



Commander Peter Mosse

The Falklands War – HMS Ambuscade 1982

Part of a collection of Falklands memoirs published privately by Ingrid Carding
DL MA in memory of her father Cdr Tony Roberts

Gibraltar

It was Holy Week 1982, we were all on weekend leave. AMBUSCADE was in dry dock for routine maintenance in Plymouth having just returned from the Far East and I had been the Commanding Officer(CO) for 3 months. Argentina had landed people on South Georgia near Antarctica and we now heard on TV they had invaded the Falklands. Admiral Sandy Woodward was to sail Monday 5 April with a large Task Force to sort them out – Operation Corporate. AMBUSCADE was not involved I was told, and so I finished my gardening and returned to Plymouth on Tuesday 6 April.

But by Thursday 8 April my plans seemed to have gone wrong and we were rapidly getting ready for sea. On Friday we sailed for Gibraltar, in the dark under some secrecy because we had the flight deck covered in ammunition to replenish Gibraltar's stocks which had been given to the Task Force. Good Friday! It was also the day Britain declared a 200 mile Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) around the Falklands, which the Argentinians were told to keep out of. We had tested all our weapon systems, including doing an Anti Aircraft (AA) shoot with our 4.5" gun, before we cleared the Plymouth area and the day after Easter Monday, we entered Gibraltar. We had been sent to be Gibraltar Guardship, in place of ships who had by now sailed southwards as escorts with the Task Force. We soon expected to be sent home again to continue with our peacetime work-up programme at Portland. So we stayed around Gibraltar for 2½ weeks, training and exercising, practising lifeboat and manoverboard drills. We operated all the equipment,

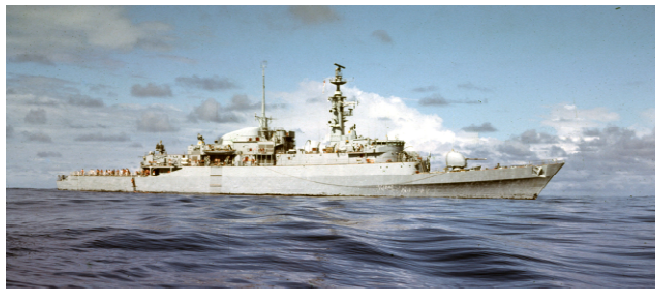


Full power

and did full-power trials. You name it, we checked it, but instead of returning home, at 0200 on 5 May, in the bowels of the Rock, I received orders to leave the Mediterranean, turn south instead of north and sail for Ascension as part of Operation Corporate at last. The uncertainty of our future had got to everyone and the relief at now having a purpose was plain to see.

Ascension Island

Because we were now no longer going to get our formal workup at Portland, we took three of the Portland work-up staff with us to help us prepare for war on the way. This time we practised Action Stations, Anti-submarine (ASW) tactics and missile attack, Damage Control and Fire-fighting. The motivation and determination of everyone was fantastic. But on the second night out, 4 May, war suddenly became real when we heard that SHEFFIELD had been hit by an Exocet. Capt Sam Salt and I had been on COs' courses together only 5 months earlier, before setting out for the Middle East.



Pennant numbers and markings removed

The following Sunday 9 May over half the ship's company was at the Church service on the foc'sle.... "Preserve us from the sea and the air, and from the violence of the enemy". 20 of our friends in SHEFFIELD had been killed.

On 9 May we crossed the Equator, but a crossing-the-line ceremony did not seem appropriate. We were working hard, and there was a war ahead: so we stopped for a bathe instead and I took the opportunity to inspect our new colours – distinguishing black features all greyed out and pennant number removed. That night we went into Defence Watches which is the watchkeeping organisation we use for any prolonged exercise or operation, and for war.

Ascension Island is not much to look at, just a volcanic outcrop, rather like the moon, with a single hill in the middle with trees on it. Now it was the biggest store depot I had ever seen. Next to the enormous airstrip was a city of tents, in hot, dusty lines, boxes and crates piled high for every conceivable ship of the force, and more to spare, with a handful of



Ascension Island

helicopters to deliver them. We had to anchor some distance off the island because there were no berths, and as well as topping up with stores ourselves, we "processed" the entire crew of the submarine ONYX – that is we loaded their stores for them, showered, scrubbed and fed them, and showed them the latest movies. We then settled down for what we thought would be our 2½ months of Guardship duties.

Our Lynx helicopter was called Gonzo and as soon as we arrived it took me off to call on the Senior Naval Officer ashore, Capt Bob MacQueen. On its return trip, however, one of its 2 engines broke down and the Flight crew and engineers had to stay ashore for 2 days to replace it.

Meanwhile, in the South Atlantic, the Royal Marines had recaptured South Georgia (25 April) and ANTELOPE, another Type 21 (Cdr Nick Tobin) and a tanker now arrived back at Ascension Is with the Argentinian POWs from South Georgia, including a notorious naval commando called Lt Cdr Alfredo Astiz who had been captured.



Gonzo

We were delighted to see another Type 21 – the first since we left UK. We were very proud of our Type 21s: ACTIVE, ALACRITY AMAZON, AMBUSCADE, ANTELOPE, ARDENT, ARROW, and AVENGER. We called ourselves the Type 21 Club, they called us the MTB cowboys. We could accelerate from 0 – 28 knots in a minute, were 500 tons bigger and better armed than the Leander class frigates, and yet had 50 less people. At 170 strong, we had to work hard but had superb team spirit, lots of responsibility all round and even more fun. All took part in the Falklands campaign except AMAZON, with Capt Hugo White as our Captain F4 (4th Frigate Squadron) in AVENGER.

Predictably the Ascension stop did not last long either. After only 2 days, we fuelled from the tanker RFA TIDESPRIING, joined ANTELOPE and on 14 May sailed on south to join the Task Force. Gonzo was just fit enough to fly back onboard before we left, but it was not his day and as he landed on deck he promptly lost his other engine! So while they had miraculously “acquired” a set of the brand new anti-ship Sea Skua missiles, the Flight team had to start all over again and change the second engine, thanks to ANTELOPE who had another spare.

Southbound

The next part of the story is all about fuel, so let me explain about our engines. We had two large, very thirsty Rolls Royce Olympus gas turbines (like Concord), giving us a top speed of 35kt, with that enormous acceleration, but at that speed we would run out of fuel in 20 hours. So for normal cruising we also had 2 smaller Rolls Royce Tyne engines. These were slower with a maximum speed of 20kt but were very economical and we could keep going on one Tyne for 2 weeks, steam 4000 miles and still have a quarter of our fuel left at the end.

So, AMBUSCADE and ANTELOPE left TIDESPRIING behind and were now on their way south to the next tanker, at full speed on the 2 smaller Tyne engines, 18kt plus, in fair weather and a calm sea. Still 3500 miles away, the Main Task Force hovered off the Falklands, the amphibious

landings were evidently going to happen soon, but none of us knew exactly when or where. ANTELOPE had satellite communications (satcoms), so although our communications main stay, HF radio, was now fading, notoriously bad in the south Atlantic, we had could get all our signals via her, and we settled down into what turned out to be 2 months Defence Watches.

2 days from Ascension, however, on 15 May one of our Tyne engines broke down, catastrophic failure was the way my Marine Engineer Officer (MEO) Lt Cdr Ed Searle put it, but it could not be mended and gave us a major problem. 18kt on 2 Tynes was fine, but if we kept going at the same speed using a thirsty Olympus instead we calculated that would not only fall below the statutory minimum of 40% fuel remaining but go below the 29% needed to keep us upright – Type 21s do not have water compensated tanks like other frigates and need clean fuel. On the other hand, if we slowed down to 14kt on one Tyne, we would take too long to get there, stop other ships using the Tanker which would have to come up to meet us, and seriously delay our joining the operation which was now getting critical.

Well, after a lot of deliberating, but with no help from Northwood Headquarters at home who had rather bigger things on their plate, we decided that ANTELOPE should go on ahead (leaving us without long range communications) and we should slow down to save fuel. We met the tanker with 28% fuel left, 1% below the stability minimum, but it was still just enough because of all the extra stores and ammunition we were carrying low down in the ship. But it was a close thing.

However, we now ran into our first South Atlantic gale, Force 10, and to make matters worse the converted merchant tanker BRITISH ESK reported that she could not get enough pressure on the hoses to give us that vital fuel. Now I was getting worried. We had stabilisers, little fins underwater fitted to keep the weapon systems happier, so we hove to overnight, switched off everything non-essential, and went just fast enough for the stabilisers to



Replenishing from British Esk in Gale Force 10

keep us upright. But in the morning the hoses were still not ready and would not be until at least 1400 that afternoon. We were now approaching 20% and at serious risk of capsizing.

I therefore went to the bridge to get a final assessment from the Master of the tanker on VHF radio and had little alternative but to follow my MEO's advice and ballast 15% of our fuel tanks with salt water. This was a serious decision because although the ship would be stable again, we had no fuel strippers to remove the water and we would now only be able to refuel up to 85% of our total fuel tank capacity.

I was pretty depressed about this, but suddenly over the VHF a bright new voice boomed out: “Hi, Peter, sorry to hear your problems, we’re doing all we can over here – at least you’ve got a b***** a ship”. It was Capt Sam Salt. He and the other SHEFFIELD survivors were in the tanker on way to Ascension Is to fly home. He explained that the seals in the fuel hoses had all been fitted the wrong way round at Portland and his ships company had been up all night fixing them. Coming up with a cheery message like this after what he must have been through was a real boost. Here was I worrying about a percentage or so of fuel, and he had just lost his ship! We estimated we had less than 10% fuel left when we finally managed to fuel successfully at 1600 on 19 May. Against all the rules my stokers then went down into the contaminated tanks wearing fire-fighting breathing apparatus and scrubbed them out with soap and water – a most unpleasant job, even if the weather had moderated to Force 8. They knew that if we had clean tanks in time we could then fill her right up again from the next tanker, and late the next day 20 May, we were able to do just that.

The War

As we neared the Task Force we met up with EXETER (Capt Hugh Balfour) who got us up to date with all our missed signal traffic, and we began to pick up the strains of local radio communications ourselves as the first punishing raids by the Argentinian aircraft began to take their toll in San Carlos. It was 21 May, the landings were in full swing and we were reassured that we had made the right decision.

The San Carlos anchorage was a good one: the landing sites were ideal and would soon easily be protected by Rapier anti-aircraft missile batteries as well. But the Argentinean pilots in those early days were good and very brave as they fought their way in over the hills, and we used all the weapons we could lay our hands on against them: AA guided missiles, larger guns and even small calibre weapons. And high above us, Sea Harrier fighter aircraft flew their web of protection.

But sadly two of the 21Club’s fiercest fighters were lost here: ANTELOPE had got there before us and came under aircraft attack in Bomb Alley as it was now called and blew up while they were defusing an unexploded bomb, ARDENT sank under devastating air attack in Falkland Sound. But the landings were not the end, just the means, and the battle to retake the Falkland Islands had just begun. Our job at this stage was to act as one of the escorts for the main Battle Group, 80 miles to the east: aircraft carriers, support ships and merchant ships taken up from trade (STUFT). Admiral Woodward needed to keep the Carriers out of reach of Argentinian aircraft but as close as possible to the Islands, to provide air cover to the Army as they advanced. Argentina also had submarines and so we took up station on the ASW screen close to the Group while the Type 42 destroyers formed an anti-air warfare (AAW) screen around us. Our first encounter came at 0340 on 23 May when we gained underwater sonar contact. As we scrambled to Action Stations it was clear that our training had paid off. There was the sonar echo as large as life, heading straight for INVINCIBLE. We followed the contact closely for 10

mins until one of the magazine crews reported hearing the sound of a torpedo: we carried out an urgent attack with our Ships Torpedo Weapon System (STWS) and fired a Mk 46 anti-submarine homing torpedo. We did not hit it but the echo disappeared and no longer appeared to threaten the force. Well, we still don't know whether it was a submarine or not, but it didn't matter – it was real enough to us and a threat. Afterwards one of the Staff Captains cautioned that while it was better to be safe than sorry, they had wasted a lot of time and ammunition chasing whales before we had got there.

The opposite watch woke us all up again at 1700 that afternoon with another sonar contact, and this time I thought it wise to call the helicopters in to help. They picked up the contact on their sonar but unfortunately had a hang-up on their weapons and so we still did not manage to kill it.

And so it was, very much on our mettle, that in the last hours of daylight on 25 May we quite unexpectedly detected a Super Etendard aircraft raid coming in from the north. This should not have been possible because we were out of range, but unbeknown to us the Argentinians had adapted the Super Etendard for inflight refuelling to give them extra legs. Again it was



Atlantic Conveyor

just like an exercise in the models at HMS DRYAD training school, first our Electronic Warfare (EW) specialists detected their Agave search radar, next we picked up a fleeting radar contact 30 odd miles away, as the pilot climbed to acquire his target. Then as we reported it to the Group, we saw the contact separate into two as it launched its Exocet and turned away to escape and to our horror it was flying straight towards us. (There were in fact two aircraft and two Exocets, one behind the other, although we did not know it at the time)

Behind us, the carrier HERMES was probably the intended target presenting a much larger radar echo, but we had given her plenty of warning and she was able to escape at full speed to the south leaving the STUFT, ATLANTIC CONVEYOR close by. The offwatch Principal Warfare Officer (PWO) Lt Phil Wilcocks was at his action station up on the Gun Direction Platform above the bridge and saw a long black trail of smoke from the missile quite clearly at about 16 miles, standing out in the excellent visibility. On it came, until at just 8 miles it suddenly turned away towards ATLANTIC CONVEYOR. There was nothing we could do.

It turned out that our carefully planned and well practiced countermeasures to protect ourselves had worked well. First, we fired 4.5" Gun Chaff "Charlie" at long range to give the Exocet's seekerhead radar another target to go for, and we then fired our close range 3" Rockets (Chaff Delta) in a special pattern we had concocted should the missile(s) get through. The Chaff Charlie worked perfectly and the missiles both locked onto it and turned left (east),

away from us. However, once they had flown through the chaff the seekerheads started looking for another target to home onto and it was ATLANTIC CONVEYOR that was now in their sights and would take the punishment instead. We were stunned! While certainly thankful that it had not been us, as we spent the next hours searching for survivors, the horror of losing ATLANTIC CONVEYOR, or indeed any ship, began to come home. 12 people died, including the Master, Capt Ian North. We not only felt sad, but almost guilty because the missile had been meant for us.

The following day we were sent back to assess the damage and I sent the MEO over to have a look in Gonzo. There was not much left, everything was burnt and as they approached, the back end blew up. However, the importance of her cargo was not clear to us until much later. Although they had flown off all the Harriers, they lost tents, stores, weapons and, most important of all, helicopters, which probably delayed the assault on the capital Port Stanley by over a day.



The day after the attack

Another task we had was to escort convoys to and from the Islands. Each night convoys of STUFTs and RFAs would run into San Carlos at full speed under cover of darkness, and others would leave. We would escort one group in, and take another one back – each time trying to avoid being caught in daylight with our pants down, open to air attack. We had very short days from about 1030-1500. After our close involvement with ATLANTIC CONVEYOR, it was evident that our EW teams had won their spurs in raising the alarm so quickly, perhaps helping to save HERMES, so we were now moved out from the ASW screen to the outer AAW screen with the Type 42s, to provide early warning. We wore our Battle Ensign at the masthead, and because some things had not changed much since World War 2, when under radio silence we ordered formation and course changes by flags!



Battle Ensign

Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) was perhaps our most notable contribution– and it was undoubtedly a significant factor in the campaign overall. We carried out our first sortie with GLAMORGAN (Capt Mike Barrow) off Fitzroy on 29th May. We would leave our AAW screen at dusk and arrive off the foreshore under cover of darkness to begin our firing. We would then leave 3 hours before dawn to avoid being caught in the open. We often came under enemy fire

from ashore, but either they were very bad shots or we kept out of range. Our own automatic 4.5" gun had a range of 11 miles, it was highly accurate and was purpose built for bombardment. It was early days for computers but we could engage 2 targets at once and store 8 different target positions in the system. That night we fired a total of 84 rounds, just over 2 tons of High Explosive (HE).

Returning early the next day, we would enjoy the seemingly endless task of replenishing stocks. On average we fuelled at least once every two days and always kept topped up with ammunition. By far the quickest way was to use helicopters and this was how it was on 30 May. There were pallets of ammunition and empty cartridge cases all over the foc'sle, a Sea King helicopter hovering on top with another load, and Gonzo had just landed on the Flightdeck to refuel after a



Sea King replenishing ammunition

reconnaissance sortie – the pilot was in the heads. Suddenly Action Stations sounded off again as the EW and Ops Room teams detected another air raid approaching from the south. This time 2 Super Etendards were coming in, escorted by A4 Skyhawks. Again, they fired Exocet but fortunately all the aircraft and Exocets missed their targets this time, appearing to concentrate more on AVENGER (Capt Hugo White) who swear that an Exocet flew over their flight deck before it ran out of fuel, and an A4 was shot down by Sea Dart from a Type 42.

Gonzo was a big asset. The observer was the Flight Commander (Lt Phil Henry) and the pilot (Lt Al Bucknell) was a “Junglie” who had worked with commando forces before, which proved its worth on a number of flights to insert special forces ashore. While hitherto usually in an ASW role, being now fitted with the Sea Skua anti-ship missile system meant they were not only adept at reconnaissance but also capable of dealing with any Argentinian ships.

One remarkable feature of this and all subsequent attacks was the arrival of a snowy petrel on the foc'sle. We called it our *White Dove* and with unbelievable consistency, it always appeared at critical moments and became our mascot. In fact, incredibly, as we sailed up the English Channel on the way home a real white dove landed on the foc'sle to welcome us home!



"White Dove"

As the army advanced, so the naval gunfire support runs became more important, but more difficult as the weather got worse. When we got back from Volunteer Bay in the north on 31 May, we had an appalling battle to refuel because the weather was so bad, but we managed to finish and returned next day to Salvador in the north, where we destroyed a radar site.

The next fuel replenishment was remarkable. I am looking a little worried because although it was calm for once we now had dense fog to contend with and at times the visibility reduced to

less than 50 feet! On this occasion I was also annoyed because we had been queue barged by the large passenger cruiser CANBERRA, which we called the *White Whale*. So being the largest ship with least manoeuvrability, she was made the *guide*, the tanker OLNA then took station on her and we were outside OLNA trying to keep station on her so we could fuel as well. We could just see CANBERRA when we were in the waiting position but sometimes she was not visible at all, even when she was just the other side of OLNA! The whole business was exasperating and when the Task Group had to reverse course by 180°, we did it in 5° steps and it took us 12 hours!



Thick fog– me . . .



. . . and Canberra

On 6 Jun we joined another Type 21 ACTIVE (Cdr Paul Canter) and from the Bluff Cove area in the south fired 85 rounds into the hills around Stanley. As usual, we took care to avoid the shore batteries but we now also had to keep clear of a shore based Exocet Battery which intelligence had told us was mounted just south of Stanley. But although these kept us on our toes, I was more frightened of getting tangled up in the huge fields of kelp (seaweed) which was extensively marked on the chart and very bad news for our propellers and cooling water inlets.

It was after this run with the weather still getting worse that the ship's stabilisers broke down! Life became even more uncomfortable, and in fact they never worked again. We had some escort duties next, trawlers this time. The Argentineans had laid a minefield to the east of Port Stanley, and the trawlers had been converted into minesweepers to clear a path through it for us. A combination of awful weather and the lost helicopters had by now delayed the main Brigade assault on Stanley, and there had been the horrific bombing of the landing ships SIR GALAHAD and SIR TRISTRAM near Bluff Cove. Meanwhile, we badly needed to do some engine repairs and so headed off for STENA SEASPREAD which was stationed well out of range to the east. in an area called the Tug Repair and Logistics Area (TRALA). Having lost one Tyne completely, the other Tyne and one of the Olympus engines were now both out of action because of blocked filters and this left us with just one Olympus engine and a speed restriction of a *minimum* of 14kt to make sure we had enough water circulating to cool the other machinery! However, after a few hours alongside STENA SEASPREAD we were back to three engines again and being temporarily out of harm's way it also gave us all a welcome break.



More rough weather

However, the weather was getting worse and very cold as the southern winter set in. Having rejoined the Task Group, on 12/13 June we had a long overdue stores replenishment, 5 hours,

all night, alongside RFA STROMNESS. We had completed it by daylight, with a very satisfying pile of nutty in the canteen to prove it, and were immediately despatched with AVENGER, ACTIVE and YARMOUTH (Capt Tony Morton) for a concerted night on the NGS gunline. That night of 13 June turned out to be the most dramatic. By now we knew for certain that the Exocet battery was sited south of Stanley, because GLAMORGAN had been hit by one, so we approached well clear of that. There was also the minefield to avoid, so tonight we were going to try to sneak along the coastline, down a swept channel and take up positions in Berkeley Sound north of Stanley. We got in safely and settled down, the four ships each a mile apart. We made contact with the army almost immediately and began our bombardment. Each ship was allocated to a different Regiment and worked with its own spotter ashore. We were to support 2 Para (Lt Col David Chaundler) as they advanced from Mount Longdon, along Wireless Ridge and into Port Stanley from the north. That night we literally lit up the sky with a total of 228 rounds, nearly 6 tons of HE, and destroyed two 155mm gun emplacements on the way. 2 Para's attack from the north was supposed to divert the enemy's attention from the main thrust of the Royal Marines in the middle and the Scots Guards in the south, but as we watched our targets move eastward towards Port Stanley it was clear that 2 Para's attack was developing into a major thrust. It was remarkable and they ended up having to be held back to wait for the RMs. (It turned out that the CO of B Company Maj John Crosland and I had been at school together and afterwards he visited the ship and presented us with an Argentinian rifle mounted on a plaque).

We pulled back before dawn as usual, but ran into the worst weather yet, still without our stabilisers: Force 12, rolling up to angles of 45°! But as we floundered, the news came through that white flags were flying over Stanley and the Argentinians had begun to give themselves up. The next night's NGS was called off, thank goodness, and two days later Ceasefire talks began!

South Georgia

We were no less alert however, because before we went home, we were to escort more POWs from San Carlos back to Ascension in the BR ferry ST EDMUND: this time it was General Menendez and some of his crack troops. Only the gash party got ashore but the POWs became subject to a political wrangle so we fuelled alongside ANCO CHARGER and just took them



round to Port Stanley. Having delivered the POWs on 1 July there was a brief pause before we embarked 40 Scots Guards for what now became our final mission. M Company RMs had recaptured South Georgia 2 months earlier on 25 April and we were to relieve them with the Scots Guards and ferry the first 40 to Ascension Is where they could fly home.

We arrived at Gritviken Bay in South Georgia at dawn, just in time to see the sun catch the tops

of the mountains. We were piped in by the Scots Guards, and witnessed a glorious sunrise. However, it was winter and very cold. We moored alongside the tanker and stayed just long enough for the ships company to have a quick leg stretch ashore to see the whaling station and Shackleton's grave, while I had lunch with Capt Nick Barker aboard ENDURANCE – known as the Red Plumb. As we drank Argentinian wine, “saved” from the



Sunrise at Gritviken

Argentinian Submarine SANTA FE, now derelict alongside in Gritviken, it was fascinating to hear from him how it had all started. Being on station on Antarctic patrol, ENDURANCE could see the growing hostile attitudes, the threat of and Argentinian invasion of the Falklands and a perceived lack of resolve signalled by John Nott's defence cuts. ENDURANCE's subsequent role had included operation Paraquat to recapture South Georgia and her wasps' attack on the SANTA FE. Coincidentally, he was another member of the Type 21 Club having been the first CO of ARROW in 1975.

Homeward bound

It continued to be very cold and I wanted to be well clear of Gritviken before dark to avoid the icebergs. Our trip north to Ascension was operationally uneventful but the weather as bad as ever: the barometer fell 10mb in ½hr, from 1002 to 992mb!

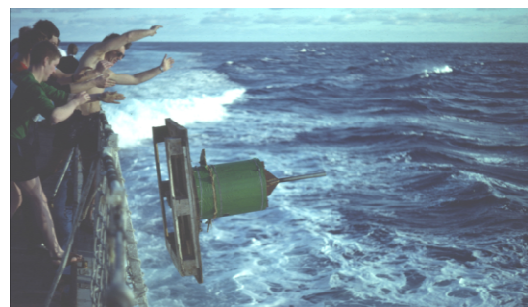


Iceberg off Gritviken

Back home they had started the South Atlantic Fund, to support the families of those who had been killed, so as we approached the equator and it got warmer we had a Fête on the Flight Deck to raise some money for it. One star attraction was the homemade base for a machine gun “Yertz”, in front of which sailors could have their mug shots taken in appropriate rig winning the war, while standing on genuine Falkland Is soil, courtesy of the gash party's last trip ashore in San Carlos! Snowballs made from Falkland Island snow were auctioned to be thrown across the equator, and the RMs charged us for naval ammunition to shoot at beer cans towed over the stern. Having served its country for the last time Yertz was now buried at sea.



Yertz.



. buried at sea

We had a quick stop at Ascension to drop off the

RMs and to pick up mail and fresh stores, and a brief diversion to Dakar 18 July to land a sailor with appendicitis (remarkably he was on the jetty to meet us when we got back!). Then on 24 July we finally got home to an emotional welcome in Plymouth, 3½ months after we left.



Welcome Home F172!

Postscript – Vital Statistics

24,226 miles.	83 days at sea since Gibraltar
106 sacks mail	1,726,210kw electricity
5,044 tons of fuel	17,500 yards of teleprinter roll
19,128 Classified signals	20,000 eggs
11,000 lbs meat	1,000 chickens
2,000 sausages	2,800 cans of Baked Beans
2,000 cans of Tomatoes	10,800 pints of milk
33,800 lbs potatoes	2,500 loaves of bread
12,000 bread rolls	25,812 bars chocolate
28,880 bags sweets	12,480 tins soft drinks
19,200 cans beer	5,233 bags crisps
345,000 cigarettes	3,350 cigars
500 rounds 4.5" ammunition (12 tons)	1 Seacat, 1 torpedo



MY FALKLANDS WAR – SARAH MOSSE

This is a just very few words on what it was like to be a Falkland wife. It all started one sunny Friday in April (2nd) while Peter was on Easter leave, he was cutting the grass outside

when I saw it on the News – the Falkands had been invaded by the Argentinians. At the time I had Patrick 5yr, Andrew 3½ yr and the twins Simon and Gina nearly 1yr. Peter returned to his ship in Plymouth the following week and my next few weeks after Easter were taken up with getting on with life and watching the News. The ship was incommunicado so I had no idea what was happening.

We thought they were at Portland, but no, they had been sent to Gibraltar for a few weeks – letters took about a week at this point, later on it was something like 3 weeks, that is 5-6 weeks for a reply – no telephone calls and no email in those days! So now we thought they were in Gib to be the guard ship, but no, they had been sent to Ascension Island to be guard ship there, and then of course just when we thought they were settling down in Ascension Island and no, they had been sent South to the Falklands.

At this point the morale of all the Ambuscade wives was pretty low as no-one had been able to say goodbye, but never the less there were beginning to be get-togethers and we kept our spirits up by chatting between us and comparing notes from our letters. And guess what, on 21 May, business as usual for the CO's wife – me and a number of the other wives were all invited down to Plymouth by Royal Mail for the launch of an official postcard of Ambuscade!



We heard everything on the news, of course, Belgrano, then Sheffield, and Ardent and Antelope after the landings, and most recently Atlantic Conveyor, although I had no idea if Peter was involved.

I then had my Black Monday. It was Whit Monday (31 May) and Andrew 3½ pulled a piece of farm machinery on top of himself and broke both his legs and all four bones. My Dad was in a coma at home having had a stroke and we knew that Peter had sailed south and was probably in the middle of it all. Well, I had to take Andrew down to the Queen Alexandra Hospital (Portsmouth) where they x-rayed him and sorted him out, but I think it was when they started the inquisition and almost accused me of child abuse that it almost finished me and I turned into a sobbing heap. But it is amazing what a strong cup of tea and a few kind words can do.

My biggest problem then was how much to tell Peter. He could do nothing to help and that

would have upset him, and he had more important things on his mind. But if I didn't tell him and he heard it through someone else, he would have been more upset. So I did tell him and it was a relief to have done so.

P 191737Z MAY 82
FM CINCPACVHOM
TO ZOC/TF 317
INFO RBDEC/CINCFLEET

BT

UNCLAS

SIC 19F

PERSONAL FROM COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

I AM SURE ALL IN THE TASK FORCE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW SPLENDIDLY
THEIR FAMILIES ARE FACING THE PRESENT SITUATION. THEY ARE CHEERFUL,
DETERMINED, HELPING EACH OTHER AND ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BEHIND YOU.
WE'RE DOING ALL WE CAN TO HELP THEM. THEY WOULD PARTICULARLY
WISH ME TO SEND YOU THEIR LOVE

BT

The ministry told me as much as they could but most of it we got through the News bulletins. I was lucky, Peter came home unscathed, Andrew totally recovered and ended up walking out of 2 sets of plasters and my only real sadness was my Dad died. But we naval wives can cope with most things and all is well that ends well. It all seems a long time ago now.