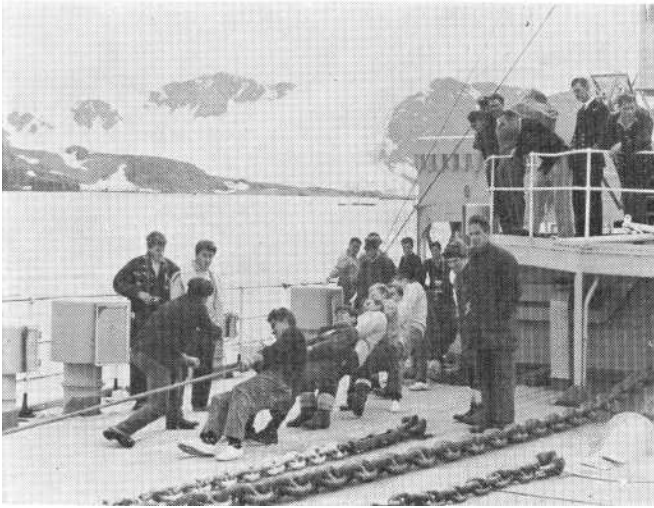
The Gentoos on the other hand, prefer open ground for their rookeries, and on Beauchêne they were jammed tight on the middle saddle - so thick that one had to brush them aside with a foot before taking a step forward. They are slightly bigger than the Rock-Hopper, and rather lighter coloured on the back. They also have a prominent white band running over the crown of the head from eye to eye, and white edging to their flippers.

The next most common species was the King Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax atriceps albiventor*). These were nesting on ledges of the cliffs, sometimes mixed up with the Rock-Hopper penguins. They are about the size of a farmyard duck, but stand rather more upright. They are basically a glossy purple-black above, and white below, with a white bar on the upper wing. Close to, one can recognise them by the large crest on the head, large yellow-orange wattles at the base of the bill, and a brilliant violet-blue eyeflash.

Finally there were a few pairs of Johnny Rooks (*Phalcoabaenus australis*). These are largish birds of the hawk family, generally brown speckled with gold. They were not at all happy at the invasion of "happy snappers" from the ship, and "divebombed" anyone who got too close to their nests in the tussock grass, at the north of the island. These birds are only found in the more remote and isolated of the Falkland Islands, and I doubt if there are more than a hundred pairs in existence. They are basically carrion eaters, and fulfil a useful function by disposing of the dead and dying of the other species.



Drawn by
Cpl. A. S. M. Paul



They were beaten by those enormous Engineers



The players



The prize (Kingswood Trophy)

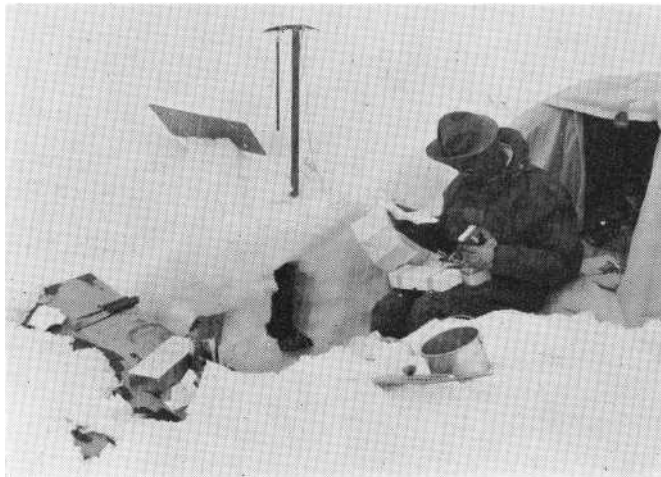
The players



The prize

The rifle team





R.N. ANTARCTIC SURVEY PARTY

Our season began in the Falkland Islands where the first task was to chart an area at the southern end of Falkland Sound - the strait that divides the two main islands. We were comfortably accommodated in the sheep shearers' house on Great Island. This proved to be a convenient base and we moored our survey boat *Nimrod* in the bay close by.

Atrocious weather during the three weeks we were there limited the amount we were able to do. One day *Nimrod* was caught in a force eight wind and took five hours to cover the six miles back to her moorings. We benefited from the hospitality of our nearest neighbours at the Speedwell island settlement, twelve miles away, who visited us every week bringing with them lavish gifts of fresh food including whole carcasses of sheep. Everyone became interested in wild life - the island abounds with wild geese, wild ducks, penguins, cormorants, gulls, skuas, terns, oyster-catchers, plovers and numerous other species.

At the beginning of November the party embarked in the R.S.S. *John Biscoe* to take passage to the South Orkney Islands. There we landed at Borge Bay on Signy Island and set up our tents close to the British Antarctic Survey Base. A large scale survey of the bay was undertaken during December and this revealed many new shoals and uncovered numerous errors in the existing chart. We soon got used to working under Antarctic conditions, although at first we all went a bit short of sleep - partly due to the fact that it never got properly dark and partly because of the fearful roars of the bull elephant seals guarding their harems on the beaches across the bay. Christmas was a happy occasion, for the party were invited to join in the festivities at the Base where we were made very welcome and treated to all the traditional items of Christmas fare.

Early in January the *Protector* arrived on the scene and with her helicopters gave the surveyors valuable assistance in their task of finding the exact position of new triangulation stations on Coronation Island east and west of Signy Island. This work was in preparation for the survey on a small scale of all the approaches to Signy Island which was now to be carried out by the *John Biscoe*. For this work the *John Biscoe* had already been fitted out with a new radio position-fixing system called Decca Hi-Fix.

The *John Biscoe* returned almost as soon as the *Protector* left. The shore Hi-Fix stations (known unflatteringly as "slave" stations) were activated and some of the party returned to the *John Biscoe* to start work there. In the ensuing month the ship was able to run her lines of soundings on fourteen days and during this period covered a distance of 1,500 miles. On many days the visibility was poor and work was only possible because we now had a radio position-fixing system fitted. However, we did not have things all our own way - one day eighty-knot winds blew down the Hi-Fix mast and tore away the tents at one of the slave stations. And a huge iceberg occupied twenty-five square miles of the survey area and remained there tantalisingly until the very day before the *John Biscoe* had to leave.

In mid-February work in the South Orkney Islands was concluded for the season and the area of operations was shifted to a part of the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula in the vicinity of the Argentine Islands. This is a noted Antarctic beauty spot. The Lemaire Channel certainly has a majestic grandeur while the Argentine Islands possess the fascination of all small island groups. Icebergs and sea ice in a multitude of shapes and shades floating on a glassy sea add an unreal quality to the scenery.

In the Argentine Islands we were accommodated in an old base hut called Wordie House situated on the site of the British Graham Land Expedition's first winter quarters. The survey here was to complete a large scale chart of the islands which was begun last season. When we got there the group was choked with ice, progress was slow and *Nimrod's* steering gear was twice damaged. Spare time was spent on skis on the nursery slopes above our hut.

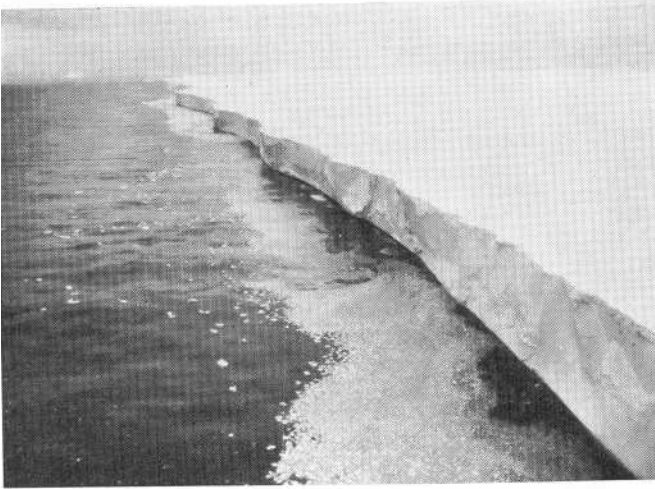
H.M.S. *Protector* assisted with our work here too. Observations were made to find the position of Hugo Island - an island about forty miles off-shore hitherto only sketchily charted. Hi-Fix slave stations were also established in preparation for the *John Biscoe's* return when the final survey of the season - a small scale survey of the approaches to the Argentine Islands - would be begun.

When the *John Biscoe* did return there unfortunately followed a period of very rough weather and on several days work was quite impossible. The sea bed in these waters is very rugged and the echo sounder revealed formidable submarine cliffs and canyons. Four new shoal areas were discovered and a similar number of charted dangers were disproved. Nine hundred miles of soundings were obtained.

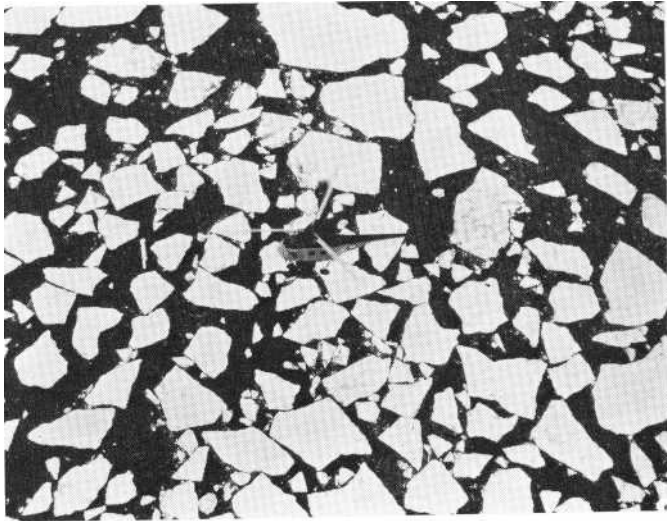
Meanwhile the party working from Wordie House had completed the survey of the Argentine Islands. Several new anchorages and approaches have been charted which will give ships relieving the Base there a choice of route.

The end of the season came dramatically. The *John Biscoe* sailed to try to complete the last thirty miles of soundings, but it was soon evident that the pack ice was moving in for the winter. Then followed a race to recover our Hi-Fix slave stations. Most inopportunistly *Nimrod* broke down and only just managed to make the Base in the Argentine Islands. Everything depended on the wind remaining in the east so that the pack was held back from the Argentine Islands. With considerable difficulty *Nimrod* was recovered - she had to be hauled through the ice on the end of a long hawser. The last slave station returned to us by manhaul sledge and the *John Biscoe's* lifeboat. Then as the ship headed north with all safely on board the wind backed round to the west.

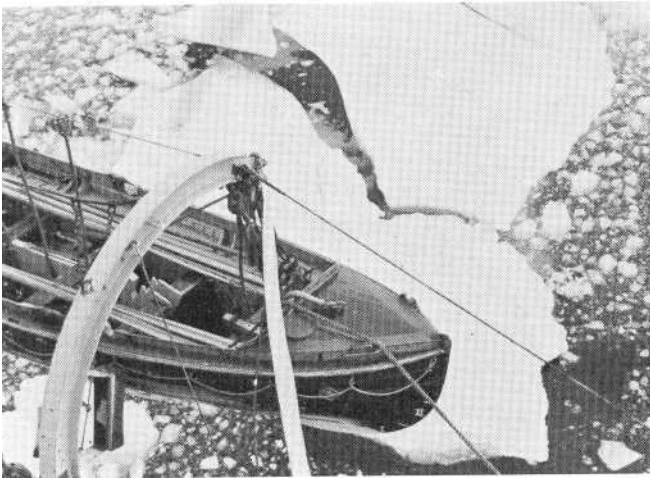
The party returned home in the *John Biscoe* sailing direct from Grytviken, South Georgia to Southampton. We did miss the bright lights of South America, but found our satisfaction in having worked together as a team to bring back four Atlantic surveys and - thanks to Hi-Fix - more miles of soundings than any of our predecessors.



Total length ten miles-plus



Antarctic patterns



Antarctic patterns

SEISMIC 1964

At 2105 (-3) on the 17th December, 1964, in the Bransfield Strait, Antarctica, an order was relayed from the bridge to the net-deck - "Let go the end". As communication number Rawlins repeated this and Junior Seaman Page (since promoted to ORD!!) cut the worn firing cable, the ship's siren sounded, but it was not loud enough to drown the cheers echoing round the net-deck. It was relief absolute that the cheers were expressing, and understandably so, for eight days of seismic charge firing has left Protector somewhat weary. Sixteen and a half tons of explosives, made up of 324 "bangs" had been exploded over 570 miles of sea and all this from a cold, dank and often very windy net-deck.

A "well done" from the captain was followed in a few weeks by a letter of appreciation and congratulation from Sir Vivian Fuchs for this highly successful operation. It was appropriate that this should be read out to the whole ship's company at divisions as it had been a truly ship's company job. Every department had a "finger in the pie".

The ship's seismic arrangements had been completely revised during the refit but the short trial off the Isle of Wight did not reveal what was to be our major problem. In changing from a two-firing cable system to a single cable, a quick recovery time was essential if operations were not to be unduly prolonged. The hope that a light cable would solve this proved abortive. Numerous practices showed that the cable was not strong enough for the job, and with only a few weeks to go before the start of the operation, we were back on working out some way to recover the heavier cable in an acceptable time.

Due to the co-operation and ingenuity of a great number of people a suitable system was finally adopted which whacked the problem - and just in time. Looking back it is most satisfying to remember that even though times without number the shipwright officer was approached - "Could you supply a chute?", "Would you check the ready use lockers?", "Please, - Have you got", etc.; he did not resort to the well worn expression - "go away". Neither did the engineers. They nearly built a new winch on the net-deck but were contained by time, and provided an excellent substitute. Again, near the end of the week they saved the day with a very necessary replacement. Apparently there is a "factory" on board run by C.E.R.A. Binny.

The weather, too, was kind - at no time was it more than force five. This is just as well because the firing cable would not have survived - nor for that matter would the electrical officer have survived either. As it was he aged haggardly each time he saw the cable badly handled. Yes, it's funny to look back on; C.E.A. Kingston and P.O. Hambleton decided that it would "nurse" the cable and prevent "chafe" if the inboard end which did not get wet when streamed was lubricated on recovery, so they did this with a jug of water, pouring it on the cable as it was recovered. As the first lieutenant watched this, some wag was heard, "How does your cable grow, sir?".

After one mighty bang the bridge asked "Confirm that 1,100 ft. of cable was streamed". "Confirmed." "Confirm that a forty-five second firing interval was used", "Confirmed" and "Confirm that a charge was used". The utter disbelief on the net-deck crew on hearing the last question was only removed at the sight of communication number Rawlins cheeky grin.

The most dreary job was without doubt, the "bumpers", they had to turn by hand, a wooden drum suspended on ball races. Day after day, run after run, those stalwarts A.B. Smith, Ord. Barnard, Juniors Page and Ashcroft and Marines Lewis and Bishop "bumped" the reel round.

There was much "reliefs close up" on the winch - first A.B. Carr left, then A.B. Smith was relieved by A.B. Norton and lastly U.C.2. Baker arrived. The latter thrived on it, either that or the soup and "wedges" so conscientiously provided by P.O. Cook Shaw and his staff. This was a most popular diversion, "greased lightening" is a term generally very loosely applied, but it is the ideal description for the speed at which those sandwiches disappeared!

It was nice to hear that the Antarctic record was replaced by a new one of seventy miles and no doubt L.Sea (now P.O.) Woods, A.B.'s Hall, Johnston and Coomes would be led to think that possibly they too had made a record. They "made" 648 electrical connections between firing cable and charge to say nothing of a similar number of connections of the electrical detonators.

As with most successful ventures it was with smug satisfaction that we "downed" our cans of beer supplied by the B.A.S. scientists later. Now the time has come for leave and then another "bash".

