



# FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



## IN THIS ISSUE

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**MUSEUM PIECE GOES OPERATIONAL**

**STEVE ROBINSON**

**FALKLAND ISLAND SPECIAL**

**PUZZLE PAGE**

**REG'S MODELS**

SUMMER 2022

[www.rafanddfs.co.uk](http://www.rafanddfs.co.uk)



# Who To Contact - Officers and Committee

Patron	
Air Marshal Sir Roger Austin KCB AFC RAF (Ret'd)	
President	
Ron Brown	Member 294
38 Sedgebrook, Liden, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 6EY.	
Tel: 01793 496307	
Email: <a href="mailto:brown026@virginmedia.com">brown026@virginmedia.com</a>	
Vice – President	
Steve Harrison	
58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ	
Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568	
Email <a href="mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com">silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com</a>	
Chairman	
Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E	
16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln LN1 2UJ	
Tel 07912 658402	
Email <a href="mailto:steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk">steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk</a>	
Vice- Chairman	
Donald Pape	
7 Keys Brow, High Harrington,M Workington, Cumbria, CA14 5RR	
Tel: 01946 834319    Mobile: 07954 177486	
mail <a href="mailto:d.pape632@sky.com">d.pape632@sky.com</a>	
General Secretary	
Mike Clapton	Member 704
4 Fairfax Road, Cirencester, Gloucester, GL7 1NF.	
Tel: 01285 655314	
Email: <a href="mailto:fire.bucket@btinternet.com">fire.bucket@btinternet.com</a>	
Assistant General Secretary	
Val Moss	
2 Nursery Road, Watermoor, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1NU	
Mobile: 07966373399Home 01285640745	
Email <a href="mailto:moss01285@gmail.com">moss01285@gmail.com</a>	
Treasurer	
Trevor Hayes	
2 Gypsy lane, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8PR.	
Tel: 01923 331975	
Email: <a href="mailto:hayes.trevor425@gmail.com">hayes.trevor425@gmail.com</a>	
Membership Secretary	
Brian Jones	
4 Bluebell Close, Pakefield, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 7EH	
Tel: 01502 567524 / 07772247295	
Email: <a href="mailto:813jones@talktalk.net">813jones@talktalk.net</a>	
Flashpoint Editor	
Reg Metcalfe	
18 Pategill Court, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 8LN	
Home 01768630339    Mobile. 07548873159	
Email: <a href="mailto:advisorp@btinternet.com">advisorp@btinternet.com</a>	
Assistant Flashpoint Editor	
Steve Harrison	
58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ	
Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568	
Email <a href="mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com">silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com</a>	

Remembrance Parade Co-ordinator
Paul Murray
Sweet Apple Cottage, 5 Upper Weald, Calverton, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK 19 6EL
Tel: 01908 261254 / 07866 940689
Email: <a href="mailto:pmurr7753@gmail.com">pmurr7753@gmail.com</a>
Web Master
Dave Kirk
1 Fyling Road, North Yorkshire, YO21 3NA
Tel: 01947 604613
Email: <a href="mailto:webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk">webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk</a>
AREA CO-ORDINATORS
The Co-Ordinators Committee Member
Vacant
Lincolnshire
Steve Harrison
58 Gospel Gate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ
Tel: 01507 355740
Email: <a href="mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com">silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com</a>
Cornwall, Devon & Somerset
Terry Mortimore
32 Newbridge, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3LX
Tel:
Email: <a href="mailto:terry_mortimore@yahoo.com">terry_mortimore@yahoo.com</a>
North West & Wales
Vacant
North
Robert Atkinson Member 108
4 Fairway, Stella Park, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, NE21 4LL
Tel: 0191 4148176
Norfolk
Vacant
RAF
Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E
16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln, LN1 2UJ
Tel: 07912 658402
Email: <a href="mailto:steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk">steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk</a>
South
John Hurl
34 Copt Elm Close, Charlton King, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 8AE.
Tel: 01242 522503
London
Vacant
Scotland
Alec Robertson
12 Kinclavin Crescent, Murthly, Perth, PH1 4EU.
Tel: 01738 710487
Cambridge & Suffolk
Vacant
Northern Ireland
Kenneth Green
2 Brooklands Drive, Whitehead, Carrickfergus, Antrim, Northern Ireland.
Tel: 01960 372595
Essex
Vacant
Front Cover Picture
RAF Stanley “Trumpton” Fire Section from Steve Harrison

# “SILVERFOX” Editorial Special

So here I am once again, why? Well, I am writing the editorial on behalf of Reg at his request, who has had a little of a rough time of late and although members who use Facebook will be aware of his recent troubles those that don’t do that stuff, then I am sure Reg would not mind me telling you that he has had surgery on his neck sorting out his vertebrae which had been giving him movement problems. On top of that he caught Covid before the surgery was due, but the surgeon thought it that such a serious condition it all went ahead. I am pleased to say that I talked to Reg after he went home from hospital, and he is his usual “Daft” self and although his recovery will be difficult, he faces it with typical service humour. He has had hundreds of well-wishers on the old Facebook, and I am sure for those who don’t do the social media will, through your prayers wish him well. Please send an email or text with a short message, I am sure he will appreciate it. Reg has also been busy producing some models of Firefighters which he alluded in his last editorial, and I am sure he will update you all as soon as he can and how

to get these models another way other than through than social media. I received one of these which was a post-production type, and it sits in my “Mancave” with pride of place (Thanks Reg) and they are unique and very good (as is Reg)

So welcome to this **Special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Falklands Editon.** It is well documented the heroic deeds of our armed forces that secured the islands for the population down there. But this edition reflects the always underrated deeds of the RAF Fire Service and the contribution that they made to help the continuous defence of those islands. One of the exceptions in the varied stories is a contribution by Stephen Robertson (member 1152) who served in the Royal Navy and was in the conflict aboard HMS Hermes, he is also a member of our museum team. So, I am sure us “Crab’s” will welcome this memory of his time.

I only served down there once back in 84/85 at RAF Stanley, this holds special memories for me, I always think of it as a “Harrier Deployment on Steroid’s”



Dave Kirk our webmaster has really to take credit for most of this edition. He has put a great effort into collating the stories into a timeline, some of them you may have seen before, but there is plenty of new contributions. It’s always interesting for me to see the different points of view and experiences that we have of a place. So, sit back with a beer or tea, whatever and enjoy this bumper special edition.

*Steve Harrison*

## Chairman’s Address

Welcome to this special edition of Flashpoint, commemorating the 40 years that have passed since the Falklands War. Many of our members have served in this bleak but beautiful location and it remains, probably, the greatest focal point for the history of our trade. After 40 years, there is little room left in the fire stations to display this history and thankfully efforts are underway to ensure that future generations send items back from the Falklands for display in the Museum when the walls get full. The hand painted murals and bricks remain though sadly some are so faded that they can’t be read without a magnifying glass! This publication has been a labour of love and I must thank Reg, Dave Kirk and Steve Harrison for their efforts in putting this together. I must also thank all those who have sent pictures and anecdotes into the editor for consideration. Sadly many of the firefighters mentioned on the manning boards are no longer with us and these boards, photographs and stories serve as an unofficial memorial to their service. Perhaps one of the saddest stories is that of 19 year old Aircraft

Handler Brian Marsden, who served aboard HMS Invincible. He was killed in a tragic accident two days after the war ended. He was crushed between a flight deck tractor and the Island superstructure of the ship during atrocious weather. He was buried at sea. We must never forget the 255 British personnel, 650 Argentine 3 Islanders who were killed, nor the men and women who continue to serve in order to protect the sovereignty of the Islands. Fires still happen as do aircraft emergencies, road traffic accidents on the Islands infamous roads, peat fires and medical emergencies. Hopefully this magazine will help us remember the good times whilst honouring those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

I hope to see many of you at this years AGM. There are a variety of options available for you to attend (details on the web site) so please, come and join us and perhaps we can raise a glass to all those that have served and continue to serve on this remote part of Britain

*Kindest regards  
Steve  
Steven Shirley MBE, GIFireE.*



## A WARM WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

It’s pleasing to see new members joining and re- joining we would like to see you at future reunions and please contribute to the Flashpoint as this is your magazine. Thank you.

1172 David Corfield

1173 Mark Taylor

1174 John William Johnson

1175 Ernest Haynes

1176 David John Ives

1177 Steve Haden

ATTENTION TO ALL PRESENT MEMBERS Brian Jones the Membership Secretary has asked if you could forward to him any change in contact details i.e. change of address, phone numbers and email. This will ensure the prompt distribution of Flashpoint and maintain his records. Thank you.



# The Life of a 'Hangar Rat'

## Memories from Naval Airman Stephen Robertson (Royal Navy, retired).

Having enjoyed four years as a Sea Cadet at Training Ship Tenacity in Ashington, Steve joined the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm on 17 July 1979, aged just 16. Enlistment was followed by six weeks of basic training at HMS Raleigh at Torpoint in Cornwall, before moving on to Part 2 training which consisted of airmanship, the principles of flight, and how aircraft fly and operate. There then followed two further courses:

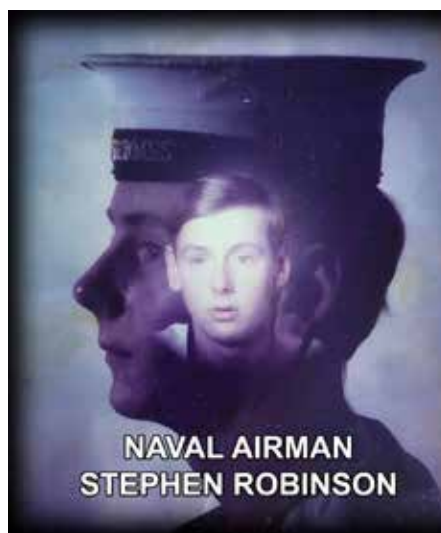
Part 3(a) - Aircraft Handling on ships and shore bases

Part 3(b) - Aircraft firefighting and rescue and domestic firefighting

Having passed his training, Steve was posted to HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent where he carried out shore based duties, and also did an eight week detachment to Gibraltar, where he worked on the chain arrestor gear (CHAG) on the airfield at North Front. He also met his mate Brian Marsdon while working at Gib.

In February 1981 Steve joined the crew of the carrier HMS Hermes where he became a member of the Aircraft Hangar Movements Team – known to everyone on board as 'Hangar Rats'. Primary duties there included moving aircraft within the below-deck hangar, which involved operating electro-mechanical handlers. These were cut-down battery powered tugs, which would be attached to the nose wheels of Harriers or tail wheels of helicopters. Aboard Hermes Steve enjoyed deployments to America and the Mediterranean before Hermes returned to Portsmouth for a short term maintenance period, during which the ship's company was granted leave.

The year was 1982, and four days into his leave Steve received a phone call and a visit by the local constabulary with orders to return to his ship. The policeman kindly gave him a lift to Newcastle railway station, and that was when Steve found himself on his way to war. On arrival at Portsmouth he was told to get six hours sleep before reporting for duties of "Storing Ship". This involved forming long chains of sailors busily passing supplies along gangways and into various storage compartments in order to get the ship ready for a long deployment. The whole process took two full days.



On Monday 5 April HMS Hermes left Portsmouth and headed south as Flagship of a fleet of vessels tasked with liberating the Falkland Islands from the occupying forces of the Argentine junta. 'Defence Watches' were the order of the day - 8 hours on duty followed by 8 hours off duty. There was Hangar training and exercises, as well as various practices aimed at getting the crew ready for war. The Royal Navy had never been to war since World War II, and everyone thought they would be turning round for home soon; but when they arrived at the Ascension Islands to take on-board fresh supplies and RAF Harrier aircraft they knew it was serious. On reaching the 200 mile 'Exclusion Zone' around The Falkland Islands, duties changed from 'Defence Watches' to 'Combat Action Stations'. The ship was 'closed down', i.e. bulkheads were closed, shutting compartments. Steve's duty then was to stay at the Port-Forward Access Lobby to the hangar where he was to operate the Forward fire-curtain in the hangar. The purpose of the fire-curtain was to provide a partition within the hangar to divide it into separate compartments in order to facilitate fire protection. Altogether HMS Hermes had three fire-curtains, making four compartments within the hangar. Steve's was the front one and it was his duty to ensure that no-one entered or left that section of the hangar. He

also had to operate the forward fire-sprinkling system for that section of the hangar, which involved mixing AFFF foam in drums using a still-pipe connected to the fire-sprinkling system when needed. Fortunately, 'Action Stations' were only called when there was a threat, otherwise the Naval Airmen were at 'Normal Duties'. 'Normal Duties' focussed on moving Harrier aircraft and Sea King helicopters in and out of the hangar to and from the flight-deck above.

Whilst at one period of Action Stations, Steve saw the sad image of HMS Sheffield on fire in the distance through a port-hole. This was followed by a tannoy announcement *"Standby to receive casualties from HMS Sheffield!"*. Hermes' Sick Bay was located on the hangar level with direct access from the after-lift which would normally be used for aircraft. Seeing survivors coming down the after-lift was a very sombre experience, and brought home the fact that they were fighting a war.

Whilst cruising at Action Stations in the Exclusion Zone a message was Tannoyed *"Quarter Stand Too"*. This meant that there was a serious imminent threat from an Exocet missile! "Oh f\*\*k!" The words *"Brace! Brace!"* were sounded and Crew had to stay put and find somewhere safe to survive the missile attack. Steve recalls *"All I could do was get under a Sea King and 'kiss my arse goodbye'"*. Thankfully the Hermes survived the missile attack, but feelings of relief were soon dampened when it was discovered that the RoRo *'Atlantic Conveyor'* had been seriously hit by a missile and was on fire. Hermes wasn't called to assist or board survivors, but was able to support the only Chinook off the *'Atlantic Conveyor'*. The now-



famous 'Bravo November' went on to provide sterling service for troops during the land campaign, and later served with distinction in Afghanistan.

The *Hangar Rat's Mess* had direct access to the flight deck which meant that Steve and his co-workers found themselves 'hot bunking' with SAS and SBS troops. They slept in action working dress on top of their bunks, and even when off-watch, still had to man their Station under Action Station requirements. Therefore, on an 8 hours 'on' and 8 hours 'off' shift pattern, Steve probably rarely had more than five hours sleep per day in any 24 hour period.

The Argentineans eventually surrendered and the Union Flag was raised at Government House, Port Stanley. When the Tannoy announcement reported the victory a big cheer went through *HMS Hermes*. The crew knew that soon they could begin to sail home, but not until they had completed another five-day period of Action Stations' duty to ensure that all hostilities had indeed ceased. When the Captain finally announced that the conflict was over the *Hermes* set sail for home but not until after first disembarking the RAF Harriers to Port Stanley.

After passing the Ascension Islands the ships company was stood down and went back to normal duty. Further North they sailed around Tenerife, but sadly didn't stop.

During the whole of the conflict HMS Hermes had been shadowed by her Guard Ship, HMS Broadsword which did take several hits from enemy bombs. The frigate did a great job in protecting Hermes and on reaching the South West Approaches of

England the crew of Hermes said 'goodbye' to HMS Broadsword in the traditional way of ships passing; horns blaring and fire hoses saluting. HMS Broadsword went to Plymouth and Hermes sailed on to Portsmouth where they received a fantastic reception. After receiving VIPs while at anchor off Portsmouth, the crew adopted 'Procedure Alpha', which involved manning the flight deck in No. 1 Uniform as the big ship sailed into the harbour surrounded by a large flotilla of small vessels. Some lucky sailors on the starboard side cheered at the sight of two ladies who lifted their tops to reveal their bare 'assets'. Unfortunately Steve was on the port side.

It was a slow process to get into the Jetty, but they war-weary sailors eventually made it. Steve recalls "I remember calling into a local shop and buying a pint of milk!

Yes! Milk! I drank it slowly like a pint of vintage wine, because it was so enjoyable and refreshing after having powdered milk rations (Milac) for the whole of the time that HMS Hermes was at sea during the conflict. When I got back home to Ashington, the neighbours were all out in the street to welcome me back home! Then there was the party – I don't remember much about that, except for the headache afterwards!"

On completion of his tour aboard HMS Hermes Steve had posting to:

- HMS Seahawk (Culdrose) – where he served with the Fire Station and also gained an HGV licence to become a fire-truck driver – Dennis Mk9, TACR 1 and Bedford TAYMEC 2000ltr.
- HMS Gannett (Prestwick) – Front line service as a tractor driver with 819 Helicopter Squadron.
- HMS Osprey (Portland Fire Station) – 2nd line service with the Fire Station on either 'Rescue 1' or 'Crash 1' duties. 'Rescue' was using a TACR 2 Range Rover, whilst 'Crash' used a Unipower Mk10.

So that's it! What started as a career wish 'To see the World' and save lives, took Steve to war in the Falklands on the Royal Navy Flag Ship HMS Hermes. Following that several tours of duty in the Royal Navy Fire Service prepared Steve for his vocation as a volunteer in the RAF Fire-fighting Museum.

Thank you for sharing your experiences Stephen Robertson!



Steve Robinson pictured with Steve Shirley's grandsons in front of a model of HMS Hermes





In 2019 I wrote an article for Flashpoint introducing the West Raynham Control Tower Museum. Anyone who enjoyed reading that will be interested to learn of this development.

This little mini Bedford is part of the RAF West Raynham Control Tower Museum and at approximately 16:45 on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July this year it had it's first "shout" since being retired from RAF service.

A combine harvester, straw and field were ablaze at Kipton Ash Farm, just outside the former airfield boundary.

Nicknamed "Angus" the museum's fire appliance was first on the scene, and with farm workers on the hose, he was able to suppress the combine fire sufficiently to save a tractor and keep access clear for the arrival of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. The first units arrived just as Angus's 100 gallon tank ran dry.

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service had been run off their feet that week due to the dry weather yet they responded quickly to this incident and very probably prevented fire spreading to the long grass which would have caused problems at the solar farm and indeed the tower itself. There were no casualties at this incident, however a lot of straw and a combine harvester were lost.

Jon Booty went on to say;

*"A big thanks to those who helped on the hose and a big thank you to little Angus who is getting a well earned wash this week! It was also great to see Gary Dawes, jet engine excavator and cradle maker extraordinaire, quick to get to the scene with a cultivator to create fire breaks in the field."*

*It's great to see the local community pull together to help each other in these emergencies.*

*Any more of this stuff and we will be reinstating the volleyball court!"*

**OBITUARIES**

AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN,  
AND IN THE MORNING,  
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

*I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.  
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when  
life is done.  
I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly  
down the ways.  
Of happy times and laughing times and bright  
sunny days.  
I'd like the tears of those who grieve,  
to dry before the sun  
Of happy memories that I leave when  
life is done.*

**Sadly we have to report the passing of the  
following comrades since the last Flashpoint  
was published:**

John Young Member 581 7th April  
Dave Blackburn Member 39 member 6th April  
Leslie Hertz Member 51  
Steve Davey Member 670  
Michael Urquhar tMember 420  
Malcolm (Georgie) Ray  
Robert Williams Member 465 13th May  
Martin Tattersall  
Alan Dawes Member 1102 9th July  
Michael (Mick) Skelly 30<sup>th</sup> July

**REST IN PEACE BROTHERS**



Unless you were a stamp collector, prior to 1982 it is unlikely that you would have known where the Falkland Islands were located, or you may not have heard of them at all! That all changed on 2nd of April of that year when Argentine forces invaded, and occupied the archipelago in an attempt to forcibly end their long running claim of sovereignty over Las Islas Malvinas, as they insisted on calling the islands.

I remember the event quite vividly. At the time I was a Corporal stationed at Gibraltar with a one month old baby girl, and less than three months left to serve out of a three year tour. The day the news broke I was on a night shift and had not heard anything about it until I arrived at the Fire Section for my duty. It certainly hit me! Things began to move apace for us from then on, and night shifts were a completely different ballgame. Gone were the days of seeing the Tangier Viscount in safely, going fishing for a couple of hours, then having a spot of supper before going down to domestic manning from midnight. If I remember correctly the first C130 landed at about 2am that same shift. It was stopping to refuel before lumbering down the runway, grossly overweight, and struggling to gain height on next leg of its journey south. From then on, we were on almost constant standby duties for dangerous air cargo, hot refuel turn-arounds etc, and watching those Hercs take off out into the Bay of Gibraltar barely getting up off the runway, it seemed extremely fortuitous that we never lost one.

Back home in Blighty, as the main Task Force was being made ready to sail, preparations were also being made for RAF Fire crews to be sent south so they could man the airfield at Stanley once it

had been retaken. With WO Wilf Longmire detailed to command the detachment, 18 other firemen were duly mustered at Brize Norton, not knowing much about what was in store for them. They were:

Cpl Clarkstone  
SAC Pinnock  
SAC Doyle  
SAC Stoyles  
Cpl Mullen  
Cpl Stainer  
Cpl Gray  
Cpl Millard  
Cpl Owens  
SAC Brooks  
SAC Davis  
SAC Lawrence  
SAC Owen  
SAC Inglis  
SAC Craig  
SAC Large  
SAC Pittock  
SAC Effer

After 10 days at Brize they were moved to St Mawgan, and then later were bussed to Southampton to board the ship, TEV Rangatiri, which would be their home for the foreseeable future. The Rangatira was launched in 1971 at Swan Hunters on Tyneside and used as a ferry for the Cook Strait crossing from North to South Islands New Zealand. More recently the vessel had been used as an accommodation ship for oil workers, and now with a new Helicopter landing deck installed, she was ready to sail for the South Atlantic.

On the 11th of July, just 27 days after the Argentine surrender, Rangatira arrived at Port Stanley, and the crews were tasked with setting up a Fire Section at the battle scarred airfield. The short runway was

located on a sandy peninsular to the east of the town, almost entirely surrounded by water and minefields. As well as the obvious battlefield damage repairs, work was underway to make the base suitable for Phantom aircraft, which were to take over the air defence role from HMS Invincible's Harriers. This involved extending the runway with aluminium planking and installing rotary hydraulic arrester gear (RHAGs). Initially the Fire Section consisted of little more than three 12 X 12 tents and a "box", but with a bit of hard work and some very persuasive scrounging, the lads made the best of their very basic facilities.

Roger Brooks recalls some of the problems they had to overcome:

- Filling the EWS tank with water from the pond; it was on the right hand side as you came in off the unmade road - and was in a minefield!
- Another incident, the 3 tents we lived in were tied down with rope. At the other end of the rope was a 50 gallon drum filled with napalm!
- I forgot, in the water tank, we found boxes of 9mm bullets (dum dums)!

A week later the arrival of four TACR2s and a Mk9 meant they were able to set up shop and provide fire services at Stanley and also Kelly's Garden, a forward operating base adjacent to Port San Carlos.

Dave Brown, who came down in September to relieve Wilf Longmire had this to say:

"The lads going down with the Task Force did a fantastic job of getting things up and running, and improving things for us. Above all, I don't think anything left out





Stanley Fire Section September 1982  
Sgt Stanier SAC Barker SAC Lawrence SAC Alderslade SAC Woodfield SAC Inglis SAC Owen FS Brown  
CPL Millard CPL Mullen SAC Davis CPL Gray SAC Large SAC Effer.

was safe with the lads around, even the barbed wire RE compound was a target, nails and sheets of tin being prime booty.

The 'Control Room' on the front of the big box was made from wood from the aluminium runway boxes, the roof kindly donated from the RE Compound complete with nails and the Perspex window legally obtained from GEF. Bunk beds were fitted in the big box with mattresses donated by the Hospital. I believe the filled black bags from the designer toilet are still floating on the ponds around the old Stanley airfield.

Rangatira continued to provide accommodation while moored in Stanley Harbour, and initially the 2 Crews worked 24 hours on/off to spend some time away from the airfield. However, problems arose when the Harbour got rough; then the boat would up-anchor and go out to sea to ride it out, leaving a crew stuck at Stanley. After a short while we did get a share of a bungalow in Stanley with OC Army's cook and driver, it did give the lads a chance of a bath and a bit of normality. One thing the Argies did give us was coffee in large tins which included milk powder and sugar. Some we had already but on being called to a fire in a hut on the Race Course, found quite a large stache of the stuff and it quickly vanished to where all unprotected gear went."

Roger Brooks also had memories of the accommodation: "We had a bungalow in Stanley that we took over. John (Jock) Grey slept on the porch and one day he decided to go inside and have a look round in the loft. During his investigation he followed some wires from the front door thinking they were to the door bell. They weren't; they went to a box of explosives!

You have never seen firemen move so fast and needless to say Jock was the first out!"

Once the Phantoms became operational, the RHAG became a major part of the fire crew's routine, so much so that as well as Firemen, the crew also had two Ground Equipment Technicians, or "Raggies" as they were referred to,

working with them. There were five RHAGs installed at Stanley, two British and three US versions. The American RHAGs were preferred as they slowed the aircraft much faster, a bit like a deck landing, and so had less tape to rewind, making them quicker to recycle. Because of the short runway, every F4 landing would involve a RHAG engagement, and as Phantoms fly in pairs and there was no diversion airfield they could use, it was essential that the cable was rewound and made ready for the next aircraft quickly and efficiently. Consequently, the crews working at Stanley became very proficient RHAG operators; probably the best in the world at the time. George Edwards wrote this in his book Out of the Blue.

"RHAG deployments were a very common occurrence at RAF Stanley, nine or ten in the course of a 24 hour shift was about normal. Imagine operating in the dark with a face numbing Antarctic wind chill recovering fully armed Phantom aircraft with engines running from ice clad runway arresting cables. Speed and accuracy are imperative if the aircraft is to be removed and the cable prepared for the imminent landing of another Phantom or transport aircraft both at the limit of their endurance with no diversionary airfield. There really was no margin for error but the RAF fire crews of RAF Stanley excelled in this difficult and potentially very dangerous task. The following citation dated the 22 November 1984 was given to all members of my crew but the scenario and prevailing situation could apply to any RAF Stanley Fire crew RHAG deployment:

On the afternoon of Thursday the 20th November 1984 the Crash Combine

were deployed for an East Alpha RHAG engagement a regular occurrence for the fire crews at RAF Stanley. However the weather gave some cause for concern. Suddenly Mount Tumbledown disappeared in a gathering storm strong northerly crosswinds gusting at 50 knots were in evidence. The combine were deployed to rig the centre Alpha and stand by for two Geese (F4) and a Fat Albert (extended C130) recovering. The first goose landed safely and the cable was rewound. The second Goose also landed safely and the cable was rewound to allow the Fat Albert to land. The combine returned to normal readiness. Shortly after Wing Commander Manning (OC ops) called at the section and thanked the crew for their prompt and efficient actions. In the words of the Wing Commander I have never seen a fire crew move so quickly and professionally and that includes my days at RAF Coningsby. I was urging you lads on from up in the tower and I was so relieved when you completed all your tasks in what must have been record time. I would like to show my appreciation for a job very well done by sharing a drink with you all. The Wing Commander then produced a bottle of Scotch whisky and asked us to join in a toast to the wonderful men of the RAF Fire service. As the crew chief I would like to pass on my appreciation to all members of the crew; Cpl Bowerbanks Cpl Tortice Cpl Yapp SAC Haughton SAC Hawes SAC Hollis SAC Lenaghan SAC Wade SAC Walton SAC Young and our two raggies Cpl Thomas and JT Palmer. I hope that you can look on this incident in years to come as a task very professionally undertaken at Royal Air Force Stanley.

George G Edwards  
SNCO i/c A Crew  
Fire Section  
RAF Stanley

As a matter of interest, I declined the Wing Commander's offer of a toast. Its not very often you get the chance to disagree with a Wing Commander but we still had a long night ahead of us and there was no way any of my crew were consuming alcohol on duty, however small the quantity. We did however have our toast at a more appropriate time."

## A collection of photographs kindly provided by Richard Lawrence

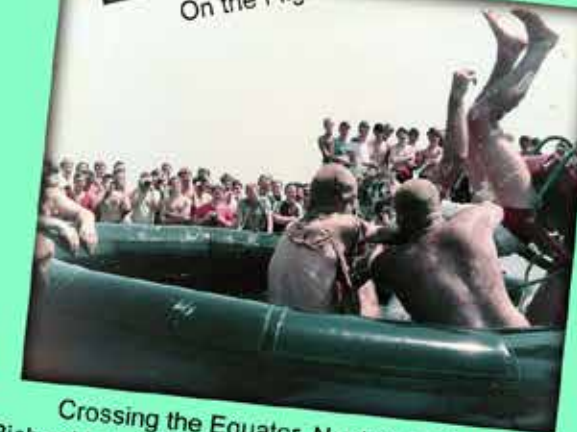


Personnel mustered ready for emergency deployment

Top row L to R: SAC Craig, CPL Gray, SAC Lawrence, SAC Owen, CPL Owens, SAC Davis  
Bottom Row L to R: SAC Effer, SAC Barker, SAC Inglis, CPL Millard, CPL Mullen & SAC Large



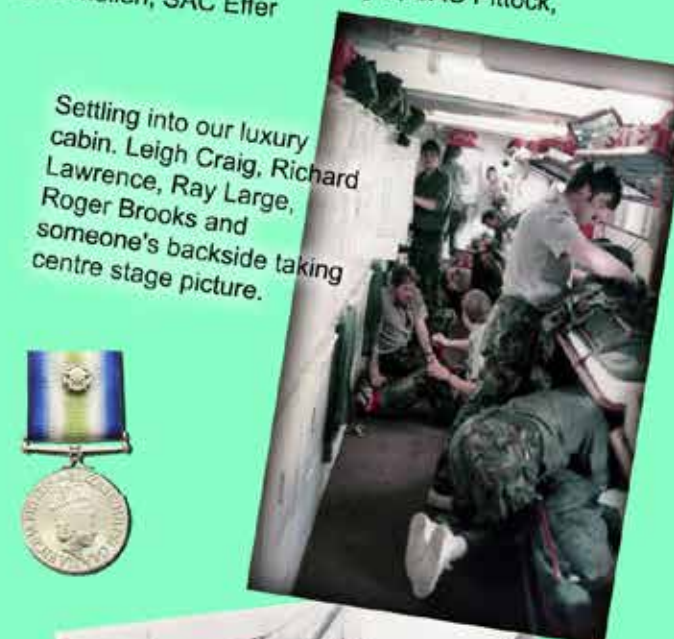
On the Flight Deck with Uncle Wilf



Crossing the Equator. Neptune's Court, Richard Lawrence, SACs Effer, Inglis and Large in background



Debussing at Southampton  
In picture; SAC Davis, SAC Inglis, SAC Pittock, CPL Mullen, SAC Effer

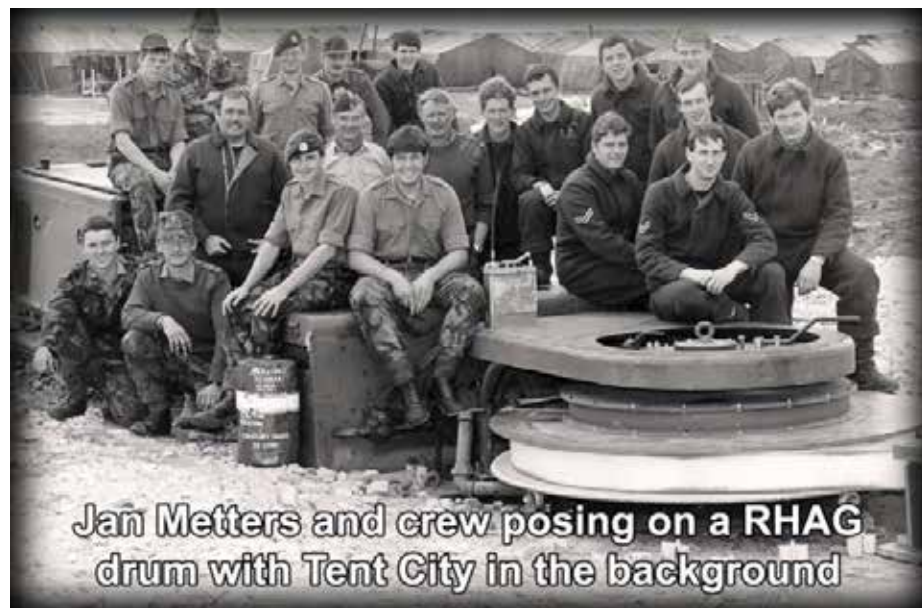


Settling into our luxury cabin. Leigh Craig, Richard Lawrence, Ray Large, Roger Brooks and someone's backside taking centre stage picture.



Replenishment at sea





Working on the RHAG on a small and very busy airfield can be a dangerous task too, and many firemen who served during those early years have their own tales to tell about it. Steve Harrison wrote:

I kept a small diary when I was down there and according to that I attended 237 RHAG engagements during my tour. One to remember was when a skid plate came off the hook and missed Traff Trafford's head by inches!

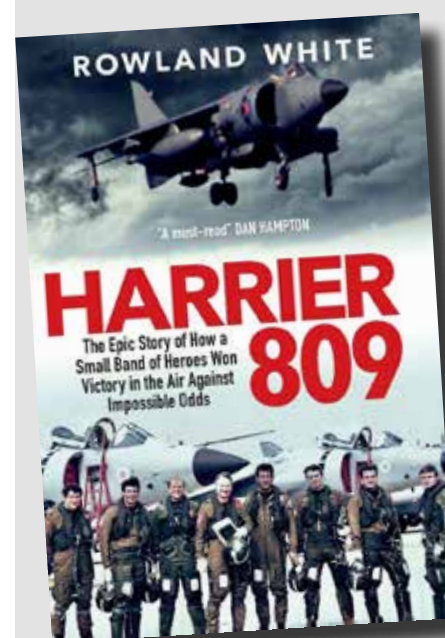
Steve Boundy remembers derigging a RHAG at Stanley in 1983. I was working with PB and Sid Keenan. We were just lifting the cable onto the hook on the back of Crash 1 when some w\*\*\*er of a SENG from Whimpdet drove over it and nearly sliced two fingers off my right hand.

Bryn Venables also has a tale to tell regarding other unit's interference in RHAG operations. Jan Metters was directing a RHAG rewind in his usual manner, stood on the centre-line, marshaling with his bats, while singing "Save your love my darling" at the top of his voice. Just as he was hitting the high notes, a Harrier pilot decided he would hover-land over the top of us. Jan was flung to floor, RHAG tape snaked all over the place and the dust got into everyone's eyes. Jan called for Crash 1 to come and pick him up and take him to HARDET, where he fired off all guns at said pilot. Harriers didn't come anywhere near us following that episode!



Stanley Phantoms from the top of a Mk9  
From David Abbott

## BOOK REVIEW



My old friend Tom McCrorie recommended this book to me last time I was in Scotland. Written by Rowland White, an accomplished chronicler of modern British military history, it focuses on the Pilots and Harriers that sailed South on the Atlantic Conveyor to reinforce the Task Force already on it's way to the battle zone. With Hermes and Invincible only having a total of 20 Sea Harriers between them to take on the 300 or so aircraft of the Argentine air force, Lt Cdr Tim Gedge was tasked with finding the airmen and airframes to form a new squadron to supplement the Task Force.

As well as 809 Sqn RNAS, the book also gives a comprehensive account of how the battle for air superiority was fought over the Falkland Islands through historical records and personal accounts from the time. Other aspects of the book I enjoyed were the details of what the RAF Wyton Squadrons were doing behind the scenes. Roland has a simple style of writing which is easy to read, and is both entertaining and enlightening.

Available from Amazon for £8.19, or free to borrow from your local library.

Highly recommended

Dave Kirk  
Mem No 414

## Engaging the RHAG

To compliment the previous accounts of RHAG engagements, the following is an aircrew perspective kindly sent in by David Gledhill:

"Looks like we have a double utilities failure."

Why is that statement relevant if I'm about to talk about engaging the RHAG - the rotary hydraulic arrestor gear?

In a Phantom, the flying controls and the ancillary services were controlled by hydraulic systems. If both powered control systems failed it was easy - loss of control; eject!. If the utilities systems failed it was more complex. An immediate diversion followed, nursing a sick jet and the subsequent arrival on terra firma would be into the RHAG because the nosewheel steering was one of the absent functions. After blowing down the gear and flaps using the emergency system, an inventory check would reveal a plethora of other systems which had been lost.

As the crew made their way gingerly back to earth, the prospect of a RHAG engagement would be discussed. Get rid of unwanted fuel, make sure the gear and flaps were really down, drop the hook and, most important, tighten those ejection seat straps. Going off the side of the runway was not only inconvenient; there was a proven risk that damage to the airframe could prevent a safe ejection. Many crews chose to eject under such circumstances. Approaching the touchdown point, it was important to go into the cable in the centre. "Feet off the brakes" was an oft quoted reminder from the back seat. Any brake pressure risked a burst tyre adding insult to injury. Thump onto the concrete in true Phantom style, navigator looking over his shoulder waiting for the tell-tale ripple of the grommets lined up along the cable, signifying a successful trap. A skip of the hook and it may be round again to make another approach. This was not a fun manoeuvre with a hydraulic failure and many may have elected to stay down and risk a run down the far end of the runway in a less than directionally stable "Rhino". With an overrun cable or the barrier as the final options, life under these circumstances was certainly not fun.

The grommets ripple, the cable drags out to its full 1300 foot travel and the aircraft pulls up rapidly. The engines carry on spooling as the pilot holds the tension against power, preventing the aircraft from



being pulled backwards by the stretched cable.

So, down safely, things have quietened down. After shutting down the engines - well we're not taxiing anywhere anytime soon - it was time to unstrap and survey the scene

The now limp cable would be wound back by the fire crew and I'm sure there are plenty of stories from the team of times when the straight forward operation was by no means straight forward! A flurry of activity around the nosewheel as the towing bar was hooked with only the quiet ticking in the cockpit left as overheated instruments spun down.

Finally, we're free and out of the cable. Still no nosewheel steering so the taxi back to the Squadron was behind the ubiquitous tow truck. Not the stuff of Top Gun celebrations, sadly, but much better than sticking a wheel into the turf.

There were, however, occasions when the Phantom landed routinely into the cable, namely the Falkland Islands. With an operational fit of four Skyflash, four Sidewinders and a gun, and only 6000 feet of matting on which to land, landing into the approach end cable with just enough fuel for a short hold was the norm. Takeoff was no problem but discretion meant that landing into the cable was wise, so this was the routine option. There were three cables at RAF Stanley, positioned at both ends of the runway with an additional central system.

The 600 foot pull-out - half that of a standard RHAG - was daunting. Many an unaware navigator would at this stage be "listening to the radar" as the deceleration caused the upper body to snap forward. Tight straps and a rigid head became standard practice.

If the jet was held on power after the "trap", self disengagement was entirely possible. A slight relaxation of power, allowing the jet to drift backwards, was followed by a swift upwards selection of the hook and the cable would often drop free, allowing the jet to taxi back to dispersal. The fire

crews became incredibly adept at a rapid wind back. I can imagine that the sound of the No2 in the overhead would be a powerful incentive.

The other time most aircrew came up close and personal with firemen, apart from the annual fire drills, was on a practice lift out. The brief was to play dead and allow a burly stranger to extract you from a live ejection seat. Hmmmm. The opening of the canopy was followed by the arrival of a ladder alongside the cockpit. The ejection seat pins in the stowage positively screamed until they were reinserted into the sears on the seat. Life became a little more relaxed at this point - although not much. Invariably, the quick release box on the seat harness was given a hefty thump which was not for the faint-hearted. Being lifted bodily from the seat and deposited over the side of the cockpit, sometimes not precisely upright, was a tense moment. I'm sure that being 130 lbs in my aircrew socks was a source of some pleasure when compared to my weightier brethren! It was a relief to finally arrive on terra firma and banter was never lacking.

To be serious, there were few instances where such an extraction would be needed but having trained personnel with the skills to achieve it was a good insurance policy.

Contact between aircrew and the fire crews was regrettably rare. That said, rest assured that we all knew that without the big red engine, we could not go flying. We remain ever grateful.

### Falklands Facts

The name "Falkland Islands" comes from Falkland Sound, the strait that separates the two main islands. The name "Falkland" was applied to the channel by John Strong, captain of an English expedition that landed on the islands in 1690. Strong named the strait in honour of Anthony Cary, 5th Viscount of Falkland, the Treasurer of the Navy who sponsored his journey. The name "Falklands" was not applied to the islands until 1765, when British captain John Byron of the Royal Navy claimed them for King George III as "Falkland's Islands". Nowadays the term "Falklands" is a standard abbreviation used to refer to the islands.



# My Falklands Experiences - Mike Goupillot

My journey to the Falklands was in 1984. Well I did have to give the Argentines a chance to clear out before I got there didn't I? We travelled from RAF Marham in Norfolk in a mini bus to RAF Innsworth where we were kitted out with further useless items for our tour of duty. With my personal items and civvy clothes, KD tropical uniform (why I don't know, as Stanley is near the Antarctic Circle) combat kit and two crash kits, I felt like the proverbial donkey. From Innsworth to Brize Norton, where some young specky LAC from Air-Movements section seemed to have the power over all of us, from the lowliest ranks like me, to some very senior officers from all three services. No one was told anything other than "to wait". The LAC guarded information about flight times etc. like it was all Top Secret. Eventually after several games of 'get on the bus get off the bus', we were seated on a VC10 and on our way.

Travelling to Stanley was done in one of two ways; UK to Ascension Island via Dakar in Senegal by VC10, or chartered civil aircraft, this journey taking about nine hours on average, then it was on a ship such as the SS Uganda or MV Norland for the two week journey through the extremely



rough South Atlantic, or for the lucky ones, a straight flight to Stanley. I being a Goupillot, got the SS Uganda. Dakar airport has little in the way of comforts, the idea is for a quick turnaround then off again. My flight was delayed for a number of hours by an engine malfunction which was only fixed when the right size sledge hammer was found to fix it! (I kid you not). Ascension is a volcanic rock rising out of the Atlantic Ocean, it also lacked in facilities for those passing through. It was a dust bowl area where everyone was herded into lines to wait in the baking sun for the helicopter shuttle out to the ships. The first and lasting impression of the ship was the smell of boiled cabbage and sweaty bodies; you never got used to it because it never went away. The cabbage was served out at every meal, and the bodies just got sweeter. Junior ranks cabins were just on the water line or well below for reasons only the Navy can explain. Each cabin on the Uganda had about 20 men to a room in small bunks with all their kit.

Physical training took place every day on the flight deck which was OK in the calmer waters but as we sailed south and the sea got rougher it was no joke. Some cocky barrel-chested PTI had us doing, amongst other things, star jumps, which requires you to jump in the air flinging your arms out to the side, fine until the ship hits a swell and you come crashing back to the deck from about 15 feet. Apart from lectures and some practical training there was little in the way of entertainment, though they once showed

the film "Beneath the Waves" which is about enemy submarines attacking troop ships. Being under the jurisdiction of the Navy, everyone on board was given some menial tasks to do around the ship, ranging from swabbing the decks to tea making.

Another break in the monotony was guard duty; picture half a dozen RAF erks who don't know their port from their starboard, or the right name for the sharp or blunt end, being given a route to patrol. Our orders included fire watch below decks, but when on the outer decks, to look for enemy submarines and to repel boarders. I'm a fireman for Pete's sake, I wouldn't know a sub from a whale till it was to late, and no one could explain how Argie swimmers were going to climb up the side of the ship doing about 30mph in gale force seas. Meal time was always the highlight of the day, for some obscure naval tradition custom, all cooks on the ship had girl's names: Mary for instance was about 6ft 6 (and that was just between the eyes) and his/her arms so big that the anchor tattoo was almost actual size. Mary would take a shine to some young SAC and blow kisses throughout the meal: we had some poor young lads who just did not go for meals at all! Food was taken on long tables and benches, with the whole meal served up onto a flat metal tray, custard running into mash and gravy. If the ship lurched either way your tray came back usually minus some food pinched by a much bigger bloke.

After two long weeks at sea the ship eventually arrived in Stanley harbour,

giving those on board their first glimpse of the Island. A couple of hundred buildings, some of them little more than shacks, with red or green corrugated roofs making up the town, and even at this distance all you saw was mud glorious mud. Soon after the initial conflict, three offshore accommodation vessels known as Coastels had been towed down to the Falklands and anchored in the bay. The RAF being quick off the mark, laid claims to the first to arrive. The accommodation was basic but comfortable in design, with 2 man bunks for 1,000 + men; ours had a canteen and laundry, but little else. The next to arrive was the same with the addition of two canteens and a cinema this was used by the Navy. The poor Army were still in tents at this time and had to wait for theirs to arrive, but when it did it had three canteens, 2 laundries, 2 cinemas and a gymnasium so big it housed all the garrison watching a live Jim Davidson show; so much for superior RAF intelligence and guile! All junior rank firemen shared one wing, but because of the 24 hour on 24 hour off shift, there was only ever half of the fire section using it. A small communal area allowed the card sharps to fleece those like me on a regular basis.

The journey to work was a short ten minute ride over muddy bumpy roads in the back of a four-tonner which drove slowly past each section on the airfield allowing individuals to jump from the back of the moving lorry; lesson one:- never jump into what you think is just a shallow puddle as you will end up with only RAF beret

floating on the top, and lesson two:- make sure you're first to jump off, as many a first timer arrived at work dripping in muddy water being left until last by his mates. A dozen pairs of muddy fire boots sure makes a splash. The drop off point for firemen was at the back of the fire section, near the Trumpton sign depicting a penguin in a fire helmet.

The section itself was a couple of rat-infested portacabins which had been joined together and extended using old pallets and aircraft engine crates. A small control room doubled as the Sgt and Cpl's sleeping bunks. We also had a tiny breathing apparatus repair and store room, a crew rest room, an office for the FS, and a dorm for the. The toilet was a small shack outside with a tube leading to an open drain. Meals were taken whenever possible in the large cookhouse about 20 yards from the fire section. The duty crew was one Sgt, two Cpl's and ten-twelve firemen Two RAF engineers were also permanently attached to the crew; it was their job to maintain the Rotary Hydraulic Arrestor Gear (RHAG) at the end of the runway. Three Mk9 Foam Tenders, two TACR2 6 wheel Range Rovers and one flat fronted small domestic Land Rover made up the crash combine. These were all parked out the front of the section in all weathers.

Following shift changeover and parade, and the obligatory cup of tea, it was usually off to the first RHAG engagement of the day. Stanley runway is very short even with the metal sheeting extensions, and is

blessed with the sea at one end and a mine field at the other. Hercules and Harriers had no problem landing, but each time a fully armed Phantom landed it had to engage the RHAG. Firemen at Stanley were truly unbeatable at getting the aircraft clear, cable rewound and grommets re-spaced before the next aircraft landed. One and a half to two minutes was the norm, and this had to be done up to a dozen or more times a day. As well as RHAG engagements there were constant helicopter movements, man-ups for Hercules takeoffs and landings, pan wash-downs and various in flight emergencies. Some firemen came from what they thought were busy UK flying stations; non of these compared with Stanley.

All aircraft had code names; Hercules were "Fat Alberts", Harriers were "Budgies" Chinook Helicopters were "Woka Woka" and Phantoms were known as "Geese". Air Traffic Control often turned out the crews to "geese in difficulties"; of course we would go belting off to find the feathered variety in trouble; so funny these people in the glass tower. On a RHAG engagement, the TACR2 usually positioned at a point near the centre of the runway, and the rest of the vehicles deployed onto both cable drums, one each side of the touch down point. The Phantoms hook would grab the cable which eventually stopped (you hoped) the aircraft. The Corporal on the TACR2 would go out make the armament safe if necessary, and using red bats marshal the aircraft and cable teams until the aircraft had disengaged and taxied away. Having just arrived and never having seen RHAG equipment, marshalled an aircraft or worked with Phantoms, this was a steep learning curve for me. I had spent two and a half years on Queens Flight and was pretty good with helicopters but this was different; have you ever tried to bring a Phantom into the hover? After the last aircraft was down for the night it was our job to drive a range of old bowzers onto the runway to prevent the Argies sneaking in while we were all asleep. These had to be removed the following morning before flying could resume.

Another vital task was to take the MK9 and fill up the water tank in ATC, vital in so much that this supplied the one and only flush toilet in the immediate vicinity. It was while doing this job that I came close to dying on active service. Mail was, as I am sure to any of you that have been on long unaccompanied tours would



RAF Stanley Fire Section 1984

## BOOK RECOMMENDATION



An absolute banging read!

Exclusively for Association members:- there are 9 signed copies of this book available for £15 each

Also available from Amazon

Steve Metcalf  
Mem No 991





TACR2 in the mud at Kelly's Garden

agree, vital to ones health, welfare and sanity. On this particular day mail had not arrived from Ascension for a couple of weeks. We were told it was something to do with sandstorms on the Island, which was difficult for us to comprehend as we were standing in two foot snow drifts and battling blizzards. Due to the lack of mail, men were becoming aggressive or suicidal, and in some case both. My crew and I had connected a MK9 to the water tank in ATC and were waiting for it to fill up. As we were doing this, a Hercules landed carrying the whole garrisons mail, and then taxied to where we were working. We raced over to the Pan and rifled through the sacks until we found those belonging to the Fire Section, and then ran back to distribute them to the rest of the lads. The rest of the mail sacks were off-loaded and left stacked outside of ATC awaiting MT transport. Meanwhile our vehicle was still merrily pumping away. The water tank in ATC held about 200 gallons of water and the MK9 held 1250 gallons; now if this had been the other way around, no problem, but it wasn't. The excess water came down the stairs of ATC like a waterfall and was quickly absorbed into the mail sacks. I returned to find "blueys" (airmail envelopes floating off across the Pan like paper boats. The quickest hose rolling that would have won any competition took place and we scarpered! Like any good fireman, the last thing I did was to cover our tracks. I bunged up the sink and turned

the taps on full. Everyone on station was out for blood and would have killed the idiot that left the tap on, however we drove round in that mighty big tap with no one knowing it was really our fault.

The only break in this routine Sunday mornings when all the personal weapons were taken from the locked safe in the control room to be cleaned. We all ran round the station pretending to be Rambo, when really we should have been cleaning the 9mm pistols, rifles and sub machine guns. When this was finished they were put back under lock and key. One day I was taking the weapons back, when I spotted the biggest rat I have ever seen sat waving at me from on top of my bunk. If I had been quicker at weapons drill I would have fitted a magazine, cocked the SMG and shot the damned thing.

About half way into my tour, I was sent to a place called Kelly's Garden at Port San Carlos for two weeks, along with an SAC Fireman. We were flown by helicopter across the island and on landing did a straight swap with two firemen we were replacing. The Fire Section there was a small portacabin adrift in a sea of mud. Our vehicle, a TACR2, was supposed to be our transport but it spent most of its time being dug out of the mire. The two firemen had little to do except cover helicopter movements in and out of the small outpost. The two of us spent our time swapping firemen's green string vests and long-johns for kit which the army had to offer.

While there I was asked by an Army Grenadier Guards Regimental Sergeant Major if I would do him a favour. Anyone who knows RSM's knows that this is an order and not a request, so I of course said yes I would love to. Well I didn't want to fight as the Argies might have come back, and I might be needed to fight them. The RSM was responsible for the safety of the troops based at Kelly's Garden and asked us to check all of the fire extinguishers on camp. He gave us permission to go where and when we pleased to do the job. What he failed to tell us was not to go into one particular hut, because it was here that Special Forces Intelligence secretly listened into Argentine military radio broadcasts. And so it was that we wandered in there with a bag of spanners and spare CO2 cartridges only to end up face down on the floor with a loaded gun at our heads! No one had warned these lads of our arrival and we burst through the doors in green crash kit which was different from the normal kit worn by all the others. They had nearly shot us mistaking us for Argie Special Forces.

I was eventually given a date for my return home so I packed my bags, said my farewells and waited for my replacement to arrive by Hercules. However, when the aircraft landed he was not on it! I was told he had had some kind of accident and would be delayed for another two weeks. Two weeks came, and the same thing happened again! I eventually did five months of a four month tour and when I finally departed half the camp came to see me off. I'd like to think it was to wish me well but I suspect it was because they wanted to see the back of me as I had spent the last month crying into everyone's beer.

Thirteen hours in a Hercules parachute seat saw me back at Ascension Island, bent double, unable to walk properly, but thankfully closer to 'Blighty'. A further nine hours lording it up in the comfort of a VC10 and I was home.

Mike Goupillot  
Mem No 359

Despite the camaraderie and job satisfaction that went with a deployment to Stanley, not everyone enjoyed the experience. The following poem was sent to me by George Edwards and reflects another side to life in the South Atlantic (Apologies in advance to anyone who's easily offended) :

### Ode To Stanley

This fucking town's a fucking cuss,  
No fucking trams no fucking bus  
nobody cares for fucking us  
in fucking Stanley.

The fucking roads are fucking bad  
Fucking folk are fucking mad  
It makes the brightest fucking sad  
In fucking Stanley.

All fucking clouds all fucking rain  
No fucking kerbs no fucking drains  
the councils got no fucking brains  
in fucking Stanley

No fucking sport no fucking games  
No fucking fun with fucking dames  
Won't even give their fucking names  
In fucking Stanley

Everything's so fucking dear  
A fucking quid for a fucking beer  
and is it good? no fucking fear  
in fucking Stanley.

The fucking films are fucking old  
The fucking seats are always cold  
You can't get in for fucking gold  
in fucking Stanley.

The fucking dances make you smile  
The fucking band is fucking vile  
It only cramps your fucking style  
In fucking Stanley.

Best fucking place fucking bed  
with fucking ice on your fucking head  
you might as well be fucking dead  
in fucking Stanley.

No fucking Airbridge no fucking mail  
Just fucking snow and fucking rain  
In anguish deep we fucking wail  
In fucking Stanley.

The fucking pubs are fucking dry  
the fucking barmaids fucking fly  
with fucking grief we fucking cry  
Oh fuck you Stanley!!







Near the end of my RAF Stanley tour there was one walk I had been planning to undertake for some time, Mount Lowe. Sunday 6th December was the big day; my party consisted of SNCOs from most sections, and my mate, the Station Commanders personal assistant (Sergeant Chris Ellis) was, also in the party. Mount Lowe is across the other side of Stanley harbour, so I needed transport to convey us across the inlet. I duly arranged for a motor launch to be at the Stanley jetty for 9am. I collected a four-ton truck to take us to the jetty and I also collected a wonderful packed lunch from the mess. Also in the party was the SNCO in charge of the mess so I'm not surprised we had an excellent lunch to look forward to. By now I was feeling very confident on the hills and expected no problems. We arrived at the jetty and there was a very young Army coxswain waiting to take us on the twenty-minute trip to Sparrow Cove.

Off we sped, with sea spray all over us, and were taken into a beach and dismounted. Within earshot of the entire group, I confirmed with the coxswain where we were on the map, and he agreed we were in Sparrow Cove. I gave him instructions to pick us up here at 3.30pm and off he sped. I took a compass bearing on Mount Lowe and I thought we may be a degree or so out, but visibility was good, I could see the summit of Mount Lowe and off we went. About twenty minutes into the walk, we approached a minefield fence. I had, by now, seen many minefield fences and knew exactly what they looked like, but this minefield fence seemed very

different. As you approach a minefield fence, you see clearly visible a metal plate attached with the skull and bones symbol and the words, 'beware mines. As I approached this fence, I could see the metal plate but there were no words on the plate. I was slightly concerned as we approached but, once I came alongside the notice, I leaned over the other side and clearly visible on that side was the skull and bones and the words, 'beware mines' We had just walked through a minefield. Instead of being dropped off at Sparrow Cove we were dropped off at Hell's Kitchen, which I was subsequently to learn was the most active minefield on the Falkland Isles. More sheep and cattle had been blown to pieces there than at any of the other minefields. I didn't know that then as I led the group over the fence and into relative safety. To this day I have an abiding affection for penguins. When I left the coxswain earlier in the day, I noticed a 'penguin walk' and chose that as my route away from the beach head. I think it was that penguin walk that saved our lives. None of the group displayed any outward signs of fear, but they, like me, were no doubt feeling those same flushes of panic as were realised what had happened. As with all my hill walking activities, I carried a radio and a spare. I radioed in to the operations centre intending to explain our situation and seek an airlift back to Stanley. This was the one and only occasion that I could not contact the operations centre. On other occasions, I would regularly call operations and some of the remote listening stations on the mainland, but we were on the other side of Stanley harbour

and there were no listening stations. I was in a dilemma but decided to continue with the walk and then I would have to work out some sort of plan to get back to the pickup point. Clearly, I could not return through the minefield. We carried on, reached the summit of Mount Lowe and, whilst sat up there, I was struggling to work out a way of meeting with the coxswain at 3.30. We commenced our descent and the only solution I had was to follow the minefield fence round to the sea and I would have to wade out and attract the attention of the coxswain as he made his way into Hell's Kitchen. We followed the fence and, come half past three, I could see several motor launches approaching our location. We were spotted, picked up and whisked back to Stanley. I realised that I would need to make a report and I could sense that something was already afoot by the large number of personnel and motor launches present. Nothing was said on our return to Stanley.



George Edwards at the helm of the motor launch totally unaware of what lay ahead

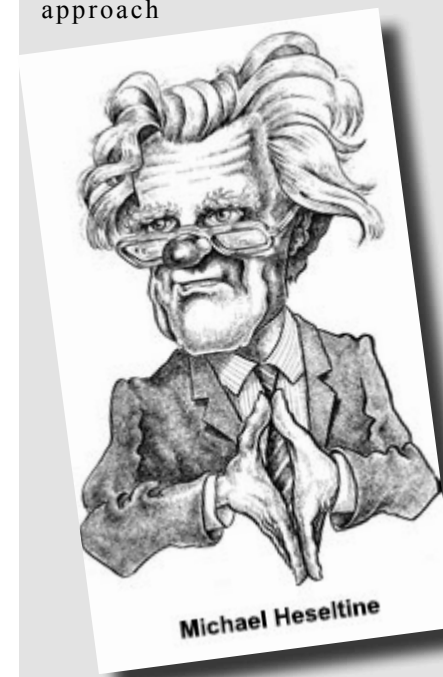
On arrival back at Stanley Harbour I was told the harbour master wanted to see me, urgently. I dropped off my party and drove down to meet the harbour master. He came straight to the point and lambasted me. "You could have killed a lot of people today; do you realise what you have done". Then came the bombshell, "why did you tell the coxswain to take you to Hell's Kitchen". "That's not true," said I. "I have my witnesses who can confirm that I asked the coxswain very clearly if we were in Sparrow Cove to which he replied we were". I then had to go to Military Headquarters and appear before the senior military personnel on the island (BIFFI) who again asked me why I gave the coxswain that order. I was informed there would be an inquiry and off I went back to the coastal. By now it was early evening; I was physically and emotionally drained. I had completed a twenty-four-hour shift, only that morning, rushed around getting transport, packed lunches, completed a mountain walk and then had the very blood drain out of me but there was more to come. By the time I got back to the coastal, word had spread, and people were shouting, "have you heard about the RAF fireman mine detector" and mimicking a mine field clearance technique, i.e., walking backwards with the mine detector in front. The coastal tannoy system continuously called for me to telephone so and so. My boss came to see me; fortunately, my boss Flight Sergeant Chic Bebb thought it very funny. I couldn't at that time see the funny side. "Well, George, I always said you had golden bollocks and you could walk on water but now I'll have to call you no bollocks". An enquiry duly took place; I was interviewed by the Military Police as were all my party. It was proven that I never gave the instruction to the coxswain to enter Hell's Kitchen. Apparently there was a major breach in Army procedures. The coxswain was apparently newly arrived, an (FNG Falklands New Guy), unfamiliar with area and should never have been allowed to travel on his own. There was a clear breach of procedure and I understand the Army NCOs tried to cover up this highly dangerous cock-up. It transpired that several Army personnel were charged and fined for their behaviour. As for me, it took me a while to get over the shock, but I was soon back on my walks but remained on the Stanley side of the harbour

*The Late George Edwards BEM*

## Visit of Michael Heseltine and the crash of GR3 HARRIER XZ992 of 1453 FLT (HARDET) RAF Stanley Steve Harrison – Association Vice President

When I carried out my tour down the Falklands, I kept a diary in note form which at the moment I am trying to flesh out into a full diary (memory permitting) when I arrived at the point of 28-29th November 1984 there was a visit of Secretary of State and a crash of a Harrier of 1435 Flight, and I thought it would be an interesting article for the Flashpoint magazine. I have tried to obtain some information from any of my crew who was involved in the incident, which was not straightforward, apart from a reminder from my good friend and opposite crew chief George Edwards that -we changed to 12 hr shifts I have had no feedback on this incident, so this is my version of events of those days. 28th November 1984 Michael Heseltine then Secretary of State for Defence was due to arrive in a Nimrod aircraft.

For such a landing we would be expecting a 'Hot wheels shout' which was no surprise as the runway at Stanley was very short and the pilot of the Nimrod would have to be heavy on the brakes. Even the Phantoms took the RHAG every time they landed, only on one occasion in four months when the wind was extremely strong did I witness Phantoms landing just deploying their chutes. So, when the A/C was on final approach



we manned the vehicles as a normal procedure and when the Nimrod taxied in, we had a shout for hot wheels. When the lads were checking out the wheels and standing by, I was having a look around when I saw that the wing flaps were full of holes. What had happened was that the pilot knowing that he wanted every bit of runway dropped it on the very edge and had thrown up hardcore into the flaps. I pointed this out to a ground crew 'Chiefy' and you can imagine the horror on his face.

Consequently, Michael Heseltine flew back to Ascension a couple of days later with the flaps mended with 'Gaffa tape' I bet they didn't tell him that! The reason for his visit I think was to have a look at the progress of Mount Pleasant Airport (MPA) which at this time was being built. Also, we had 3 RHAG engagements and two state 2's for Harriers with problems which landed safely. 29th November Yet another busy day at the office, there was an ongoing exercise (Southern Rain). I think no doubt it was for the benefit of Michael Heseltine. It was the first one since I had been here, as we were always on high state of alert as still, they had been no peace agreement between the Argentinean and British Governments, and we would occasionally get an air-raid warning. (Another story in the diary) On the Fire Section Flt Sgt 'Chic' Bebb had arrived a couple of days earlier to take over the from Flt Sgt Ron (Granny) Lawton and they were involved in arranging and monitoring some of the incidents for the exercise. In the morning we had 2 RHAG engagements and then the first incident was due which I knew would be down were the Phantoms were based. The first simulated attack came from 2 Harriers of 1453 Flt (Hardet) the first one screamed across the airfield at very low level and climbed away. Then the crash alarm sounded and just for a moment I thought it might be exercise related but I had a feeling the second one had crashed and sure enough the message over the crash phone was "Crash, Crash, Crash, Whalebone Cove" As the crash combine pulled out and headed towards Whalebone Cove





## FIRE SECTION NOMINAL ROLE BOARD

ROYAL AIR FORCE STANLEY 11TH JULY 1982 - 30TH APRIL 1986

WARRANT OFFICER LONGMIRE



Cpl Clarkstone	SAC Burn	SAC Neil	SAC McIntosh	SAC Edwards	SAC Petrie	SAC Arnold
SAC Pinnock	FS Metters	SAC Foster	SAC Woodcock	SAC Evans	Sgt Broom	SAC Jones
SAC Doyle	Cpl Bell	SAC Norton	Cpl Goupillot	Cpl Porter	Cpl Carter	SAC Watson
SAC Stoyles	Cpl Venables	SAC Hughes	SAC Paken	Sgt Fleet	SAC Cox	Cpl Dudridge
Cpl Mullen	SAC Wooley	SAC Birkin	SAC Roberts	Cpl Cox	Cpl Dow	Cpl King
Cpl Stainer	SAC Gurr	FS Bones	Sgt Davis	Cpl Wren	SAC Morris	Cpl Jeff
Cpl Gray	SAC Abbott	SAC Kitchen	SAC Foster	SAC Keogh	SAC Woollaston	Sgt Johannsen
Cpl Millard	SAC Smallman	SAC Welsh	Cpl Broadley	SAC Tudge	Sgt Greaves	Sgt Vincent
Cpl Owens	SAC Michael	SAC Mattinson	SAC Taylor	SAC Fishburn	SAC Greenaway	SAC Scott
SAC Brooks	SAC Higgins	SAC Howell	SAC Lawler	SAC Hughes	SAC Cawkwell	SAC Metcalf
SAC Davis	Cpl Judd	Cpl Roadknight	Sgt Forster	Cpl Fillis	Sgt Sherry	SAC Ashworth
SAC Lawrence	Sgt Ellis	Cpl Bending	SAC Jackson	SAC Kelley	Cpl McCreath	SAC Spoors
SAC Owen	Sgt Pearson	Cpl Boundy	FS Laughton	SAC Fearnley	SAC Harris	FS Arnold
SAC Inglis	Cpl Holden	SAC Roberts	SAC Swabey	SAC Boon	SAC Crampton	SAC Gorgett
SAC Craig	SAC Wilcox	SAC Nyland	FS McCarthy	Cpl Aveston	SAC Unsworth	SAC Wren
SAC Large	SAC Mayes	SAC Sanguy	Cpl Yapp	SAC Evans	FS Turton	SAC Jackson A
SAC Pittock	Sgt Graham	SAC Scales	SAC Walton	Sgt Miller	SAC Rodwell	SAC Jackson N
SAC Effer	SAC Friar	Cpl Jack	SAC Hawes	Cpl Gore	Cpl Broome	SAC Humphries
SAC Alderslade	SAC Clark	SAC Krotochwi	Cpl Bowerbanks	SAC Byrne	SAC Thomas	Cpl Shiel
SAC Barker	Cpl Spooner	SAC Pugh	SAC Hollis	SAC Dowell	SAC Meade	Cpl Davies
SAC Woodfield	FS Daniels	Cpl Ball	SAC Young	SAC Bower	SAC Wilson	SAC Hayward
FS Brown	Cpl McKechnie	SAC Goldthorpe	Sgt Edwards	SAC McCoombs	Cpl Hanlon	SAC Woodley
Cpl Stiles	SAC Corkin	Sgt Wood	Cpl Tortice	Cpl Bowden	SAC Bevan	Cpl Richard
Cpl Peterson	SAC Taylor	SAC Higgins	Cpl Johnson	Cpl Trafford	SAC Dart	SAC Tidswell
SAC Fulton	SAC Lownds	SAC Michael	SAC Lenaghan	SAC Porter	SAC Davey	Sgt Calvert
SAC Larvin	SAC Smedley	SAC Naylor	SAC Lucock	SAC MacKay	Cpl Engall	Cpl Waters
SAC Davies	SAC Fairclough	Cpl Austin	SAC Wade	SAC Eustace	Sgt Fitch	Cpl Caffrey
Cpl Thorpe	Cpl Brown	Cpl Rainford	SAC Gill	SAC Burtonshaw	Cpl Clent	SAC Gray
SAC Kelsall	Cpl Bennett	SAC Evans	SAC Ablett	Cpl Morrell	Cpl Gallsworthy	Sgt Steel
Sgt Williams	SAC Monk	SAC Braird	FS Bebb	Sgt Harrison	SAC Redmond	Cpl Barrow
SAC Donellan	SAC Sutton	SAC Trafford	SAC Haughton	SAC Lockerbie	SAC Keenan	SAC Barnes
Cpl Burgess	SAC Keenan	SAC Maunder	SAC Bending	Cpl Evans	Cpl Jones	SAC Phillips
SAC Jones	SAC Evans	Sgt Carstairs	SAC Birkin	SAC Murray	Sgt Jowett	SAC Clarke
SAC Stenhouse	SAC Gray	Cpl Brown	Sgt Thompson	SAC Devine	Sgt Martyn	SAC Ingram
SAC Brown	SAC Merchant	SAC Hunt	SAC Beven	SAC Cook	SAC Bickerton	FS Woods
SAC Smith	Cpl Green	SAC Eaton	SAC Gibson	SAC Badmin	SAC Williams	SAC Clayton
SAC McLeay	Sgt Jones	Sgt Lawther	SAC McCowie	Cpl Cadogan	SAC Blackett	SAC Smith
SAC Jones	Sgt Wyatt	FS Williams	Sgt Wilson	Cpl Price	SAC Wardlaw	SAC Rippon
Cpl Edwards	Sgt Grimbleby	SAC Downes	SAC Millichamp	SAC Boland	SAC Baillie	SAC Goldstone
SAC Burns	Cpl Renard	SAC Jones	SAC Day	SAC Ablett	FS Costello	
SAC Johnson	Cpl Murray	Cpl John	SAC Byrne	SAC Cormack	SAC Young	

Closed 30 April 1986



I noticed smoke coming from the east of the airfield which was the location of the first exercise incident, so Chic and Ron had lit the smoke bombs for the first incident after the first aircraft had carried out its bombing run, but they would be in for a surprise when no one turned up! Whalebone Cove was due west of the airfield, and I knew that there was a small road splitting off to the right of the main road, so there was that possibility that I might have to split the Crash Combine, as it still hadn't been established what was the exact location of the crash, or if the pilot had ejected and his location, as obviously he was the priority. With the adrenaline kicking in and noise of the engine in the cab the radio traffic, which included me screaming down the radio for information, the thought processes started. The thing was there was no plume of smoke to be seen which generally would be expected from a crash site, also to the north of Whalebone Cove there were minefields, what if he had ejected and landed in there? An ejecting pilot with chute deployed is generally very visible, why had nobody in the Control Tower seen him? I feared the worse. Then the Control Tower came back with the information that the aircraft had actually crashed into Whalebone Cove so there was to be no firefighting to be done but the location of the pilot was still unknown. If I remember correctly, I did send Crash 1 down the small road leading to the right of the cove to search for any signs of the pilot. We (the 2 major foams) carried on down the other road then we noticed on the banks of the cove and across the road steaming wreckage from the Harrier which had broken up as it had hit the water at great speed. Yet

still we had no report on the pilot at this stage, so I stopped at the LOX (liquid oxygen) plant which was surrounded by steaming wreckage and spoke to a shaking 'Chiefy' from the LOX plant if he had any information. The reasons for his shaking were pretty obvious, if a piece of that aircraft had gone into the Lox plant, we would have had a busier day that we were already having and the Chiefy would be knocking at the 'Pearly Gates' (I saw him the next day and he still looked white!) At this stage Chic Bebb and Ron Lawton turned up and it was decided by them to carry out a line search for the pilot along the path of the wreckage. They took all of my crew and some other personnel leaving SAC Andy Devine and myself remaining in the Mk9 monitoring the radio for information. While still waiting for information we received a radio message that a 'Goose' was inbound for an 'East Alpha' RHAG engagement. To this day I have wondered why there was only one Phantom as normally they flew in pairs, whether it was to do with the exercise or more likely it was scrambled because of the Harrier crash. The problem was the rest of the fire crew was carrying out the line search for the Harrier pilot. Obviously, I had to retrieve some of my crew as any RAF Fire-fighter knows carrying out a RHAG recovery is a bit difficult with two people! I am certain to this day that they didn't have a hand-held radio with them and although I shouted as hard as I could, there was no response. So, Andy Devine and I returned to the airfield, as we returned, we found that the two 'rhaggies' (tech guys who was with all shifts to sort out any serviceability problems with the RHAG) were there. So, Andy and I took

up the normal TACR2 RHAG position in the Mk9 and the rhaggies took up position on the rewind drums, was I glad to see them! The arrest went smoothly thank goodness. I remember Andy and I sitting in the Mk9 talking how we would handle things if the Phantom 'pranged' if I remember correctly, I said to him "Your bodies I'll do the fire!!"

In the intervening time of the RHAG engagement it had been established the pilot of the harrier had ended up in Whalebone Cove. Flt Lt Ian Wilkes had ejected at a very low level (250ft) with insufficient time for the parachute to slow him down and he suffered serious injuries. He was saved from drowning by two airmen who were working nearby and had gone to his aid in a Gemini dinghy. He did recover but what happened in his RAF career I don't know. I still think of him now. The cause of the crash was a large seabird strike, probably a Southern Giant Petrel. As always at these times service humour comes in to the fore. It was said that when the lads who pulled the 'jockey' out were reassuring him they said to him "tell us a joke then" He allegedly replied "harrier pilots" The next night one of the firemen was leaving and we were in the 'Shed' (NAAFI) drinking and 'wearing' a few beers and everyone was singing to the tune of yellow submarine "we all live in a yellow harrier, a yellow harrier" So this is my memories of the incident it is now 26 years on and my diary was only in note form so I apologise if there are some errors.

*Steve Harrison  
Member No 625*



In January 1985 I set out for a 4 month detachment to the Falkland Islands. The war had finished in 1982 but the base where I was headed, RAF Stanley, was on MV status (Military Vigilance) in readiness for further military action from Argentina.

My first leg of the journey was RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. After processing and dropping off our luggage, we all boarded a VC10 and headed to the Ascension Isles, which is about 1000 miles off the African coast in the South Atlantic. We had one refuelling stop in Dakar, Senegal, Africa, where we were allowed to stretch our legs on the tarmac for a couple of hours during the refuel.

When we landed on Ascension Island, we were quickly put into groups of 12 and then each group was flown by Puma helicopter to the helipad on the SS Uganda. There was a mix of Army, Navy and Air Force on board the ship plus a detachment of the Queens Ghurkha engineers, who took the duty of guard patrol at night.

The SS Uganda was an awesome experience; formerly a passenger steam liner built in 1952, she was later used as an educational cruise ship for P&O. During the Falklands war she was commissioned as a Military hospital ship with the call sign 'Mother Hen'. The vessel was now re-commissioned as a troop carrier and was to be our home for the next 11 days, sailing south towards the Falklands following the line of Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina. While on the ship I volunteered to take fitness classes on the helipad and I gave First aid lessons to all three forces aboard (on one occasion I had to give a lecture on the effect and treatment of burns in the ships cinema to over 100 troops). As this was above and beyond my duties as a

Fireman, the ships Warrant Officer sent a letter of commendation to my section when I arrived.

Having disembarked at Port Stanley, we were taken by a small boat to the town where we were picked up and transported to our Coastel (floating accommodation, similar to what oil riggers use).

I reported for duty at the Fire Section the next day where I was introduced to my new crew mates and the way of life working at this unique remote operating base in the South Atlantic. One of our main duties was setting and re-setting the RHAG (Rotary Hydraulic Arrestor Gear). This was designed to slow down the Phantom aircraft by catching a hook that was dropped down from the aircraft when landing and catching a cable which then broke the speed of the aircraft through a series of gears. (The Phantoms deployed their rear parachutes as added breaking assistance too) RHAGs were essential bits of kit at RAF Stanley due to the very short runway, and the Phantoms' landing speed. Other aircraft there included Harrier jump jets, and C130 Hercules, which we called 'Fat Alberts'.

During my tour I made sure that on my days off that I didn't stay indoors and get 'cabin fever' as some did. So I weight trained in the three gyms available. There



Kelly's Garden Gym 1985

was the Army gym (mostly Welsh guards, Royal Engineers and Royal Green Jackets at that time), which was at their Coastel, about a ten minute walk from our Coastel. They also had two bathing pools, one cold and one warm which were great to use after a good workout. Another gym was our own one which was in a Porta-cabin but not as well equipped as the Army ones. The third gym I used (see photo), was when I did two weeks at Kelly's Garden & Port San Carlos with the Army (Welsh guards). It was a corrugated tin shack with one multi-gym, a few rusty weights and lit by a single light bulb. (You can see the cable for the light in the photo).

Kelly's garden and Port San Carlos made a nice break from Port Stanley. My duties there were mainly fire training for the Army lads, fire equipment servicing, and an early am mail pick up from the daily helicopter drop off. (Which made us Firemen popular!).



Coastels accommodation vessels in Stanley Harbour



All set for a bimbie in a 4 Tonner



During my tour I also took various ‘bimbles’ around the war zones, such as Mount Tumbledown, Mount Longdon and the Twin Sisters hills which overlooked Stanley.

I volunteered to do the driving too (see picture), which was a great experience

negotiating a truck through Falklands terrain. I also got to fly in a variety of Helicopters, including the Twin bladed Chinook, which was awesome.

After a tour of 4 months, I was shipped home via a 10 hour flight to Ascension Island on a ‘Fat Albert’, followed by the

last leg to Brize Norton on a Tri-Star. That was an amazing experience for a 26 year old, and with the Falkland Islands being over 8,000 miles away, it was, and still is, the furthest single journey I have ever travelled to date.

*Sean Boland*



A visit by the AOC accompanied by the Commandant General of the RAF Regiment; as I escorted the two Senior Officers down the line introducing them to the crew (Sean Boland) the lad third from the left had put on a plastic red nose. Neither the AOC or King Rock said a word. From George Edwards

## COLINS BLUEYS

Anyone who’s done an unaccompanied tour will tell you that mail is probably the most important thing with regards to morale, hence it being mentioned more than once in the personal accounts detailed in this magazine. This is also true for the loved one’s who are left behind and the standard correspondence for the Falklands was the Airmail “Bluey”. It was common practice to use carbon paper to trace cartoon figures onto the Blueys and some were quite imaginative.

Thea Ellicock, who was at Honington when her late husband Colin did a tour recalls:-

“Also to add to my story of the Falklands experience I was well looked after whilst Colin was away as I worked for some of the people on camp and knew quite a few, in fact I worked for the Group captain wife a Mrs. Hedges she was really nice she visited many times to see if I was coping ok with everything, we kept in touch ages after we left there, I believe she passed away years ago which was a shock.

I have just found Colin’s blues too in a folder so yes, well kept communication!”



## My Falklands Experiences – Steve Davey



RAF Mount Pleasant with “The Bronx” in the foreground

I was the last “Fire One” to enjoy the Contractors Camp at MPA before we occupied the new RAF accommodation. The runway & main paved parking areas were complete with other manoeuvring areas, dispersal for the aircraft from Stanley, roads and access routes still under construction.

The Contractors Camp, or “Bronx” as it was later to be known as, was a maze of identical wooden huts with interlinking corridors, completely enclosed against the South Atlantic weather. The dining room was reached within the same complex, and the food from Kelvin the Caterers was exceptional and abundant. Female civilian staff were everywhere for cleaning and dining: they were affectionately known as Kelvin’s Kittens. I had established a good rapport with the Kelvin Staff and before we moved to Service Catering I was able to liberate many frozen lobsters to my store for future use. When we eventually moved into a combined Sgts and Officers Mess, the RAF cooks were happy to do me the occasional Lobster Thermidor.

The Fire Section had seemingly limitless supplies of bread rolls and bacon from Kelvin’s, which were delivered by one of the JCB drivers we called Worzel Gummidge. The smell of bacon butties pervaded the air around the Fire Section/ Ops Complex, and often contractors and other people in the Ops area would drop in for a morning snack.

On the other side of the airfield, the brand new Crash Fire Section was a splendid building full of shiny fire trucks and the initiatives to make it a “home from home” by the lads in post were excellent; the “York Stone” fireplace in the crew room being an example. The walls were hung with ex Argentinean FN rifles.

The biggest drawback was the up-slope from the crash bays to the taxi-way and the restricted view from the control room windows. With the onset of winter, ice and snow covered the incline which made forward acceleration difficult with poor traction on the big

heavy Crash Trucks. Of course the airfield was usually BLACK when the ground was WHITE and so there was no need to leave the bays!

The domestic Truck was positioned on the admin/accommodation site and was housed in the Contractors Fire Section, a (One Welsh Man) canvas shelter. A brand new domestic section came into being toward the end of my tour and was taken over by my successor, Steady Eddie (Ward)

Looking from the Crash Bays control room windows up the slope, the surface of the ATC access road and runway beyond was at eye level - all you saw were the rudders of the larger aircraft. This was very pertinent in one instance. Mrs H Jones, wife of Col H Jones VC of the Paras, and other bereaved wives had been on a visit, and were leaving on the afternoon Tri-Star. As it passed the control room on its take off run, a large trail of flame was apparent from the tail engine. It looked like a Doodlebug or a plumbers blow lamp (for those who don’t remember Doodlebugs!). The duty local controller shouted “Abort!! Abort!!” to the Captain who engaged an automatic system on that aircraft which brought it to a safe stop. The reason for the flames was a strong cross wind component, and incomplete combustion. We deployed in that same wind and had to surround the front of the aircraft with our trucks to enable the gangway to be positioned without being blown down the runway.

Another snag was the total inadequacy of the Crash Alarm. The designers/specifiers must have worked in a Public Library Quiet Room. It was a single high pitched whistle audible only to dogs. I explained to the Electrical Contractors still on site that a crash alarm was meant to summon up the blood and make the hairs stand on end. They apparently had never seen a Submarine picture or heard a Klaxon horn, but I think they changed it in the end.

Early in the piece I travelled down to Stanley on the unfinished hard core road with its “Skull & Crossbones” signs and the warning words “Slow Minefield”. I had a romantic pre-conception of a quaint settlement, but on arrival the Islands’ capital proved to be a real culture shock. At first sight the brightly coloured “wriggly tin” roofed dwellings, and the heavy peat smoke atmosphere, looked like the result of a multiple fog-induced pile-up between lorries carrying paint and corrugated iron.

And so onto RAF Stanley, to meet the incumbent boss (FS Fred Woods) and the “Trumpton Fire Brigade”. The collection of containers and lean-to shelters which formed the Fire Section was rudimentary in the extreme, but it became evident that this section was all about function not form. I was immediately aware of the high level of cheerfulness, and enthusiasm for the main task of Phantom RHAG recovery.

I was to return with a TACR 2, Fred Woods and the Falklands Fire Chief, whose name I do not recall, to provide cover for the last Phantom to leave Stanley.

One last trip to “town” during my tour was to help Fred celebrate his wedding anniversary by having dinner at The Upland Goose Hotel. We had the signature dish of Upland Goose, which tasted of fish, obviously a reflection of the unfortunate the bird’s diet. We had arranged to spend the night in the RAF Coastel, an experience for me but home again for Fred.



Upland Goose Hotel Port Stanley



I had taken over from Trevor Chambers, now regrettably dead, who in turn had been preceded in post by Alan Quail and Ken Leverett. Trevor Chambers was a real Gentleman. As part of the incumbent WO's remit, RAF Ascension and South Georgia were to be visited during his tour. Following his trip to ASI, Trevor he was returning to MPA in a "Fat Albert" (Hercules) which suffered an engine failure somewhere over the South Atlantic. They diverted into Rio de Janeiro during carnival week and he enjoyed a stay in a hotel on the Government. He knew I was to follow him to MPA and sent me a postcard from sunny Rio to a snow-bound Kinloss.

I only know of one WO who visited South Georgia during his tour, one Peter Lee, also sadly no longer with us. I think Peter said he had been winched ashore in foul weather.

One day, while sitting in my MPA office, a Tri-Star Pilot came to see me for fishing tackle. I was somewhat gob-smacked until I was informed that I had inherited the title of "Fishing Officer", and that we kept the gear in the section together with maps of the best fishing areas. Kenny Leverett had set this up, being a keen angler himself he had sent a steady supply of sea trout etc. back to BZN his own station via the Tri-Star fish vans.

When everything was moving up from RAF Stanley it was intended to cull all the cats which had become personal pets during the occupation; ostensibly to prevent a proliferation of pussies at MPA. The firemen "Spirited" one tabby moggie away from Stanley to MPA ahead of the hunt. The lads christened it "Napalm" I don't know why but would hazard a guess that it had dropped a few nasty "Bombs" in its time. The boys made it a home in a cardboard box with his name painted on it.

One fine day, the cat found itself in its box in the crew room doing what cats do best, when a phone was placed on top of the box. Following the afternoon Tri-star landing, an FNG (Falklands New Guy) fireman found his way to the section and was alone in the crew room with the box/cat/phone.



Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram Memorial

The established hands had observed this situation through the Georgian-wired viewing panels in the crew room door, and one bright spark then called the crew room phone from another extension in the Section.

The FNG detects the ringing and looks around, but no one comes to answer so gingerly he picks up the receiver on top of the cats box, and sez rather timidly.

"Fire Section"

"Hello" sez the Wag, "Is the cat in?"

The FNG locates puss in the box and replies

"Yes, but he's asleep!"

"OK" sez the wag, "I will Call Back."

Everybody fall about!

I did the obligatory "Bimble" out across the scrubland past the "Great Britain Hotel". We past many Bennies, and loads of sheep on our way to Bluff Cove, Fitzroy, where we saw the Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram RFA memorials. My companions were Sgt Kevin Cook a 6 footer with a stride to match, and a fit young fireman who loved fell walking in the UK and who had come prepared with the proper boots and backpack. After some 15 miles round trip I was feeling my 50 years and happy to catch a Land Rover back to MPA.

My early work consisted almost entirely of "Take-over Boards" with WTW and LMA PSA officials plus the normal RAF Representatives. The Army maintained a Force Fire Officer in Stanley at the HQ, known as COMBRIT or some such acronym. He was a three piper and attended all the boards with me. I found him to be helpful, knowledgeable,

and unpretentious, but he was succeeded in post by the antithesis of that ilk. This guy had been a Sub Officer in the old AFDFS at RAF Syerston, and graduated to Officer Grade in the Army Fire Service. From day one he adopted a very superior attitude toward all things non-commissioned and RAF in particular. He told me one day that he intended to do all future Fire Prevention inspections at RAF MPA, because RAF FP Training was worthless. He, on the other hand, had attended Moreton-in-Marsh, and was the real

deal. I was incensed and relayed his intention to my Wingco Admin. Together we advised the RAF Fire Staff at High Wycombe of his aspirations. I think they saw this as establishment building for the pongos, and his trying to take over an RAF base was a non starter. I was immediately created Force Fire Officer South Atlantic; and the Army chappy returned to wooden huts and sand buckets. The rest as they say is hysterical, except that all of my erstwhile colleagues that followed me to MPA did not think so.

The PSA officials in MPA were given honorary RAF rank/status as were the Met Men. On returning from my visit to Ascension I met a PSA man in the departure lounge I knew as George from our work on take-over boards. He was going back south after a trip home.

"Hello George" sez I, "Where are you sitting?"

"Seat 4a" he replies.

"Is there any room near you?" I ask,

"Its empty, only a party right at the front of the aircraft" he says.

I ask the movers if I can be seated adjacent to George and they say sorry we do not allocate seat numbers. So I pick up a blank boarding card and a marker pen and write "Seat 4f". I forgot to mention that this was a British Airways 747 and on mounting the gangway I was ushered into First Class. George was on one side of the wide body and I on the other. George had got his seat at BZN because he was RAF Group Captain equivalent; I had no idea. My Sqn Ldr Ops was on the same flight back and was somewhere back in "Steerage". The Party at the front of the aircraft was Air

Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine and his ADC. I had met the BA crew on the beach the day before and we shared a barbecue and beer. The engineer asked if I would like to observe the take off from the flight deck and I accepted with alacrity. Wideawake airfield has a 9000 foot runway over a hill. Lining up the aircraft for take off just after dusk there were 3000 foot of lights and then a space between the volcanic hills at each side of the runway. This prompted the obvious remark between the pilots "Bloody short runway".

I continued my tour at MPA into mid winter (June/July) with snow every day and the biting chill factor. When the small outstations closed all the TACR 2s came back to Mount Pleasant, and I had one for my personal transport. As mentioned, the Officers shared the Sgts Mess until their mess was ready and at cease work they would park their Land Rovers out in front and it became known as the Land Rover Owners Club. My Range Rover was a real piece of one-upmanship! However, a bored fireman either at MPA or Kelly's Garden had cleverly altered the RANGE ROVER sign on the front bonnet to read HANG OVER, which could well have been more appropriate.

The only real excitement during my sojourn was a fire on Lively Island, spotted



Lively Island fire - response team

by ATC early one evening. We loaded the light pump, suction and delivery hose, the generator and floodlight from one of the Mk XIs onto the Rescue Sea King, and flew into action. Sgt Roy Bastable, SAC's Gordon Smith, Kiki Dee, Fran Neary, Neil Bateman and Liam Rippon were successful in extinguishing the fire, but we were called too late to save the Farm Building. Gordon Smith is still serving as a civilian and as I write is the Chairman of the RAF Fire Services Association.

Without any obvious reason I found the tour quite exhausting. Maybe it was the twelve hour days and seven day working, with none of the usual UK respites and diversions. I was certainly glad when my turn came to leave. However, fate had one last trick to play.

The RAF Tri-Star Fleet had recently been

purchased from Pan American Airways via BA and modification at Marshalls of Cambridge, who incidentally removed the in-flight movie capability (soon to be restored). Anyway, for whatever contractual reason, there was a BA Engineer resident at MPA during the initial service of the aircraft.

Now my shiny Tri-Star was on time, all prepared and ready to go, when the said engineer did a fuel sample and apparently our machine had too much anti freeze additive in the AVTUR. This is metered-in automatically with the fuel. The RAF crew were not too worried about this, but the Civilian Engineer would not approve. Consequently, all the fuel in the aircraft had to be pumped out to bowsers, transported to Mare Harbour, and fresh fuel brought back. It took something like seven or eight hours to complete this task, and all the while the aircrew were running out of duty time. We had left the mess after breakfast and said our good-byes, so our return at Lunch time was of course greeted with the customary service "Schadenfreude". We got away in the end, but only just.

Sadly, Steve passed away on 21st April this year. *Readers will be glad to know that more of his memories will be appearing in future editions of Flashpoint.*



AERIAL VIEW OF MOUNT PLEASANT AIR BASE COPIED FROM GOOGLE EARTH 2022



# Falklands March - July 1990 Mike Traynor

I went down south long after the invasion, so we had it pretty good, up at the Mount Pleasant. Firstly, I can't remember anyone who was pleased to be selected to go!

I certainly wasn't looking forward to it but just accepted it. 18 hours on an aircraft is a long time for anyone. It was quite pleasant at first arriving in Ascension, glorious sunshine, thinking this is OK. When we arrived in Ascension we were told that everyone in the Falklands was moaning about lack of mail from home. It was found out that all the mail from the previous two days had been off loaded to accommodate some essential equipment that was required urgently. To ensure we

loaded as much mail as possible, everyone on board had to be weighed, together with any hand baggage you had. I think I was 500 letters and a couple of small packages. The ritual when you arrived at Mount Pleasant was that you were met by the person you were relieving and just about everyone had a placard stating only 122 days to do! A couple of stories I heard from a SWO from Kinloss who had been down three times. First time just after hostilities. Seemingly they were living in tents and ISO's, large metal shipping containers. Of course the SWO had the biggest and best container and being a good organiser, he had loads of home comforts. The

container served as his office which was curtained off midway, behind which was his sleeping area. Well one day the CO came bouncing in full of hell, complaining that he had organised a shower and toilet for his container and it had disappeared. He wanted it found and the culprit who took it punished. The SWO took copious notes regarding the description of the items and promised he would look into it as soon as possible. As soon as the CO left he opened the curtain to his sleeping area and looked down at the new toilet and shower he had just had plumbed in and said to himself "I'm looking into it Sir". True story.

I had to investigate a fire on one of the R

and R sites (rest and recuperation). I flew out on one of 'Eric's Bristow's choppers, with my slab of beers and an overnight bag. The building belonged to one of the sheep farmers and having completed the investigation, sat down and promptly drank the 24 cans of lager. It's a tough life for these people miles from anywhere with about 5000+ sheep to look after.

Being the naive person I am I said it must be difficult if the sheep have a problem and you need a vet! "A vet" he said, "We don't bother with vets, and if a sheep is ill we just kill it and feed it to the dogs. We kill about three sheep a week anyway! To feed the dogs and ourselves". As I said, it's a tough life! The fire I investigated started in the roof next to the chimney and had smouldered for days. They had to check the area for cracks and make good and I recommended he had the chimney swept. "That's no problem; I will do it tomorrow". I said "do you have the equipment"? "Yes", he said, I will catch an upland goose, we tie a cord around its leg, put it in the fire place (no fire of course) and it tries to escape by flying the chimney. When it almost reaches the top, we pull it down again and the whole procedure is repeated until the chimney is clean. We then release the goose, a little black by this time, but OK.

The golf course was something else. A group of us would travel down to Stanley each weekend. The course was horrendous but it got you off the base for the day. The trip down, over an hour and always a nightmare. Death by pot holes. You just couldn't miss them there was so many. I had the privilege to play with Governor Rex Hunt (name dropper) and the Stanley bank manager. The thing is they had all the best gear, clothes, clubs, and trolleys. All top line stuff, but the course, as I said was full of bomb craters and over the fence was a mine field. Needless to say, no one looked for any balls out of bounds!

Another story; all the locals were known as 'Bennies' like out of Crossroads on the telly around that time. They all would wear a ski type hat, 'Bennies'. Well, a new officer commanding arrived and did not like everyone calling the locals 'Bennies' so he issued an order stating that it had to stop. Well soon after that they were known as 'Stills'. Eventually the CO found out



Stanley Golf Links

and enquired why "Stills". 'Well Sir', was the reply, "they are still Bennies".

One last story I recall. The locals would buy anything and every so often there would be an auction sale on camp to get rid of numerous items no longer of any use to the service i.e. damaged equipment, Land rovers, lorries, anything at all.

Well the story goes that this farmer bought a large metal container. They loaded it onto his lorry and off he went. Once home he opened it up and discovered a brand new Land Rover, which he refused to return stating he had bought the container and anything in it! He got to keep it.

Mike Traynor  
Member No 395

## A Painting from my Past

In June 2011 I bought an unframed water colour from 'Unique Auction House' in Lincoln, on the basis that there was something hauntingly familiar about it. When I got the painting home, I thought to myself "I am sure that this from the Falkland Islands" and I was certain that in my photographs was one of some wrecked boats that looked similar and sure enough there was a photo. When I studied them both it was without a doubt that they were the same boats, the water colours perspective was from the causeway in the photograph. The other strange thing was that the painting was dated 1984 the very year that I did my detachment to RAF Stanley. As for the artist, he is David C Bell, a well know marine and aviation artist whose work I am familiar with. I already have two prints of Humber Ferries

and two artists proof's of some Hull steam trawlers by the same artist. When I did a little more research I discovered that he had been commissioned by the Ministry to produce several commemorative paintings; I can imagine them hanging in the buildings of the MOD. The area in which the boats lay is called 'The Canache' which is east of Stanley Harbour to the south of 'Whalebone Cove' and also the area where the 'Coastel's were anchored. The painting has been framed and now hangs in my home alongside it the photograph I took, and I still find it remarkable that I discovered it and that it was painted in 1984, the very year in which I took the photograph.

Steve Harrison



## 36 Years on – Charlotte Lord

When I found out I would be going to the Falklands for the second time, I instantly felt a sigh of relief. Being a non-driver, and having 2 family weddings on either side of the world at the end of 2018, it was clear to me that my chances of getting a warm and sunny tour were going to be slim. But, the drafter was true to her word and sent me here at the beginning of June, ensuring I would be able to get back in time for both weddings. Most people seem to hear bad things about life in the Falklands before they even takeoff, but the truth is, life here is pretty good; and I should know, I'm halfway through my second tour in three years. I joined the RAF in 2013 and have been based at Brize Norton since I completed my training at Manston. I have had many opportunities to represent the RAF such as sporting events, Poppy selling, Parading through London, and as a Steward at Wimbledon. My God Father, Giles Hodges, had been an RAF Firefighter and he encouraged me

to make the most of my years in the service. By seeing the positives in everything, getting out and about, and being involved in things you don't normally do back home, not only does it make the time you spend out here go a lot quicker, it also makes it much more enjoyable. I loved my first tour in the Falkland's and as a positive person; I knew I was going to make the most of my second tour as well. So, when I was given nine months' notice of my deployment. I began waiting for my next adventure. I felt slightly more prepared this time as I had completed a winter tour of the Falkland's previously, and as a result, not only did I know what to expect, I also had a good idea of what the facilities were like, and how much is on offer. I didn't finish work until 4 days prior to my departure flight. This was my choice as I wanted to save up as much leave as possible for the weddings when I get back in October. Having packed my bags I left BZN for my final weekend

in the UK, spent with friends and family. The weekend flew by and before I knew it, I was heading back to BZN to collect my bags. After checking in I went back to my room to relax for a few hours. I felt like I'd only just blinked and I was being driven back to the terminal, preparing myself to say goodbye to my fiancé and the rest of the country for the next 4 months. It never gets easier but I know it's something I have to do. It comes with the job so I just try and think of the positives. It's an opportunity to do something different, see something out of this world, and meet new faces, some of whom may become the best friends I will ever know. Inside the terminal I bumped into one of my friends that I had met and shared a room with in the Falkland's previously. Emma Pook had worked on the domestic crew and I worked at the Crash Bays so we only saw each other every other night, but it was great to have some female company. I couldn't believe my luck when



I saw her again and we managed to have a chat and catch up with one another before we boarded the Voyager aircraft. The first leg of the flight only took about 6 or 7 hours and it absolutely flew by. The flight was a little different this time as we stopped off at Cape Verde due to Ascension Islands runway being under repair. At Cape Verde it was so lovely and warm that part of me felt sad I'd soon be leaving there to enjoy the cold windy greeting that the Falklands had to offer me. As the two of us disembarked the aircraft and made our way into the departure lounge, we recognised another firefighter, this time it was WO Sean Kerr who was to be our Force Fire officer. After a short break we made our way back onto the aircraft for the second leg of our journey, which would take roughly 10 hours. I can honestly say it was one of the worst flights I have ever been on as we had a lot of turbulence, which made me feel very sick so I was happy to eventually land in what seemed like an alternative version of Dartmoor. With its boggy marshland like terrain and trees bent horizontal by the wind, it really is somewhere you need to physically see to appreciate. We made our way through the terminal and collected our baggage and were met by the domestic fire crew. They kindly took our bags, popped them in the back of the Land Rover and drove us to the fire-fighters block. As soon as I saw the terminal, the block and the surroundings, it felt like only yesterday that I had left. I'm not sure whether that's a good thing or a bad thing but I embraced the familiarity of the place in the hope it would help me settle in quickly. It turns out we were sharing a room, so Emma and I quickly unpacked, and she then had to go on crew to allow someone else to fly home. Once I had freshened up, I got ready for bed and took a moment to open a parcel which my mum had given me a few hours before I left home. Between her and my sister they had compiled a selection of goodies, things which I may find useful during my time out here, and wrapped it up with a card from each of them. It was so lovely and it made me smile so much. After the journey and the settling in, it is perfect to have something to open which reminds you of home and the people you love. The following day I had the Station Arrivals Brief... In other words, death by PowerPoint! Fortunately it had clearly undergone some improvements as it didn't

seem half as painful as it did last time and I was done by 3pm. Once I had been given the thumbs up from work that I wasn't needed until tomorrow, I wasted no time in heading down to the gym. My first day at work was slightly nerve racking but exciting. Working on the domestic crew this time presented me with an exciting new challenge which I was ready to take on. I didn't know what to expect, but the lads were so friendly and as I had met the new WO on my flight out here, I was nervous and excited to start work. It's the people you serve alongside whilst you're away which make your tour. You could be in the worst place in the world but if you've got a crew that you can have a good laugh with, there's no doubt you'll have so many happy memories throughout your tour that you will remember for years to come. My tour has already flown by rapidly; I am coming up to 10 weeks now so I'm over half way there. I feel like as soon as I blink, that's another week done. I am very lucky though as I find it very easy to meet new people, I enjoying trying out new activities and I have a natural gift, though some call it a curse, when it comes to talking. A few months ago my Mum told my Brize crew commander that every conversation with me should start "Charlotte is this going to take long?"! Getting back to the tour and what I've done so far... Within a couple of days I had already settled in and began chatting to anybody and everybody! By the end of my first week, I had managed to go to the cinema, find the gym and check out timetables for all of the clubs which they had on offer, I'd covered on crew at the crash bays, I'd been down to the swimming pool, played football with the lads, watched the opening ceremony of the World Cup in Russia, watched quite a few of the football games on for that week (not bad considering I don't actually watch or follow football back home), I had been bowling, baked cakes at the Oasis café, worked the café serving tea, coffee, cake and making toasties for personnel on the camp during the weekly quiz and I'd even spontaneously been Go-Karting. As you could imagine, my first week had been a busy but exciting week and I had absolutely no doubt that there would be a lot more to come. Throughout the next 9 weeks I continued to talk a lot and go to various classes/clubs at the gym such as: Ladies that Lift, Bodymax, Kayak Club, Circuits, Basketball, Boxing, Swimming Club,

Rock Climbing, Pole Fitness and Flexibility Classes. I've also taken part in a 10k Charity Run around MPC, The South West Atlantic Midwinter Swim 2018 at Surf Bay and a Dodge ball Tournament, two of which raised money for a Service charity and the other a local charity in the Falklands. I'd made new friends from Sections I didn't even know existed, as well as reconnecting with old friends whom I had met at other times; including my Brize crew commander, Sgt Shaun Sparkes. My main aim whilst I am out here is to get involved in as many different activities, charity events and days out as possible, as well as improving my knowledge and skills to make me a better fire-fighter! I want to get physically fitter, become mentally stronger and help as many people as I can on the way. Whether that's by assisting someone in carrying out a job or simply just a smile a day, it all goes a long way out here. Someone once said to me, "it's the little things in life which make the big difference..." Only once I did my first tour in the RAF did I realise what they actually meant! Most people seem to give the Falklands a bad reputation and say that it is awful, but I don't think that's true. I think the Falklands is as good or as bad as you make it and whether we choose to be out here or not, we are all working together to achieve the same goal. Everybody is in a similar position having left loved ones back home whether that's friends or family. Some are fortunate to only do 4 months like me; others are out here for longer. This is when it is important to speak to people, do things together and look after each other. You never know when you may need a helping hand or a warming smile. For myself, I know that I will continue to enjoy the remainder of my tour as I am willing to go out there and give anything a go. Life is far too short in my eyes and I don't feel like we appreciate the small things as much as we should do when we are back home. Sometimes it takes a place like the Falklands to remind you of what you do have. Suddenly things don't seem as bad after all...

*SAC Charlotte Lord  
RAF Fire & Rescue Service  
Falkland Islands*





# Häggblunds BV 206

Anyone who has completed a tour at MPA will be familiar with the RAF's Fire Appliance version of the BV 206. For me it meant having to leave my family in Germany to go to Leconfield for five weeks – two learning how to be a BV 206 driving instructor and three teaching Grenadier Guards how to drive them. However, it is a pretty impressive little vehicle.

Developed in the late 70s for the Swedish army to use on snow and soft ground it soon became popular with armed forces world wide and has been modified to meet various different roles. The variant used by RAF Fire Services at MPA has an AFFF system similar to those found on TACR vehicles and a full compliment of rescue equipment. As well as being the ultimate “go-anywhere” vehicle, it is also capable of being under-slung below a Chinook helicopter and so can be deployed anywhere in the archipelago.

The BVs were ideal for getting across the boggy landscape of the Falkland Islands despite the transmission components taking a bit of a hammering from the many rocks that could not be avoided and most drivers enjoyed learning the advantages and limitations of them.



Dave Hails recalls:

I was in Champina Pond with Al Godfrey and he decided to open the door to see if we were swimming, the water immediately shot in under pressure and tipped it to his side, I put my foot down and put full lock on towards his side which righted it and gave him a chance to get the door closed. He was dripping from head to foot.

Oh how I laughed 😊

# A Modern Firefighters Perspective

## Looking Back on the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict

Walking to the main entrance into the fire section for the first time you are greeted with white bricked fire sign down to your right and the vintage firefighting extinguisher on your left and you can already sense the history of the place. This feeling intensifies when you walk into the corridor and you are surrounded with murals of past crews, red and green, painted around the hallways, common room, and kitchen. Followed up the individual brick work in the bedroom, from years of past firefighters who have come and gone to some that are still here, returning frequently to take up the post 40 years on from when Mount Pleasant Camp came to be. The nomination board of every single crew member that has attended this place is displayed with honour in the hallway before the bays, going back as far as 2006 till present, but the rest going back to 1984 have taken their rightful place in the Fire Service Museum.

Coming in for your first tour you can sense the atmosphere of past crews and those who have gone before you, building a feeling of pride that you will be immortalized alongside those veterans and old guard who paved the way for us. With the infrastructure still intact, we have

had to adapt with the new fleet we work with. The MPRV and Strikers, squeezing into bays, showing the level of evolution with the firefighting equipment, how we now tackle incidents, fighting from the protection of the cab initially before getting hands on. Working alongside the Typhoons which took over from the Tornado F3 and for the older lot the Phantom as our QRA. A400 coming in and replacing the C130, with the V10 and TriStar no longer being used and the A300 as the new Airtanker and the search and rescue being operated by a civilian company.

Arriving down at the domestic section and seeing all the photographs of previous crews brings an appreciation of those who have endured the weather, the distance from loved ones, knowing that we will soon become part of that proud alumni. One thing that will never change is the stories told by the older, wiser, and weathered NCOs of previous tours, bars that are no longer around and shenanigans that would have HR hunting them down

*SAC Edward Butcher*

## AS 1 Sullivan

In the Falklands I work in a crew of twelve personnel from all different RAF UK stations. This is my first tour out here which is a completely different surrounding to what I'm used to back at RAF Waddington. I'm currently posted here for four months in the winter months. The shift pattern is twenty-four on twenty-four off meaning time fly's by quickly. The types of aircraft we cover for out here are the A400, Voyager, Typhoons, Search & Rescue and the Brintel (heli ops). We will also soon have the land chillies. We now run with the new fire vehicles out here which are two Strikers, one MPRV and an SUV for the crew commander. The new vehicles are a lot more reliable than the old ones and are great pieces of kit allowing us to firefight from the cab using the HRET/bumper monitors. We aren't as busy in the crash bays compared to the domestic section, but we still have to complete training and daily tasks such as servicing equipment or vehicle/equipment checks. And of course, a few games of pool and darts!

When we are off shift there is a few things to do on or off camp. Most of us like to train in the Longdon gym which has a great equipment in it. Every now and again the PTI's like to set up challenges. I recently completed the 1,000lb (453.5kg) challenge not long ago which consisted of being able to lift that weight across 3 lifts deadlift,





squat and bench press. Then you have a bar at the bottom of the long corridor where some of us go for a coffee in the afternoon to break the day up a bit. You can go on trips down to Stanley or helicopter trips to see penguins but they haven't always been running due to the weather. Hopefully soon some of us will be going on a A400 trip as a lot of us first timers haven't been on this aircraft before. In the evenings you have a choice of a few bars to go down to or sometimes have a few events going on especially on a weekend. Soon I'll be DJing in a bar called Shady's for a 90s club night!

AS 1 King

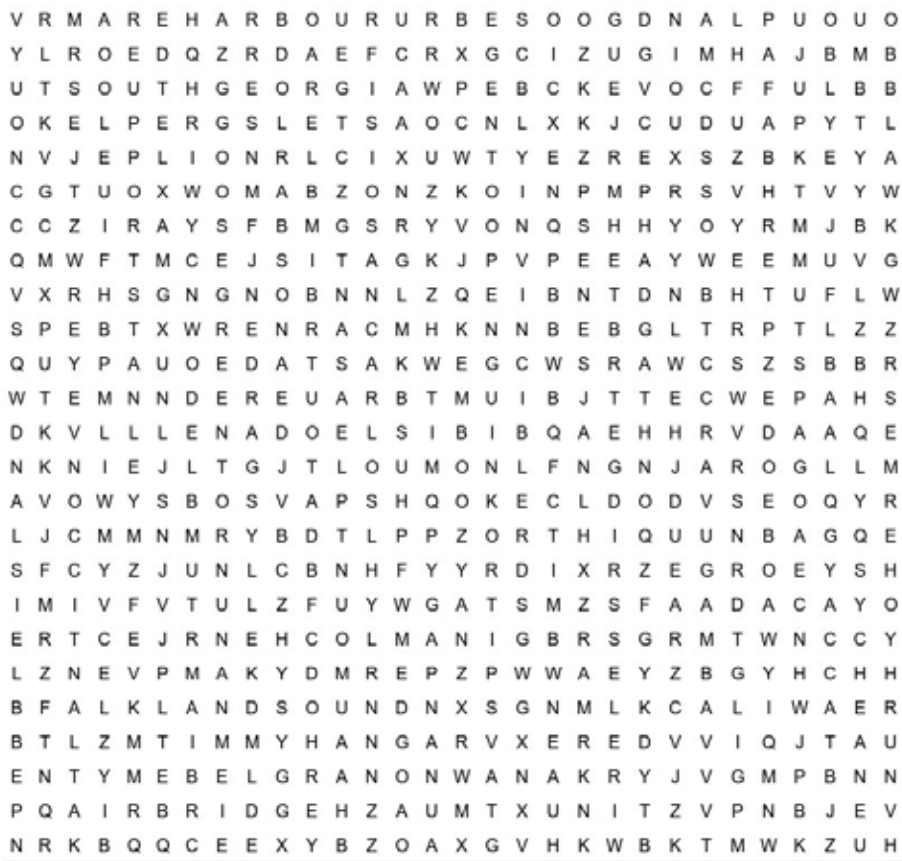
I'm here on my fourth tour of MPA. A few things have changed since the first time I was here. The main changes have been welfare which is a good thing. Internet access is much better now than it was a decade ago which means keeping in touch with family and friends is much easier and you feel less isolated. Wi-Fi hotspots are easily accessible and are available at the crash bays which is good. There is also a Wi-Fi room with gaming consoles which is a good facility.

The actual camp hasn't really changed at all and it's showing its age, but the facilities are good such as the main gym, swimming pool (when its open) and the bottom NAAFI has been refurbished to make it much more modern. Our accommodation is K block just by 12 Facility and we are in shared 2/3-man rooms. On days off most of us have our gym routines then go for coffee on an afternoon and drinks on an evening at the bars usually on weekends. There is an alcohol limit now 4 cans during the week and 6 at weekends. We try to get trips down to Stanley when the weather allows and helicopter trips to places like volunteer point and dolphin cove.

I would say work is better with the new vehicles compared to the old ones which were unreliable and outdated. The tempo is a lot more relaxed compared to my first tour as there is much less aircraft flying particularly with the Typhoons. The shift in work usually consists of vehicle and equipment DI's, any testing that needs doing, daily jobs and training. Everything is recorded on online now so no occurrence book unless the computers are down!

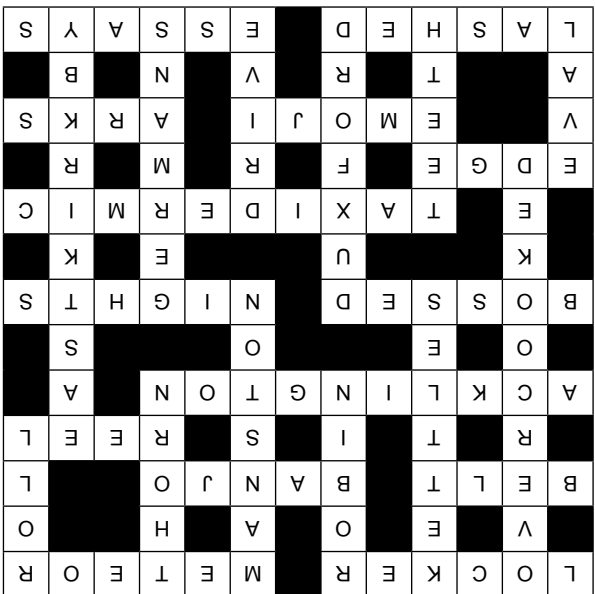
Thanks to WO Ciaran Dineen, Sgt Chris Martin, as well as AS's King and Sullivan for these enlightening articles

Falkland Islands Word Search



AIR BRIDGE	ATLANTIC CONVEYER	BELGRANO
BERTHAS BEACH	BIMBLE	BLUEYS
BLUFF COVE	COASTELS	DEANOS BAR
ELEPHANT SEAL	ENDURANCE	FALKLAND SOUND
FAT ALBERT	GENTOO PENGUIN	GOOSE GREEN
HERMES	INVINCIBLE	KELLYS GARDEN
KELPER	MARE HARBOUR	MOUNT PLEASANT
PEBBLE ISLAND	PORT STANLEY	RHAG ENGAGEMENT
SAN CARLOS	SOUTH GEORGIA	TIMMY HANGAR
TUMBLEDOWN	UPLAND GOOSE	WIRELESS RIDGE

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

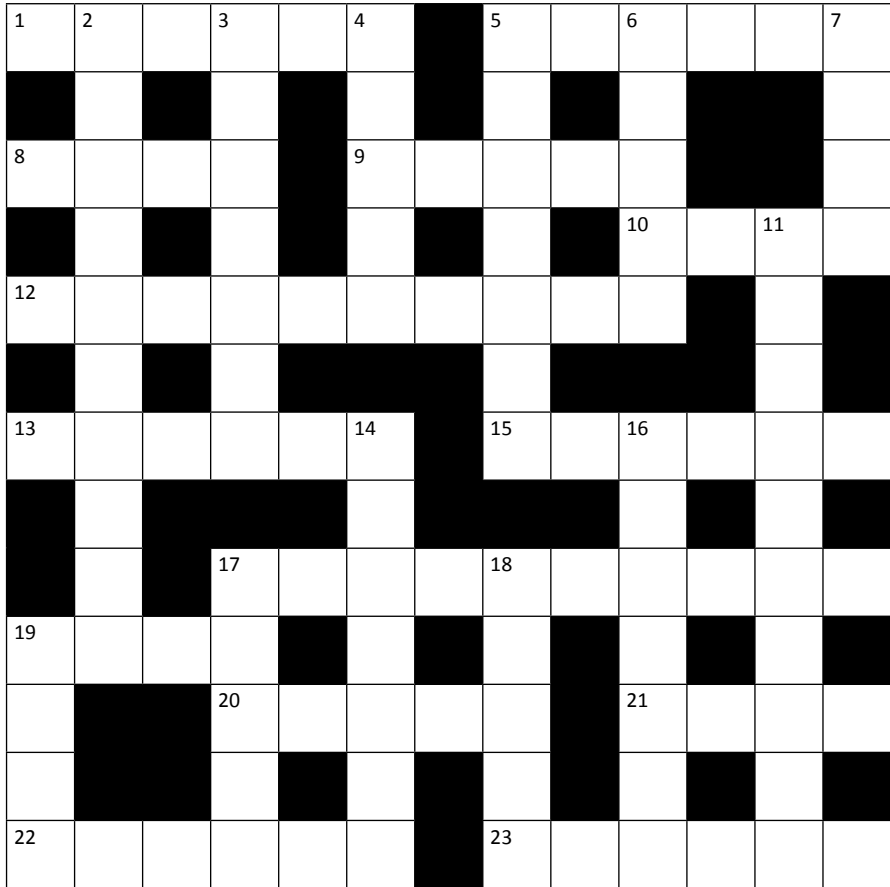


I think everyone who has been to MPA will remember looking at the bricks and wall art in the rest rooms, both at the airfield crash bays and the domestic fire station. The graphic below is just a

small compilation from a great deal of wall art sent to me by our Chairman, Steve Shirley







- Across**

  - 1. Tress her majesty might find in this storage compartment. (6)
  - 5. Did this fighter jet arrive in a shower? (6)
  - 8. Where we might find an axe hanging? (4)
  - 9. No jab played badly on this instrument. (5)
  - 10. Hose dance? (4)
  - 12. Northumberland base not lacking disruption. (10)
  - 13. Fire Officer and journalist took control. (6)
  - 15. It's said that King Arthur may want you for these shifts. (6)
  - 17. Strangely direct maxi towards stuffing. (10)
  - 19. Headless border; or border? (4)
  - 20. Translate Joe I'm told is an emoticon. (5)
  - 21. Vessels found in dark seas. (4)
  - 22. US City lost and was tied to a ladder. (6)
  - 23. Compositions say yes in four directions. (6)
- Down**

  - 2. Burnt and certainly not rare! (10)
  - 3. Containers for powder or water that LACs will be familiar with? (7)
  - 4. Really odd bird in Northolt initially is a redbreast. (5)
  - 5. Fellow with child around junction at school. (7)
  - 6. Two-tone maybe after junction is sharp. (5)
  - 7. Jam, bread or sausage? (4)
  - 11. Where you may see a Lancaster (4, 6)
  - 14. Top Scottish pupil meets Henry perhaps at Imperial War Museum site. (7)
  - 16. LECs from Bruggen or Wildenrath? (7)
  - 17. Sharp ends of a double-edge saw? (5)
  - 18. MO I have to propel to this answer. (5)
  - 19. Tactical assessment of Saintly Cornish Air Base (4)

Solution to the "Spot the Difference" puzzle in last Flashpoint



Follows of our Facebook Group will by now be well aware of Reg's model-making endeavours and the fantastic figures he produces. For those less internet savvy, here is what our resident artist has to say about how the venture is progressing:

It's been a long time since I started the process of sculpting these figures, over 18 months in fact. I am delighted with the end product. Over 80 have been purchased thus far and have gone as far as New Zealand, Oz and Canada.

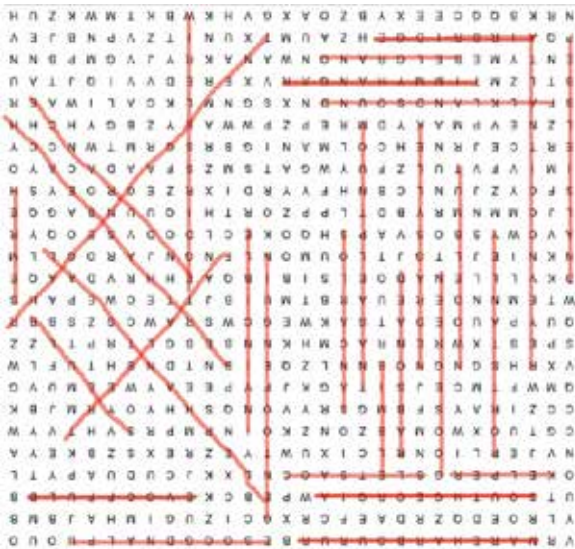
They are available as a 200mm Bust or 120mm full figure. Personally, I prefer the Bust as the detail is easier to see. The Bust is £85 inc P&P and the figure is £80 inc P&P. Ordering is through me via social media and for those that don't do social media you can contact me via the contact details on page 2 of this magazine. Available in Blue, Green or that horrible Sage Green colour. Names and Rank can be put on back of helmets in dayglo.

Folk have asked me to do a figure in the MK1 Helmet holding a Crash Branch. This is way off yet as it would be a total re-sculpt and the cost of getting my master 3D rendered is over £1000 so would take a while to get my initial outlay back.

I am working on a modern-day RAF Fireman either with a TIC or Hose Reel. As for vehicles my range of 1/72 vehicles will be back in production in the new year. I have a range of 1/48 scale vehicles in the pipeline, being the MFV, RIV, Mk7 and Mk9 and Bedford Major Angus. The MFV is ready, all I need to do is make the moulds and get casting, this should be done in time for Christmas.

Well, I hope everyone is well and I wish you and yours all the very best.

Cheers  
Reg and Florian





# Images for Mount Pleasant Airfield Fire Section 2022

