

## THE STORY OF MY MILITARY LIFE

I was born on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1944 in the front room of my Grandparents home in Moseley Birmingham. I had always wanted to enlist and eagerly awaited my call up but on 31 Dec 1960 the Call Up ended. My Grandad used to tell me stories of his time in WW1 in France for 2 years with the Royal Warwicks and then 2 years in Malta but only when my Grandmother was not in the room. My sister and I were orphaned early on in life so our Grandparents brought us up. My Mother died on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug 1949 aged 30 and my Father on 9 Jul 1953 aged 37. She did not approve of me joining up at all. After a conversation with her she forbade me to enlist until I was of age then it was my own decision. When I became of age I told her I still wanted to join and she said 'All right then, on your head be it'. I enlisted in Jan 1963 at the Recruiting Office in Birmingham. All I wanted to do was join the Para's but the Recruiting Officer said they were full up. I said I will not bother then but he said if you join the Artillery you can parachute with 7<sup>th</sup> Para. I agreed and was sent to Oswestry for 8 weeks basic training on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1963 with 24 Irish Bty. It had been one of the coldest winters ever with lots of snow and ice.



*Me back row 6<sup>th</sup> from left, Pete Maxwell 7<sup>th</sup> from left. Ernie Gent front row 6<sup>th</sup> from right.*

During training we had to sit the Army Entry Test. For some reason I gained maximum marks so the Troop Officer, Lt Breech RA said I would be posted to Germany as a TARA. What's that I asked and he explained to me because I was 'Bright' and I could use a slide rule, I was going to College prior to enlisting on a three year ONC course to become a Structural Engineer and had to use slide rules, I would fit the job. But all I wanted to do was Parachute. I told him I wanted to buy myself out for the £20 which was on offer. He said he would think about it. Ironically the very next day a Bdr from 7<sup>th</sup> Para was allowed into our block on a sort of awareness visit. I looked at his red beret, Pegasus flash and wings and decided to approach him with my plight. He assured me that I could join 7<sup>th</sup> if I insisted and become a TARA with them. I asked for another interview with the Tp Commander. Two days later our squad and the other one from 59 Asten Bty were paraded in a hanger. The Training officer introduced some soldiers from 95 Amphibious Observation Regt RA to us. The first on stage was a strange bearded bloke wearing dark blue Battle Dress, a black beret with a strange cloth badge, Para Wings and Combined Ops Badges on his sleeves. He said 'I am RO2 Brian Coldron from the Royal Navy and I am a radio operator in an NGFO party. We go ashore and direct the guns from RN ships and strike aircraft from the RAF. When the troops land we either join up with them or we are tasked for something else. We complete the RM Cdo course, Pre Para and Para selection and jumps course at Abingdon to get our wings. The NGS course is 3 months long. If you pass all this you can be posted to either Bovington, Bahrain, Malta, Singapore or Hong Kong.' I was convinced. He was followed a Bdr and a Sgt who also detailed what they did then it was the turn of a smooth casual officer, Capt Marsh, who sealed it for me. He said in essence you will be in a Special Forces Unit as Infantry men but with the ability to give support from covert OP's. We use Parachutes, Canoes, Boats,

Submarines, bikes, buses or taxis to insert behind or close to enemy lines. I think the taxi and bus methods were meant to be a joke but I got the idea of his approach.

Around 50 of us said we would like to give it a go. There followed a Morse Aptitude Test. I could already read Morse at 8 wpm from the Boy Scouts so that was a doddle. The Officer gave us a quick interview one at a time. All I remember him asking was 'If you were inserted by parachute and had to TAB 20 miles to your target carrying 90 lbs could you do it?' I remember vividly my reply which was 'Well Sir having never parachuted or Tabbed that far with that weight I am not sure but I would give it a bloody good try'. He looked at me and said 'Mmmmm, good answer' Then we were all put into 2 ranks and the Sgt said 'OK, just follow me and do not attempt to race ahead and do not drop back. We are going for a run OK' He never said how far it would be. There was a traffic guard about 50 yds in front and one at similar distance to the rear. Off we went and of course some bright kids ran up to the front traffic guard and some dropped back. I just kept in the main body of the squad. It went on for quite a time. There were around 20 of us at the finish in a squad with the rest spread out all over the place. They took us 20 to an assault course which we had never seen or used during our basic training. The Sgt, who wasn't even breathing heavily said right lads the Bdr, who had also accompanied us on the run and was still not puffed, will show you how to tackle each obstacle and you will try it after him. After the demo and our attempts he lined us up and shouted very loudly 'Go'. We sort of shuffled off and pranced around the obstacles like little girls. He lined us all up again and remonstrated with us in a manner I had never heard before. He finished with 'If someone is in your way you will drag him off whatever he is blocking you from and get round as fast as you can. Do you understand?' Off we went again and as each one finished he lined us up. As the last man came in he shouted 'Go'. We did this again and as the last man arrived the Bdr took him to one side. It was an elimination test I realised. I began to pace myself. We must have gone round 10 times at least and then there were 5 left. The Sgt said to us 5 'OK you can try to get into 95 AO Regt if you want. Just give your names to the Bdr and he will pass them onto the Tp Commander'. He then said 'Good luck, see you in Poole'. At that time I had no idea where Poole was.

I found Basic Training quite interesting and not that difficult. I understood the instructors were doing their job, some more enthusiastically than others it has to be said but on the whole I guess it was quite frustrating for them. The recruits were all post war of course and many were from the emerging 60's culture of Teddy Boys and rebellion. A lot from up-North were joining because there was little work for them where they lived. The Beatles were popular and their second hit record, 'Please please me' was everywhere to be heard. I just kept my head down and got on with it.

We were told after a few weeks that we had to do Guard Duty. Sounded a bit scary as the Bdrs gave us the run down about what was expected of us. I was in the first group to be detailed off and along with around 10 others started to get ready. All the others in the squad watched us eagerly offering no help at all. We had to wear the 'New' Green Combat clothing which was all puffy and still had creases from when it was issued. We were not allowed to iron it or wash it for some reason. We all looked like a bag of the proverbial. We paraded outside our Hut waiting to be marched to the Guard Room but first had to be inspected by our Bdrs and Sgt. They tore us up and as I was inspected the Sgt said 'Stick Man'. I had no idea what that was and the Bdr told me to move to the flank. I assumed I was in big trouble. Then the Sgt told me to stand fast and marched the others away. One of the Bdr's came to me and said 'Richards, you were Stick Man so fall out'. I asked what a Stick Man was and he said 'The smartest one on parade so you can fall out'. I was selected again for 2 more Guard Duties after that but both times I got Stick Man without even trying.



On passing out from Oswestry I was posted to JSWAC Poole to join 95 AO Regt. There I met up with Scouse Brougham, Ernie Gent and Jock Maxwell who were the others on my basic trg. The fifth guy must have changed his mind. We got settled into the block to which we were assigned. It had 10 bunks with a room at the end which had 2 bunks. We found out these were for JNCO's. In the middle of the main room was a Pot Bellied Stove. As we chatted we could hear a noise outside of some sort of physical activity. When it ended 6 Matelots came into the room. Acko Atkinson, Chip Singleton, Jumper Collins, Mick Holton, Johna Jones and Mick Seville. They chatted and told us they were on the beat up course with us. Then one asked if we were 'going ashore for a couple of whets' that evening. What were they talking about? We

had to quickly learn to speak Matleot which was reinforced when the APTI Bdr Mick Kyte walked in. He got us four together and said 'OK you lot, tomorrow muster at 0800hrs at the Regt Lines. Make sure you have a bath and dhobi and square your bunks off. When you shave take your berets and shirts off and clean the sink afterwards. The heads are just over there'. Again, to us a foreign language. Next morning we 'Mustered' on time and BSM Potter welcomed us and did a quick inspection. He laid down the rules which were when you are told to be somewhere just be on time and finished with 'Keep your hair tidy but don't get it cut too short. This is the real Army'. We spent the next two weeks doing physical training every day except Sunday. In those days we worked Sat until 1300hrs as well. The plan was if we were considered fit enough we would go to Lymptone to do the RM Cdo Course followed by P Coy and the Para course. In mid Sept the next NGS Course was due to begin for three months. We would be joined by any others who came along. Previously to get your wings you had to pass pre Para at 7<sup>th</sup> in Aldershot. P Coy was compulsory to wear wings. In 1962 29 Regt became Cdo Trained so the Cdo course was used as the Pre Para for us. Nuff said.

At the end of the two weeks Bdr Kyte had thinned down the group and LRO Atkinson, RO2 Holton, Gnrs Brougham, Gent, Maxwell and I were considered fit to go to Lymptone/Bickley. We got the train and arrived at the Lymptone main gate. Cpl French, all 6ft 5" of him met us and growled 'Bloody Matelots and Pongoes, what next for my beloved Corps?' His claim to fame, stated by others I may add, was to be able to hold a Bren Gun in each hand and fire at tgts hitting bull's eyes. We were taken to a block which was a tip and told to get it ship shape and ready for rounds. Next day a chubby Sgt got us together and explained he was going to see if we were fit enough to join the next RM Cdo Course as there were no more All Arms Cdo Courses for a while. We were joined by two gunners from 29 Cdo Regt as well. The Royal Marines had been training for many months and they were due to go on their 6 week Cdo Course next week and we might be allowed to join them, if we were fit enough! The Sgt took us to the stores and issued us with 58 Pattern webbing and other stuff. He noticed we had studded boots and suggested we went to 'slops' and purchased some rubber soled Commando boots. All except Ernie did so. He insisted the Army should pay for his boots and not him. On the first run it was obvious this Sgt was not fit enough for the task. He kept stopping and breathlessly told us how to keep in step on speed marches and how to pace ourselves. Next day we ran him into the ground and he conceded with a gasp and said 'I think you are all fit enough to join the next RM Cdo course.' The 2 guys from 29 were always at the rear and had not had much fitness prep.

Next week we joined the RM Course. The Course Sgt was named Davies and hated Matelots and Pongos so we had to make sure we excelled. Acko kept on upsetting the Sgt because he had been in the Navy for over 6 years, a Killick and was not scared of a bellowing Sgt. Once the Sgt was explaining the difference between a RM Troop of 9 and an Army Section of 8. He made the mistake of asking if anyone knew what the difference in numbers was. Acko came to attention and raised his hand with 'I do Sgt' The Sgt replied with 'OK lets hear the Matelot tell us' Acko smiled and said with all confidence 'Because 8 Army guys can do what it takes 9 Marines to do.' Silence descended and the Sgt went ballistic. The troop Cpls were quite good guys and saw something in us. We were split up into the various Troops and Acko and I were together. We were assigned a RM for the course as we had to work in threes throughout. Acko and I carried our RM many times. On the endurance course with tunnels etc. he was lagging behind so we dragged him by his webbing straps. We took it in turns to carry his weapon. As we approached the main gate where there were staff watching he suddenly bucked up and sprinted away. They encouraged him with cries of 'Come on Royal, show these Pongoes'. Acko and I looked at each other amazed. Our trio got the record for the 12 miler which was a surprise. On the 30 miler Acko wore shoes because his boots were hurting him. We all passed and

it was decided that one of the RM's would be awarded the Commando Medal. He came up to Scouse and me and said it should have been one of us who got it but it was all Politics. We went back to Poole for two weeks relaxing prior to going to P Coy.

On the Saturday as we were laying on our bunks resting the Clerk came in and asked for LRO Atkinson. Here are your travel warrants to Aldershot he said. Acko said put them over there as we don't need them for two weeks. Oh no said the Clerk they are for tomorrow. You are on the next course.

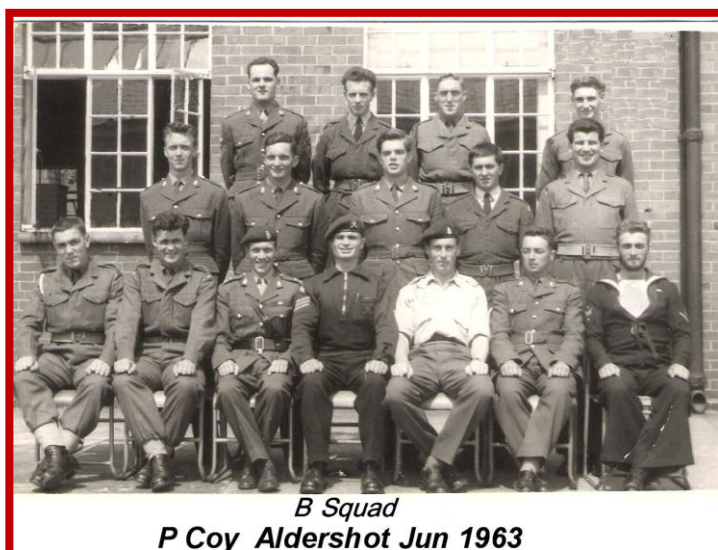


RM Cdo Course - Apr / May 1963



On Sun around mid-day we arrived at Aldershot station and Acko used a telephone box to call for transport to Maida Barracks where P Coy was staged. I was standing close to him and I heard him say 'A party of 6 need transport from the Station to the camp please' then he said 'What?' there was a pause and then he said 'My feet of course'. The person at the other end had responded to the request for transport by asking what he was standing on. When he replied 'My feet' the person said well use them as your transport and hung up. We got into two taxis and eventually were assigned our bunks. We then had to be processed by some of the Course staff. As it was Sunday they were not too happy. We were the last group to arrive. We got together and agreed on our story, not to mention the Commando course we had all just passed. They would simply dismiss us on the spot. We agreed to say we had just come from Poole which of course was correct. We were called in one at a time. As it was an empty barrack block and the table which had three staff at it was at the far end we were exposed to a bit of a drill session. None of us marched in correctly to their satisfaction especially Acko with his Naval jaunt. We had just spent the past 7 weeks doing RM drill and had almost forgotten to stamp our feet as the Para's do.

P Coy was not so much a course but a selection process. There were certain stages, none of which we had a chance to see before doing them. Swimming Pool, Trainasium & Shuffle Bars, Assault Course, Log Race, 2, 3 & 6 Mile Run, Steeplechase, Milling, Gymnasium Work, the 3 Day Wales



*B Squad*  
**P Coy Aldershot Jun 1963**

March - Incorporating the infamous Stretcher Race. Any of these could cause instant RTU. For instance once doing general morning gym work a soldier from the Int Corps, to my left in the photo, was in the same team as me and as he was running towards me he was told 'You are useless, Platform, 2 Go' which meant he had failed and to get out. I found P Coy much harder than the Commando Course by far. It was more brutal and the staff were much more intense and even vicious. The reader may not believe what I am about to say but I can assure them it is true. On the Log Race, which I found to be one of the hardest things I have ever done, I was second from the front on the right side behind a Tank Cpl.

Scouse was at the front left. The logs were massive and we had to attach ourselves with toggle ropes. There was about a 50 yd race to the log and there were 4 logs in each race off. Our instructor ran backwards punching the two front men, Scouse and the Tank Cpl, in the chest alternately. I watched as the Tank Cpl's hand slowly began to slip out of the loop on his toggle rope and he eventually let go. He fell to the right and then I heard a thud. Later I was told the instructor had kicked him in the stomach. A while later the log suddenly lurched as the guy at the rear right also fell off. At the finish the other log, which was trying to overtake ours, said our instructor had taken hold of the guy and punched him full in the chin knocking him clean out. Their instructor yelled at them to run over him. Now our log was slowing so he made us shoulder it and keep running to the finish. When we crossed the line he made us keep running towards the waiting vehicles which must have been another 400 yds. We, just the 6 of us, fell down exhausted. Our instructor screamed at us to stand at attention. After a while the whole of P Coy paraded and the Senior Staff PTI asked who had the P Coy Pendant, which signified the leading squad. It was me of course and I had forgotten to collect it after the race. I put my hand up and shouted 'Me Staff' to which he said 'well where is it then?' 'I think it may be in the truck' to which he screamed at me 'Well then F\*\*\*ing get it then on the double'. This I did and stood at attention in front of him. He snarled at me and wanted to know why I had not collected it and I could see he was squaring me up for a jab. As he swung I ducked and his hand hit the staff of the Pendant. I straightened up just as his other fist hit me square in my solar plexus. I slumped down winded as he screamed obscenities at my writhing on the ground. Just another day at the office for him.

On the Assault course and steeple chase the instructors had hockey sticks or just sticks which they would encourage those they considered were not putting all their effort into things by hitting them on the helmets. We always wore helmets on the physical outdoors. On the 3, 6 and 9 mile runs, which



were mainly over the tank tracks in Aldershot, the instructor would sometimes stop and slowly get his note book out then turn round and lo and behold if you were not standing in line. They would always run their squad into the others and intermingle so as to confuse us. One time I was busy keeping up and watching the white PT Shirt and when it stopped I was right behind it. The only problem was it was not my PTI and I got quite a bollocking. He screamed at me to join my own squad in no uncertain manner. I was sure I would be binned after that. It was just all a game to them.

Next it was the Wales March. We were transported from Aldershot to the Brecon Beacons by lorry. On arrival we were given 5 mins to prepare to TAB it. Our instructor Sgt Roadnight led the way at a brisk pace. He never once looked back and after an age he stopped and said '5 mins break, get into all round defence'. Then off we went again minus a couple of guys. As it began to get dark we made camp using our groundsheet and blanket. No such thing as a sleeping bag. I found a boulder and got comfortable and made a brew. Some just flaked out on the ground. The Sgt made up a guard list as the other squads were going to attack us during the early hours. Next morning we were off again and then we stopped alongside a couple of Lorries. There was the stretcher race to do now. It was just a sand track with two poles and a concrete post on it with boots on. The other squad was to depart 30 mins after us and attempt to catch us. That was not allowed to happen. We ran and ran with this stretcher and then we entered Crickhowell bridge which signified the half way point. We had beaten the other squad and as they arrived they took over the stretcher. We waited and 30 mins later we raced off after them. I had been here with the Boy Scouts a few years ago and we had gone up to Pen y Fan by a similar route. As we entered Talybont on Usk we saw the stretcher crew just finishing. We had almost caught them up. I now realised we were going up to Pen y Fan as individuals. It was agonising but I just thought one step at a time and don't look up. As I crested the final false ridge I saw the instructors waiting for us. I was around 5<sup>th</sup> I think and they seemed much more human saying 'OK guys it is all over'. I wondered if they were playing mind games with us. Other stragglers arrived and one of the Instructors said pointing to a building some distance away 'The vehicles are waiting down there as they could not get past the gate. Just make your way down slowly OK?' I thought Yes OK I think I will jog on down and some others followed me. It is never over until it is over I said.

On the final day those of us who had survived were sat in a lecture room awaiting our fate. 72 started, 36 finished and 12 passed. We all had numbers painted on our denims, mine was 141, and when they called your number out you had to stand up to attention and shout out loud, in my case '141 Gnr Richards Royal Artillery Sir'. The Major then said Pass or Fail. When he said Pass I floated back down to my seat in a dream. All pain left my body and I was elated.

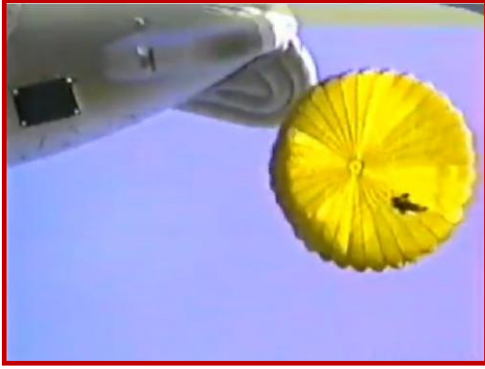


Para Course Jun 1963

We were then off to Abingdon immediately by truck. We arrived late in the afternoon and were met by a sadistic Para Regt Sgt. He was to be our course Sgt which meant he was responsible for us each day and marched us to the hangers then handed us over to the RAF Parachute staff. As it was evening meal time he marched us over to the Main Galley. There we were met with real food of many varieties. There was even the Duty Officer, a Flt Lt assisting with the serving. He welcomed us and said take what you like and as much as you need. This was heaven after the pig swill at Aldershot. We visited the NAAFI that night just to see what was going on. Quite a few WRAF were there eyeing up the new material on offer. Next

morning we felt so much better but that was quickly shattered by the Para Regt Sgt screaming and shouting at us. He inspected the block and of course we were in for it. He marched us at Para Regt quick time to the hanger and with much shouting and foot stamping handed us over to the RAF. The PJI's said 'Gentlemen, just relax and gather round'. They were human beings in uniform. The days were great but the going to and from the hangers was a pain.

The course consisted of 2 Balloon jumps and 6 Aircraft (2 clean fatigue and 4 with equipment) with one of those a night jump. Various aircraft were used in those days as follows. Balloon from 800ft one out of the front, one out of the hole in the floor. It was so strange to stand in the cage with the wind whistling through the cables with us all hanging on to the rails. Then on command to simply launch oneself out into the air dropping for 200 ft before the canopy fully deployed. Have to say it was a great feeling though.



The infamous Balloon jump. The wind whistled through the wires of the basket suspended from the Balloon in an eerie manner. I found the first one quite exciting but the second one through the hole in the floor somewhat of a bit scary. I guess it was because I knew what was coming.

do a Balloon jump through the floor.

The lumbering Beverly from the main body and from the Boom. That's why we had to



The Hastings – Mind your head on the tail please. If you were No 1 on the Port side the tail seemed so close and many ducked as they drove out. You had to drive out hard because if not the slipstream would make your head bang along the fuselage which was called 'A rivet check'.



After we had gained our wings we returned to Poole for August leave. Of course we all strode about showing off our Para Wings. Now we had to wait for the start of the NGS Course and more guys to appear.

BSM Potter called me into his office one day and said 'I understand you were training to become a Structural Engineering Draughtsman at College' I replied in the positive. He then pointed to a model of a Fan Tower used at Abingdon for Parachute Training. It was made of scaffolding and meant to be 40 feet tall. 'Right, I want you to be in charge of building one for the JSWAC open day next month.' What, I was just a Gnr. Anyhow I did my best with the help of others waiting for the Course and many guy ropes and then the day came for the RAF Engineers to install the fan on the top. They would not do it and called in 9 Sqn Para Engineers. When they arrived they asked to see the person who built it so everyone pointed at me. A Sgt said 'Well I have to say you had a good attempt at it but it is unsafe in my opinion.' I fully agreed with him so they took it down and rebuilt it with about 4 guy ropes and it was solid as a rock. It was a great success at the open day and I was amongst the crew manning it assisting ladies and girls up the ladders. Say no more.



Ernie and I used to go up to Abingdon when our PJI said there was a TAVR weekend of parachuting. Once we got 5 jumps in, 3 Balloon and 2 Beverly's. We just used to join in the queue to fit parachutes and nobody ever checked we were not TAVR.

Some guys arrived for their selection process but would have to complete their Cdo and P Coy and Para courses after the NGS course if they passed. On the course was Scouse Brougham, Jock Max, Ernie Gent, Phill Waller, Mick Flanagan, Wally Doole, Derek Barzie, Taff Powell, Rocky Eyre, Johnny Marsden, Titch Taylor and Me.

Our instructors were, Bdr McNaughton, Bdr Earle, RO2 Coldron, Sgt Foot (Ex SAS), Bdr Lazelle, Bdr McCann. All were very experienced NCO's who had served in the NGS world for at least 4 years each. The course was intense with so much to learn. The procedures were all different for Army, Navy and RAF. We had to learn RN procedures in both Voice and Morse. The radio equipment was mostly WWII stuff.



RS A62 - HF



BCC 156 (HF) – Civilian Radio



A43 - UHF



Austin Champ



A41 – A42



Early Land Rover

During the course I went to Wales rock climbing. As mentioned before in those day's we worked on Sat mornings but once a month there was what was called a 'Long Weekend'. That meant the camp stood down at 1300hrs on the Friday and turned too again at 0800hrs on Monday. I was therefore able to catch the train to London midday and then one to Birmingham to meet up with my mate Gordon Law who was at that time a Police Cadet. We then went to Bangor and hitchhiked to Llanberris Pass to start climbing at first light. We then managed to sneak into the Youth Hostel without paying and be out the next morning for a quick climb before hitch hiking back to Bangor and home. I usually arrived at Poole on the slow 'Milk' train from London which stopped at most stations picking up mail and papers. On arrival at Poole around 0330hrs I got a taxi if there was one there or walked back to camp. Just as I got my head down, it seemed, we were all woken up with a rousing of 'Wakey Wakey, rise and shine the morning's fine, don't roll over roll out' to go to work on the course. Wonderful. I did this at least 3 times during my NGS course. On one occasion as I was waiting for the train back to Poole from London I noticed a group of people gathered around someone who was reading a Newspaper. As I approached I saw the headline 'JFK Assassinated'. It was Nov 22nd 1963. I thought there was sure to be a War now. It had to be the Russians after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Once we had a Para jump during the course but only 6 of us who were Para trained joined in. We were in teams of 3. Bdr Jock McCann, Scouse and me made up one team. Bdr McCann was a legend and a maniac. He used to go over to Rockley, which was only about 100 caravans then, for his Stand Easy and lunch. You can guess what he had for that. The camp PJI took us new boys on some ground trg, the others were so experienced he left them alone, and during he said to us 'Remember you are now part of Special Forces so when you land you wrap your parachute up this way.' He showed us and then we all copied him. We were jumping from a Beverly Tail Boom. Each stick had to climb up the ladder with kit to go into the Boom. It was my first time doing that although I had jumped from the Boom on my course and afterwards with the TAV(R). The PJI's spaced the three of us out along the 15 seats and then we were called up for Equipment Check. I was last in the stick so started to creep forward. The PJI held me back and shouted in my ear 'When you see the Red light begin walking forward so you will all go out close to each other.' I guess he knew best. 'Red On' so I began staggering forward then 'Green On, as I was still closing up to Scouse then I stepped into the hole and suddenly the ground was very close. I quickly released my container and hit the ground after it. We did our stuff and grouped together. Bdr McCann said 'OK, where is the first RV then?' Scouse and I



looked at him and shook our heads. 'I will follow you' he said. We were too scared of him to argue so we tried to work out where we were and where we should logically be going. As we sat under a tree he offered some advice. 'You see those red lights over there' he said pointing 'Well that means it is the Port side of aircraft' What the hell was he talking about? 'Might as well go take a look' he said in his broad Scottish brogue. He was of course messing with us. I said to him that the jump seemed a bit low and he replied 'Oh yes, I forgot to mention we were jumping at 600ft'. In time we arrived at the RV a bit more educated. Always check the plan before hand with someone who knows it.

Later on in the course we had to learn to drive. In those day's very few people drove. Jock McCann was my Instructor. It was straight after lunch and he took me to a L/Rover and lifted the bonnet saying 'Under there is a Dynamo, Spark plugs, an engine and other important stuff OK?' I nodded my head as he slammed the bonnet down. He then said for me to sit in the driver's seat. I explained I had never driven before but he simply said I was going to drive now. I had no idea what to with all the levers and stuff. After a little vague instruction he said to start her up. I was petrified but managed to do it. Then I had to put it into gear and drive off. He wanted to go over the dunes which are now part of a concrete driving circuit at the top of camp. We somehow managed to drive away but changing gear was difficult for me. When we arrived at the bumps he said he wanted me to drive at 20 MPH. I was puzzled as he then said 'I have always wanted to have a pish at 20 MPH' He opened his door and did just that. I was shaking and went over a very big bump which made the L/Rover tip over onto the driver's side. He ejected and disappeared. I managed to crawl out and shakingly made my way back to Sgt Foot who was the MT Sgt to explain. He was quite calm and simply said 'Jock at it again?'

The week before Christmas arrived and the course ended. The results were announced. A couple had failed and they chose to go to 7<sup>th</sup> Para as they had already completed P Coy. A couple went to 29 Cdo and others to 148 Bty at Bovington where they would complete Cdo and P Coy. Of the 4 originals Scouse and I, who both came joint top were posted to NGFO5 with 2 Para in Bahrain, Ernie went to 3 Troop in Malta where there were two NGS Teams and Jock Max went to 20 Cdo AO Bty in Hong Kong. I wanted so much to go to Hong Kong but was assured that once I had served 6 months with the Para's our team would then be posted to Hong Kong for the remaining 2 years. It was normal for a 2 ½ year tour then. I thought of those who had gone to Bovington and was satisfied with my fate.

Had Christmas leave and then we mustered at Poole to go to Bahrain. The BQMS issued us each with an MFO box for all our non immediate kit and then made us sign for the nails, 10 each. We painted the lid and sides with black matt paint and put our No, Rank, Name and the address on them. NGFO 5, 2 Para Bn Gp, BFPO 51. They were going to be picked up by the Steam Ship Charles McCloud for delivery to Bahrain within 2 weeks. Little did we know that we were not to see them again until 14 months later in Hong Kong. Later on it this journal all will be explained.

Our Bdr would be McNaughton, one of our course instructors, who had done a tour in Hong Kong, Borneo, Middle East and on many ships. The matelot we were assigned was RO2 Baxendale. Back then the RN pers just had to pass Cdo and Para courses but never an NGS course. They were solely employed to set watch with the Gunship. Some who had served for a long time did pick up things. When the COBU's were formed in 1941 the Teams consisted of a Capt RA, sometimes a Bdr Ack and up to three RN pers. A Telegraphist (for the Morse Code) and two Signallers (Flags and Aldis).

22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1964 we flew by BUA charter which took 9 hours. We arrived and as I stepped out I felt a harsh heat. I thought it was the engines but quickly realised it was the Bahrain morning air. Bdr Mac Thompson was waiting for us with the L/Rover and Trailer. We piled in and gazed in amazement at the terrain. This was my very first time abroad. On arrival at 2 Para Camp we were met by the team out there but they were all ready to go back on the Aircraft that had brought us out except for Mac and Capt AJ Payne. As our assigned officer Capt JK Riddell was not yet available Capt Payne would stay for another couple of weeks. We got ourselves sorted out and Mac showed us around. It was strange seeing all the red berets but I was eager to put mine on. Next day Mac took us to the stores. A L/Cpl took the 1157's from our Bdr and then tore them up. No need for these in the Para's he said and began to issue us with all sorts of stuff including 2 more red berets, smocks, boots and webbing. We staggered back to our block and again sorted ourselves out. Mac then took us down town to Muhaaraq. As it was Ramadan there were many rules to obey lest we offended the locals. There was a Cold Store which sold soft drinks so we took advantage but you could not eat food or smoke in public. We then went to a shoe shop to buy our Desert Boots at 22 Rupees a pair. After a boring time we went back to camp and again Mac explained the rules. If the Sheik of Bahrain and his convoy

were using the dual carriageway we had to stop and get out and salute otherwise some of his bodyguard would turn up and enquire why. There was a handwritten note in the little store area of our accommodation which read. 'You are entitled to 4 pints of orange juice each day free of charge. Make sure you use it during your stay which is but for 6 months, only half a year, a lifetime even.'

Capt J K Riddell arrived to take over after a couple of weeks. He was fabulous as our Leader. He had completed his Para jumps at Ringway where they did not use reserves. He was also a pilot in the AAC where he had flown Austers as an Air Spotter. He decided to make me the Driver and Scouse responsible for all radios and Bty charging and other stores kit.

One of the first Exercises of many we went on was to Yas Island where we were to conduct live NGS. We were to land in darkness and make our way up to the top of the mountain to set up an OP to support a landing by the Para's. The ship decided it would be a good idea if two of their Officers could accompany us for the experience. They met us on the Stbd waist and what a sight they were. One was a Lt and the other a Middy. They had their peaked caps on with No 8's, new boots and Blancoed Gaiters. We boarded the boat and headed for the shore in total darkness. As we neared the shore line the Coxswain said it was close enough and he was worried about going aground. We asked how deep it was and he thought it would be just up to our waist. Mac Struggled over the gunnels and immediately disappeared under the water. Luckily he only had one bergan strap over his shoulder and was able to shed it. He came up spluttering and cursing. He made the boat get closer and we all got off in much shallower water. Next came the Tab up to the Mountain. The RN Lt, who only had a water bottle on his belt streaked ahead. Capt Riddell had to constantly make him get back but he kept on saying this is easy. In time we arrived at the foot of the steep slope and once again the Lt RN went ahead. As he scampered up the hill we could hear many rocks being dislodged and then we heard one which seemed quite big bouncing down in our direction. Scouse and I were standing still next to each other in the darkness when suddenly a large rock hit my left hand. Luckily we were both relaxed and it sort of moved my arm backwards but it hurt. We broke with tactics and shone a shaded light on my left hand and saw blood pouring out of the knuckle of my second finger. We bandaged it up and Capt Riddell had a word with the Lt. We moved on with the Lt at the rear. We set up in the OP and contacted the ship and waited. The rock could have easily hit one of us in a more serious place.

We completed a couple of shoots then Capt Riddell told Scouse and me to show the RN Officers how to do NGS. I chose the Middy of course. After a rough instruction we gave our students a Tgt and told them to make out the details for a live shoot. When my student showed me his plan I questioned him as to why he had chosen our OP as the Tgt. He had not quite understood my instructions so I helped him a tad. After a while we allowed him to do the shoot and I showed him the errors of his ways.

When we arrived back in Bahrain Capt Riddell asked me about my Rock Climbing background. I told him and then he asked me if I would like to join 2 Para Mountain Climbing team. What here in Bahrain I replied but he said they were going on an expedition to Mt Kenya and attempting to ascend it in the Monsoon Season. Of course I wanted that so I moved into another block with about 10 others from 2 Para and one from 7<sup>th</sup> Para. We trained on some rocks near the civilian oil workers base. In due course we flew to Kenya and set ourselves up in a camp in Nairobi with the Scots Guards. They were preparing for what was to be the last Patrol searching for the elusive Mau Mau Terrorists. Jomo Kenyatta was now president and he had renamed Princess Margaret Avenue to Kenyatta Avenue. As we walked around Nairobi wearing our Red berets and smocks people would run away from us. We later found out that the Secret Police, who were very much sadistic bullies wore similar clothing.

We were appointed an RCT Driver to ferry us about in a 3 tonner. He was mesmerised by us Para's. After some training Rock Climbing at an outcrop a few miles out from the Camp we were joined by Robert [Rusty] Baillie who was in the second British team to ascend the Eiger on 21 – 23 July 1963. He showed us a climb but as he was ascending he disturbed a Hornets nest and he flew up the rest of the climb. He had a big ginger beard and we helped him remove several Hornets. He spent the day with us and I just happened to successfully complete a climb called Eagles Nest Traverse as leader. He said to me afterwards 'I would not like to try that one let alone lead it.' What a compliment from him. I was walking on air the rest of the day. Next, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1964 we departed for the 17,058ft Mountain. The RCT guy took us as far up the track as he could because it was a National Park we had to stop at the Park Game Warden Post. Some Rangers checked our credentials and asked if we had any weapons after they had given us a talk on the wildlife we may meet. Buffalo, Elephant and Leopards. They said the Buffalo was the most dangerous and asked to look at our 2 SLR's which they

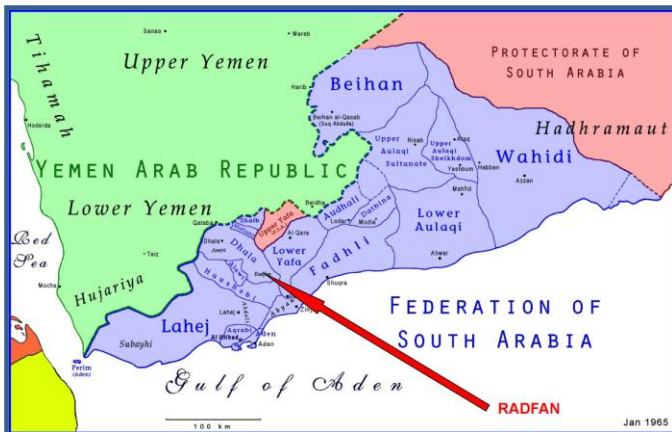
inspected and added that will not kill a Buffalo. The best form of defence for all three beasts was to stand still then slowly walk backwards constantly looking at the animals eyes. Err, I don't think so. A couple of days later 4 of us were moving slowly up a sort of path when we saw a Leopard laying across it. We froze and then slowly backed away from it. I was second in line and it took all my courage not to run away I can tell you. It worked and the Leopard just gazed at us. I guess he had just eaten. Another group came across an Elephant which charged them but they managed to scatter in all directions and got away with it.



In time we all made it to Top Hut at 15,500ft and acclimatised there. We were carrying around 110 – 120 lbs each of fuel, food and ropes etc. We paired up and made up a list of who would attempt the ascent. I teamed up with Cpl Bob Parslo and we went for a look at Thomsons Flake which in the guide book was described as 'A crumbling piece or rock that nobody has yet been stupid enough to attempt to ascend.' That was all we needed for inspiration. We managed to make the first ascent but on the way down Bob slipped on the steep glacier and had to dig his ice axe in to arrest his fall but he was a tad late I was catapulted

over his head but managed to get my axe in as I landed. He then catapulted over me but I was able to stop his fall. He ended up just near the edge of a 50 ft cliff face. Next stop was the approx mile long glacier which was very steep. In the process he had impaled his right ankle with his crampons. We gingerly returned to Top Hut a little shaken. Four pairs managed successfully to ascend to the top of Mt Kenya on consecutive days. Bob and I couldn't owing to his injury.

In time we all returned to the camp in Nairobi. We had a very good celebration and then all the 2 Para guys had to return to the UK. 3 Para had taken over in Bahrain whilst we were away. I was left with the RCT guy awaiting a flight but the day after I was summoned to the Scots Guards Regt Office. A Sgt handed me a signal from Capt Riddell which read '*Gnr Richards is to report to Aden immediately repeat immediately*' I asked what it was about and the Sgt said have you not heard what has happened in the Radfan. Hardly, I replied as we have been up a Mountain. He explained 3 Para had deployed to the Dhala Road awaiting an insertion by parachute into the hills. A 9 man SAS patrol were in the hills looking for a DZ for the Bn but were bumped by Arabs and two were killed and had their heads chopped off. Capt Edwards & Tpr J Warburton. The Sgt said he had me on a flight the next day to Aden.



The RCT guy took me to the airport in the 3 Tonne and I got on a plane arriving in Aden as it was just getting dark. I had no idea if there would be anyone to pick me up so I searched around and saw a Red Beret. I asked the guy for a lift back to the Transit Camp and he said once he had picked up all the stores and mail he was getting. I got a camp bed in a tent amongst all the chaos. Next morning I went to the 3 Para Rear Party office and reported who I was. The Cpl was expecting me but said the road convoy with the Bn had left early yesterday morning. He said Capt Riddell had left instructions for me to get my kit

and join the NGFO party asap. The Cpl got a Pvt to take me to a building where my kit was. Scouse Brougham had packed stuff for me as I only had one set of working clothes and the rest was climbing gear. As the Pvt opened the door I was confronted by about 100 Army Issue Suitcases all from HQ Bty 7<sup>th</sup> Para. Yours is in there somewhere he said. We checked and eventually found mine and I hauled it back to the tented village. Next I needed a weapon so once again the Cpl got the Pvt to take me to the hospital. There were three guys in a side ward who had been wounded on the initial contact. The Pvt said this will be yours mate. The guy in the bed pointed to his weapon and webbing and I asked why it had red paint on it. That's my blood he said. I left a tad shaken and went back to



the office. No matter how hard I scrubbed I could not get all the blood out. The Sgt said there is a four vehicle convoy going up tomorrow and you will be on it. Depart 0400hrs.

We left at the crack of dawn and in due course followed the Dhala Road and got covered in fine dust. We came to the end which was a very rough track so had to unload the Trailers and ferry boxes of ammo up forward. I made three trips doing this and then saw Bdr Ulyett of 7<sup>th</sup> Para RHA Bulls Tp. He was Capt Hugh Colleys OP Ack. 'Hello Brum' he said 'where have you been?' We exchanged stories and I asked how I could get to the sharp end where NGFO5 were. About 100yds away a Scout Helio was taking important people up so I thought I would wing it. I crouched with some others and when the Helio landed I rushed to the passenger door and got in. Three others got into the back. Just as I was attempting to fasten my seat belt a hand grabbed me and threw me out. It was CSM Nobby Arnold, all 6ft 4inch of him. He said something like 'Next lift for you laddie.' I was not going to argue. Next one I was on in an instant.

We landed but I had no idea where I was or where to go. As the helio lifted off the four of us scurried over to a sanga where we could see some antennas poking out. I fell into the sanga and said



something like 'Gnr Richards NGFO5 reporting for duty.' I got a bollocking but an officer said 'Oh, so you are Gnr Richards. Capt Riddell is waiting for you.' He got a Sgt to show me where to go next. He said to just follow this contour around the hill for about 200 yds and you will see a tower with a wall to its right hand side. NGFO5 are in there, it is the very sharp end of the Bn. The Arabs have stopped

firing so you will be OK but don't dawdle' I started to move at a brisk pace and heard some strange whizzing sounds quite near to me. I then heard Bdr McNaughton shout words to the effect 'I suggest you keep your head down Brum because a nasty man is trying to shoot you. Get a hurry up on please.' Well that was the polite version. I arrived and threw myself down against the wall where Scouse was laying. I recall a quote by Winston Churchill which said 'There is nothing so exhilarating in life than to be shot at without result'. Capt Riddell was standing in the doorway of the tower casually puffing on a ciggie. He said 'Where the bloody hell have you been Richards?' I knew he was joking, or was he, so I said 'You are lucky I got her so quickly Sir. I had to get some kit and weapon.' Well you now have two weapons he replied, here's yours, I am fed up carrying it'. I now had an SMG and SLR. Scouse and I sat by the wall chatting and the others were inside the tower which was used by the shepherds to watch over their flock of goats. I found out NGFO5 had been conducting FAC whilst the MFC's who were in the tower as well had been directing the Mortars onto some Arabs who were not too happy. As it grew darker the MFC's were getting ready to withdraw and a 9 man patrol was going to come through our position and move forward. They were mostly equipped with GPMG's, a new weapon for the British Army. Previously it had been Bren Guns. Capt Riddell told the 2 MFC's to keep to the right so off they went stumbling in the ever darkening late evening. We then heard someone shout 'Grass Hopper' out very loud, then about 5 seconds later they shouted it again. Suddenly we saw flashes and heard the sound of a barrage of rounds over our heads. Then the same person shouted 'Cease Fire.' What was happening? Scouse and I were trying to dig into the rock as Capt Riddell was laughing at us. He was inside the Tower still with Mac and Baxendale. A bit of shouting and the patrol came into view. Capt Riddell wanted to know what they were playing at and the section commander tried to explain. The challenge should have been 'Grass' and the response was 'Hopper'. The MFC's were confused as well. It was a very close thing. The patrol passed through and we followed on a difficult night advance with some of the Bn following. The next few days we had several contacts and advanced some distance until we went firm so we built a Sanga. We conducted several FAC Missions from here with great success. The photos were taken by some Life Photographers who had arrived. They asked where was the best position to see some action and they were directed to NGFO5. They stayed with us for about a week but kept their heads well down all the time.

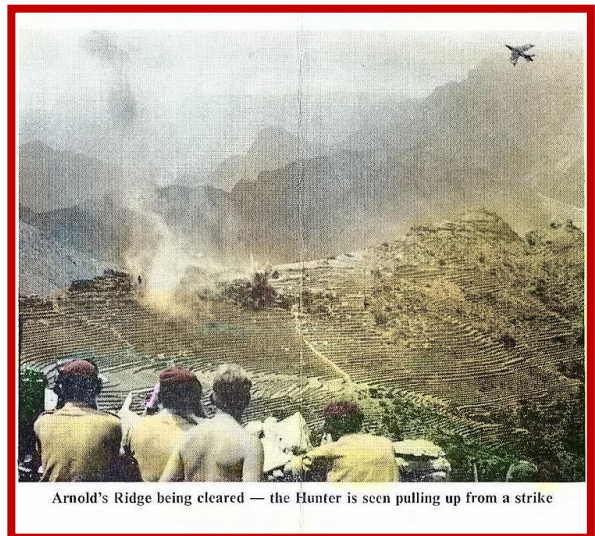


In the photo is the rear of the Sanga we had constructed with us standing outside during a lull in firing. One day during an FAC mission Capt Riddell said to me 'How do you feel about earning a VC?' I had no idea what he was talking about. He then said 'When I tell you, just jump out of the Sanga and aim the Panels directly at the guy who is firing at us, OK?' I couldn't respond and in an instant he shouted out the order. I jumped up and shakingly aimed but he wanted it to be perfect and kept adjusting the Panels. They were in a Tee so it was difficult. In due course he said OK get back and I dived back under cover. He conducted a perfect

mission onto the guys and eliminated them. I asked what would have happened if I had refused to do it and he replied he would have Court Martialed me. Perhaps he was joking. Next day Scouse was going to relieve himself when he noticed some silver like marks on the rocks at the front of our Sanga. They were where the rounds had been landing from this bloody Arab pair.



The CO of 3 Para, Lt Col Farrah-Hockley insisted we always wore our Red Berets to show the Arabs, who called themselves the Red Wolves, just who was the boss. FAC was a great success owing to Capt Riddell's professionalism. He knew some of the Hunter pilots as well and they were always keen to engage. Once I saw him direct a strike onto a lone Arab under a tree and get a direct hit with the first pass.



Arnold's Ridge being cleared — the Hunter is seen pulling up from a strike

Another time one Company attacked about 40 Red Wolves. It was very intense and we were supporting with 7<sup>th</sup> Para Pack Howitzers, 3<sup>rd</sup> RHA J Sidi Rezegh 5.5s, 3 Para 81 mm Mortars and RAF Hunters. I operated the Inf Net and acted as the Ack for Capt Riddell doing FAC. Scouse operated the Gnr Net and Mac was doing all sorts of stuff to help and organise. His most important job was to throw the Phosphorus grenades to mark our position for the Air Strikes. At one time we conducted 7 Lu Lu's with the Hunters. What that meant was a pair would circle overhead or near by and we would call them in for support when asked. As they became low on fuel another pair would arrive from Khormasker to take over. It took around 8 mins. That happened 7 times during the day so the Para's had total overhead cover. They had around an hour plus loiter time but that was shortened when they were attacking. We never did find any bodies but there were many blood trails and bits of body as well.

After the air strikes had been completed someone asked if they could do a low level fly past. I think it may have been one of the Life Magazine guys. Capt Riddell said OK and a while later said to look to our front. One Hunter flew past in the dip to our front and there was a sigh of disappointment as it was quite a way from us. He nudged me and the others and said look behind you and we saw a Hunter just above the ground coming toward us. He then said to the rest 'Look Out' and there was an almighty rush of air and then the sound followed it. They all dived for the ground looking a tad sheepish. The cameraman said he did not get a time for a photo and that he almost broke his camera. Our Matelot RO2 Baxendale did not impress Capt Riddell so he was quickly RTU'd to the UK.

In time the action was all over and we withdrew to Thumir which was a temp base with some normal troops, Hats, and also used as a Helio base. We were extracted by Belvedere and on arrival at the camp were told we could commandeer any tent and bunk within it from the base Walla's. We did this and then went to the NAFFI tent. There was a sign on the temp bar saying 'Sharp End Hotel' and as I stood there waiting to be served a very tall Para with a GPMG and belts of ammo around his chest and dusty clothes said 'Get that F\*\*\*\*g sign down and get us some beers' to the pale faced RAF person behind the bar. He shakingly gave him the beers. The Para moved away and the RAF guy said how much it was to which the Para said 'You pay for them you useless REMF.' It was the start of another Para invasion. I think the Base Walla's all hid away that night. We never did pay for any beer.

Next morning we all paraded and were issued new kit. Beret, Smock, Denims and boots for those who needed them. Later we were all put into 3 tonners and we left the area via the Dhalah road. On arrival at Aden transit camp we had a much needed shower and relaxed in the real NAFFI. Had to pay for the beer though.

Back in Bahrain we started to wind down and get back to normal. All in all we had lost 3 Killed and 5 wounded two seriously. RO2 Baxendale had returned to the UK very quickly so Mac said to me 'Brum, you are now the acting Matelot and you will set watch with every ship from now on'.

One incident I recall clearly was when we were going to do a Coy Jump. The only safe place to kit up was on the hard court surface tennis area. We entered with some of 7<sup>th</sup> Para and lined up to kit up. As we were almost finished A Coy, 3 Para entered and began to push us up to the back of court. We all became bunched up in one corner so I, in my usual polite manner asked out loud, very loud in fact 'What F\*\*\*\*er organised this shambles?' Well I turned round and there was WOII Nobby Arnold again. He bellowed 'I did, you got any problems with that?' I said 'No sir, good job'. He just growled at me.

Life went on with many varied exercises until one in particular. We had to deploy to Jebel Dahna, which was just a Desert Airstrip, to conduct some FAC. An Officer from the UK was to join us so he could get qualified as an FAC. When we arrived at the location would you believe it but Cap Riddell knew the Grahame McKenzie radio relay operator who had a station near by. We stayed with him in his desert home. It was air conditioned and we just slept on the floor. He had a couple of servants who cooked up our compo rations for us. The Trucial Oman Scouts came each day and we followed them into the desert about 5 miles or so to conduct the FAC. They were in a 3 Tonner and the driver, who was totally mad, seemed to know every bump and hole for the whole journey. I found it very difficult to keep up with him in my L/Rover and trailer. The UK Officer was with them. He was so white he shone in the sun. On the second day he was standing on the bonnet of my L/Rover jabbering and staggering about so he was taken away by the Trucial Oman Scouts, suffering from heat fatigue, and Capt Riddell taught Mac, Scouse and me how to do FAC and we became qualified ACT/s. He said it was a waste of time him conducting all the missions as he was already quite good at it. Amen to that I thought. When the FAC was over the rest of the team had to go over to Yas Island to conduct some live firing for another Para Drop followed by Para's shooting some up rocks on the Island. Capt Riddell said to me 'Right Richards, when we have gone come back here to the air strip and wait for the Beverly which will land tomorrow and drop off the ramps. It will then take off and drop the Para's and return to pick you up. If for any reason it cannot drop it will return to Bahrain with the Para's and you will have to drive to Sharjah to be collected a few days later. Any questions?' I had a million. 'How do I get to Sharjah without a map?' was the first one. He replied with his usual calm and pragmatism 'Keep the sea on your left and you will eventually bump into it. There are some buildings there and they will be the first ones you see.' I prayed for good weather for the drop.

Next morning the Beverly arrived and dropped off the ramps. My L/R was suffering from a faulty dynamo so I had been starting it with the handle the past week. It was running as the Beverly departed. I radioed the Team and kept then updated with the situation and in the distant I heard the ship firing. Then I saw a fat speck coming into land on the sandy strip. I sat in the L/Rover anxiously and then the back opened and the crew began putting the ramps on for me to drive into the belly of the Aircraft. An engineer was walking round the Beverly then suddenly began flapping his arms for me to get on board. I put my foot down and immediately stalled the vehicle. The crew came over and the Engineer said quite loudly 'You better get this started PDQ because the Stbd undercarriage is leaking Hydraulic fluid and if we don't take off in the next 5 mins we will be stranded on this dismal airstrip for weeks.' The crew bump started me and I drove up the ramp into the belly of the Beverly just like the Minis in the Film 'The Italian Job'. We were still putting the chains on as we took off.



The Load Master came up to me and saw I was a Para but asked if I was familiar with the crash procedures of a Beverly. I nodded in the affirmative so all except the pilot, Nav and Co Pilot went up into the Boom and sat well apart from each other. There were 3 PJIs and the Loadmaster. He had said it was expected that when we landed in Bahrain the Stbd undercarriage would buckle and we would spin to the right as the wing hit the ground. He also expected the Boom to detach itself some time as well. Interesting scenario I thought. We circled for a while over the airfield in Bahrain ditching fuel. As we approached the runway I could see all the emergency vehicles racing down the taxi way next to us. The Pilot put the Beverly down so gently on the Port side and as we almost stopped the Plane settled down and stopped. We evacuated at the rush and the fire crew sprayed foam all over the Stbd Side. Thank goodness the Loadmaster had previously said 'On evacuation run to the Port side like crazy'. I was the first to arrive in the safe area where the ambulance was. I tried to look cool but failed. People in uniform gathered round and asked many questions. I asked when I could get my L/Rover out and they laughed. This Aircraft was going into quarantine for investigation and could be here for a long time. I explained that tomorrow I had to meet the guys at the jetty. Someone took pity on me and said OK to the Loadmaster to show me how to open the back. He took me inside and showed me the handle which was the manual method of opening the back. Around 2 hours later and soaking with sweat I had the back open. The crew helped me with the ramps and I returned to camp to unload and clean the vehicle. It had sand tyres on so I had to change each one, unload all the kit which was covered in sand, repack the cam nets, refuel and wash it down. As I got into our block I saw RO2 Benny Benfield laying on what used to be Baxendales bunk. 'Hello Benny I said, why didn't you give me a hand'. 'You never asked he replied.' I never even knew he was here.



Gnr Brougham, Bdr MacNaughton, Capt Riddell, RO2 Benfield, Gnr Richards  
1964 Bahrain with 3 Para on 6 Month Detachment

Benny was to remain with us and join the next Party, Capt Rogers, Bdr Bert Cousins, L/Bdr 'Nobby' Noble and Gnr Nev Batley, when we were due to leave for Hong Kong in July.

I recall another Exercise on Yas Island which involved a Para Drop and then 7<sup>th</sup> Para guns being landed by LCM's from HMS Bastion. We went down to the docks in Bahrain for some reason perhaps just to watch the guns loading up. When the Gnrs arrived at the docks towing the 6 Pack Howitzers by Long Wheeled Based L/Rovers the RM LCM crew asked where are your front towing hooks. The Para's frowned and said why do we need front towing hooks? The RM said so you can drive the gun onto

the craft then unhook and turn round and hook up again. Why when we can just reverse onto the craft. This caused the RM guys to smile and say no way. The BSM arrived and wanted to know what the delay was. The gun Sgts explained so the BSM said to the RM crew exactly where do you want the 6 guns and vehicles. The RM Cox pointed to where they should all line up and the BSM said clear the area. He went to the Gun Sgts and told them what to do, then we witnessed an amazing show. The gunners each in turn swung their vehicles around and reversed into the Craft without any fault or shunting. The RM crew were stunned. Then the BSM said very loudly 'Nobody, I repeat Nobody touch those Guns. They are our colours. Any questions? Carry on'. The RM Coxswain, give him his due, said 'I have never seen anything as professional as that before.' The BSM just smiled and said, again loudly 'Well, next time we do it you will see it again laddie.' The CP Vehicles and other assorted ones gently drove on as well but lacked the style and fineness of the Gun crew Drivers.

It was now Jul 1964 and in due course, after many realistic exercises, we had to depart for the rest of our tour which was 2 years in Hong Kong. We spent a few days in Aden before a flight, all Military, was available to take us to Singapore. We arrived at Changi Airport in the early evening and drove to Nee Soon Camp in a L/Rover. As we passed through each village I was amazed at the smells, noise, humidity and greenery. We were allocated our bunks in 20 AO Bty area and slept soundly. Next morning we got dressed and I just sat looking at all the Green vehicles and trees. We had to go to HQ Bty 29 Cdo to get our Green Berets. We sort of stood out in the Red ones. As I was issued mine the Storeman asked if he could have my Red one. 'Only if you do P Coy' I replied as I put it in my pocket.

Singapore was so different. We went ashore and drank in the London Bar in Nee Soon Village. The NGFO Party there was Capt Harford, Bdr Kyte, Gnrs Doole and Flanagan and RO2 Greener if I recall. After a couple of days Capt Riddell had secured us a passage to Hong Kong on the newly built County Class Destroyer HMS Kent. She was shiny and new. In those days we used to travel by RN ships wherever possible. After a couple of days as we were watching a movie on the flight deck the film suddenly stopped. Of course a cheer went up with much hilarity as Matelots do when they think the projectionist has mucked something up. Then the tannoy burst into life. 'Do you hear there, this is the Captain speaking. We have just received a signal from the MOD that Indonesian Para's have landed on the west coast near Malacca, intentions not yet known. As we are an Aircraft Picket Ship we are being diverted round to the West into the Malacca Straights to intervene and give support where required. I am therefore informing the ships company that we are now to consider the ship is on active service. That is all, Carry on'. Then the Action Stations alarms sounded. Most just stood there not believing the announcement until there were officers and senior rates hurrying us all up. Our Action Station was in the mess so we went there and wondered what to do next. After quite a while Capt Riddell contacted us and said we should get all our gear together because tomorrow at sparrows as we passed near Singapore we would be able to get off the ship. In fact we were well round Singapore and as we waited on the upper deck we saw the Tug Typhoon alongside us matching our speed and course. She was still towing a Splash Tgt and couldn't stop so we were lowered into a ships boat and came alongside her and just jumped over. She stayed in the area for a day or so allowing her splash tgt to be used for tgt practice then we broke off, recovered the splash tgt intact and entered the Naval Base in Singapore. I thought it would just have been our luck to have been hit by some ship trying to hit the splash Tgt. There was nowhere to hide. The Tugs crew of which there were about 12 in total but around 8 in the lower decks, said they had more business those two days than the past year. There was no accommodation for us so we just crashed out on the upper deck. Food was also limited but somehow beer was not. Strange how these things work out.

We arrived back in Nee Soon and settled in for what ever was to happen next. 20 Bty in Hong Kong had sent our L/Rover and trailer and a full set of kit down to Changi so I was despatched to collect it. Looks like we were in for the long haul. 3 Cdo Bde were getting ready to deploy on the Carrier Bulwark and the new ship HMS Fearless was also deployed. The NGFO party in Singapore were also deploying so we were now alone. The next morning I woke and looked out of the balcony and saw loads of vehicles and Anti Aircraft Guns. It appeared 22 Air Defence Regt had been moved from BAOR to defend Changi Airport with their Bofors Guns. Things were hotting up somewhat.

Our team was tasked with patrolling alongside the Police as they had imposed a total curfew from 1800hrs until 0600hrs every day. Anyone on the streets during Curfew was to be challenged and shot if they did not stop and surrender. From what I saw some of the Police got it wrong and shot then challenged. This went on for a few weeks then it all stopped and we were able to return to a normal life. Some of 3 Cdo Bde returned to Singapore as did the NGFO team.

One thing happened to me which is worthy of note. I had parked my L/Rover up on the square in its prescribed spot and ensured the wheel hub was on the correct line as 29 Cdo Regt MT had dictated. I wrote in the Work Ticket all the details, made sure the windows were closed and the canopy all strapped down and ship shape and returned to the block. The next day there was nothing special to do and around late morning a Bdr came into our block asking for me. I identified myself and he asked to see my work ticket having stated he was from the MT section. I went to the drawer in my bedside locker and handed him my work ticket holder. He opened it and asked where the work ticket was. I was dumbfounded and straight away looked a Scouse thinking he was mucking about. We searched and after a while the Bdr said I should come with him. Mac agreed and said just to sort it out. The MT Sgt made a big thing of this and after questioning me he took a work ticket out of his drawer and said 'Is this yours?' I checked and said 'Yes, where did you get it from?' He wouldn't answer and smiled and told me I was in big trouble. After he had his sadistic fun with me he told me to get out of his MT in no uncertain manner. I told Capt Riddell and he just told me to be more careful. How had they got hold of it I wondered? The following week another Bdr came into our block and demanded to see me. He said have you not read Regt Orders to which I said no why should I read your orders, I am in 20 AO Bty. He said I was being charged for loosing my work ticket. He told me to come with him. I stood outside HQ Bty office and BSM Crawshaw came out and gave me a dressing down for not reading Orders. Just then Capt Riddell walked past and wanted to know why I was standing there. I told him and he said to wait. He went into the Regt Office and about 5 mins later he came out and told me to return to the block and wait for him. I complied and when he came he said words to the effect 'I am

not having them charge one of my men without telling me. I will charge you tomorrow; you are warned for office Gnr Richards.' That was a surprise I never saw coming. Next day Bdr McNaughton marched me in, Scouse was my escort and Capt Riddell the charging officer. The MT Sgt was there to give his evidence. It was all done by the book and I thought I was in for it. The Sgt made a meal of it and when I was asked to say something I told my story. Capt Riddell then asked me if I wanted to accept his punishment or to go on to see the CO. I said I accept his punishment. He then said that he knew me and believed my story and admonished me. The MT Sgt looked stunned but very sheepish. We all fell out and Capt Riddell said to me we have to watch it with these 29 Cdo guys as they are always out to get us. I still have no idea how they got hold of the work ticket.

Around Sep 1964 the remainder of Cdo Bde returned as the emergency was over and a couple of weeks later we had passage to Hong Kong again but this time by HMS Berwick a Type 12 Rothsea Class Frigate. We all boarded and were escorted to the forward Seaman's Mess Deck. We were told to draw hammocks as there were only 12 bunks. We all declined and I slept alongside the lockers on twin 9" benches put together for the next 6 days. As the watches changed everyone was disturbed as the on going and off coming Matelots wanted access to their lockers. Some forgot we were there and jumped out of their hammocks right onto us. One or two said sorry you can have sippers at tot time.

Scouse and I were shown an 'Open Chock' on the Port Forcastle by the Buffer and he said just chip all the paint off and then paint it with Red Lead then give it about 4 coats of White Gloss. Make sure it is perfect as we dock in Hong Kong on the Port Side. That should keep you Pongos busy. It sure did. We lined the GDP deck for Procedure Alpha and entered harbour. We of course stood out in our Jungle Greens and the RN in No 6's (whites). We were collected and transported to Whitfield Barracks where 20 Cdo AO Bty were billeted.

Max met Scouse and me and we had so much to talk about. He asked me for a loan of \$20HK and said lets go ashore and I will show you the sights (Bars). As we stepped out of camp and onto Nathan Road there were bars everywhere and even more down each side road.

We had to go to BQMS Kelly next day to get some kit explaining that our MFO Boxes still had not arrived and all we had was what we had on. Well in fact Mac did all the talking as he was good at bluffing. When Mac gave him a list he began to visibly shake. Why do you need smocks when you have one on? Mac said it was borrowed. The same happened with most all the rest of the list. The BQMS grudgingly issued us all on a new 1157.

At long last our MFO Boxes arrived. The story was when the ship arrived at Bahrain our boxes were under others in the hold so it was decided they would be brought up at the next port of call and then offloaded next month when it returned to Bahrain. We of course were in Radfan so nothing happened. Then the ship went to Singapore but we were still in Bahrain. Next time it arrived in Bahrain we were in Singapore and so it went on. Eventually the ship arrived in HK and our Boxes were offloaded just before we went to Borneo. Most of the stuff had a mouldy smell to it.

It was a great intro to the life of 20 Cdo AO Bty. Each morning we did physical and on a Monday we all, and I mean the whole Bty, climbed Lion Rock. It wasn't a race but the guys made it one. The BSM WOII Alan Dorey always led the way until it became a free for all at the top which was a minor road leading to a Pagoda. It always ended up with Dave Swift and Max racing to see who would be first.



The BC's changed and Maj Lockhead left and Maj KRH Eve took over. It was tradition when someone left the Bty that we all went to the airport to see them off. Here are some of us at Kai Tak seeing Maj Lockhead off. We always dressed smartly.

*I to r:- Gnr's Scouse Brougham, Taff Powell, Me, PO Mick Cross, Gnr Al Hester, RO2 Benny Benfield, Gnr Pete Maxwell, RO2 Jimmy George, Bdr Pete Norton and RO2 Lou Costello.*

There were more behind the cameraman and some still in the bar no doubt.





The BC found out about my Climbing background and invited me to his home one Sunday. His wife Paddy cooked a meal and we sat and chatted about exploring the hills more for the Bty runs. I was amazed. Here was me, a young Gnr in the BC's home and him wanting me to organise some physical. He also asked me to teach the Bty how to Abseil correctly as they only shimmied down ropes at that time. I got stuck in right away.

*L to r: Me, Capt Davidson, Maj Eve and the Brig (?)*

We became very proficient and put on many demos. Later on we added padding across the back and left shoulder. Also we managed to get some Drivers Gauntlets where we wore our issue woollen gloves underneath.

The Borneo emergency had just begun and we had to deploy one NGFO Team with 40 Cdo. Some of us went to Singapore for parachuting. We were not allowed to do any in Hong Kong after our mad Sgt Cann, an ex SAS Soldier who was also a diving and free fall expert jumped out of a light Aircraft in the New Territories. The Chinese thought they were being invaded. I say mad because he was such a character. Once he was teaching our Cpl R Sigs Radio Tech how to drive on an old airfield. He put the hand throttle on crawled into the back saying for him to take the wheel. The Cpl lost the plot entirely. He had to rest in a dark room for a few days. So we were in Singapore doing some jumps from an Argosy in Malaya at Kuantan Airfield on the East Coast. We were supposed to land in the grassy bits between the Runway and Taxi ways but the wind got up and 13 of us managed to land on the main runway. With a PX Chute steering was not easy. Another guy went under me and stole my air. I had to crawl on hands and knees to the Ambulance which was overrun with casualties. Some were quite bad. In all 6 of us were hospitalised. We just lay on the deck of the Argosy we had jumped from and flew back to Singapore and then by a fleet of Army Ambulances to Changi Hospital. 4 of us had to stay in Hospital but we were sort of celebrities. The Nurses were so nice to us.

My feet were badly swollen and bruised. Luckily the bones were all intact owing to my good position on crashing into the deck so I was told. In time I was discharged and returned to the Bty. The BSM told me NGFO5 had deployed to Borneo on active service but Capt Riddell didn't replace me and wanted me to join them on my discharge from hospital. What about sick leave I asked only to be told you can have that on the journey down there. He handed me details for a flight to Singapore the next day and said to arrange the rest myself.



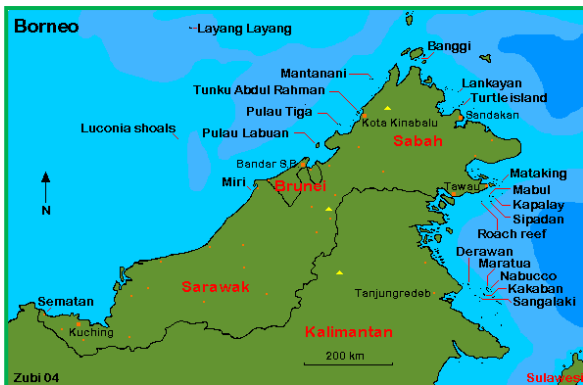
## 20 Cdo AO Bty 1965 – Hong Kong

L to R - Back row - Gnr Maxwell, Gnr Richards, Cpl Spicer (R Sigs), RO2 George, Gnr Doole, L/Bdr Lewtas, Gnr Russell.

Middle row Gnr Smith, L/Bdr Drew, Bdr Murby, Bdr Earle, Bdr Kyte, Cpl Higginson (RAPC), L/Bdr Stevens, RO1 Holton

Front Row S/Sgt BQMS Kelly, Capt Harford RA, Maj KRH Eve RA, Visiting RN Senior Officer, WOII BSM Dorey, Capt A Storey RA, Bdr Spur (RA Clerk)

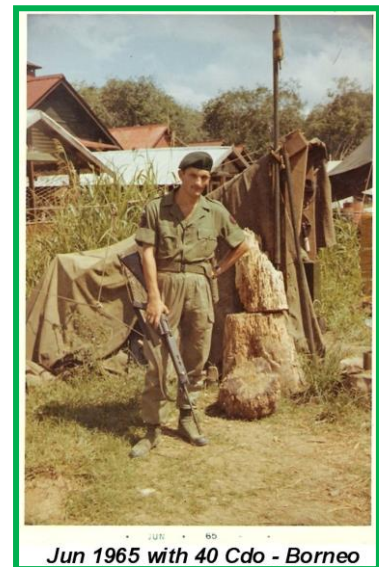
It has to be remembered there were also NGFO Teams on detachment in Bahrain with the Paras, 29 Cdo in Singapore and RM's in Borneo.



I arrived in Singapore and was picked up by Gnr Nobby Noble. We chatted as we had not seen each other for over a year. He asked about the Radfan and the Malaysia active services. He then told me there was a GSM for both which I had no idea of. That night Nobby, Bert Cousins and I went into Nee Soon village for a few whets. The next day Capt Davidson had arranged for a Military flight for me to Pulau Labuan which I found out was on the N West tip of Borneo. I arrived and as the RCT Movements whallas called out names the chosen few were collected by the transport. I was left there all by myself. I

approached the RCT guy and asked where is my transport. Where to he asked. Tawau I said and he laughed. Tawau is on the East coast of Borneo he said and there is not another flight until next week. I felt a bit of a wally but insisted I had to get there. He told me to report to the Base Sqn Ldr tomorrow and tell him of my plight.

Next morning I was outside the Base Sqn Ldr's office at 0730hrs as he arrived and he wanted to know who I was and what I wanted. In his office I noticed a large map of Borneo on the wall and I had time to take a look as he sorted himself out. I don't know what came over me but I took a chance and said 'Well sir, I guess you know the operational situation as of this morning. I have highly classified information which has to get to 40 Cdo immediately' I glanced at the map and then at him. He looked me up and down taking in my jungle greens, jungle boots, Para wings, Combined Ops badges and Green beret. 'Yes of course he stammered. What exactly are you referring to.' 'Sorry sir but I am not able to divulge the complexities and any specifics of the OP Order but may I assure you it is urgent.' I have no idea how but he bought it but he picked up the phone and arranged for me to join a Civilian flight that mid morning. I scurried off waiting to be grabbed by the RAF Police, got my kit and was picked up and taken to the Terminal. It was an old DC3 Dakota and I was the only non local and in uniform as well. The rest of the passengers, about 25 or so got on with their chickens and all sorts of goods and then a gorgeous Chinese hostess ushered me to a seat all by myself. She spoke to me in broken but good English so I took the chance of responding in Cantonese which I could speak colloquially but badly. She was amazed and on the journey I was given first class treatment. She came round later on with newspapers so I picked a Chinese one, all bluff of course, and she just stood aghast as I opened it up and pretended to read, luckily it was the right way up. There were three stops on the journey and in time we arrived at Tawau which was just a baked mud strip with a wooden hut as the Air Terminal.



Jun 1965 with 40 Cdo - Borneo

Again there was nobody there to pick me up and I had no idea where to go but I did see a L/Rover and a guy with a Green Beret. I scurried over to him and asked where he was going next. He said 40 Cdo but help me load all these mail sacks first mate. My mind went back to my arrival at Aden. It was exactly the same. How I managed then and now I will never know. Just a lucky Gnr that's me I guess. I had winged it and even now I will never know how I got away with it. We arrived at the RM camp and I was shown to the NGFO Tent. Bdr McNaughton, LRO Atkinson and Gnr Brougham were there and

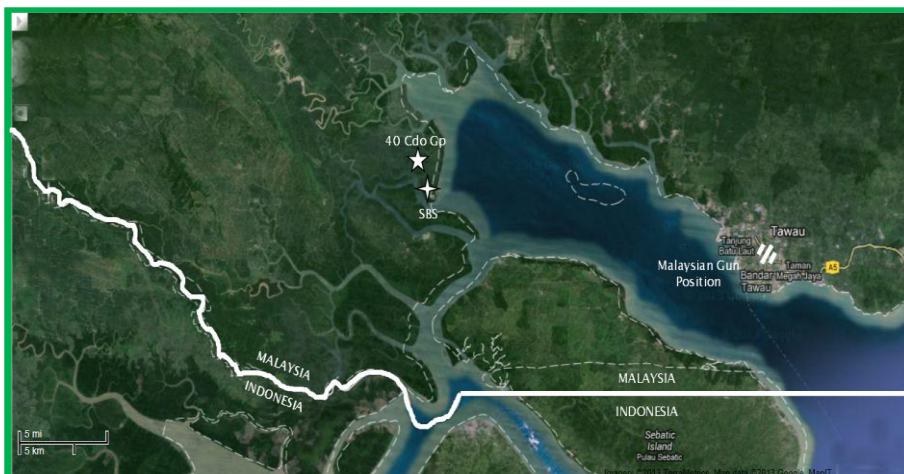


there was a spare bed for me. Mac took me over to the Officers area and once again Capt Riddell said 'What took you so long this time Richards?' We smiled but I was glad to be with my old team again. Mac explained the routine and I was to be the Driver and also the Assault Boat coxswain as well. I had never steered a boat but Mac said I would soon learn. The other thing Capt Riddell said was I was to be his batman. I shook my head with a 'No way Sir' and he explained that all RM Capt's and above had one and Lts share one between two. We sort of argued and he again explained that to fit in we had to comply with RM traditions. We agreed all I would do for him was arrange his Mossie Net each morning, make his bed and collect his laundry. Those minor tasks would clearly be seen by the other RM Officers so all would be OK. My mind was racing to come up with a plan to get out of this situation.

I got used to being the coxswain and we made many trips over to the village to check in with the Malaysian 25 pounder Gun Position. I was never too sure just who's side they were on. They always seemed polite but shifty at the same time. Our weapons were always close at hand and loaded. We also patrolled the rivers close to our location. It was all very tense and a tad scary.

We used to go out on patrol and sometimes provide FAC Support for other patrols. Once we had to work with a Canberra Bomber giving such support. We found a small clearing but observation was not good so Capt Riddell decided to conduct the mission by pure maths. The set up was LRO Atkinson on the FAC, me on the Infantry Net, Scouse on the Gnr Net and Capt Riddell overseeing it all. Mac was to have the White Phosphorous grenade, always much denser than coloured smoke and it deployed much quicker as well. All was set up with us behind a small bank of earth. The aircraft approached but it reported it was lost. The canopy offered no relief so Capt Riddell said very quickly do a 180dg turn and I will tell you when you are overhead. The aircraft did this and as he was overhead we said 'Mark Mark' he acknowledged and then we directed him to a CP so he could do a new run. As he approached Acko said ref my WP, Mac pulled the pin and looked up, I also stood up to see just as the grenade hit me on the left shoulder. Mac and I tried to run but we were running in a panic into each other. My headset was holding me back. Acko had dived for cover and the radio followed him. Scouse just ran but calm as anything Capt Riddell picked the grenade up and threw it into the jungle. It went off and some bits came very close and some landed on the radios. He calmly said 'The grenade has a 7 second fuse you fools and you only messed about for three of them'. Classic, calm Capt Riddell.

One thing we were tasked to do was a 'Deniable Mission' with SBS. The threat was an Indonesian Patrol Boat started coming up from the inlet at bottom centre of the attached picture and slowly circumnavigating Sebatik Island then departing. This was crossing the border and the Top Brass were not happy. They hatched up a Secret plan which Capt Riddell and OC SBS attended and then briefed us on. We were not allowed to mention it with anyone in the camp. All we told them was we were going on board the Gunships HMS Cavendish and RMN Hang Tuah (Ex HMS Loch Insh). The plan was to brief the local Gun Position that we were conducting some live firing to test their response over a certain period. The Island was the tgt area. We were to insert just inside our side with SBS as our protection then when the boat turned up we were to engage it to it's rear with NGS to hopefully stop it turning round then at the front with the Malaysian Gun. SBS would then ensure it was sunk and all crew disposed of. Of course should anything go wrong the cover story would be that we made a massive cock up and we would be chastised for being the bad guys and lousy map readers. We waited in our covert OP for 3 days then were told to exfiltrate secretly. It was thought someone, the Malaysian Gun Position perhaps, had informed the Indonesians of the plan as the boat never arrived.



A week later we visited the gun position and gave them a very hard time for being sloppy and for being 'a bloody Shower' as Terry Thomas the film actor always said.

In due course our tour was up and we were to be relieved by another NGFO from Hong Kong. The idea was to get as



many of the Bty on an active service tour as possible. Capt Riddell said to me that as I had arrived late again I would stay behind for a week to show the new guys the ropes. Things were quiet in the local village with the police in total control so he wanted to go for a haircut with another RM Officer. I had to drive them and I took Gnr Flannagan, the new teams appointed driver, with me to show him around. I was to meet the 2 Officers at 1400hrs in the local posh cafe. When I arrived Capt Riddell was very quiet which was not normal for him. As we arrived back in camp and the RM Officer had departed he asked me why I was late. I didn't think I was and stood my ground. He insisted and it transpired that I was about 5 mins late. We checked our watches and they were 5 mins apart. He insisted his was the correct time. I will deal with this later he said. I thought little of it until the next morning he arrived and told me I was on guard duty that night. OK I thought, no big deal as I had done many guards in that camp and knew all the dodges. I arrived at the guard room and the RM Sgt said that I would be the orderly as I was a Pongo. All I had to do was stay in the guard tent and be at their beckon call which was almost nil. I slept very well. Next morning Capt Riddell arrived all chirpy and asked how the duty went. Bloody horrible I said. Bitten by mossies, walked around the camp perimeter with another RM who was crazy and got no sleep. He smiled and said just be on time in future. Next day he found out exactly what had happened and said to me 'OK Richards thats one for you. Just watch it.' We both laughed at the situation. The other guys left for Hong Kong and I stayed to brief them. A few days later I boarded the Minesweeper HMS Dufton for Hong Kong. There was always a Sweeper on a four month deployment and it's relief was due from Hong Kong the next day. I was shown my bunk and introduced to the Buffer who was also the Coxswain. The cramped mess deck was so hot I slept on the Stbd waist under a lifeboat. We met the relief boat next day and handed over in about 5 mins. The skippers exchanged documents and we were on our way.

The buffer kept on telling me it would be a rough passage back. A mad dash across the Sulu Sea then hugging the coast of the Philippines to it's Northern most tip then another mad dash across the South China Sea into Hong Kong. This last mad dash would be very rough he said. Well it turned out to be the calmest journey ever. The sea was like a billiard table all the way. He was livid.

Back to the routine of physical and touring the Bars. There was some NGS of course because any RN Ship that entered the area had to conduct a successful mission prior to entering Hong Kong and also on it's way out to wherever it was going. There was a lot of that going on in the 60's.

For some reason I was put on a course for Vehicle Fault Finding. What had been happening was that the REME had been called out too many times to recover Vehicles only to find there were no faults but the tanks were dry. It has to be said it was mostly the Ghurkha Transport vehicles so it was decided to run a series of courses to address the situation. I was on the first course along with 4 other Brits and around 8 Ghurkhas of which most could not speak very good English. We had to learn the Internal Combustion Engine and all it's surrounding bits and pieces. How to change a wheel and how to start a L/Rover an easy way. This entailed jacking up one rear wheel and putting the vehicle into 4<sup>th</sup> gear with the hand brake on then turning the jacked up wheel which would then start the vehicle. The Ghurkhas were not convinced and backed away but the Instructor stood in front of the vehicle and asked one of them to turn the wheel. To their amazement it started and the vehicle did not run away. They all did a Salam with their hands and laughed a lot. At the completion of the course there were both practical and written tests. I managed to get 100% and on return to the Bty Maj Keith Eve called me into his office to congratulate me.



One notable Exercise was with the DLI acting as enemy. The idea was for us, in teams of 4, to evade them in the New Territories. They were practising their drills and if they captured anyone they would be interrogated by their Officers. Our team was Bdr MacNaughton, Benny, Scouse and me. Mac of course said he had done things like this several times. The Bty, four teams and a couple of single runners, all mustered at the start line. It was very hilly country and the exercise was training for trying to return those who had somehow crossed over the border from China. The main problem was the isolated villages which all had dogs that

barked anytime a stranger approached. We were strangers and smelt different from the local farmers. We managed to get safely to the end in Sha Tin. We then started phase 2 of the Ex. This was where we had all to hide in a specified area and the DLI would then make a thorough search of it and of course we would be captured. Mac had decided to get us all to tell the same story. Our name was Bill McNaughton and we were fishermen who had been driven ashore by winds when our sail had broken. The Interrogators were not trained so it was a bit of a shambles. At the appointed hour suddenly there were whistles being blown and shouts in a strange language were heard. I later found out it was Geordie. After a long time most of us were found, well that was the plan otherwise it was a total waste of time. We were blindfolded and rough handled by sturdy hairy Geordies. Mac actually had an SMG down his trousers and convinced the guys who had captured him it was a false leg. He even got into the interrogation room with it and then produced it before a startled Officer. When the debacle was over we all got together for a sort of debrief which was laughable. It would appear that we did not follow their rules.

Ironically around a month later some of us were sent to the border OP at Robins Nest for a week to relieve the permanent presence of HK Police and Soldiers. We had to do shifts watching through very powerful Binocs and record all movement over the border. There were masses of tanks and a hotel near by where officers were coming and going all the time. We were supposed to record their rank and give a brief description of them. It always said in the log, 'short, slant eyed black hair'.



On the approach to the OP there was the last remaining, I believe, Mule Troop with RCT guys. The Mules had been used in the Jungle during WWII a lot to carry all manner of things from rations to weapons. We had a look at them and boy were they big, stubborn and mean, the Mules that is.

Around Aug 1965 came the news that our NGFO was going to go to Malta to relieve one of the teams there. Bit of a bummer as I was loving HK so much. We made the trip back to the UK by Britannia turbo prop aircraft which took 24 hrs with two stops of an hour each. There were in fact two aircraft, one had left a half hour after us. When we arrived at

Lyneham the movements staff came into the arrivals area and told us to wait for the other aircraft. It duly arrived and then the movements staff again came in and made an announcement. 'Will all Officers and their Ladies please come forward for customs check'. I noticed one officer with two cameras strung around his neck. Strange I thought, why two. Once they had cleared another announcement. 'Will all remaining single Officers please come forward.' When they had cleared it was 'Will all SNCO's and their wives please come forward.' Then 'all remaining SNCO's.' Other ranks with wives next then of course all you single servicemen. I had brought a Parker Pen Set for my sister and a fancy brooch for my Grandmother. I was quizzed by the Customs man and had to pay duty on both. I thought of the Officer with two cameras hanging round his neck. Scouse kept asking me what time it was knowing that I had secreted a Rolex Explorer Watch inside a tube of shaving cream. If they had found that I would have still been breaking rocks in a Military Prison I guess.

A couple of days at home in Birmingham then off to a London transit depot for the flight to Malta. When we arrived at the transit terminal L/Bdr Johnny Stevens, Scouse and me were called to the desk and a Sgt RCT Movements guy said 'You 3 are on standby should the aircraft be overloaded'. We waited anxiously as everyone checked their luggage in and then we were called to check ours. Scouse and I were held back and thought the worst although our baggage was accepted. The same Sgt said 'Right you' pointing at me 'You will look after this lady's baby and you', pointing at Scouse 'will look after her luggage.' It appears she was the wife of an RN Officer in Malta and she was too good to look after her baby and belongings. I was wearing a black blazer and the shawl covering her child left many white bits all over it. On arrival at Luqa in Malta she ran to her husband, a lowly Lt RN, and hugged him. Scouse and I struggled towards them with their baggage and child which they took and they never even said thank you to either of us.

Malta was good. Capt Riddell, Capt Harford, Sgt Mick Kyte, Bdr Jack Hood, L/Bdr Stevens, RO2's Red Rigley & Mick Flemming, Max, Scouse and Me. We were stationed in HMS St Angelo and

worked in Manoel Island. Because we worked away from where we were billeted we were entitled to missmusters of Tot at 1700hrs each working day. We had to muster with the two RN Sparkers from Lascaris for this ritual. Everyone else on base of course got theirs at 1200 hrs. There was a water dispenser near the rum issues dept so we put some into our glass as the duty Regulator measured out the rum. If he was a good guy he allowed us to accidentally spill some water out before he put the rum into the glass. Sometimes the Duty Officer, who was always present, made us put more water in than was needed. It was all a game and both sides tried it on all the time. Life was good but very busy. There were ships conducting live firings all the time. The USN fleet would book the range for 6 day's and carry out their own firings, with us spotting, from their manual called FXP3. We had three camera positions so could get accurate fall of shot proof once the film was developed.

There was an E&E exercise in N Africa but Capt Riddell and me had to stay behind to man the pumps. He said to me 'Right Richards, as both Matelots are away you will have to learn how to type. Here is your first letter'. It was a sharp learning curve. I had never used a typewriter before let alone a Skin from which we had to reproduce things on a Gestetner, another implement I had never used.

Towards the end 1965 things changed again and I was going to be posted back to HK to replace one of the guys in 148 Bty who had been killed in a RTA in Singapore. We lost Bernard Collins and Brian Coldron. The Regt, 95 Cdo Lt Regt RA had lost 3. Very sad times indeed.

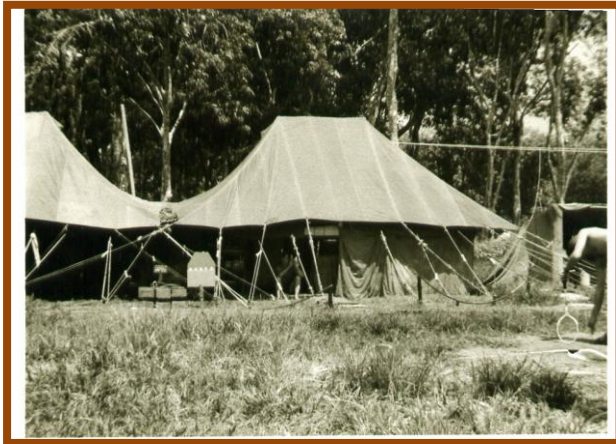
It felt good to be back in Hong Kong again. Things were good then and we had a new Bdr join us as ours, Barrie Viles, went back to the UK to complete his RSI's course and then to return afterwards. The new Bdr was Mick 'Flash' Cook. He had been in the SAS for 10 years and did lots of time in Malaya during the emergency on long patrols. He got the name Flash for his prowess at shooting. Once he took us on the range for some shooting with a variety of weapons. We put all the Tgts up and he selected an SMG, a weapon not many thought much of. He walked about 25 yds away and turned his back on the tgts. Then he said to someone 'Shout out Fire.' Which they did. He turned round in an instant and put a magazine in then fired one round into each tgt with lightening speed. He unloaded and we went to check. Each Figure 10 tgt had a round in the head. Amazing skill.

He could also TAB like nobody I had ever seen. The Bty came up to HK for an Ex which involved lots of movement in the New Territories, all very hilly. We had to get ashore by LCM but as we approached the beach area it was blocked off. The BC, Maj Spencer was not amused so began shouting at one of the vessels blocking our landing. Much exchange was undertaken until a figure appeared on the deck and silence prevailed from those around. It was Steve McQueen who was making the film 'The Sand Pebbles'. He heard our plight and simply said to the Director and crew 'Let these guys do what they have to do' and he waved us on. We then split up into our teams and hastened to make the RV's. Mick used to say 'Just stay on this contour, I am going to check the route.' He would then speed off and we just plodded on at the steady pace. He would then return and say OK or whatever then do it all again. He must have gone at least three times the distance we had but he was never out of breath. On another Ex we had to board an LCM of the RCT Port Sqdn with our L/Rover. We were to conduct some Fire Missions with a ship then observe a torpedo launch from a Submarine which was of course submerged. The LCM was to ensure the area around the Tgt was clear of the fishing Junks that always hovered around the Tgt Area to collect stunned fish. We shoed them all away and stood off the safe distance. We were warned that sometimes a torpedo would go rogue and home onto the largest metal object in the area which would of course have been us. The torpedo was fired and it tracked correctly towards the tgt. Then we suddenly saw a Junk speeding after it. We went to max speed but could not catch it. As the torpedo exploded with a mighty plume the Junk honed in on the splash. When we arrived the fishermen were grinning at us as they picked up loads of fish. What could we do but smile back at them. Those Junks sure could move fast.

We completed 6 months in HK and then in Jul 1966 the Team, Capt Payne, Bdr Barrie Viles, LRO Stu Fidler, Gnr Boggy Marsh and me were posted to Singapore and we were relieved by another team. As we arrived in Changi we were met by the BC of 148. He said we were to go straight to Borneo for a 3 month tour. Capt Payne had a few words with the BC but lost the argument. He said why us but was met with a wall of reasons. It was easier, he said, for us to complete this tour then have 2 years in Singapore than have settled in Singapore then to up sticks and move again. We conceded and went to Borneo.



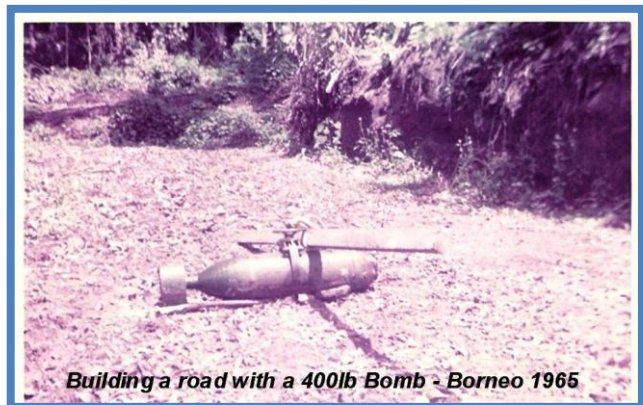
As I was the only one who had been there before it befell on me to be the tour guide. I ended up as driver and cox again. This time we were stationed with the Royal Hampshires, a slightly different prospect than with the RM as before. The camp routine was slightly different as the Borneo troubles were due to come to an end soon. At least we had much better accommodation this time, 2 tents linked up into one. Luxury.



There were a couple of things of note during our tour. The river which ran behind the camp was getting blocked up so at a meeting someone suggested it should be cleared as Mosquitoes were breeding in the debris. Capt Payne said one of his team was explosives trained and he would do it. That was of course me. We set about placing the charges when Boggy Marsh fell into the river. He had to be evacuated immediately as there was a suspicion that River Fluke or Leptospirosis was present. He spent a couple of days in the Hospital and was cleared. The explosion drew many spectators.

The next one was when the guy who owned the plantation we were camped on asked if we could help him with a problem. There was a minor hill

which he believed was an old volcano. He thought if we could blow the top off it he could get the ash out and spread it over his muddy tracks. Once again we came to the rescue. The MS Hang Tuah was still the guard ship so we asked if they had any old bombs. The Gunnery Officer produced a 400 lb Amatol bomb for me to blow up. He said he only had expertise of firing them through the ships system. He produced several Malaysian Seamen for a labour detail. They dug a big hole for it and I prepared the explosives. I taped 4x1lb sticks of TNT together and put dets and det chord into them. I made up 6 packs like this in all. When the Seamen had manoeuvred the bomb into the hole I prepared the cable to the charges. I had the initiation device with me and told them to wait. I went down the hill a considerable distance and secured the wire to a nearby tree and began to return to the bomb still with the initiation device in my hand. As I approached I saw them pounding at the earth which they had covered the bomb with. I screamed for them to stop. I then explained to the Gunnery Officer that they could have set the dets off with their pounding. He said 'Oh dear, we don't want that do we?' All went well after that and I set the charges off. A mighty explosion shook the earth and I saw the Seamen wide eyed covering somewhat. Apparently there was enough ash for the new road surface.



Another minor event happened whilst we were in Borneo. One of the camp signallers had managed to get contact by HF to the HQ and was able to relay the message that England had just won the World Football Cup. I was not interested and didn't even know there was a World Cup for football.

As the confrontation was drawing to a close our team was tasked with setting up a base on a tiny island off the N East tip of Borneo to see if we could intercept Gun Runners who used this route to smuggle weapons and cigarettes to the Philippines. For this we would have a Ship as support and a Helicopter at the Police Station on the mainland. I drove the Assault boat with a spare 40 hp engine up the coast for 80 miles and had Stu Fiddler and Capt Payne as passengers. Boggy Marsh and Barrie Viles went in the L/Rover by road.

We spent a couple of weeks mostly in preparation for the task in hand. We cleared a helio pad nearby and made ourselves obvious with boat patrols. Once again my explosives experience came into its own. I got the guys to chop a circle around each tree trunk near the ground and then I wound Det Chord around them all. I attached a ring of Det Chord and when initiated each tree came down easily.

All we then had to do was clear them away forming a sort of fence around the chopper pad. On returning from one of these Patrols I raised the engine then jumped out of the boat to push it onto the beach. That way only I would get wet. As I pushed I felt something bite me on my left foot through my Jungle Boot, which was just canvass. It hurt like mad but as I was pushing I just carried on as it had let go by then. When we had sorted ourselves out I took my boot off and inspected the area of the assault. There was a red patch and a couple of marks. Barrie gave a couple of pills and said stop being such a wuss. That night my leg was on fire and I could not move it. I dragged myself away from the others to sit against a tree. As morning broke Capt Payne asked how I was and he could see I was in some distress. The decision was to get me back to camp at the rush. It was 80 miles away. Stu drove the boat to the Police Post and Capt Payne and I got into the L/Rover with my left leg hanging out of the door. It was on fire. The journey was mostly on mud tracks so it was not pleasant. Upon arrival the Doctor took one look and said I would have to be admitted. He did some things to my foot and then I was put into the only Air Conditioned ward in the makeshift hospital in RAF Tawau. There were 5 beds crammed into this very small room. The other occupants were one soldier who had been shot in the shoulder during a patrol, one who had been badly burned by Aviation Fuel, another with very bad tinea of his groin area and the other who had been badly treated with phosphorus dressings after the removal of verrucas. Next day the Doc took me to the operating room and said to sit on the table holding my leg. He said he would not give me an anaesthetic as I was supposed to be a roughy toughy, he then cut my foot with a scalpel where the two holes were and all sorts of multi coloured stuff poured out. He seemed quite pleased with that result. He explained all the poison had accumulated between the bones of my little toe and the next one forming an abscess. The hole was about the size of a thumbnail and we could see into the inside of my foot. He said I was lucky because a sea snake bite was normally deadly but mostly only to young children and old people. Nevertheless he said I was lucky because had the poison entered through a vein I would have been very sick indeed and possibly dead by now. Thanks for the diagnosis I said.

I spent a week in hospital having three penicillin jabs each day and having dead cells pulled out of the hole with tweezers. The Team had to depart as the confrontation was now over and all that were needed were garrison type troops for a while. It appears we were more important.

After a while I was discharged and returned to Singapore and back to 148 Bty. In a week the Bty were to deploy on a 3 month Exercise to the Philippines, Hong Kong back to the Philippines then onto Australia before returning to Singapore. The whole Fleet was to be involved with the Aircraft Carrier HMS Victorious as the Flag Ship. I was almost recovered but the hole in my foot had not fully healed up so I was told to try and keep it dry. The team I was assigned to was Capt Murphy, LRO Fidler, L/Bdr 'Brummie' Jones, Gnr 'Boggy' Marsh and me as a newly promoted L/Bdr. The rest of the Bty were spread out on other ships. I had occasion to get into Capt Murphy's bad books when a while ago he was telling some of the Bty about his exploits as the Primary FAC with 3 Para in the Radfan. He went a tad quiet when I told him I was in NGFO5 during the whole time with 3 Para and seemed to recall things differently. In fact Lt Col Farrah-Hockley had sent him to the rear and made Capt Riddell the Primary FAC. Nuf said. So now he was my boss on this trip. Our team boarded the RFA Tidespring and were allocated the forrad mess deck to ourselves. It was massive. We did Canadian PT every morning and chatted about things but not the Radfan. A week later the armada arrived in the Philippines namely Subic Bay which was a massive US Naval base. The next day we were due to transfer to HMS Victorious so had the chance of a quick run ashore. We were anchored quite a way out in the bay. Capt Murphy said 'You can go ashore but remember this. The last ferry leaves the jetty at 0100hrs. We are being picked up from the Port Waist at 0700hrs to be transferred to Victorious. Any questions?' There were none. Brummie Jones and I made a quick exit to go ashore. We went to many bars and one in particular invited us to stay a while and be entertained. We had a quite a few drinks and suddenly I saw it was past 0100hrs. We scurried to the Jetty and saw a Yank boat. I asked if they could take us to the Tidespring. The guy looked at my Green Beret and hesitated. Come on man I pleaded we are in deep mire if we are late. He said OK and asked where the Tidespring was. Out there I said pointing to the horizon. We visited many ships until we eventually found ours and slipped aboard. It was 0600hrs. We got our kit and rushed to the Port Waist pick up point with 10 mins to spare. Capt Murphy was there and seemed very angry. He wanted to know where we had been and why we were late. I calmly said we are not late Sir, you said 0700hrs and it is now 0650hrs. Then we couldn't find Stu Fidler. I said in my usual sarcastic manner 'looks like he is adrift Sir should we spread out and try to find him?'

We eventually all got together and boarded Victorious. We sailed for HK. During the weeks voyage both Brummie Jones and I were charged with being absent from a parade. There was no such thing in those days as warning someone for office they just marched them in. We stood before the BC as Murphy read out his statement and listened to the BC telling us both about what horrible men we were and did we have anything to say for ourselves before he administered punishment. Brummie said nothing but I of course put my Barristers wig on and went into a long explanation of why we were not late. When I had finished the BC asked Murphy if my details about timing were correct and he answered that technically I was right but I was also wrong. The BC suggested that I had displayed initiative and admonished me but he demoted Brummie. As we marched away Brummie said something to me which I cannot repeat but he also smiled. We spent 9 days in HK then the fleet had to return to Subic Bay. This time some of us went by HMS Manxman. She was a Fast Minelayer during WWII and operated in the Med. She had a top speed of 38kts (44mph) in her day. She was narrow and tossed about even when tied up in harbour. Once again we were allocated the forrad mess deck with some of the Chinese Laundry men. There were about 8 of us. Barrie Viles, Stu Fidler, Ernie Gent, Boggy Marsh, Rocky Eyre, Brummie Jones, Podge Black and me. Dont recall the others. As we left HK there was a storm brewing so the upper deck was put out of bounds. Barrie spent the next 5 days in a rope locker just behind the funnel. We kept feeding him mugs of chips and coffee. He was very sea sick. The others were as well but for some reason both Ernie and I were not. Oh yes! I have just remembered, we had all their tots of rum each day. Stay pissed and you cannot get sea sick. We arrived in Subic and again transferred to Victorious. Next there was a beach landing and we deployed ashore to the firing range with the USMC. There were two teams of us and we waded ashore as the ramp went down I looked behind me to see the USMC guys stripped and with their kit on their heads. The two NGFO's were Capt's Murphy and Miller. Capt Miller spoke with a cultured Oxford accent which came in useful later. I was put into Murphys team with L/Bdr Rocky Eyre as the senior JNCO. He and Murphy were pals. Both were amazing runners and Rocky was also a very fierce boxer. He became a tad power crazy and tried to boss me around somewhat to Murphy's delight. I decided to do exactly as I was told even if it was wrong and it was often wrong. This exasperated Murphy even more. When he couldn't observe a salvo I also couldn't for some reason. When we conducted FAC for some reason I could not see the approaching strike aircraft. After a while he realised and made me his ACK. I surreptitiously took over most of the NGS and FAC Missions after that.

The USMC guys just lay on their lilos in their sleeping bags most of the time. We of course did physical and brewed up and cooked our rations and made bashers. The Yanks did not cook theirs but ate them cold as they stared in envy at us scoffing ours.

One evening we were sitting on the beach when the USMC Det asked if we would like some beer. Where would they get beer we asked. They sent the fishermen to get some from the next village and some ice as well. We dug a big hole in the beach and when they returned we put the ice and beer into it. That evening we, that's 10 of us and around 6 of USMC sat around a bonfire to chat. The conversation turned to what they did in Vietnam. One Marine said they just went on patrol and shot Gooks. How did they do it we asked. He replied that when we see a VC, or think we saw a VC or thought we may have seen one we just open up on the Jungle. He bragged he had once fired 3000 rounds from his AR14 at something. Helicopters had dropped more ammo into them. They had a Lt (JD) with them and he saw Capt Miller smiling and shaking his head. They discussed tactics and the Lt asked how we would have done it. Muggsy Miller said with his terribly posh cultured English accent, 'Well Old Boy, I would have pointed at one of my men and simply said One round at the man in black pyjamas, fire. That would have been enough don't you think?' The Lt was confused by his suggestion. They also had a S/Sgt who was a Lifer with them and one of the younger guys said he could drink anyone under the table. They had not counted on Ernie Gent who was our best drinker. We began and after a time there were only Ernie, the S/Sgt and me left. I was cheating by occasionally spilling my beer into the sand but after a while I gave up. Next morning the S/Sgt was flaked out and Ernie was still drinking the remaining beers watching the sun rise.



The time came to get on with the main Exercise which would be 21 day's at sea being chased by the Aussie Navy simulating an attack by sea. We all boarded our ships with most of the Bty going onto Bulwark but a small group of us went on the Victorious. Capt Reed, Barrie Viles, Ernie, Boggy Marsh, RO2 Jock (Gordon) Innes, Rocky Eyre and me. Capt Reed had once been in the RN Fleet Air Arm but he just couldn't land a plane so he was discharged. About 18 months later he joined the RA and then 148 Bty. We were split up and Barrie, Ernie and Rocky went into the Cheffs Mess and Jock, Boggy and me into the Fleet Air Arm (Hairy Fairies) Mess. Rocky joined up with the Club Swingers for full time boxing training as there was to be a Boxing competition when we arrived in Australia against a local Sydney Club. At first we were just watch keeping in the Radio Office as we could all do morse but after 2 day's we asked for a Job Change possibly on the roof so we could get some fresh air. Jock remained in the wireless office as he was getting experience for his LRO's course. We were given two full sets of No 8's and all the flight deck and foul weather gear and became 'Chock Heads'. Blue vests on the flight deck who were responsible for all the handling of the aircraft. The Killick of the Mess I was in saw all this new gear and suggested when we left the ship I could exchange it with his for a tot or two. I agreed and as we chatted he said he was once in the Para's. Yes, right I thought but he then

*Ernie & Me awaiting Reception to allocate us a bunk - The 'Vic' 1966*



showed me he had wings tattooed on his right arm. He also showed me some photos of him to prove it. We were put into watches and I was in First Part of Port watch. We would continue doing this for the remainder of our trip less for one very good Jolly. We were allowed to do some training and be flown off the Carrier by catapult in AEW Gannets then recovered after we had conducted a Fly Past of Bikini Atoll. They were used for Atomic Bombs testing prior to and after the war. The Safety Officer did say if you have to get out in the air just watch out for the tail. As we were all Para trained that part was not needed. We had a photo taken alongside a Vixen and used it many times when ashore to say we were Fighter Jet Pilots.



*Ernie, Rocky & Me after our flight off the deck  
The 'Vic' 1966*

I witnessed 5 crashes on that Flight Deck. It was said that the flight deck of a Carrier was the busiest and most dangerous in the world. I can vouch for that. I got on well with the guys in the mess deck and was asked by the Killick of the Mess if I wanted to be rum bosun on two occasions. That was a massive honour for a mere Pongo. I knew all the actions, traditions and procedure which were closely monitored throughout. I had passed and was almost a Matelot. The second time was when one guy had his birthday and the tradition was he had to leave his ID Card and Tot Glass alongside the Rum Fanny as the Bosun conducted the tradition of nodding at it each time he drew another tot. That meant each guy would take a look at the ID Card then also give a nod and I had to spill a bit back into the fanny. At the end I had to draw 2 tots for the Birthday boy before drawing mine. Last action was for me to empty the fanny and that was 'Queen's'. The traditions were a minefield and small gestures, a nod, wink were all part of the secret language of Tot Time. Lo and behold it if the Bosun got anything wrong but luckily I didn't.

We entered Sydney Harbour and of course Procedure Alpha was conducted. I was on the Watch that had to line up all the Aircraft and vehicles. We got about 3 hours sleep then all lined the decks.

*The 'Vic' entering Sydney Harbour - Oct 1966  
That's me 123rd on right*



There was a massive crowd on the docks waiting for us. We had 12 day's in harbour and all transport and cinemas ashore were free for those in uniform and some other things as well. The crowds just wanted to meet us all as most of them were from the UK and had emigrated to Australia in the 50's for only £10. A guy came into our mess deck and said he had served on the Vic and this was his mess deck. He now ran an RSL Club which was similar to the RBL. He invited the whole mess to Mortdale RSL Club that night. As most were either on duty or had to be on duty later only 5 of us could attend. It was fabulous. Next day Jock and me asked for shore leave and got it for the remainder of the stay as long as we were back on board for Sailing Orders. We spent a great time with the Aussies and we even went to the St George's Rugby League Club. It was quite famous and I just happened to win a very big jackpot on the One Arm Bandits. I had to enter my name in the Book for such a big win then as I collected the cash and turned round all I could see were scowling Aussie faces. I got a round in and all was well. Our host took us out to Bondi Beach and we went for a ride in a speed boat towing a gorgeous lady skier. He told us she was the current Aussie champ. Then we went for the inevitable Barbie and had a few Tinnies. In due course we had to return to the Victorious and make passage for a week to Freemantle.

Flying duties continued all week and then we entered Freemantle accompanied by a couple of Destroyer escorts. As it was in Sydney all travel was free so Ernie and me decided to visit Perth by train. We were stared at in our Jungle Greens (OG's) and we smiled and just nodded. All the bars we went into in Perth were deserted so we decided to return to Freemantle but then said lets get off at the fourth stop and see what is happening there. We boarded the train and lots of other people got on each stop until the fourth where they all disembarked. What was going on we thought. We followed the throng and it was a car racing circuit. We got in free and saw a big caravan which was a bar. We went up and ordered a beer but one of the two guys at the bar, one each end, said he would pay. It transpired he had been in the Aussie Army in Borneo and had been in a position with the Poms as he called us. He recognised our uniform and asked what we were doing here. Spending the next week we replied so he said we could use his car if we wanted and he gave us his address and said he had to go meet someone. I was flabbergasted. The other guy came over and said he had heard us chatting and said he was also in the Aussie RAREME and now owned a used car showroom. His wife was a Brit and she worked as a Dental Receptionist. We went to his home and met her and chatted about the UK. We stayed with them for a couple of days and he let us have a car each morning as he had to work but in the afternoon he joined us and was our tour guide. He also introduced us to his Uncle who just happened to be Perth City Treasurer. He was also in the Aussie Army as a Capt and showed us his uniform. His wife noticed he and Ernie were about the same size so suggested Ernie tried it on. It was a perfect fit. That's the only time I had seen Ernie looking so smart.

Sadly it was time to leave and continue our journey back to Singapore. We passed through the straights of Indonesia and Borneo at full Action Stations just to be on the safe side. Our aircraft flew overhead as well. The Confrontation was over but just in case as we were still an International force we wanted to show off a bit.



Arrived back in Singapore to find we had been moved from Nee Soon Camp into Dieppe Barracks with the Regt. Our buildings had been burnt down when we were away and the rear party were not able to salvage much. As they were Ratan huts it was not a surprise. There had been an electrical fault.

When we turned too a couple of days later the BSM WOII Costello called me into his office. 'Right Richards, I want you to take this new officer (I forget his name) up to the Island to conduct some NGS for a ship going to HK and Japan. You will be picked up by a Malasian Alouette and taken to Palau Aur then it will go to Mersing to refuel and wait. Once the firings are over you are to get the ship to contact the Mersing Airfield and arrange to be picked up and return here. (Not many Frigates had



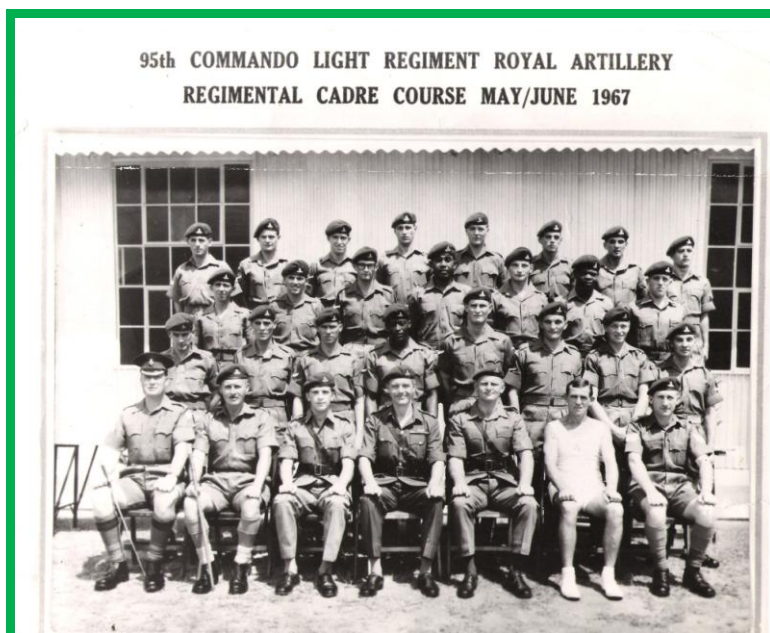
their own Helios in those days). Should anything go wrong just sort it out OK. Any questions? Well I had so many but at the top of the list was 'Why me Sir, I have just spent 3 months in Borneo, 3 months on the Exercise. Is there nobody else? He paused and then said something I will never forget. 'Look Richards, I have chosen you because you are the best and most experienced JNCO's in the Bty. I am pushing for your second stripe so don't let me down' I have to say I was amazed. I felt I was doing OK in the Bty and on reflection I guess I had gained a load of experience in the past 2 ½ years. I left feeling quite good about myself.

I met up with the Capt and said to him OK what are your plans then Sir. He looked at me and said I thought you were going to tell me. I said you are a Capt and get much more pay than me as a L/Bdr. Tell me what to do. He tried to reason with me and after a while I conceded to his wishes. I got an A43 (UHF) and an A13 (HF) radio with spare btys and the Tgt Records, stop watches, flare gun, Air Pannels and some survival kit. The Officer, who was so green he had not even completed his Jungle Warfare Course yet. We boarded the Helio and made our way to the Island which is about 60K off the East Coast of Malaysia. Mersing is about a 180k trip.

I guided the pilot towards the rough Landing Strip which had been cut a long time ago and we got out and made our way to the big rock that was the OP. I got comms with the Helio and Ship. The Capt said why are you using Morse Code. Obviously he had not been briefed about the Bty at all. I started to point out the Buoys to him but he could not for the life of him see any. I tried to guide him but to no avail. They were 6,000yds away on a calm sea. I told him that sometimes in a choppy sea or swell they are difficult but it is now dead calm. OK, I decided to do the first mission myself and hope he could join in sometime. So there I was, a L/Bdr with a Capt looking at me communicating with a Frigate by Morse and filling in the Tgt Records at the same time. After the first mission I switched the ship to Voice and hoped he could see something. Nothing, not even the fall of shot. I was known for speaking my mind and being a tad sarcastic but always ending with 'Sir' but this was too much.

On return to Camp the BSM asked me for a report on the new Officer. I told him exactly what I thought. In 1967 I was put on a Cadre Course which was meant to take Bdrs and prepare the for Sgt in due course. The course consisted of drill, lots of it, the ability to instruct any subject, signals and a lot of bull. It culminated in a Jungle Exercise up the Pantai Ridge. The Drill Instructor, a Cpl of Horse from the Life Guards who had just completed his long drill course at Pirbright, was all over us. He was quite funny at times but mostly just shouted a lot. At one point he had us lined up opposite each other on the drill square about 60 yds apart drilling our opposite number all at the same time. Of course our voices never managed to carry so the antics of guessing what was shouted at us was hilarious. He always said that we should obey any order even if it was wrong. He once marched the whole squad into a Monsoon Ditch on purpose.





**TOP ROW** BDR RAVENHILL, LBDR CONNELLY, LBDR PHILP, LBDR BURRELL, LBDR FAULL, LBDR ADAMSON, LBDR NALSON, LBDR KELLY.  
**2nd ROW** LBDR HERVE, LBDR RICE, LBDR HALLING, LBDR NAICO, LBDR McDEAN, LBDR MARSH, LBDR EMERY.  
**3rd ROW** LBDR TARLING, LBDR COOPER, LBDR WHITELOCK, LBDR SIMON, LBDR BLOCKLEY, LBDR RICHARDS, GNR JACKSON, LBDR SMITH.  
**SITTING** C of H HUNT J., WO1 (RSM) DAVEY L.J., CAPT J.N. ALFORD RA, LT COL P. R. R. deBURGH RA, LT I.M.D. SWAN RA, Q.M.S.I. WINNING, SGT HENNESSEY. R.J.

Many exercises followed as well as live firings with ships. Suddenly I was promoted to Bdr. The BSM called me in and told me there had been some resistance from a certain officer who was in favour of someone else and to try to keep my nose clean and not to speak out so much. Nuf said.

A while later in 1967 some of us were on our upgrage NGA course to B1. We went to Hong Kong for 5 weeks for this. I went ashore every night but still managed to come top. I had a wealth of experience under my belt by now but I always just got on with the job and kept in the background mostly.

I managed to fit a tour to Aden in soon afterwards. It was a bit of a bore just doing road blocks and feeling a sniper was always watching you through the sights of a rifle. We had some dealings with the SAS who used to patrol in Arab dress. They nearly always told us they were in our area just to avoid any trouble. One of them was a Fijian who had great success in grabbing suspects. I was also involved in some old fashioned Brit Square style of riot control. The front rank had to fire at the crowd on many occasions. When we left the situation had worsened and the withdrawal took place with much booby trapping. Some of the Embassy staff drove Austin Princesses to the airport and just left them there so we spiked them with the pins of grenades tied to door handles, bonnets, boots and other things.

I returned to Singapore then out of the blue there was another change to plans. Some of us were going to be posted to Malta for a 12 month tour. We packed up and then went to Malta. There were still 2 teams out there but this time we were billeted in Lintorn Bks alongside Valetta, this was where my Grandfather had been posted during the first World War in 1916. The new setup was Maj Kellway, Capt Morris, Bdr Hood, RO1 Pullen, RO1 Martin, Ernie, Baz Critchley, Bert Stevens, Podge Black and Me. Maj Kellway was new and was surprised that Pete Pullen had a beard. We had to explain that he was a Matelot and could grow one. Over a few beers we complained that it was unfair, jokingly, about this discrimination and he said as he was our Troop Commander he would allow all of us to grow beards. Well after a few weeks only myself, Ernie, and Baz had some sort of respectable growth so the rest had to come clean. One morning Ernie awoke from a good night ashore and started to shave then realised what he was doing. With only half left he had to go the whole way. Baz had developed just a chin strap so he had to bail out as well which only left me. I kept it for a very long time. We went to Cyprus parachuting regularly and one time as we were coming back through check-in an RMP Cpl stopped me and asked to see my ID Card. I didn't of course have a beard then so he questioned me

## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY



quite vigorously so I simply said that the guy over there, pointing at Maj Kellway, said it was OK. The Cpl strutted over and enquired about my statement so Maj Kellway said I am his CO and I have authorised it. Do you have any problems with that Cpl. Err no he said, I was just checking.

I started playing Rugby for a team of small units called the Nomads. Also playing from 3 Tp were Podge Black, Pete Pullen and Johnny Martin. During the first few trg sessions we were told to slow down as we were so fit. Later on I also played for a civvy team called the Overseas Club and a couple of times for the Army.

After a while Maj Kellway was posted back to the UK to take over as BC 148 Bty and Maj Jackman took over. He had been an NGFO in HK for some time in the early 60's and knew the ropes. I had to shave my beard off but kept the tash which I still have.



Our Maltese Bdr Clerk was due to leave and we had a small ceremony.

*L to R:- Ernie Gent, Pete Pullin, Maj Jackman, Me, Baz Critchley, Johnny Martin, The Clerk, Bert Stevens and Capt Morris.*



The TAVR NGLO's and the NGS Troop (TA) came out to Malta and I was tasked again in producing a training programme for them. Of course it included Abseiling which to them was a new skill. The spot I chose was near Jharlapsi and as they went over the top about 20 ft later it was a sheer drop from an overhang.

The live firings continued and we were kept very busy with the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet, NATO and DTS ships. The US 6th Fleet had left Naples and was approaching Malta for Live Firings on Filfla the following week. They had been at Battle Stations/General Quarters for the past 7 hours and the last serial on their Exercise was to establish Comms with us to simulate supporting a landing. It was July 20<sup>th</sup> 1969 and from the roof of our block in Lintorn Bks

I had good Morse comms with them and we practised some of their FXP3 Missions. Z40G, Z44G and Z46G. As the Comms exercise ended we were on Voice so I said to the Operator 'Good serial and may we all congratulate you on last night's fantastic achievement'. The guy on the other end said 'Request you say again'. I did and he then said 'What achievement?' I replied 'Landing on the Moon'. They did not know at that stage. The rest of the fleet knew about 3 mins later on. We had a good run ashore down the Gut that evening.

1 Para were the Inf Bn on the Island and we did a lot of work with them. One day I bumped into Titch Taylor who had been on the same basic NGS course as me but had failed and chose 7<sup>th</sup> Para. Later on he had transferred to the Para's and now here he was the armourer. We had a long chat and he seemed very happy with how things had turned out. Once we had an Ex with 1 Para where we jumped into Lybia from 2 Hercs. The DZSO took a photo of it. We had to stay for 2 days shooting up



rocks and bushes before we returned to Malta. The jump went well and everyone walked off the DZ which it unusual for the Para's as they expect at least 10% casualties. I was behind Maj Jackman on the Stbd side and as I cleared the Aircraft I could see a chute flapping and hear someone shouting to keep hold of him. There had been a collision with the other guy from the Port side and both were coming down on one chute. Maj Jackman said that when he jumped out all he saw was a chute wrapped round his face so he began to try and clear it thinking it may be his own. In the process he had scratched

his face quite a bit. He heard this guy calling not to let him go and was just able to clear one eye to see what had happened. He shouted to the guy to drop his container but couldn't lower his own for fear of it hitting the guy below. It was a miracle they both walked off the DZ. When we arrived back in Malta people all asked what we had been doing and we replied just a Jump and a small Ex afterwards. Haven't you heard the news they asked. Apparently Col Gadaffi, who was then sort of friendly with the Brits, had mounted a Military Coup on 1<sup>st</sup> Sep 1969. They all thought were part of it but later we assumed we had possibly been used on the drop as a cover. He did also kick the Americans out from Whelus Air Base though and 22 Air Defence Regt.

The Bty used to send a team out to Malta for a swan and we used to take them ashore and beast them at Physical. We were so fit. One such time we were preparing for an Exercise with SBS against a ship. It was usual and called Operation Awkward in the Navy. They had to defend their ship against boarders and divers. The idea was our two teams would be in the canoes and speed boat we had and SBS would swim and attempt to get aboard. The ship was not allowed to use thunder flashes dropped near their ship as it would be too dangerous. The team from UK had Capt Yogi Preece as their officer. He was a tad mad but one great idea he had was a tube about 2" dia and around 4ft long. He would strike a large Thunder flash and drop it in then strike another one and drop it on top. When the first one went off it propelled the second one into the air a fair distance then it went off. By some jiggery pokery he could make the burst of the second one alter. We got all set up and the idea was we were to make as much noise as possible while SBS did their stuff. We had lights, whistles and an assortment of diversionary items to confuse the Navy. Two of SBS managed to get on board but as the whole ships company were on the upper deck it was deemed as a failure. There was a Lt in charge of the defence force and he handcuffed one of SBS to a stop cock on the upper deck as he began to interrogate the other one. The first SBS guy got bored and began to walk around the stop cock he was handcuffed to and it flooded somewhere on board. Damage control were deployed to stop it. The one who was being interrogated by the Lt RN was only handcuffed and as the commotion ensued the Lt, his interrogator, looked at where all the noise was coming from as the SBS guy calmly dived overboard still handcuffed.

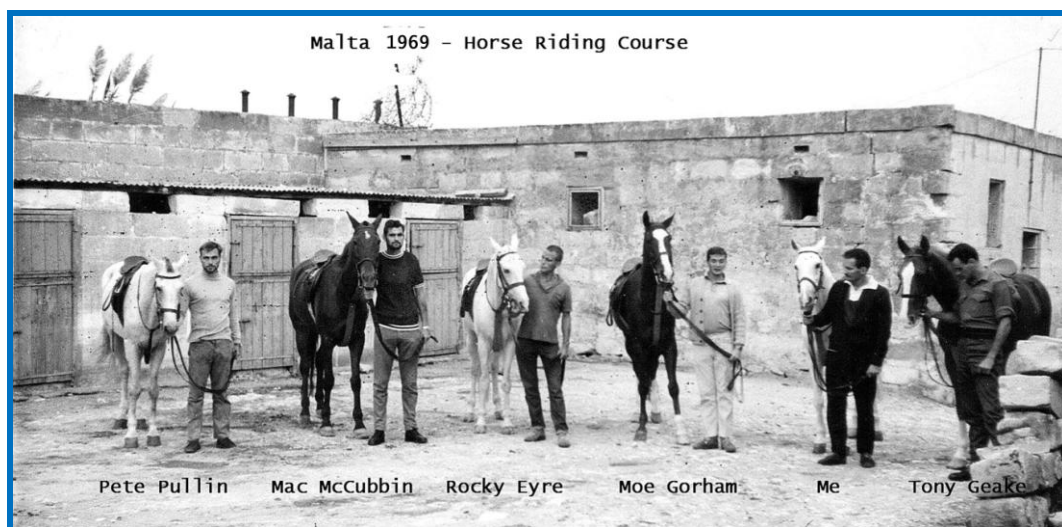
Peace and quiet descended and there was a hot wash-up. When the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt asked how the SBS guy had got away the Lt said he was handcuffed so I thought he would stay. The 1<sup>st</sup> Lt said, 'Mr, he is an SBS Swimmer Canoeist. He could have swum miles with hands and feet handcuffed'. In those days SBS were all expert Swimmers and this guy was a just like a dolphin.

Malta was busy as always and soon there was another change of personnel. Maj Jackman tasked me with showing the new guys around and running a little 2 week course for them on the American NGS Procedures. I presented him with the programme which consisted of, Physical, Morse, Visiting the Camera positions and OP at Gharlapsi, Photo Compilation from firings and general MT systems. Out came the new guys. Sgt Eyre, RO1's McCubbin and Watson, Gnr's Mo Gorham and Tony Geek. I was not happy having to teach a Sgt and made it quite clear to Maj Jackman. I showed him the



results from the daily Morse and other things where the Sgt was not up to scratch. Maj Jackman spoke with the Sgt who said he was not here to do things like that but to tell others what to do. Again I was not happy at all. After a very long time in deep thought I decided to apply for selection for the SAS. Maj Jackman and I had a lengthy conversation about things. I was not happy that after a Bdrs Course, which was basically a drill course, someone could be promoted to Sgt. He said he would accept my request but would delay it for 6 months as was his right. I left the office and after a week I returned with another option. I demanded to go to Larkhill and do the RSI course where I guaranteed I would get a B Grade, A Grades were as rare as Dodo Eggs, and therefore be fully qualified to be the Bty Sigs Sgt. He said he would look into it but as I had not completed a JSI course it would be unprecedented.

An opportunity arose for us to do a 2 month course to ride the Polo Ponies that were stabled in Marsa. They were not used a lot so the staff offered the course out to all Troops on the Island. We were first to request so off we went. The idea was to introduce soldiers to horses with the hope they may take up riding.



We got on quite well. I had ridden before but only briefly when I was a child in Hereford and again in Bahrain. I think the instructors allowed us some leeway owing to our fitness and willingness to get stuck in. Once when the Instructor was called away he told us just to potter around the end of the Polo area as he would not be too long. That was a mistake because we all lined up and raced to the other side. Then a couple of Maltese riders came out to practice some Polo shots. When our ponies heard the click of the ball being hit with the stick they perked up and raced uncontrollably towards the sound. They pushed into each other as they raced forward. It was a surprise to us just how strong they were. The Instructor arrived and admonished us all but secretly saw the funny side to it and inside he was pleased with our enthusiasm.

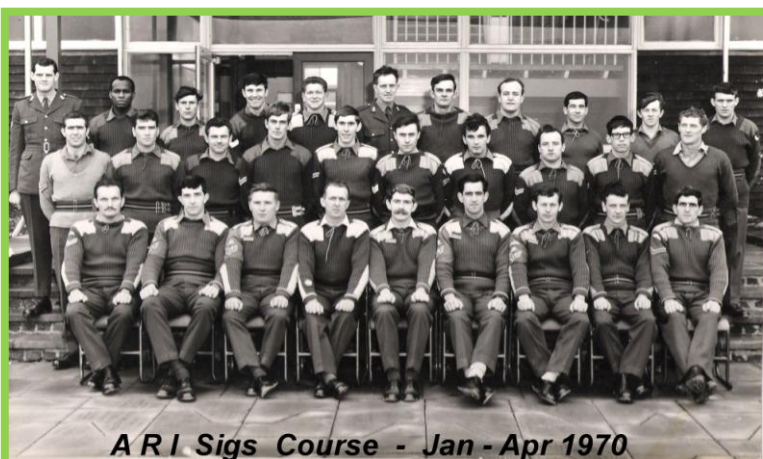
Another Med trip was on for 3 Cdo Bde and as they passed Malta we boarded for destination Cyprus and a major Ex with live Firings. There was much planning and I was involved on the fringes. All the big wigs got together then it was filtered down to us erks. In essence the 3 Cdo Bde Commander wanted his Marines to experience moving forward under close support. As the exercise area was inland he wanted the guns from 29 Cdo to act as NGS and then followed up with FAC. We were to play this part much to the annoyance of 29 who thought they should control the situation. He quickly pointed out that NGS always preceded a landing and the guns followed on. 15 love to the Brig I say. It was planned for each Coy to practice a landing by helio with our NGFO then advance to the tgt. That meant 3 landings for our team. As the FAC was not able to join in that would be the next day with similar movements. In due course we arrived in Cyprus and began setting up the exercise. First we climbed aboard the Wessex as a fleet of others followed. We exited and got comms and conducted a dry run and advanced. The Booties quickly overtook us and we had to try to stop them. We then conducted the same Ex two more times with the other Coys. At the debrief we had to try and tell them not to advance beyond us otherwise it may be a tad dangerous with live rounds landing. In the afternoon we began the live phase and embarked on the Wessex again. I had established comms and prepared the Guns with the initial rounds so only had to order '1 round Fire For Effect' as I exited

the helio. All went very well and as I exited so did all the others from their respective Helios. As the rounds landed I saw almost all of the RM go to ground. We advanced and had to encourage them to follow as the rounds were walked ahead of us at around 600yds or so. The same happened with the other two Coy's strangely. At the Hot Washup the RM leaders said they had never experienced something like that before. Job done I thought. We had more respect from the Booties from then on.

Now it was the FAC phase. There was a very large mound which we took over to observe the F4 Phantoms attacking selected tgts. The RM were placed in their positions as we directed the rockets. Again they were impressed. On the mound along but behind us were some top brass and they were also impressed. Maj Jackman asked for the usual low pass to signify EndEx. Just like that time in the Radfan one Phantom passed in front of us from right to left but suddenly the other one came right at us a little to our right. He actually passed below us very fast and the sound shocked many of the Brass. They were impressed I can tell you so were the RM Cdo who were all over us from then on.

I acted as an NGLO on many occasions with many NATO ships. Once when I was on a USN ship she was conducting their Big 'E' shoot which they had to qualify 100% in to get the hash marks on the E on their funnel signifying they had passed Gunnery Proficiency. We had a couple of warm up runs then the Skipper announced over the tannoy 'Do you hear there. Capt here. We are now going to go for the Big 'E' so get your heads on straight. Let's do it' The Z46G as it was known required the ship to simulate a beach landing support with various tgts being engaged over a strict time phase but with the added inclusion of a Counter Bty firing at them which required 4 fast salvoes at Counter Bty fire. All was going well and the Gunnery Officer and I were in total Sync. Then came the final phase which required another timed firing. We were all poised and tension was high. The Gunnery officer said to one of the Chief's 'I want you to count down the secs to the firing' The chief nodded then as he pressed the mic to his lips he said Five and almost got Four out when the ship fired. They had committed the cardinal sin of using Five during a live mission. The Skipper came rushing into the Ops room from the bridge and grabbed the Gunnery Officer and hit him square in the chest. There was a gasp from everyone. He screamed out loud 'What the Goddam F\*\*\*\* do you think I am down this far on my ship you Mother F\*\*\*\*. You have just cost me .....' then he seemed to calm down a little realising we were all watching. After a silence I said to the Skipper 'Sir, if you want I can log that as a Live Warm Up and say the Shore Fire Control Party had a Camera Malfunction if you agree' He was stunned and to be honest so was I at my bold statement. He stammered something and I called the Team and suggested they had a camera malfunction and we would go again in 15mins. They agreed realising something had gone wrong. At the Hot wash-up everyone had some excuse and when I was asked my opinion I stated that on RN ships we never use the number 5 in a countdown and use the word 'Shoot' to indicate to fire. The Skipper said to everyone 'You make those Goddam guns Shoot or there will be some demotions.' We completed a perfect Z46G afterwards. The Skipper was quite pleased with my performance and in fact said, in jest, he would appoint me temp Capt of his ship as we entered Marsalokk Harbour. Well he did and I took command, under much scrutiny by the Bridge Crew I have to say, and just said slow ahead, steer 320Dg, and then all stop.

We also went to Cyprus and complete a Military Ski Course. It was both downhill and Cross Country. All one had to do was change the binding setting to switch to either. We were split into 8 Man sections and Ernie and I were together. Our instructor was a Para and we got on very well and progressed quicker than most of the others. Airborne!



I was accepted on the next RSI course at Larkhill and met up with some old friends.

*Front row third from right Sgt MacNaughton who was now an instructor. Front row far left me of course and far right Bdr Nobby Noble, ex 20 Bty. Behind him Jock Poneskis (SAS) his son became BSM of 148 Bty later. Back row third from right Bdr Wally Doole who was 20 Bty.*

The course was 14 weeks long and intense. Everyone had to learn

## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

Morse so that was one subject for me not to worry about. Mac was the instructor for that so he knew Wally, Nobby, Jock and me were OK but just not to show any favouritism the Course Instructing Officer, Capt Moffat said we had to attend all lessons. As the class got better Mac used to send sentences of about 8-10 words long and afterwards ask someone to read out what they had received. Later on he made me stand up with my hands behind my back as he was sending and when finished he made me repeat what he had sent. Then he asked the class if it was right. He also did this to the other Ex AO Bty guys as well. At the end of the course both Wally and I gained a 'B' Grade with a recommendation to return as instructors. I went home to B'ham for a week then back to Singapore and 148 Bty.

May 1970 I arrived back in Singapore. We knew there was to be a massive cutback in the Military everywhere and especially in Singapore. It was planned that there would be a big pullout in 1971. Soon after I arrived I was told to run a Basic NGS Course for some soldiers who had been posted to 148 Bty. I was not sure if they had volunteered at that time. I got on with making out a programme but we did not have many aids. Some failed and were sent back to the Regt.



Our building was the one on the left and HQ Bty 95 Cdo Lt Regt on the right. The remainder of 95 were in Dieppe Bks. The ground floor was mainly Stores, the first floor Offices and NGFO rooms and the top floor accommodation. After a short while Ernie managed to persuade Maj Kellway, the BC that we should have our own bar. The two rooms on the top left were turned into the bar area. I helped Ernie build it but he organised, with his flair for doing business, all the materials and made a contract with the NAAFI to provide the drinks. Every Friday we had a delivery and all hands assisted to stock up the bar. There was a very strict rule that only 148 Pers could use the bar and anyone wishing to bring someone as a guest had to pass a board from the Bty. It worked very well. We did not try to make a profit but somehow we always did.

One day the BSM Barrie Viles called me into the office with a task. I was to take a few guys and a S/Sgt, L/Cpl and Spr from the Royal Engineers up to Palau Aur to make a more permanent OP using the existing boulder as the base. The idea was to use it as a platform after they had blown the top off it. Previously Ernie and I had managed to make the Heli Pad large enough to take a Wessex by blowing up all the trees and stumps. This time I was in charge of the plan and we would all go up in an LCM and when we were in position a Helio would arrive to transfer all the heavy kit up to the peak. It's first lift would be a 50gall drum of aviation fuel for it's self. I had to keep in contact with it by UHF until all the lifting was complete then it would return to Singapore and we would construct this OP. Not everything went to plan but in due course we had a stable OP built.





## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

I took the photo. *L to R Rear - Soapy Watson, RE Sapper, RE S/Sgt. Front – RE L/Cpl, Dave Millward, Dick Adderton, Harry Jukes.*

There was an Ex in HK for one ad hoc NGS Team and the BC asked me if I would like to be on it as a reward for running the NGS Course and building the OP on Pulau Aur. Of course I said yes so I joined up with Maj Jackman (BK), RO1 Jock (Gordon) Innes, Gnr Williams (Storeman). We kitted up and went to Changi airport. It was the time when certain bad people were hi jacking aeroplanes so the RAF Police had to check everyone on the flight. It was a flight full of Military pers and some of their families but still they had to do their job. We were in uniform with weapons slung over our shoulders, ArmaLite AR 14's to be exact. As we approached the makeshift table set up outside the departure area we were asked some questions by the RAF Police and one by one let off to walk to the Aircraft. As the last member of our group was allowed to pass suddenly the RAF Police staff, both men and women, shouted for us to stop and stand still. I turned around and saw them all in a panic. What are those weapons you have one shouted. Put them down immediately. It was a farce. They collected the four weapons and began to admonish us for not declaring them. In my usual polite manner I said to a Cpl they were on full display and you never asked if we had weapons you idiot. Maj Jackman stepped in to calm the situation as other passengers passed us by staring. They said we could not take weapons on board without special permission. I said just take the working parts out and keep them in a safe place and then give us back the bits of metal on arrival at HK as the weapons will be useless without them. I handed my weapon to the Cpl and he attempted to remove the working parts but asked me to do it for him as he had never seen a ArmaLite before. I said something like you silly little boy or words to that effect and he growled at me. I should have joined the Diplomatic Corps I thought.

The exercise was a washout as a Typhoon hit the island so we spent 3 days in the NAFFI drinking and singing songs. When we returned it was up to Asahan in Malaya for Regt Practice camp. I was told by the BC I would get a new NGFO during the Practice Camp and just to go ahead and do whatever was asked of me. My team was RO2 Hyslop, Dave Millward and Tony Geake. We carried out 3 days of missions and later on the third day someone arrived at our OP and asked for Bdr Richards. I was pointed out and he said hello he was Capt Harvey and was our new OP Officer. I asked him where he had just come from and he said he was the GPO from 79 Bty. I asked if he had done an FOO course and he said no so I told him to go back to 79 Bty and be a GPO again. No good to me I said. I hope he realised I was joking, a little bit. We chatted and formed a good relationship. At the end of the 2 weeks he was not bad at being an FOO.

Another emergency in which I was involved happened in Dec 1970 when a massive tidal wave hit Patiukhali Dacca on the East coast of Pakistan. The RM in Dieppe Bks were stood too and I was ordered round there for a briefing. I was to man a team of 4 acting as a radio link to the Intrepid. We were to be flown in as far North as possible with a trailer to act as a forward operating Radio Station using HF, VHF and UHF. The trailer was to be packed out with Jerry cans for the 300 Watt Charging engine and of course our own supplies. At the briefing the RM RSM gave his guys a good talking to and said words to the effect 'I realise many of you have never been involved in an emergency like this but expect to see many dead bodies of people and animals. Each man will be armed and have 10 live rounds for personal protection. Should you be threatened simply shoot the attackers in the guts and that will stop them. Also each man will have an emergency 24hr ration pack but do not use it unless it is necessary. This, pointing at me, is Bdr Richards from 148 Bty and he will be our only contact with the real world with his team of 4'. I was a tad embarrassed to be named like that but the guys, who all knew me just nodded. The RSM continued with 'He must be protected at all times'. I used to go to a briefing twice every day but we just sat on the balcony at 10 mins notice for 5 days then our role was stood down. The Intrepid and 3 Cdo Bde Air Sqn deployed. I knew a guy who was an observer and he told me that when they threw out ration packs to the people they ripped them open and he saw one guy eat the Hexamine Blocks. They were not allowed to land as they expected the people to swarm the helicopters. In all 150,000 were killed in the tidal wave and it's after effects.

Many other things happened and we were very busy. One Exercise of note involved 4 Teams. Two were to be inserted into the Malayan jungle almost in line with Palau Aur and the other two were to land on the Island to conduct live NGS. The idea was that our two teams would enter the Jungle and set up a base camp after a few days and then cam it up and leave. We would give the other two Teams a grid ref and they had to find it whilst we swapped with them after they completed the firings and we would go to the Island and continue the firings. This was over a period of 3 weeks. As our two of four got ready Capt Harvey, my FOO gave a plan of events to follow. He was a Jungle Warfare

instructor by now and had taken many of the Regt through theirs. The other Officer, who shall not be named, interrupted and said why are you in charge? Capt Harvey and him had a slightly heated discussion and it ended with them exchanging their commissioning dates just like the scene in Rourke's Drift. It happened that the other Officer was a few days senior and insisted on taking charge. He was as green as grass. His team led off and ours followed with Capt Harvey telling me to make sure that I kept them both apart. The route we took was madness. Up and down in the Jungle when all we had to do was climb one hill and then contour round. On the second day, as the light began to fade, we decided to set up camp but the terrain was not suitable also we had disturbed a troop of monkeys who howled and howled. We had to stop and set up camp, nobody travels in the Jungle at night unless it is essential to the mission. We were strung out in a line all 8 of us which is not ideal. I made my basher as I had done many times just like I had learned from the Ghurkhas. It was a sort of raised bed with my Aussie groundsheet as a roof. As I tested the bed, which was around waist high, the monkeys continued to make a great deal of noise. We set up a guard schedule and tried to settle in for the night. I was awoken by something nuzzling into my left shoulder and arm pit. I was still sleepy but in my mind I thought it was a monkey who must be at least 4 feet tall. My rifle was alongside my right side and I tried to grasp it and then let out a massive scream as I tried to cock it and aim. The other guys woke and asked what was going on. I explained and they made a quick search of the area. Paddy Kelly began to make a massive bonfire saying they would not come near with that blazing. He was not at home in the Jungle at all. I insisted my story was correct but some doubted me. A few weeks later having gone through the details I conceded it could have been a Tree Rat as someone had suggested. I still believe it could also have been a 4 foot monkey though. There were a lot of them about in the Jungle that night.

I played rugby for the Regt and also we had our own Bty team for which I became the Capt and Trainer. We also played against the Kiwis. There was an inter Regt competition where we had to play against 7 Bty first. HQ had to play against 8 Bty. Quite a few of the Regt team were 7 Bty so it was going to be difficult. Around the end of the first half our BSM Barrie Viles injured both his hamstrings and had to be carried off. Just after that Harry Jukes was tackled by Mick Sillavale, a Fijian, and had his shoulder dislocated. They were our two wing forwards. I was the No 8. In the second half we held our own but were defeated by a small margin. The hooker from 7 Bty, Lt Wilkinson, came up to me and said it was a good game and so close. I said if we had a full team you would have been easily beaten. He was not aware we had lost two players. There was no such thing as replacements in those days.

A few weeks later the BSM called for me. I had to go to Dieppe Bks as the CO wanted to see me. I asked what for and he said he had no idea. I got a vehicle and checked my uniform was smart and starched and drove off the 4 miles. I arrived and parked up correctly and went into the Regt Office. The chief clerk said wait and went to see the Adjt. I then went into the Adjt, saluted and said the CO wanted to see me. I also asked what it was about. He also said he had no idea. Then the CO called for me. I marched in smartly and saluted. 'Bdr Richards reporting as ordered Sir'. He looked at me and said 'Why are you improperly dressed?' I looked at myself and said what was wrong. He replied 'Where are your Sgt's stripes?' I was speechless. He congratulated me and I floated away. When I returned to Nee Soon I went to see the BSM and he had a shirt for me with Sgts Stripes on. We were old friends so we had a laugh then he said we had to go over to the Sgts Mess in Dieppe Bks to make it official. This we did and it cost me dearly. I was now officially the Sigs Sgt of 148 Bty. The BC then congratulated me and said he wanted me to run another NGS course to upgrade the Twos to Ones. On the course were Bdr's Mark Clements, Podge Black and Mo Gorham. As on the first course I had just one person to assist me. RS Pete Bryant who did all the Morse and RN procedures. We guessed the same was happening in 20 Bty getting all their Bdrs up to Grade 1 before we amalgamated.

We started to pack all our equipment up. I was in charge of the Sigs store with Dave Millward helping me. Each radio had to be fully checked and its documentation with it before it was all packed up for shipping back to the UK. The vehicles were the most difficult. They would not be going back to the UK but had to be spotless no matter as they were all going to the Local Armed Forces.

We were all ordered round to Dieppe Bks for a Regt Photo. The RSM had some difficulties arranging us all but after a bit of urging we were all in position. 148 Bty was spread out amongst the rest of the Regt and it was many years later that I found out I was standing behind Capt Miles Thomson who was to become our BC some years later. He is the one in the front row at the far right and I was standing behind him between him and Maj Jackman our BK. RS Pete Bryant is in his whites sporting a black

## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY



Unit.

20 Bty had organised a sort of reunion in early June 1971 to prepare for the joining and naming of the new Unit, 95 Cdo FOU. It was to be an independent Unit supporting the Cdo Bde, AMFL, SAS and SBS. Initially there were to be 9 Teams. Sounded very good to me. The get together went down well as so many of us knew each other and those who had never yet met but had been in the NGS world for some time said 'Oh I have heard all about you' and such things. It was good to put faces to names.

I turned too at Poole in June 1971 after 7 years abroad. I was billeted in the Old Sgt's Mess at the bottom of camp and shared a cabin with Sgt Brian Halling our MT Sgt. The Mess was small. The camp had begun a massive refurbishment in 1969 and work was in fact still being carried out. It was clear that the amalgamation of 20 a 148 Bty's had not been envisaged so there was quite a bit of extra work to be done. The Sigs Store and BQMS Stores both moved into the Para Trg Room whilst their stores were enlarged. After a while we all moved into the newly refurbished building.

eye and Sgt Ray Faull to his left. He became RALONGS many years later but had never served with the Bty prior to that. At the bottom left of the photo is WO1 Bertie Booth who became our BK in the Bty. His son Garry joined later on.

We spent the last couple of weeks doing physical every morning then going down to the bars of Nee Soon for refreshments. We all lined up one day for our last pay, we used to get cash those days, and received our rail warrants and orders for turn too at Poole to the newly formed 95 Cdo FOU RA Unit. It was an Independent



**MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY**

Below is a copy of the original Orbat for 95Cdo FOU RA.

95 Cdo FOU Orbat as at 28 JUN 1971				
Z	Z1 (SACC)	Z3 (SACC) - Trg Team	Z4 (NGOC)	
C O	Maj Preedy	Maj Searight	Capt Boulter	
CRS Jones	WO2 Viles	RS Atkinson	Cpl Urquhart (REME)	
S/Sgt Dalrymple (RA Clerk)	RS Bryant	Sgt Richards	L/Bdr Collins	
L/Bdr Hoiles	Sgt Doole	LRO Pullen	L/Bdr Rose	
L/Bdr Hodgson	Bdr Martin (RA Clerk)		Gnr Hewitt	
	L/Bdr Millward		Gnr Gillett	
	Gnr Ede			
NGFO 1 - 40 Cdo	NGFO 2 - 42 Cdo	NGFO 3 - 45 Cdo	NGFO 4 - AMF (L)	NGFO 5 - AMF (L)
Capt Harvey	Capt Rose	Capt Johnston	Capt Maclean / Capt Walpole	Capt Stewart
Bdr Gorham	Bdr Watkins	Bdr Hester	Bdr Byng	Bdr Day
L/Bdr Absolon	L/Bdr Gent	L/Bdr Stevens	L/Bdr Parker	L/Bdr Arnold
Gnr Wallace	Gnr Naico	Gnr Gregge	Gnr Wilson	Gnr O'Donnell
L/Bdr Kelly C A	Gnr Abbott	Gnr Jukes	Gnr Kelly C	Gnr Doole
RO2 Deane	RO2 Mainland	RO2 Hyslop / RO1 Booth	LRO Martin	LRO Chadwick
NGFO 6 (Diving)	NGFO 7 (Malta)	NGFO 8 (Malta)	NGFO 9 (Singapore)	
Capt McKenna	Maj Story	Capt Richards	Capt Lyons	
L/Bdr Benfield	Bdr Brougham	Bdr Swift	Bdr Clement	
Gnr McCormick	Gnr Johnson	L/Bdr Wallace	L/Bdr Geake	
Gnr Lye	Gnr Summers	L/Bdr Maxwell	Gnr Critchley	
Gnr Melnyck	RO2 Williams	LRO Phipps	LRO Innes	
RO1 Watson				
	J	J2	Q	
	WO2 Bradshaw (USM)	S/Sgt Thomas	RQMS Armitage	
	Sgt Paxton (APTI)	Sgt Hinchliffe (RAPC)	Bdr Smith	
	Cpl Beard (REME)	Sgt Halling	L/Bdr Pitchfork	
	L/Cpl Spencer (ACC)	L/Cpl Moran (REME)	Gnr Hull	
	Pte Harris (ACC)	L/Bdr Haig (RA Clerk)	Gnr Williams	
			Gnr Morgan	
			Gnr Given	

It can be seen as both 20 Bty and 148 Bty amalgamated there were some extra pers, for instance most Teams had 6 people in them and one had 2 NGFO's. The CO, Lt Col JWG Morris had not arrived and the BC of 20 Bty Maj Ron Preedy was in charge for a couple of months. It was a time of sorting things out but luckily most of us older guys knew each other. It was the new guys who were looking a little dazed. I was put into SACC Trg Team with Maj Searight as RALONGS, and told that I was to be the Trg Sgt and could I run a Basic NGS course for the new guys. Of course I said I will start right away. The first thing I demanded was that after the Cdo Course P Coy was mandatory. It had fallen off as the Cdo course became a sort of replacement but not in my mind I have to say. It was a good selection tool. I thought this new Independent Unit, which was exactly like it used to be until 1964, was going to be great. I also insisted that all Matelots who joined and had passed the Cdo course, then P Coy and achieved their wings completed the next NGA Course. I had done this in Singapore and it worked well. Up until then Matelots did not complete the NGA course and just picked some things up along the way. Of course in WWII when the COBU was created that was all they had to do but now things were different. They were part of a specialised team on which comms and soldering were paramount. I also sent RO1 Ron Phipps to Larkhill to complete a JSI Course which he creamed. In Singapore I sent RO2's Deane and Hyslop on a Regt Signallers course which they both came top of course. Back in the day the Matelots were of course all first class communicators.

We settled into our routine very quickly. Physical training each morning followed by Morse then dispersed to various duties. Our pattern was sort of dictated by FOST (Flag Officer Sea Training) at Portland where one of the best, possibly the best, Naval Training establishments existed. Many NATO and some non NATA ships went there for pre commissioning training. There were personnel from all

branches within the RN teaching and the Sea Riders who went onto the ships daily for practical training. It all cumulated with a week of final training in every aspect of a ships daily life at sea.

Our part in all this was WX, CX and FX training Courses for RO's, PWO's and Pilots at Poole. A WX was simply a wireless exercise with the ships Radio Operators going through all the missions in Morse and Voice. We would send a 3 man team down to Portland for this so if there were any problems, and there were some, they could send one guy on board to assist.

A CX was when the Ops Room was closed up and all Comms and Gunnery drills were practised and then a FX was live firings at St Albans Head. The other courses in camp were up to four day's long. This was the same for RN and all other Navies.

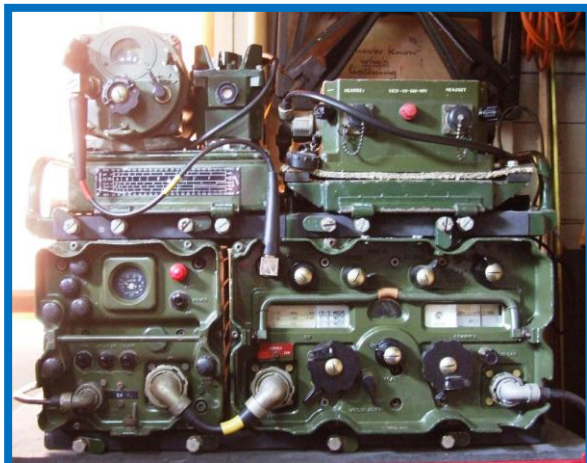
We would receive the WPP (Weekly Practice Programme) as a photo of the programme on the wall of FOST Office which was classified Secret. This would arrive by Thu each week so we could plan ahead a little. The hard copy came out on a Friday and we simply allocated personnel to each task. We were very busy with FOST and I know our dedication was appreciated by their staff.

Our role was finalised and we had various commitments as follows. To the Royal Marines, Ace Mobile Forces, SAS and SBS. We had to deploy to Norway every year with Cdo and AMF forces. There was the Med Deployment with the Marines sometimes twice a year. 29 Cdo used us many times but as the third OP which was a bore. The MGRM Trg was our immediate boss and the RA only had a loose hold on us. We were very busy and life was good.

Maj Preedy found out about my Abseiling and tasked me to teach all the others and make it a Method of Entry tool. The RAF PJI we had, F/Lt Sgt Terry Allen had never done it but as he was who he was he insisted he was in control. After a couple of people had been down the rope I stopped him and politely told Maj Preedy we are going to loose someone very soon if he carried on. He was taken aside and admitted he had never done this before so I took over. He was quite pleasant about it and we got on fine. We used to Abseil frequently but I mentioned to Maj Preedy that although I had been doing it for years I had no Military Certificate to back that up. He said he was OK with that.

After 14 weeks all the new guys had gone through the NGS Course and those who failed were sent on their way. I was to run 13 NGS courses during my time with the Bty but never once had the assistance of any officer. The only time there was an officer present was during live firing at Larkhill acting as the IG. Just saying.

One day Maj Preedy called Wally Doole and me into his office. He explained that we could only have one Sigs Sgt in the Unit and as we had both been recommended to go back to Larkhill after our RSI's course would either of us like to volunteer. I was about to say something like 'No way Sir' when Wally said he would give it a go. I was amazed at his response. The three of us talked it over for a while and then we left his office. I asked Wally why he had made that choice and he said the only opportunity for promotion was to leave and after a tour as a Sgt instructor there was a possibility to pick where he wanted to go. Soon after Wally went to Larkhill I moved into the Sigs Stores with Bdr Absolon as my side kick. I began to sort it out and noticed that we had 86 pers in the unit and there were 86 Radios in the store. Perhaps I should give every person one and tell them to look after it for me.



We went on a 3 Cdo Bde Exercise to the Med. We were to do these every year and sometimes twice a year. Stopping at many places but this one was mainly in Cyprus and Greece. In Cyprus I was assigned to the SACC with Maj Preedy. The TAC HQ was sent ashore to set up but we were put into a dense forest. The MAOT Team could not get any comms without attempting to climb the over 100 ft trees with their UHF antennas. I had some difficulty reaching CRS Jones on the Fearless although she was close to the shore. I had an A14 HF but nothing would get through. Maj Preedy kept asking if we had comms and why not. I said the radio is not strong

enough to penetrate the forest but if I had a C13 I could get comms. He had never heard of a C13 but I said Bde HQ must have them for Rear Link. He scurried away. A little while later some Booties appeared with a wheeled trolley with a C13 but it was not assembled. Here you are mate they said and then scarpereed. Maj Preedy said did I need any help. Of course I do I replied and went about assembling the radio. It was a two man lift when assembled. I fitted all the leads and boxes but noticed there was no morse key. He said he would go find one. No bother I can make one I said. I got some D10 Cable and stripped the ends, put them into the two bottom holes of the 25 point connector on the J1 box, stripped the other end about 2 inches, taped one to the handle of the J1 box and started to send. In a flash I had comms 5/5 with Fearless. What do you want to say to them Sir I asked. He gave me some messages which I sent and about 10 mins later I finished and looked up to see a group of Marines, most were Officers, standing around the back of the vehicle. Maj Preedy was bragging about how I had made a morse key to the assembled audience. I was embarrassed but felt proud but never mentioned that Bdr MacNaughton had shown me how to do that when we were in Bahrain and had borrowed a Royal Sigs C13 to communicate with Yas Island. We got on very well afterwards.

Next phase of the Ex was a joint landing with USA, Greek and UK troops into Greece. The landings went OK but after a while Maj Preedy said I had to get ashore and find out where the ANGLICO Forward observers were as nobody had any comms with them. He told me to 'Go and find them and sort them out Sgt'. He said there was a Scout Helio on the flight deck right now for me so hurry up. I grabbed my belt order, weapon, crystal ball and magic wand and scurried off to the flight deck. The Helio was indeed turning and burning so I jumped in alongside the Pilot. Once I had my headphones on he asked where we were going to which I calmly said I had no idea. We lifted off and I explained the situation to him. The idea was to simply follow the insertion route and look around. He said I only had 45mins of his time then he was tasked for another mission but would come back to pick me up on completion of that. When will that be I asked and he smiled and said I have no idea. We flew quite low and suddenly I spotted two guys in white tee shirts laying on the ground relaxing. That must be them I said knowing how the Yanks work. We circled and they casually waved but did not get up. We landed around 150 yds away and the helio left. I composed myself and approached the pair. 'Hi there, you must be the ANGLICO FOO.' They said yes and we had a discussion about their lack of comms. One guy said that the \*\*\*\*\* radio was not working. I suggested that I may take a look at it but never told them I had no idea how it worked as it was the first PRC 47 I had seen. Strangely the PRC 47 was to crop up again in my time with the NGS world. Their Comms system was that they were forward and on the beach were the rest of the Team, all 5 of them, commanded by a USN Lt. They would send requests for missions and he would either pass them on or not pass them on. I fiddled about for a while and then said to give it a try again. It worked fine. After some banter they said they were not technicians but just operators. About 30 mins later I got a message on their radio from Maj Preedy that the helio was coming to get me. When I got back to the Ops Room he simply said 'Well done Sgt, good effort.'

In time he left to become the CO of 29 Cdo Regt and Lt Col Morris took over as CO 95 Cdo FOU.

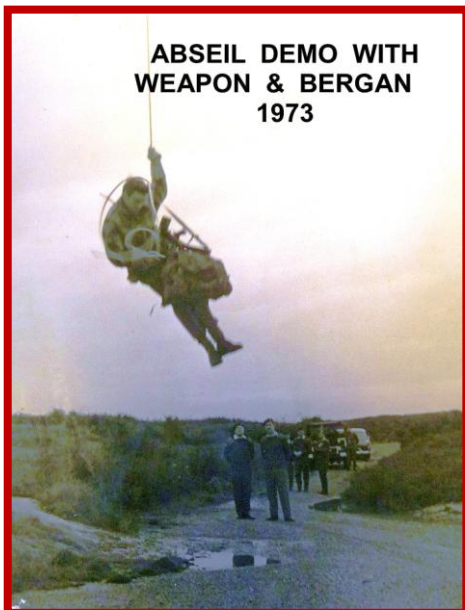
Things began to settle down and we all got to know each other more and more. One day Lt Col Morris called me into his office for a chat. He said he wanted to get me accelerated promotion to WOII but the new rules would not allow it. A soldier had to go through S/Sgt for at least 18 Months before becoming a WOII. I said I was not worried about that and thanked him for his confidence in me. We had a long chat about my future and I concluded that I was happy to stay in any capacity as I enjoyed what we did and how we did it.

I was playing rugby for the camp team each Wed in the season and also for the Army SW Districts which was a team made up from all Units with 200 or less people on strength. I also played for the Gnrs a couple of times and occasionally for Poole RFC. I managed the 95 FOU team and we played about five games but Norway always interfered with fixtures. We had to deploy teams with the AMF, SACC and two NGFO and 3 Cdo Bde, SACC and three teams. At first it was for 2 ½ Months from the second week in Jan. Later on it alternated between 2 ½ months and 6 weeks. The team from Singapore had returned after 6 months as well but Malta was still a detachment.

WOII Ray (Spinner) Bradshaw was running the Unit with his usual manner. He had been my BSM in Singapore when we were billeted alongside in the Transit Camp in Nee Soon. He was respected by everyone as he had been in the SAS for many years and was in the Malaysian Campaign. In the

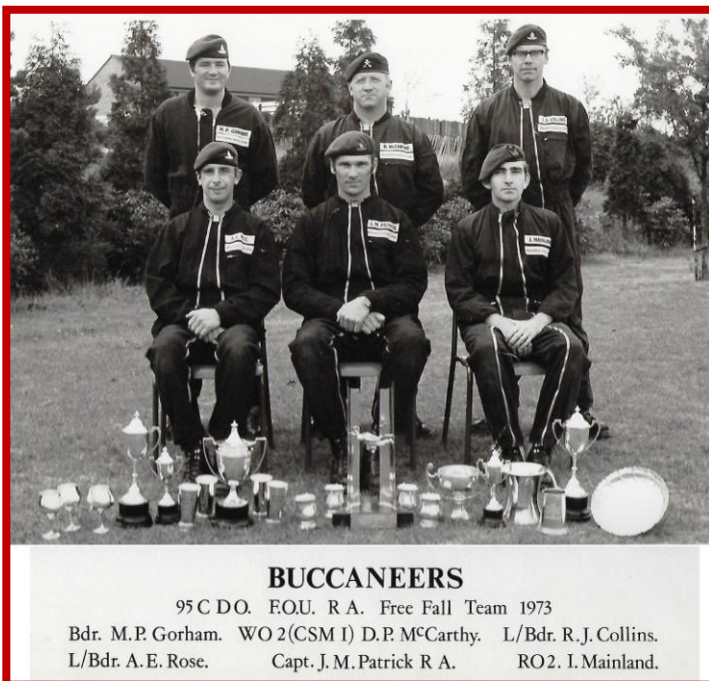


Autumn of 1972 he was posted out to become the first WO1 of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) over in Ireland which was at the height of the troubles. That was an immense challenge to which he rose effortlessly. The RQMS WO11 Armitage was promoted to WO1 and we got a QM named Capt Wells. Now Armitage had been the RQMS since we formed 95 FOU but he was not in any way from our background. He was in the Army for all he could get from it. The new QM was an Ex ranker and a black beret soldier through and through. He did not understand what we did nor did he want to. I was promoted to S/Sgt and continued doing what I had always done. The new APTC guy was WO11 Mac Macarthy, another from the SAS but he was quite old. On the first Physical he ran for us he realised we were very fit indeed. He took me to one side afterwards and said 'Brum, I am never going to take these guys on a run again. I am too old so I am delegating that task to you. If you do gym work, swimming pool or anything a little static I will take charge' He later went on to get his pilots license at Bournemouth Airport and when he retired from the Army he set up his own Free Fall school. He was a brilliant Free Faller and a DZSO and a parachute rigger and a good bloke. He understood us.



**ABSEIL DEMO WITH WEAPON & BERGAN 1973**

Our Abseil skills were second to none and I introduced Abseiling with weapons and bergans. We were the first to do that. The photo demonstrates that when we had some Brig Visiting the camp and we put on the usual show of Diving, Abseiling, Free Fall and opened up the Bty Lines for inspection.



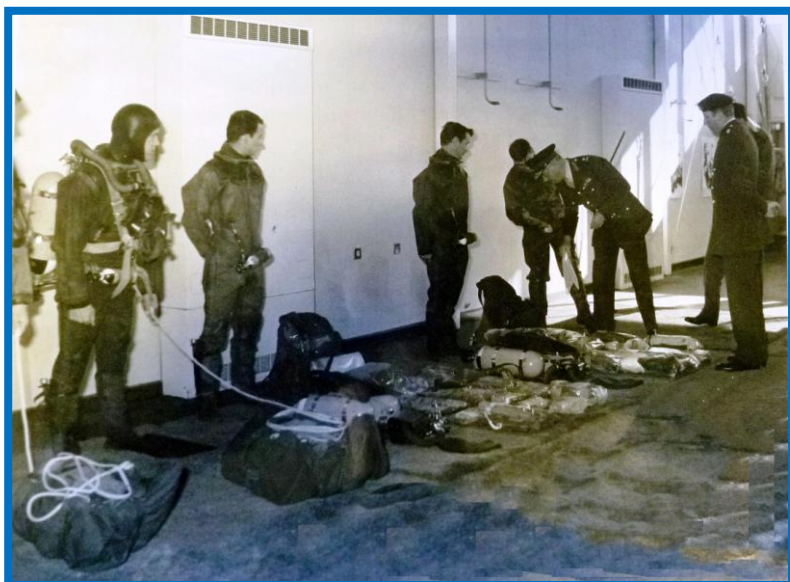
**BUCCANEERS**

95 C DO. E.O.U. R.A. Free Fall Team 1973

Bdr. M.P. Gorham. WO 2(CSM I) D.P. McCarthy. L/Bdr. R.J. Collins.  
L/Bdr. A.E. Rose. Capt. J.M. Patrick R.A. RO2. I. Mainland.

We had a Free Fall team called 'The Buccaneers' with 10 pers in it. They entered a competition called Para Shot in Germany which involved all aspects of Free Fall including Grouping, accuracy etc. When they landed it was a Patrol event with Medical, Explosives, Communications and all manner of Military tests. They won it 3 years running and were asked not to enter a team after that.

Opposition was Paras, SAS and all manner of 'Special Forces' Units. You can see from the photo all the trophies won. Other members not in the photo were Alan Atkinson, Mick Hinchliffe, Benny Benfield.



Our 2 diving teams were going from strength to strength. Most of the Matelots were ships divers as well. The Army divers had to go to Royal Engineers Diving School in Southampton and complete the arduous test there to qualify. In later years SBS started to train our guys on Rebreathers as we only had compressed air. Also we sent two members on a Submarine Escape course in Malta for the basic

training. It was later cancelled due to an accident in Scotland where two of SBS were tragically killed during an exercise in a Loch.

For some reason Armitage put himself on a diving course and there was an 'Incident'. He was disorientated when he was on a dive and the SOP was for the top safety diver to throw a thunderflash into the water which would signal to ascend. Unfortunately Armitage was near the explosion and was slightly concussed. Somehow he then was allowed to go on a Diving Supervisors course which meant more money. He also convinced the CO that he would be good as an NGLO so a course was run for this. I was also on the course but had been doing NGLO work for some years. Also on the course were WOII MacNaughton and Sgt Tony Day. At one point I was asked to do some instruction on Tgt Records for the others as I was quite good at them. So now our WOI was an NGLO, Diving Supervisor and suddenly he was going to the Head to conduct live firings as well although he had never qualified as an FOO or NGFO. He never went on physical trg though strangely enough.

Lt Col Morris left and we had Lt Col Redford arrive as his replacement. He was another outsider but quickly fitted in. He sent me on an FOO's course at Larkhill. I think I was the first non officer to go on such a course. As a S/Sgt I was looked on as unique and the others on the course, all young Capt's who just fooled around most of the time. Luckily for me the Senior Instructor was a Maj from the US Rangers. We also had 2 Officers from S Arabia which made him alter most of his lesson plans. He briefly interviewed each one of us during the first 2 days and of course I was last. He was puzzled why a S/Sgt was on he course and he made a point of telling me he had instructions to pass or fail me when he had been told the Officers simply 'Attended' the course. He asked about my background so I told him and then when he asked me to explain what 95 Cdo FOU was I simply said 'Like ANGLICO' He instantly understood and we became very good friends. After some live firings it became obvious I was one of the few taking things seriously. An Officer on the course approached me one day during Live Firings and asked if he could team up with me. He was not your usual Officer of the times meaning he did not have a posh accent and in fact looked a tad scruffy with an unmanageable hair style and a big tash. I said OK and we became the star team after that. I had carried out so many live firings in my time and had a simple plan. When others were conducting firings I watched and listened. Then when the Guns sent a 'Tgt Recorded As' message I took it down and plotted it. I thought that was obvious. When I was asked to conduct a mission or Fire Plan I had everything on my map ready. In fact once the British IG called me forward to carry out a 5 Tgt Fire Plan with Smoke and I hit everything with first rounds. The IG said he had never seen anything so quick before. The only criticism he had was that I still worked in Yds when I should have worked in Meters. I argued the difference was minimal but he would not agree. I passed the course.

Not long after that I was sent to Yeovil to do an Abseil Instructors course with a C/Sgt RM. He was an ML and stationed at Yeovil to experiment on Helicopter Abseiling from all types of helicopters in service. On the course along with me were F/Sgt Doug Fletcher, the Poole PJI, The Special Forces DZSO and another PJI who I cannot recall the name of and another RAF DZSO. We did lots of prep and then the actual rope descents. We all acted as dispatchers for each other. It quickly became obvious that I was the only one who had done this before. There is a lot to it with equipment, rope, rope prep, rope throwing out etc. We were using figure of 8 Holks and perlon rope. The attachment to each aircraft was different. Wessex, Scout, Wasp and Puma. The drills were different for each type as well. Also we had to safely do 'Hung up Drills'. We had a written safety test and the practical tests on completion of the course. At the conclusion the C/Sgt gave us our papers back and told us the results. Doug Fletcher and I had passed but the others were recommended to attend a further course which was a sort of polite fail. I was now an Official Abseil instructor and could sign a pilots or crewman's log and train and qualify Bty members in dispatching. Something I had been doing unofficially for years. Just before we left I asked the C/Sgt why he had given me 99% on the written paper but all questions had a tick alongside them. He said if he had given me 100% that would have made me better than him which he admitted I was.

One day the CO asked me to go up to Reading to a company called Racal to look at some of their radios. We had been having some problems maintaining comms with ships, mainly RN ones I have to add, where we were always drifting off freq. The A14 Radios we had were just not high quality and stable enough for the RN. I duly arrived and was met by 2 Ex R Sigs guys. We talked much technical details and what would be best for us. The main problem as that the A14 did not have SSB capabilities. They had a radio that was perfect for the job they said. They mostly attempted to encourage me to get my demob and join them at Racal. I said I was happy where I was doing what I





It was a good Radio and it proved itself some time later on a Med Deployment. We had time to conduct our own evaluation of the radio and it's ancillaries.

At the time I was in the SACC with Maj Singer and had borrowed a very High Powered PRC 47 which was used by the USMC but also by the RAF on airbases. It was perfect for our base station. I had



seen one in the Med but now I had to learn how to use it properly. Firstly we were sent to Gibraltar to join the Cdo Bde Exercise. Our vehicles had been loaded prior and only the drivers accompanied them. The main pers always flew out to meet at either Gib or Cyprus. We joined HMS Fearless and as we waited to sail from Gib I happened to go atop and strolled round the Buntins platform and saw C/Sgt Chis Taylor, the 3 Cdo Bde Yeoman of Sigs who I knew very well, stomping about. He was obviously in a bit

of distress. I asked what was up and he let out a tirade of expletives about HMS Fearless and her delicate ICS comms set up. It appears he had a schedule planned with SBS in Cyprus and the ship was unable to allocate him means of communicating. I took a chance and offered one of our Racal's. He said what is a Racal and I put my finger to my lips and said 'Need to know mate'. He smiled and said lets give it a go. I sent someone to get one from the vehicle in the Tank Deck and about 10 mins later I showed it off. He of course had never seen one before. I asked for the freq and set it up with a whip antenna. He joked and said there is no way you are going to get comms from here to Cyprus on that Brum. I got the call signs and codes from him and started to send in morse code. After a couple of attempts they responded with a 5/5 and I did the same. I offered him the key but he said I will tell you what to send Brum as you are better at this than I am. When we had finished he said he wanted some of these radios. I replied in no uncertain terms in the negative.

On completion of the whole Exercise I called USS Little Rock, which was the command ship and asked for a very brief report on the standard and strength of our NGS Comms throughout. They answered 'This is November Bravo Volks Wagon, your comms were stable and outstanding throughout.' Their International callsign was NBVW but they always used Bravovolkswaggon, typical Yanks. The PRC had performed very well. We had arrived at last.





Things had settled down and I was enjoying life now. I was not too sure about my role now I had become a S/Sgt and I hankered for the life as a Bdr being at the front with the Infantry.



Just another quiet night in the Sgts Mess.

*L to R – Back row.*

*Sgt Tony Day, Sgt Mick Hinchliffe (RAPC) RS Pete Bryant, S/Sgt Brum Richards, Sgt Brian Halling MT Sgt.*

*Front Row – CRS Frank Jones, Sgt Mac McCarthy (RAPTC) and WOII Roy McNaughton*

Another Ex of note was when we deployed to Black Shod Norway with 3 Cdo Bde. I was in the SACC with Maj Singer and the Ex began with a Mini Tac HQ being sent ashore onto a spit of land. We landed and sorted ourselves out. I had been given a PRC 47 to use and was all alone without any vehicle so

I had to get help to lug it about. There was a small 3 man party from 29 Cdo Regt and some odds and sods from elsewhere notably a Jeep with 4 USMC in it. After we had all settled down awaiting the remainder of Tac HQ to arrive we received a message that they were going to land them elsewhere and we had to remain where we were. I had 3 day's rations but no real shelter except my groundsheet. The USMC were worse off as all they had was what they stood up in and a Jeep. I went over to them to chat with their S/Sgt who was not a happy bunny. He said all his gear was in the support vehicle he was expecting to land shortly. They had no food or anything. Two of them were sat on the front wings of the Jeep with the engine running to keep their feet warm The S/Sgt was wrapped up in his new Arctic Sleeping Bag. What do you know but I had one exactly like it which I had bought from Exchange & Mart before I joined up to use on my Rock Climbing trips and on my camps whilst Scouting. I said I could probably get them some food from the 29 Cdo guys who always had loads. He was delighted with that and also I asked if I could exchange my grotty Artic Sleeping bag for his brand new one. He said I could have it after the Ex was over. We shook hands on that and I still have it.



In 1975 we won the SW Districts Army Rugby Cup. Once again we won without a full team with Ian Morgan having to go off with a severe cut to his head.

Our opposition was the Junior Leaders permanent staff, some of whom I suspected had been posted in for a very short period.

*Back Row: Capt D Burden, CRS P Bryant, Capt G Gillett, Gnr C Ede, Me, Bdy N Naico, S/Sgt M Durrant, Bdr H Jukes*

*Front Row: RS A Atkinson, Bdr J Doole, Bdr I Morgan, Sgt A Day, RS A Vamplew, Bdr R Wallace. Capt H Beaves*

I have chosen one year from the records we used to keep just to give an idea of how busy we were.

### 95 Cdo FOU REPORT - 1976

Live Firings conducted at:- St Albans Head - Cape Wrath - Pulau Aur - Sardinia

With Ships from Following Countries:- Canada, NZ, W Germany, Singapore, France, Holland, Greece, Malaysia, U S A and Australia.

I also checked all the Target Firing Records for 1976 and found that year I had conducted more live firings than all the Officers combined.

19 Individual Exercises. I went on the SAS final part of selection with Dave Millward and Charlie Ede. There were 2 pers from SBS and the Exchange SEAL Team guy MacDonnald as well. It was at Bradbury lines for phase one – Escape and Evasion, Combat Survival and Resistance to interrogation followed by 8 day's on the run in the French Pyrenees being chased by the French Para's. The course was for all PTC (Prone to Capture) servicemen and there were several Fighter Jet Pilots as well. The idea was on completion of the Hereford Phase we would be put with a Badged Member of the SAS as a four man patrol and run. Our team leader was WOII Davis from D Sqn. He had been in the SAS for about 15 years. I learned so much from just watching him. We were, of course, captured and subjected to 24 Hrs interrogation over which time I was taken in for intense interrogation 7 times. It felt so real and I began to hallucinate towards the end seeing clearly a map on the wall behind the interrogator. There was no such map. I met an old mate at Hereford, Colin Parker. He was in 148 Bty as an RO2 when I was in Singapore. I believe he was the first Matelot to get badged into the SAS.

2 Times per month parachuting - 2 Times per month Abseiling (Weather sometimes reduced this)

Several Individual Courses Including an NGA III (Which I ran)

We also used to go to Puerto Rico every 6 – 8 weeks to conduct live firings at Vieques Ranges with the Standing Naval Forces Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) made up from 6 NATO Navies. I went there twice in all as the NGFO taking two guys with me.

Over my time as an NGFO/FOO I had occasion to be on a couple of official enquiries resulting from Range Incidents. I was once at St Albans Head firing a German ship which was taking ages to get her first salvo off. When she did it was way off tgt so I gave a big Left correction rather than 'Check Solution' which would have delayed things even more. In due course we fired a couple of missions and closed down. When I got back to camp I was asked what had happened. Confused I said what I

thought but I was then told a local fisherman had complained he was being shelled. Next day in the Bournemouth Echo there was an article saying this innocent fisherman had survived the War but was now being shelled by the Germans and that a couple of rounds had landed very close to his vessel. I had to speak to various FOST Staff and the newspaper telling it from my point of view. I had observed every salvo and none had come close to any vessel. A 5" salvo sounds quite close on the open water I said and this guy was possibly distracted by his lunch and drinks afterwards.

On another occasion Capt Hutchinson was at Cape Wrath firing a ship and a Salvo apparently landed close to a local who was scavenging for cockles on the range edge. She stated that piece of shrapnel from a 4.5" shell had hit her in the right leg. I had to go to Rosyth for the enquiry. I took John Rycroft with me as he was in the OP at the time and was a witness. I was being questioned as an 'Expert Witness'. We drove up in my Ford Cortina 2 litre Capri which John was excited about and had a good run ashore that evening. When it was my time to be questioned I entered the room and waited for the questions. I had intended to defend Capt Hutchinson as much as possible but to always tell the truth and give my honest opinion to the stated facts presented. The Senior officer asked me to state my experience so I gave a brief summary but he then elaborated having in his possession quite a bit about my experiences. I was a tad shocked and to be honest a bit flattered. He set the scene up to the first salvo being fired then said 'What would you do next?' I simply stated that there were many factors to be taken into consideration which cannot be replicated in this sterile room such as weather, ships standard of training, comms, time frame and lots more. He was not impressed and again said what would you have done? The first salvo had not been observed and Capt Hutchinson had ordered Drop 800. I had to concede after much pressing that I would have possibly ordered Check Solution as it was a Brit Ship or even given a Right Correction to see if it would land in the sea. All in all it was a rare incident and the Lady did not get hit by shrapnel as she had stated and was looking for some compensation. She was in fact just inside the range area at the time.

In early 1974 Col Redford called me into his office for a chat. He discussed with me the fact, which we all knew, that 95 Cdo FOU was to be disbanded in 1976 and we were going to become part of 29 Cdo again. It was very bad news as far as I was concerned. He also told me WO1 Armitage was going to be posted on Commission. The implications were that he was not OK with getting someone posted in for a short time as a replacement WO1 and asked if I would take on the position on a temp nature. I asked what would happen to me when we became part of 29 Cdo as a temp WO1. He admitted he had no idea. He told me to think about it and let me know. It was difficult to imagine what would happen to me. I had been a WOII for some time and had extemporaneous reports. I was doing a job I enjoyed and felt comfortable in. There was no way I wanted to be a desk jockey RSM of a Regt with a Pace Stick and all that stuff. I just wanted to be an active soldier which I was at Poole. I went back to him and offered a solution. I said I would accept the temp rank of WO1 as long as nobody knew and I didn't have to wear the rank but I wanted to be paid for it. When we joined again 29 I wanted to be the BSM of 148 Bty. He thought it through and agreed after consulting with the CO 29.

I had another long conversation with Lt Col Redford about the future of NGS. As there were at that time 24 Field Gun Regts in the RA I suggested that if I could have one man from each who was a volunteer and either a senior Gunner or L/Bdr we could get them trained up. Cdo Course, P Coy, Para course then the 14 week NGA Course. If I only got 12 through then that would assure a sound stock of guys for the next 5 years. He agreed but added that no CO was going to give up his best and we were not allowed to conduct direct recruiting as we were an Independent Unit. One year 7<sup>th</sup> Para got the pick of recruits and the next year 29 Cdo got it. Stalemate I guess.

One occasion I do recall was when I took 3 guys with me to the Junior Leaders Camp at Bramcote for an unofficial visit just to let them know who we were. I just happened to have a Wessex, 4 PX Parachutes and some abseil equipment and rope. We set up on the edge of the playing fields and loads of Junior Soldiers came along to watch. I said a few words and emphasized we were not on a recruiting visit but just here to rehearse for a show we were doing close by the following week. That was our cover story anyway. We climbed into the Wessex for the abseil part, took off and made a long circuit of the camp then approached tactically at around 50 ft then popped up to 200ft and I began to dispatch the guys. They all had bergans and weapons. After the last one had exited I also roped down and the crewman cut the rope and the Wessex landed close by. As we all grouped we ran into some nearby trees where our parachutes were hidden and rigged up then ran back to the Helio. It ascended and we all jumped out and I have to say made a fine group. The Wessex then landed and shut down and I sort of said 'Any questions lads?' They were all sat there with their mouths wide open. It worked.



Another episode I recall well was 5 May 1976 when I arrived in my office in the morning and the duty guy, RO1 Thomson handed me a signal that had arrived early that morning. It was from Maj Charlie Boulter, our 2/ic who was on a NATO meeting in Turkey. It read something like this, 'To WOII Richards, report to USS Little Rock in Naples asap with one other and bring a Racal Radio.' Typical Charlie succinct and vague as well. Why Naples I thought when he was in Turkey? I contacted 3 Cdo Bde HQ and put my case to them. They got back to me quite quickly and said they had booked 2 pax plus VIP Package onto a British Airways Flight on Wed. Wear Civvies it also said. They knew that Charlie was going to go to Naples soon to meet us. I selected Bdr Joe Doole to go with me. We arrived at Heathrow and went to the Info desk and presented ourselves. They scanned our details and said to wait a moment. Then a gorgeous Air Hostess arrived and said to follow her to the VIP Lounge. She asked to carry the radio, our other baggage having been taken away, but I said it must remain in my possession at all times. She was intrigued so I, with the assistance of Joe, laid it on big time. When we arrived at the VIP Lounge she believed we were from MI5. She wanted to stay with us until the departure time. As we boarded the plane she whispered something to the other Air Hostesses. We received fabulous service during the flight to Rome. On arrival at Rome we had 2 hours to pass before catching another plane to Naples. The next flight was a bit different from the last but we arrived at Naples Airport and I looked around for some sort of reception. There was none but I saw a notice next to a telephone on a wall stating the any serviceman wanting transport was to ring the number listed. I rang and was told I would have to get a Taxi to the Naval Base. We arrived at the gate and were asked for our orders. Now luckily I had worked with the Yanks many times before and knew they loved documents and stamps all over them. I had the Message Centre in Poole reproduce 3 good copies of the original signal Charlie Boulter had sent me and then had RALONGS, BQMS Stores, MT Section and the Bty Office stamp them and squiggle an unintelligible signature on them. I handed one to the guard and after he had studied it he told us we were to be billeted in the Transit Block. We settled in and went to the main galley for a big meal. Next morning we changed into uniform and got transport to the USS Little Rock which had just docked. I walked up the gangway and again as I knew USN Protocol I said 'Warrant Officer Richards and one reporting as requested, permission to come aboard. Here are my orders' followed by a big salute. The side party were quite impressed and ushered me to the desk and the Duty Officer. After some searching they found we were expected. Joe was taken to the Junior Rates mess and as a WOII I was taken to the Wardroom. In the US Military a Warrant Officer is commissioned. I said I would rather be in the Chiefs Mess but that was not allowed so I was shown to a 4 berth cabin which was occupied by two Lt JJ's. They welcomed me and suggested I wore a WOII bar, which they found for me, in my collar. I had to agree. Then someone had the task of showing me around the ship. I asked about Maj Boulter and they said he was due tomorrow. We walked around and in the main passage I noticed 4 USMC guys with weapons. I asked what they were doing and was amazed by the answer. Their task was to come into action if anyone showed intent to take over the ship. They would rush to the scene from this central position and lo and behold anyone got in their way. Their weapons were loaded and they had orders to shoot anyone who got in their way. I had seen before in Malta when I happened to be on the bridge that when a USN Ship went to 'General Quarters' a sailor went to a cabinet and strapped on a Colt 45 to his hip. I was told that was to protect the Captain from any harm. A tad over reaction I thought but it was all Hollywood. I found out where Joe was billeted and paid him a visit. It was quite a wake up call with cramped bunks and little enclaves of Blacks, Hispanic, Oriental and White guys. Joe looked out of place as the only Jock there. He told me later that a couple of the guys had attempted to make friends with him. Nuff said. Something not related to anything in particular was a party trick I had developed so I let Joe into my only skill. I could count 60secs exactly anytime I was challenged and could even carry out a conversation as I did it. Joe said 'No way Brum' so I said try me. He had a stop watch and for the next couple of hours he kept suddenly saying 'Go' whenever he chose. I never failed and he was amazed. There is no trick; it was just something I could do just like Joe could ski a bit better than all of us.

Maj Boulter came aboard and I asked for a full brief. We were going to Sardinia and the NGS team from Malta would conduct live missions at the Cagliari ranges. OK I said. We sailed for Sardinia and after a couple of days at the appointed hour attempted to get comms with the NGS team. It was not working because the ship was using SSB so I suggested they click 1.5 down and try again. We got comms and exchanged pleasantries. The Ship wanted to conduct their FXP 3 (Firing Exercise Practices Book 3) missions but the team ashore were not fully conversant in them. Malta had ceased working with the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet some years ago. Charlie asked me what FXP 3 was so I told him. He then decided to send me ashore to conduct the missions and also to take the Racal Radio with me. I was one of the few who knew all the Missions. A boat took me ashore and I scrambled up the hill to meet

Capt Beaves and Bdr Scouse Brougham. Scouse said he could not remember all the Missions and Capt Beaves said he had never heard of them. We got through it all with me doing all the firings and Tgt Records. We completed a Z40G, Z44G and a Z46G. After several hours I was told to get ready to be picked up again. The boat arrived and the cox said he hoped he could catch the ship as it was making it's way back to Naples. He was not joking. We just managed to catch the ship up.

We disembarked and again went into the Transit Accommodation but this time with Maj Boulter. Joe and I had a walk around the camp and saw a Bar so went inside. It was full of Brits mostly from Germany. They did a tour of 6 months here in the NATO HQ. We caused a bit of a stir as newcomers but showed our ID Cards and were accepted. The beer was all German and a tad strong. On chatting about what we were doing we were told we could get a flight to Germany anytime and get back to the UK from there. We left the bar and continued our walk about noticing a poster for the entertainment that night. It was Bobby Vee, a 60's Pop Star, doing a show in the main theatre. We decided to have a burgher and another beer and go to see him. Joe had no idea who he was but I did. He was famous for the early 60's hit record 'The Night Has a Thousand Eyes'. That evening we went to the main door but entry was not free. We went to the toilet and about four American guys came in and started chatting. They had tickets so we followed them upstairs to the theatre. As they approached the door they said they had just popped out for a pee and one got his ticket out to show it to the attendant. They were all let in and I said we were with them in a very bad Yank accent. Joe was Scottish so he kept quiet. As we entered the theatre we saw it was made up of large tables seating about 10 people. We saw some spaces and quickly sat down. The surprised occupants started to chat and when they heard me speak they were excited about me being English. The band were on a break and going round the room chatting to the audience. Two approached our table and said hello. I couldn't believe my ears, they had Brummie accents. I said in my best Brummie 'Were jow cum frum then?' They said Coventry. They were also amazed to meet a Brummie and we had a great free night after that. Amazing luck. By the way I am a posh Brummie and do not have any discernible accent. Next morning we went to the camp cafe for breakfast and there was Bobby Vee sat at a table having a snack. Joe said go and chat to him as you know him. I was reluctant to name drop.

For some reason we had to leave the ship in rig for a while in port and as we walked along the jetty Sailors kept saluting me but I did not respond. Joe did of course. Poser.

Next day we met up with Charlie and he said he had to go to the HQ to arrange for our trip back home. I told him about the flight to Germany and he said he would keep that in mind. Later that day we met up again and he dropped the bombshell. In the HQ he met a RM Maj who he knew. He told him our story and the Maj said how long do you want to stay here, what hotel do you want to stay in. That trumped my luck last evening. So Charlie, Joe and me went to the Hotel for a nice stay. Charlie was trying to ensure he got the room he wanted and as we stood by the lift he rushed inside as it arrived and closed the doors before we could get inside. Joe and I stood there for a moment then the lift came back and Charlie, thinking he was on his floor tried to rush out. His face went red as he saw us standing there holding our kit. Laurel & Hardy had nothing on this. We sorted ourselves out and had a run ashore. After a couple of days Charlie had organized a flight back to the UK and we left for Naples Airport. As we booked in there was some sort of commotion and suddenly the baggage staff and some of the others downed tools and went on strike. We had to carry all of our baggage to the Aircraft, as did all the other passengers and load it ourselves. Charlie disappeared on board and hid but Joe and I were ushered to a sort of small compartment of two banks of three seats either side. I still have no idea why but the Air Hostesses gave us special treatment until Joe let out a massive Scottish fart and we were alone for a bit after that.

Before we departed I had phoned the Bty and Geoff Gillett had answered. I told him to arrange transport at Heathrow for 3 pax and 6 bags. He kept on asking if I was there as the line was so clear. I had to keep on telling him we were in Naples to which he said 'Where is Naples?'

On arrival we checked in and got our baggage but here was no sign of someone from the Bty to pick us up. Charlie was getting agitated so I quite sternly said 'Sir, sit down over there and I will sort this out'. I did not want Heathrow going on strike as well. I went over to Information and explained our predicament so they put out a call to the effect 'Will the driver picking up 3 Military pers from 95 Cdo FOU report to Terminal 3 immediately'. That ought to do it I thought. We waited again and about 15 mins later Gnr 'Eckie Thump' arrived breathless and very apologetic. We picked up our baggage and

followed him outside. 'Where is the transport?' I asked. It was in terminal 1 so I made him sprint off to get it and tried to calm Charlie down. It was a quiet trip back to Poole.



We began Tailgating with SSL's in 1976 and also were allowed to officially book aircraft for water jumps. We were stepping up a notch and we soon became very good at both. Until then we had joined with SBS for jumps. Then only a max stick of 6 could tailgate as it was thought it too risky with more as the bags were flapping about too much. The boffins did something and we were selected for a trial of a stick of 20. We used Everleigh for it and told not to steer and when we landed to leave our chutes exactly where they landed. There were cameras inside the Herc and a chase aircraft following. I used the film many times on the NGA Courses for effect.

In time the fatal day came for 95 Cdo FOU to be disbanded. There was a big parade with the CO 29 attending with the RSM. We rarely wore our ginger suits, perhaps twice a year and drill was a non starter but we looked very smart on this very sad day. I had joined 95 AO Regt when it was independent and it was renamed 95 Cdo Lt Regt with 148 as part of it. Then we became independent again as 95 Cdo FOU and now we were again being absorbed into 29 Cdo Lt Cdo Regt.



We all went back into the Para Trg room to sort ourselves out in an air of sadness. I was now the BSM, Maj Charles Boulter the BC, our RQMS Jock Saunders became the RSM 29 and Lt Col Redford went on to be in charge of Officer Selection. We had a wake that evening. On Monday morning we all paraded and tried to carry on as if nothing had happened. How wrong I was. The phone rang for me around midmorning. It was the RSM. He wanted me to get all the SNCO's to Plymouth every month for a Mess Meeting and informed me we had to pay Mess fees to 29 as well. Now he had just spent 18 months as our RQMS and also he was ex 7<sup>th</sup> Para. Why was he taking this line I wondered. After some time he agreed as we were paying Mess fees at Poole he would not ask again. We had to attend a Mess Dinner though which was very tense.

Next I had a phone call from someone saying I had to send our footballers and Rugby players down to Plymouth to see who was good enough for the Regt team. As I was playing rugby a lot I suggested that if they sent the Regt Rugby team to Poole we would play them and after we had beaten them they could decide who to drop from their team. The tone from all these people was very derisive and condescending. Someone had mentioned that as we were the junior Bty we should simply comply.





What we had to contribute to 29 Cdo is shown in the photo. Every member of 148 Bty was Cdo, P Coy and Para trained. All RA and RN pers had passed the NGA Course. Every member had been to Norway on the first opportunity. Many were Jungle Warfare trained. All were Abseil trained and we had at least 9 MSI's. We had 10 fully trained divers and a 9 man Free Fall team. In comparison the Regt OP parties were nothing like us. All the Regt wanted to do was treat us like second class soldiers. I know this did not come from the CO but some of his subordinates took this attitude and dug the knife in at any opportunity. We just had to keep our heads down and do our job.

Without any notice about two weeks later 3 soldiers arrived by train and reported to the Bty Office. Our Clerk, Bdr Clem Pooke, came to me with their docs and said he knew nothing about them. I decided to see them immediately. The first one came into my office. Who are you and why are you here I asked. He said he had come to join the diving team as he was a keen Sub Aqua diver. I noticed he was wearing Para Wings. When were you in 7<sup>th</sup> Para I asked. He said he had never been so I asked how many jumps he had done since he got his wings. None he replied. Well I said you better take them off right now because without completing P Coy you are not entitled to wear them in 148 Bty. He looked puzzled. He was a tad podgy and wore spectacles. So you want to join the Diving team then do you. First we have to get you fit, then you have to complete P Coy. If you wear those wings on the course you will not pass. Next Brize Norton for your jumps course then back here for the 14 week NGA course. If you pass all that you will then go to Norway. He said he had been to Norway. As a Gun Bunny I said, we are not Gun Bunnies. I said to wait outside. I then called the next one in. He was very large and muscular. I asked him the same as the previous guy but he said he had heard 148 Bty was quite physical and did a variety of interesting things in small teams. We went through the same planned programme for him and again I asked him to wait outside. The next one came in and the same chat was had. I then called Bdr's Charlie Ede and Dave Gregge into my office. I told them to take these three out for a normal Physical that we did but not as aggressive. I emphasised not to go too hard on them but just see what they are made of. I again emphasized not to beast them. They all went off and later on Charlie and Dave came to me with their findings. The big guy got to the Guard Room and fell out. The podgy one struggled until the beach then had to walk back. Dave was one of our divers and was not impressed. The other guy lasted a bit longer but soon fell back. I sent them all back to Plymouth that day. A couple of days later someone phoned me from Plymouth and we had a serious conversation. Don't you ever send me your trash again I said.

We were now under the command of Maj Charles Boulter RA. He had been our 2i/c in 95 FOU and also an NGFO in Singapore 1967/8 where he caught something similar to River Fluke in Borneo and lost loads of weight. He was small anyway and looked like a skeleton. He was someone who needed a war to feel happy. I got on very well with him and we had many laughs. We once went up to Cape Wrath with me as the NGFO and him as the Range Safety Officer. My team consisted of just one guy and we could only put out one man on each Vedette. A Brig appeared during the Exercise and gave

out some sort of fire plan to Charlie. He wrote it down on a scrap of paper and nodded to me after each tgt was indicated. We then carried out the Fire Plan with ease and the Brig said he had heard of people doing things on the back of a fag packet but now he had seen it. He was full of praise but said it was rare and should be avoided. During the firings with one German Ship we got a message that one of the Sailors had a compassionate reason to get off and go home to Germany in a hurry. Charlie spoke with the ships skipper and arranged for this sailor to be sent to us. The helicopter duly arrived and Charlie turned to me and said well Sgt Major how do we get this guy to Inverness Station. He also told me to take a whip round to get him some UK money. All ended well but that was Charlie, all off the cuff.

On another Exercise I was in the SACC with Charlie. We were supporting the Turkish Naval Infantry. After the first day he said to me Sgt Maj you are now the FOO for these guys as they do not have one. I got some gear together and took Bdr Nicky Allin with me and advanced with the TNI. We moved over the land very slowly. We passed through a field with melons growing. When we had all passed there were no melons left. An irate farmer came out shouting something and waving his arms about. We approached the foot of a hill and made a start line with white tape ready to advance. The only person who spoke good English was the Coy 21/c so I kept close to him. He had been on the Golan Heights during the 1966 war there. Suddenly whistles were blowing and the guys advanced a bit quicker. I could see 2 tanks on the ridge and pointed them out to the 2i/c but he just shrugged. I carried out a Fire Mission on them and the Umpire took notice. We crested the hill and then all the soldiers sat down. I asked the 2i/c what happens now and he said we have taken the hill so nothing. I suggested that some probing patrols might be sent out to mark some DF tgts and a DFSOS one be marked as well. No he said our orders were to take the hill and we have done that. I gave my list to the Umpire who screwed his face up at it but passed it on his over Net.

We were joined by Bn HQ a while later on and just sat around again. Next morning I was amazed to see a line of Officers and SNCO's all sat on shooting sticks and fold up canvass chairs being shaved with open razors by Private Soldiers with other soldiers shining their boots for them. I asked the 2i/c what this was about and he said the conscripts always do this. Some soldiers were gathering around our L/Rover so we attempted to make conversation. Most were of peasant stock so conversation was out of the question. During the Korean War the only country that captured soldiers never gave any information to the Koreans was Turkey. The Yanks were the worst at complying. From these Soldiers I could see why. Possibly captivity was more comfortable for them than freedom and the Turkish language is so difficult to learn, although young Turkish kids speak it so it can't be that difficult.

Charlie organised an Exercise in SW District for us to raid various camps in small teams. Yeovil, St Mawgan and The Citadel in Plymouth. There was no OP Order as it was just all in his mind. The funniest was RNAS Yeovil. We were to break up into 3 man teams to RECCE the camp for places of entry. The camp was on full alert on a specific day from 1200hrs until 2359hrs. Every member of the camp was on duty. I thought that if this was for real they could not manage this for more than 24 hrs. My team found a point of entry we would use later on. We all had house bricks wrapped in Black Maskers with a piece of string sticking out and the word 'BOMB' in chalk on it. The attack was to happen when some of our Free Fall team jumped out of a Wessex at the far end of the Airfield. Now RNAS Yeovil was very big don't forget. We all got into our attack positions and the Helio appeared. Apparently we found out later the Air Traffic Control called it up and asked various questions all of which it did not answer. In due course the guys exited from the Wessex and a mass of vehicles and guys running closed in on them. Looked like the Keystone Cops. We managed to gain access to the camp and placed our bombs in some buildings. Then at 2359hrs a siren sounded and most of the camp went home. State normal was reinstated. The RN had not played the game and the Stn Commander was not best pleased with the manner in which we had played.

We moved onto the next Tgt. The RAF were not much better but they did have the RAF Regt guarding the camp. Once the phase was over we all allowed into camp legally, boarded a Herc and jumped into Dartmoor to carry out a raid on the Citadel. The DZ was about 20 miles from the Citadel so we all broke up into small teams for a meeting at Fisherman's Wharf at 2200hrs. Bert Stevens and I got a Taxi and hid in the back. We told the driver what was happening and he complied with obvious eagerness. He got us near the RV without any mishap. There were guards all around the approaches to Plymouth he pointed out so he had thought there was something up. We got to the final RV and met up with the others. Our PTI Tom Mulligan was co-ordinating the attacks. Our turn came and I attempted to climb one of the walls but it was impossible owing to the slope at the top. We skirted

round and found a possible entry. We could see many soldiers on the ramparts and there were frequent patrols around the outside as well. Again how long would they have been able to keep this up? I found a small cubby hole to hide in as a patrol came near. They poked their heads in but did not see me then they went away. I snuck out and was immediately stopped by two others. Some hard nut grabbed me and began twisting my ear. I struggled and the other one got hold of me as well. I said to stop twisting my ear or I was going to get very angry. The other guy was Lt Wilkinson, the hooker from the Rugby team. He told the thug to stop. We were taken to the Guard Room for processing and then put into the cell. As the door was opened I could see many others in there. CRS Pete Bryant was there and he decided to make a break next time someone else was brought in. He said he would knock the guard out, he was a champion boxer, so we could all get free. I said then what, where do we all go. He said he wanted to make a point because there was no provision for all the captured people to be processed. The door opened and we all broke out and reported to the Guard Room. The exercise quickly came to an end but much was talked about by Charlie to the CO.

Another memorable bit of Charlie planning was when we were on HMS Fearless in the Med on a big 3 Cdo Bde Ex. I was in the SACC with him and after the main landings had taken place he wanted me, at a moments notice, to fly ashore in a Scout Chopper to find the Tac HQ and be a presence there. I asked when and he simply replied 'Now'. I rushed to the Flight Deck having grabbed my bergan and a radio then scrambled aboard the waiting Helio. The pilot asked me where we were going so I said Tac HQ. He said where are they to which I replied 'Out there somewhere and we have to find them. They are still on the move' I indicated the general direction and in a short while I saw a column of dust. We headed over to it and saw a convoy of L/Rovers. We flew over them and I recognised one of the pers so said drop me off near them. The L/Rover pulled over and it was George Martin who used to be our Clerk in 95 FOU. I jumped on the Trailer, clung on and off we went. I managed to get comms with Charlie so all was good by him.

We did many things under Charlies command and he was always on the go. He was a great BC. In time his tenure was due to finish and he was replaced by Maj Miles Thomson. He had been in Singapore with 95 Cdo Lt Regt and I stood behind him for the final Regimental photo. He had served with the Arabs as a BC during the Oman troubles and was the complete soldier. Shortly after his arrival he tasked me to 'Show me what the Bty can do' by planning an exercise to showcase our skills. We sent our divers out from the hard to St Albans head and then conducted a FX with some RN Ship and some other things. When it was over he said words to the effect 'Need to improve on that Sgt Maj. Let me know when you have it set up again'. I got the guys together and passed on the comments to a bemused audience. Next time we did it again but from my stand point it was almost the same. Afterwards the BC said it was good. When I asked why he had made us do it again and improve he replied 'I just wanted to see how you would react. Both were good. Well done'. I said something like well you better tell the guys because they seem a tad pissed off. I later discovered that a 'Well done' from Maj Thomson was praise indeed. His worst comment was 'That was not good Sgt Maj' but luckily I rarely heard that from him. He was a stoic, taciturn Scot and a bloody good soldier.

I got on well with Maj Thomson and we went to Norway four times and once to Hong Kong together. There were many other exercises as well and I learned a lot from him. On all occasions in Norway I was acting as an NGFO with 13 Coy from the Dutch ACG (Amphibious Combat Group). Even though they were attached to 3 Cdo Bde they never had an FOO assigned so we obliged.

Exercises in Norway were either referred to as Black Shod or White Shod. Black meant summer when it either rained which kept the mossies down or sunny which only made them angry and hungry. White speaks for itself I think. The first Black Shod Ex I was with Maj Thomson in the SACC but we had to go the Shetland Islands first near Lerwick which had become an Oil Boom town due to oil being discovered in the N Sea some time ago. We spent about 3 days there and one day as there was little to do Maj Thomson had me arrange a Morse Ex for the two teams accompanying us. I decided to use this opportunity to practice the Slidex Code system. It was quite simple but a bugger to use. As I was standing at the rear of our L/Rover sending messages I felt a presence behind me. I finished what I was doing and turned round to see Lt Col Brian Pennicot who was the CO of 29 Cdo. I said hello and he asked what I was doing so I explained. He looked surprised as Slidex was well known for being difficult. He said to carry on and in time he asked if he could make a message up for each of the two NGFO's. Of course I replied and he gave me the messages to encode and send. They were both acknowledged and then he said can we now go to voice. A little bit surprised I said yes and sent ZBI to both and established voice comms. He then took up the handset and asked each



team to read back the message. Both sent the message and he said 100% correct. He then took me to one side and we chatted about what had just happened. He was full of praise that we used Morse and Slidex so well and that he was going to get the Regt to do something similar. Next day Maj Thomson told me that the Co had arranged a Slidex Ex in voice and it was a total disaster. Later in the day I was interviewed by a Brig for some reason but nothing relating to the Slidex. He asked me about my ambitions and where I saw myself in 5 years and such like things. I was not prepared for this and said what I felt at the time. I was having a good time where I was. I was a little puzzled about it all and asked Maj Thomson what it was about. He just said as I was one of the senior WOII's in the RA he wanted to have a chat. There was a German EW team in a sort of one tonner in the same area and I just happened to be passing by so said hello. I asked what they were doing and of course they were on an exercise to try and listen into radio nets. The Senior Feldwebel showed me around and he spoke perfect English as did his small crew. I asked if they were coming to Norway and he said they were still not allowed on Norwegian soil owing to the Second World War. I decided to give them some of the frequency ranges that we were operating on so they could get some benefit from their time here. They could have spent ages searching and getting no experience from monitoring a specific frequency. They were grateful for that. In due course the Bde embarked on the fleet. The weather was very rough and some of the LSL's were unable to turn towards Norway as they were in danger of tipping over in the massive swell so the whole Fleet chugged slowly South. The Shetland Islands are further North than the South of Norway by the way. The first night on board I was made Duty Officer, typical. I had to arrange for a SNCO guard in the Tank Deck which had to change every hour. It was quite dangerous down there with vehicles jumping and straining at their chains.

Eventually we arrived at the Landing area a little shaken up. Maj Thomson deployed me to 13 Coy 1 ACG as their FOO. They had landed and needed some support by Air and Sea. I took L/Bdr Noble (Paddy) Ferguson with me. It was drizzling all the time so our smocks were drenched. The idea was to attack a bridge and cross it and attack the 82<sup>nd</sup> US Airborne troops who were on the other side defending it. I had 2 German F111's and a Dutch Ship in support. I had comms with both and at the appointed time I called the jets in for their strike. The enemy position was at the edge of some trees and behind a large embankment. The Jets did their stuff and then the ship likewise. I coordinated the last notional salvos to coincide with the Dutch platoon attack on and over the bridge which they did with some gusto with blazing Uzies at the hip. We had an Umpire with us and he observed every detail of this plan. When the bridge was secure he met up with the enemy umpire and they were deep in conversation. They then approached the Coy Commander and told him the attack had been unsuccessful and to do it again in 1 hour. I was a tad miffed but complied with the order. As we regrouped some 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne guys appeared from out of the trees and asked who we were. The Dutch exchanged pleasantries then they came to me and Noble. They saw we had different cam clothing and berets so wanted to know who we were. As I spoke they said, 'Oh you are Australian', a common mistake in those days for Yanks to make. No I said we were Brits and then they saw my para wings and combined ops badges. 'Yo all Airborne?' one said with a Southern drawl. Yes I replied. 'Yo all know Salisbury Plain' he said. Yes I do I again replied. They had completed a jump on Everleigh DZ a short while ago and told me just how small it was. To us Brits Everleigh was a massive DZ so I kept quiet about sizes. Then he asked what rank I was to which I said WOII. He let out a yelp and shouted to some of his mates 'Hey you guys come here. We have a Warrant Officer here carrying a radio and all wet.' They came to look. I asked why all the fuss and he said that it was unusual for a Warrant Officer to be anywhere near the front in the US Army let alone carrying a radio. I became a sort of celebrity. Paddy of course joined in and told them I was carrying the radio for him.

We attacked again and the umpires told us the same result. I would not have this so I argued that any enemy under those trees would have been hit by all sorts of splinters from the Air Strike and following that the NGS in which I had added VT high and Low to the HE. They conferred again and agreed this time it may have worked. I told them you bet it would have made a difference and they both conceded. We moved on. We regrouped in an area to the rear and then were given another mission. It turned out that another Dutch Company were surrounded by the Americans and Norgies and some of our Company was tasked into getting them out. We made a plan and moved out to execute it. As we were moving I had trouble maintaining comms on the VHF A42 Radio to the SACC. We still had Larkspur at that time but it was not up to it. The HF A14 was no good either as the Dutch used VHF so we dropped that off along with my UHF A43 as they were surplus to the mission. I had Noble put up the 10ft antenna but it was intermittent and walking with it up was difficult owing to the terrain. We came across a wide track and heard vehicles moving along. The Dutch set up an instant ambush and round the corner came 3 vehicles, 2 USMC and 1 Norwegian Umpire. The ambush was classed as a

success and the umpires awarded us a 1 hour freedom from any action. I looked in the back of one of the USMC vehicles and saw a massive radio so I investigated more. The crew attempted to hold me back but I got the Umpire and he agreed they could do nothing for 1 hour as long as I did not damage any equipment or docs. I fiddled about and found out it was VHF so dialled up our Freq and made contact with the SACC and Maj Thomson. They were loud and clear so I gave him a Sitrep. As I was doing this Noble was ensuring the crew could not see what I was doing and what freq I was on. When I had finished I turned the dials and tuning unit away from the Freq. I then got out of the Vehicle but the Dutch had moved on. Where had they gone I asked Noble but he had not seen them as he was protecting me. We were now in a tricky situation alone with these 3 vehicles but we still had about 45 mins immunity. I got back on the radio to Maj Thomson to explain my predicament and after a short pause he simply said that I had to make it back to his location and also that I knew what my duties were in the situation. I acknowledged that and after again resetting all the dials Noble and I fled at top speed from the area. I racked my brain to list the Duties of an FOO and realised that my main duty was now to get back and on the way to observe and report any enemy positions I saw.

The rain had abated somewhat and as we climbed to higher ground both for safety and observation I could see the bridges were all manned. We had hoped to cross over the wide river and then back again as we neared the Cdo Bde area. We encountered many blocked roads and paths and then entered a wooded area. I could hear the sound of an engine running so we crept towards it. It was a USMC Jeep with it's engine running at full blast to keep the occupants inside warm and dry. I crept stealthily up to the drivers side and saw a Marine in a Parka on the radio. I noted the Call Sign he was using and those that he was talking to and bits of other info. I took the vehicle number and Unit flash details and snuck away. We moved around 500yds away and sent a fire mission down to the guns. I then reported to the SACC all the details hoping someone would inform an Umpire. It started to drizzle again and in due course I estimated we were about 2 miles from our destination. As we crept down a track I could hear American voices coming from the trees either side. I was challenged by someone and took a gamble and said in my best yank speak I was going to take a leak and a dump. The voice said OK but to hurry up. We scampered a bit quicker and then suddenly came across a bridge with about 4 people around it. This is it I thought and we brazened it out and strode purposefully towards it. It was some 59 Cdo Royal Engineers laying dummy explosives. I said hello and they were surprised to find that the US Troops were so close. We laughed and all scurried down the track a couple of miles to Bde HQ to warn them. I found the SACC Vehicle and poked my head into the back to be greeted by Maj Thomson who said 'What took you so long Sgt Maj? Well done.'

Again we went to Norway and all of 148 Bty completed the full Arctic Warfare Course. Worth mentioning all did not go well from the start. For some reason RHQ at Plymouth insisted that 148 Bty would not go direct to Brize Norton as usual but to Plymouth to pass through a Movements desk first. Maj Thomson was not amused stating that the Bty had been going to Norway since 1971 without this detour, just look at the map. They were adamant so we loaded all our kit into the 3 tonner and booked a coach. When we arrived at Telegraph Hill the road was closed by Police. It was so icy nothing could get up it. We all went into the nearby Motorway Cafe. The BC got on the phone, no mobiles in those days, and had a long talk with someone in RHQ. He looked a tad angry when he came to talk with me. He had been told to wait and see if the road cleared then come through Plymouth. He had insisted that if we were to turn round right now we could get to Brize in a couple of hours. No was the answer we had to go through Plymouth first. The guys were getting restless by this time so he once again went to the phone. Same result. The Cafe was getting topped up more so every hour. He once again went to the phone and on his return told me to get everyone on the coach. I attempted to ask what had happened but his demeanour told me to skip it. We drove back to Poole as the coach was on hire and had to return to it's base early in the morning. We then got another one and went to Brize. We waited there for some hours then the Regt guys arrived. I told the Bty guys to keep quiet as they were only looking to wind us up and to bait us. In due course we boarded the plane and arrived in Norway, got on a coach and went to the Camp at Drevja. The whole journey from Poole to Norway had taken 96 hours door to door. Fred Carno's Army at it's best.

During the phase in camp our vehicles were parked up in the MT area with many others. As it was Minus 22deg the engines had to be kept running with bonnets lifted up. For some reason one of the vehicles carburettor developed a leak and a fire broke out. Three of our vehicles were destroyed along with a couple of others. Someone ran to the joint Officers/Sgts Mess and began waking people up. When the BC was woken and the guard explained what was happening he calmly said well there is nothing I can do. Order some mules in and went back to sleep.

On completion of the Course Maj Thomson had a small Ex organised to shake down the NGFO's. My team was Bdr Joe Doole (A fabulous skier) L/Bdr Pete McNeill (he hated the cold), RO1 Jock (John) Innes and Gnr Bungy Williams (not good on skis). It was intended to be a point to point Ski from opposite sides of a rather large mountain. The other Team was led by Capt Hutchinson. I decided that three of us, Joe, Jock and me would make up the team with the other two as rear party monitoring. We set off and crested a small slope. The wind was getting up and as I studied the map Joe was suddenly whisked off backwards the way we had just come from by the strong wind. Only his skiing skills kept him upright. He eventually stopped and we tried to continue. A storm was coming so I got on the radio to Maj Thomson to give a Sitrep. He simply said complete your task according to the conditions. After around two hours the conditions were so bad I again contacted him and he agreed to RV with me in his BV. We found some respite from the wind and he duly arrived. I skied to the BV but just kept getting swept backwards. He decided to change the planned Ex and said we can make the most of this bad weather by conducting a survival and comms phase. We found some shelter behind a slope and made up out tent sheet. Next we got comms with our Vehicle and Maj Thomson and sat out the storm. Later the next evening we RV'd again at base camp. Maj Thomson said to always try and make something of a bad situation and never just fold up and go home. An Exercise is just that and every bit of it should be a learning experience. He was of course right again.

The next day I was told to get up to the OP area on skis and report to the BC of 8 Bty. I took Joe Doole and Pete McNeill with me. We managed to get a lift from someone in a tracked vehicle and duly reported to the BC. He was obviously not happy that someone like me was being allowed to use his precious guns and Ammo. He was so condescending with me and his manner was that of someone showing a new recruit the ropes. First he said why have you not dug in yet? So I replied with my usual polite manner 'As you are not yet dug in I assumed it was a safe area'. Now we both knew where we stood. He said do it and that he would be back shortly. I almost said 'Sir, with respect but my name is not shortly it is WOII Richards' but I just brushed it off and enquired what my L and R of limits were. He muttered something and left. We quickly made a good OP using our Shovels and made a quick panorama. The range area was in a valley with steep sides to it. He returned and began to casually point out a couple of Tgts to me. I put on my Larkhill Hat and responded from the Book to everything he said. 'I check back, Ref hill to the right ....' and so on. He looked a tad perplexed and attempted to respond. As Ammo was limited he gave me little room for error so I did my best. Firing into snow is not easy but I somehow managed to do 3 very quick good missions with the help of my team. He again muttered something and finished with 'Beginners luck'. Well that was like a red rag to a bull. I thought in for a penny in for a pound. I stood up and said 'Thank you Sir but I have been doing this for about 17 years now all over the world. Beginners luck is nothing to do with it. I believe it is called Practice and Professionalism'. I could feel Joe and Mac cringing behind me. I thought the BC was going to kill me but he just nodded and said 'Fair enough BSM. You are dismissed'. We filled the hole in and departed.

A few days later we were deployed again to the Live Firing Ranges with the Regt. As usual we were the third OP's just waiting for scraps. The CO, Lt Col Pennicot, had the OP's spread out along a line with their respective BC's behind them. Capt Hutchinson and I were about 50 yds apart and Maj Thomson about the same distance to the rear. We were given Tgts through our respective BC's. As was my usual routine I always listened in on the radio and observed the other OP's as they conducted their missions and plotted their recorded info. We seemed to be given tgts on the far side of the range and on a slope. The next day the BC's were called to an 'O' Group by the CO. When they returned the plan was for the OP's to ski down to an RV at the bottom of the hill just where the valley started to open out to the ranges. The OP's from 7, 8 and 148 moved off and in time the CO, who was not a skier by any stretch of the imagination arrived ponderously on his NATO Planks. He gave us a brief of what he wanted to achieve. He was to act as a Coy Cdr and advance with each FOO one at a time. When he indicated the enemy the FOO had to react. He then said 'Right Sgt Major, you are up first'. I was a bit taken aback by this as I thought we would be the last. He said to follow him along the Valley. We got into a line with the CO leading, someone from his entourage next, me, Mac on Radio and Joe bringing up the rear. The others were allowed to follow at a distance. Suddenly the CO indicated with his ski pole a group of bushes a far distance away and said 'We are taking fire from there. Neutralise it'. I quickly responded by shouting 'Take cover left, enemy to the front, Fire Mission Bty'. Mac and Joe dived to the left and Joe became security and my Ack, Joe got comms with the CPO and I began to give him the grid of the tgt which I already had from yesterday. I told the CO and his sidekick to take cover as well and they complied looking a tad shaken at my direct orders. In no time the Bty reported Ready as I had included 'At My Command' in the orders. I asked the CO what the FLOT was



and had he informed his troops to take cover as some rounds were imminent. He seemed a tad stunned by all this and then began to join in with this charade. All Troops safe and under cover he said so I said Fire. There was a rush of sound as one round flew overhead and crashed down very close to my Grid. May I adjust I asked to which the CO said yes. Then I ordered one round FFE and again told him to inform his troops to take cover again. The FFE arrived and he said to end the mission and took me to one side and gave me a great compliment on what had just happened. I contained myself as I went back to my team to pass on the good words. Next up was Capt Hutchinson. As I moved to the rear some of the Regt guys gave me a cynical smile. Capt H did a similar thing as me and then it was the turn of the Regt's FOO's. They were terrible. Some could not get comms, one had difficulty in finding the tgt on the map but a couple made a decent fist of it. Later Maj Thomson said to me 'Well done Sgt Maj'. That was praise from him.

Next came the big 8 day final Exercise. I was of course with 13 Coy ACG again. We met up with them at Hardstad and we were welcomed heartily. The Ex began at 0200hrs with 13 Coy having to move South down the road on foot. The Coy Cdr's BV and mine brought up the rear. I had Pete McNeill and Bungy in it so they could be our backup with a hot drink if we ever met up again. We had to pass through an American Bn which straddled the road on the way which we did with ease. Next morning the Company had to be helicoptered over the Fjord to a mountain top on the other side to act as a blocking force with me as their FOO. We set up and the Coy Cdr called me to his tent sheet to brief me on the next day and tell me it would be -36deg that night so to get prepared. Next day I was in the OP we had set up and I noticed lots of vehicles in the Valley below. After a long study I found out they were not 'Ours' so I made up an air strike and Regt Fire Mission on the position. As always in Norway there was an Umpire det with us so I went to him and showed him my plan. He conferred by radio with his HQ and said to go ahead. Later we found out that the plan was good and the enemy had to move to another location unexpectedly as a result. That sealed our relationship with 13 Coy 1 ACG. After three days the Coy Cdr got hold of me again and said he had orders to move down to the area where the enemy had been and regroup for a further advance. He said he was going to make an unconventional move by letting his Coy get down any way they wanted as a single file move would take ages owing to all the deep snow and hidden fence wires. His MSL's would take a fanned out route 10 mins before we all moved out. He said good luck to me and also, jokingly I think, that if I beat his Coy HQ of 5 men down with my team of 3 he would never forgive me. It was mayhem with some of the Dutch Indonesian troops with Carl Gustafs around their necks joyously launching themselves down steep slopes. We all arrived at the RV and began to move along a road. There we met up with Capt Hutchinson again. As John Rycroft, his Bdr Ack saw us he waved but then lost control of his skis and fell hitting his head on the icy road with a loud thud. He got up gingerly and smiled. He had been hit harder in the boxing ring he said. After a while we turned off to the left and followed a frozen river along a valley. It began to get dark and the Coy Cdr, who always insisted I follow his signaller closely, stopped and asked me if I knew where we were. I indicated on my map a position and he said he thought we were somewhere else. After a quick discussion I pointed out some lights in a building to our half right and he agreed my position was probably correct. He then added he had lost comms with his Bn HQ. They used VHF and we had HF of course. I said his Bn Commander was sitting alongside my BC in the CP so did he want me to try and let them know. He seemed surprised at this information and said yes please. I called up Maj Thomson and we spoke about the situation and that the Coy Cdr wanted to speak to his Bn Cdr. As the Bn Cdr came on the line I passed my headset to the Coy Cdr. He started by saying 'This is 6 actual, do you hear me?', 'Yes I do what is your message?' Then they went into Dutch for what seemed like ages. I had to put my hand on the headset and say please 30-40 seconds at a time then wait as this is a Fire Orders Network. We always got on so well. The night was freezing and in the morning as we pulled pole I could see we had been camped on the frozen river, never a good idea but it was the easiest at the time. We climbed a massive mountain then we could see Eveness Airfield which was our objective. We descended and set up in a house which had the usual sheep pens underneath. My toes had suffered and also I had almost lost my voice. There was a Doctor attached to the Coy so he came to see me. He looked at my toes and then my throat. He was quite a funny guy and told me he was on a 12 month tour with the ACG as part of his Medical career but he was a Gynaecologist so he was used to looking at women from another angle. All he had in his medical pack was some aspirin which he gladly gave to me. The guys got together and gave me the orange or lemon sweets from their ration packs which I put into water and boiled it up. Maj Thomson came on the radio and ordered Joe to ban me from using the radio for the next 2 days to let my throat recover. The Exercise ended and we all came home. Another massive learning period. I learned a lot being with the Dutch and the thing I carried with me after the first time was just keep smiling. They were such a happy lot in all conditions.

Next was a big Exercise on Salisbury Plain with 1 Para. I had served with them on my second tour in Malta and had jumped into Libya with them. I had to go to Aldershot for a pre Ex briefing which could have been risky with a Green Beret on my head. Fortunately I knew some of the guys from Malta. They had also been promoted so I was accepted. The Coy Cdr, would you believe it, was a US Ranger on a 12 month exchange. He spoke to me prior to the briefing and asked of my background. All I had to say was 148 Bty was similar to ANGLICO and he was aboard in an instant. I recalled when I went on my FOO course a similar thing happened. I returned to Poole and briefed the BC and my FOO team. We were to jump in with A Coy and be their FOO throughout the 6 days. I was the only person who had previously served with the Para's, all 3 Bn's in fact, so I had to share some things with the team. The BQMS got some white tape for me and when I began to tell them what it was one said are we Umpires. No I replied this is what we put around our Bergans when we jump as a cross to indicate our kit has important gear inside. If we get hurt it is the rule any Para without white tape should drop his kit and carry the taped one to the first RV. It also ensures we are at the front of the stick which is by far the safest place. The Bty of course only jumped in sticks of 4 – 5 people. With 69 jumping from each aircraft it would be a tad crowded in the air. I got all our kit together and we spread it out in the Para Room. I made them take out anything that was not essential. When we weighed our kit two were 105 lbs and two were 110 lbs exactly. I reminded them that this was without any ammo.

We arrived at Lyneham and got the bad news the jump was off as the winds were too high. For me it was an opportunity missed to test us at the top of our job. We deployed from 3 tonners and nobody was injured. The Ex continued with the Dutch Gunners and UK Armoured Corps as enemy. At the briefing the Maj had said as this was the first time some of the Para's had worked with Armour to be careful. If anyone was in danger to simply flash his torch at the oncoming Tank and it would veer off course. Err, I don't think so I thought. Some suggested hiding behind a tree which was only delaying the inevitable I mentioned. During the Ex I did notice many guys had their GS Torches attached to their fighting order though. The final phase was near and we were all moved to Sudbury Hill to firm up. It is not in the Para psyche to be defensive but this was just to show them what Armour was like when attacking them. There had been trenches dug by JCB's for us all to hide in as Armoured vehicles were to drive over them. At the final Bn brief I met up with Maj Thomson. He asked how it had all gone so far. The Coy Cdr and I sat together as the brief for the final phase was conducted but it mainly emphasised the safety aspect of it. Something like 'Tell your soldiers not to look over the top of the trenches as the Armour attacks'. The final word was non Ex. The Bn Cdr said when Endex is ordered all 1 Para will be taken immediately to London to man Green Goddesses for the Fireman's strike which had just happened. The BC and me stifled a grin. Little did we know.

The Bty became involved with the first National Firemans Strike. I was assigned as the Station Commander at Langton Road Infants School in Glasgow. The BC visited a couple of times as he was not deployed even though he was a Glaswegian. There were 11 stations in the main Glasgow area and we were kept very busy. All the other Stations were run by Officers and I was the only SNCO to have that pleasure. I attended 163 call outs during the strike from Nov 14<sup>th</sup> 1977 – 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1978. The Bty were spread out over 3 stations to the South of Glasgow, Elderslie, Langton Rd and Wood Green which was the HQ of 40 Cdo with Lt Col Julian Thompson as the CO. I soon changed the system which I had inherited from a Jock Regt to 24 Hrs watch. I had the guys turn too at 1100hrs and be ready to take over from the existing watch at 1200hrs. Soon other stations adopted the same routine. Later on I had an almost complete crew change and the RM Band arrived. It was certainly a change. I had to sack four of the SNCO crew commanders for being useless. One day I received a back up crew from Birmingham as one of my crews had a day off. It was Dave Manton who was the scrum half in 95 Cdo Regt team when we were in Singapore. We chatted and suddenly the bells went down. I cursed and said that makes 8. Only 8 he said, we have had 10 call outs since the start. I replied that is 8 today. He looked a tad shocked. When I returned we had a long chat about the differences between Birmingham and Glasgow. The longest fire I attended was at the Grovesnor Hotel. We spent 8 hours there. Luckily I had just had a complete crew change in my station of RN pers on their Tif Engineers Course accompanied by CPO's. They could make those Green Goddess engines pump water better than anyone.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1978 29 Cdo Regt was tasked to send small group to Hong Kong mainly to assure those there that Britain was still able to deploy there to assist in anything that may happen. The Adjt was to go on a jolly acting as an FOO. I did not know if he had ever been one. 148 Bty also had to send a small team as well and as the Adjt had broken his leg just before the departure date I was appointed as the FOO. The 148 Bty pers were Maj Thomson, CRS Chadwick, Bdr Wallace, L/Bdr Topsy Turner

and a couple of others. We were in Sek Kong camp in the North of Hong Kong which I knew so well and therefore became the tour guide.

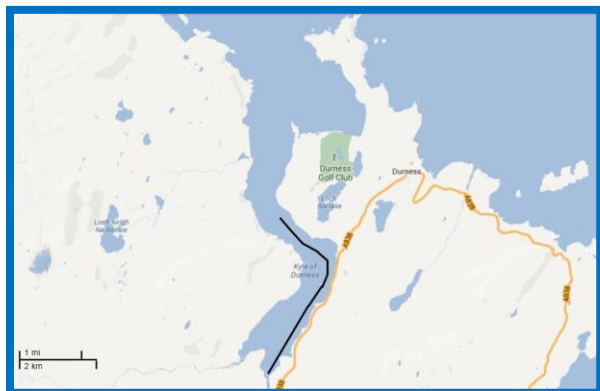
The main reason we were there, I soon discovered, was to assist with the PQS2 examinations for Officers. As the FOO I had to set a scenario of a landing in the hills by a RM Force supported by Fast Jets and Ships initially then by Guns landing soon afterwards. I set the scene for each candidate and gave them 10 mins to produce their plan. I staggered my brief so as one finished another would be ready to play. Some were quite good but one in particular, an Int Corps Lt was not. After I had set the scene I asked him to come up with his support plan from the assets I told him we had. When he returned he said 'Well first I would engage the tgt area with the two ships you said we have for 10 mins, he indicated the likely tgts. Then the Fast Jets would strike given tgts he again indicated on the map. Then the ground troops would advance and mop up any stragglers.' I began to debrief him asking what rate of fire he had set for the Ships. He said it would be up to them. Then I asked how the Fast Jets would have been able to see and identify the tgts he had chosen. He thought for a moment and then said he was not very good at this sort of thing. I gave him credit for this honest assessment.

Next day was another scenario with a Bridge Reserve Demolition plot. That was my first time involved in one but Maj Thomson explained all the variations of this art. After it was over we were both invited to a meal in the Officers Mess in the field. The Ghurkha Soldiers had put up a massive tent and laid out tables. I was not comfortable going but Maj Thomson said I had to as I had been doing the work of an Officer all the Exercise. I reluctantly agreed. There were the 3 Coy Commanders, all British, the HQ Coy Commander a Ghurkha and several young British Officers either Lt or Capt. We had a drink and chatted politely then a WOII Ghurkha went to the CO and we all sat down for the massive meal. I had to sit at the table with the CO, all the Coy Commanders, Maj Thomson and a couple of other Maj's. All the others sat at the other tables. There was a lot of noise from the other tables but ours was very proper. I asked Maj Thomson and he explained that as a junior officer one was allowed to be an idiot but on achieving Majority some order of sense had to reign. I could see that now.

We had a final Ex with the Ghurkhas and then they held a sort of Ban Yan. Their CO told us what was happening between beers and food then the Ghurkha soldiers started dancing with their Kukris. One came over to Maj Thomson and invited him up. The CO said it would be very bad not to accept so he got up and then we all had to join in with the dancing. Not a pretty sight I can assure you.

On return to the UK time was running out for Maj Thomson and his replacement was announced. Maj Ali Harvey. He had of course been my green FOO in Singapore. Just like Maj Thomson he had served with the Arabs in Oman so he came with good credentials. We had a long chat when he arrived and all looked good to me. He joined in most of the physical, played hockey and rugby and we always competed fiercely against each other during physical. It was even most of the time.

Soon after he arrived he got me into his office and said he wanted to test the Bty with an exercise he had in mind. He called it 'Fiery Cross' It was a bold idea and he wanted my input. It was to be kept a secret from the guys at all costs. He said he wanted my input from the SAS Exercise I had completed in France. In essence it was to be a massive E&E, Combat Survival with a parachute entry into the Kyle of Durness and a final Parachute jump as an emergency back into Salisbury Plain at the end.



The final RV was to be RALONGS house in Orcheston for a big PU. Ambitious indeed and it took much planning. First we had to get our DZSO to go to Durness and check out the DZ Parameters and tides. He did so and said it would be OK for sticks of no more than 4 which was ideal. The only worry was when the tide went out there was a channel, marked in heavy black in the picture, which was around 8 feet deep.

Next I had to make out a special code and report which had to be sent in reflecting the state of bridges to be used by the teams for possible demolition. I had to plan for a Helicopter Abseil programme followed by a water jump programme with the Wessex we would have for the whole 2 weeks. Next we had to travel the whole route which was from Kyle of Durness to each point and then



down to Fort William. Once there we would travel to Lossiemouth to board a Hercules for the final drop into Everleigh. I had to liaise with all the elements of this major plan. I think he just told RHQ we were all going to Cape Wrath or something. During all this Maj Harvey and I travelled up to Perth in Scotland to collect a L/Rover from the HQ there. We then went to where his Mother lived for the night and then travelled up to Cape Wrath area. There would be four teams on the Ex with a small DS of two L/Rovers. I took photos of all the bridges and surrounding hills on the route back down to Fort Augustus and we also visited chosen dwellings attempting to gain the help of locals to act as Agents. The idea was each team would be given two bridges to survey and report on using my Bridge Rep Form all in Morse Code. They would receive details of each Safe House on the route and Grids for Helio Pick up points. It was planned so no team would come into contact with another during the whole route. They had strict Radio Schedules to keep on the way.

One house in particular is worthy of mention. It was a large farm near the Loch we hoped to use for the Helio Abseil and Water Parachute part. We had obtained several chutes which were time elapsing, 10 jumps each, for this. Of course we had our own Geminis for the DZSO party. We approached the house and knocked on the door. An elderly gent came and invited us in as Maj Harvey, in his best posh Scottish accent began to tell him what we were all about and what we had planned. He listened intently when I had to explain what we expected each team to do on arrival. I said one member would approach the house and give a certain knock. After a few seconds they would give another knock but different. When the door was opened code words would be exchanged and that person allowed to enter if correct. The others would wait outside concealed. His job then was to explain a safe route to the next Safe House RV and give them the codes for both knocking and the code word on entry. We sat back and wondered if he had taken all this in. He smiled and said 'Would you boys like a wee dram?' We said yes and he went to get a special bottle for us. He then amazed us with his story. During the war he had been with the SOE and had jumped into Yugoslavia to train the resistance there. He spoke fluent Yugoslav and was delighted to be called up again to help us. He had a tear in his eye as he spoke and showed us some faded B&W photos. He said what we were planning was exactly what he had done on his live Mission. He then donned his coat and eagerly showed us around his farm area. I swear he lost a few years as he went around energetically. We asked about the Helicopter and he showed us a field we could use. He even asked if he could do a jump with us. He then showed us a sheep barn which he said he would clear out for the guys to kip in. We could not have asked for more. Maj Harvey said to me as we left 'I don't care if all the other parts of the Ex are cancelled we can come up here for a week anyway'. I had to agree with that.

After we had gone around all the other places we returned to Perth to hand back the L/Rover and returned to Poole to put things on paper. I had all the photos developed and put into each teams pack. Next I had some Exercise ID Cards made up for the runners. I was going to take their official ID Cards off them just as we had to do when on the SAS exercise. I also had to inform all the police in the area that we were operating in their area and if anyone reported any suspicious behaviour the ID Card would be proof of just who they were. I gave the Police duplicate copies of all names and details of the runners.

The Exercise went ahead with the first ever Jump into the Kyle of Durness. Maj Harvey and I went first just to see if the DZSO had his calculations correct. I was No 1 and as I cleared the tail gate I looked at the channel to the right. It was to be avoided at all costs. I lowered my container and steered away then turned round to see Maj Harvey going towards it. He landed right in the channel and came up spluttering as I steered close to him. I helped him up still attached to my chute. He was no a happy bunny. We cleared the DZ and watched the other sticks descend further to the West. They dropped their chutes and made their way to their first RV. Maj Harvey and I went up to Faraid Head, which was to be used for the first phase as our Control Room and he changed out of his wet kit. I stayed clear of him for a while as all I had was a wet knee from helping him up.

All went well for the first phase then we entered the second one. This involved the use of the Helio for transporting the teams one at a time. We had planned that on one passage to the next RV the Helio was to simulate an emergency and land to let the troops out. It worked and they had to be sure to keep an eye on the route to be able to pick it up. In time all four teams arrived at the Safe House with the ex agent at. The helio arrived fully fuelled for the Abseil phase. Next came the Parachuting. I was in the first stick and Number one as always. I shuffled to the door and the PJI said to go. As I exited I felt there was something wrong. I put my hand on my reserve handle and was just about to pull when my chute opened. I knew there was something wrong when I looked up and did not see anyone else

exiting. The Helio had returned to the land. As I entered the cold water the Gemini closed in on me and the guy asked me if I was OK. Why I asked back. Because you fell so far we thought the chute was not going to open. That's what I thought as well I replied. The DZSO came alongside in his Gemini and we chatted. What had happened was the Pilot had set his speed all wrong. Instead of 60 knots he had been doing 160 knots. I had almost gone into the rear rotor, I doubted that, but the chute deployment was affected. When it was all sorted out the programme continued. We spent a good night in the sheep pen and next morning continued on with the Ex.

I had devised a new method of being picked up by Helio at night using the good old GS Torch. It involved an inverted 'L' formation where the pilot would fly slowly along the main arm of the 'L' lining up both lights and then when he saw the other two lights he would land. The first attempt the pilot put on his lights but after that he gained confidence and used my method. He said he would write it up and make it an SOP. In due course the DS arrived at Fort William with the teams all up in the mountain to the North. They had, officially been on their own carried rations and we had organised a resupply for each team in turn. They each had to send their location and details of where they wanted the drop. Maj Harvey and I went up into the area of the drop and listened on both radios, HF and VHF. The weather was cloudy and we thought it would be cancelled. The Herc had come from Lyneham and also carried out 2 hours low level training. Now it was cloudy and dark. We waited and I stared at my watch. The first team must be flashing their code letter but would the crew see it. Suddenly I heard the drone of engines and through a break in the cloud the sight of a Herc. The SOP was if it did not drop first time it would return 5 mins later. We heard it again and this time it dropped the first container. It then followed by dropping the others all 5 mins later on. I had checked my watch and at exactly, to the second, it had been over the first point of drop only to be foiled by cloud.

Next day all the teams came down for a beer in the Hotel and then next day for some more Abseiling. I set the rope at 200 ft and as we were about to dispatch the first man two fast jets flew each side of us quite close. The pilot was not happy and he radioed his disapproval to someone. He received a 'Sorry for that' message and we carried on. We had put in a NOTAM prior to every movement for the whole Ex but this bit had somehow been overlooked.

Next we moved to Lossie, drew Parachutes and boarded the Hercules. Most of the guys relaxed and had a kip but we had arranged the final surprise. The Herc cruised along then started to raise and lower its flaps. We descended then rose again. All this over the North Sea. The Air Loadmaster came to Maj Harvey and me and started talking and animating with his hands. The guys started to look up. After a while the Loadmaster came back again and we shouted for everyone to rig up for an emergency exit. We passed the message down the line that it was jump or possibly crash. They all lined up in one stick with Me at the back which was unusual. The back was opened and very quickly the red and then green light came on. We were over Everleigh DZ. Some of the guys were not fooled especially Charlie Ede as he had recognised the final Grid Ref as Lt Col Eve's home. We had quite a PU. Then back to Poole.

There was one incident which I recall clearly. We had a Team in Belize as usual and Maj Harvey called me into his office for a chat. I will not mention their names. He said he had received a letter of complaint from a certain member of the team saying that one evening whilst they were gathered around a bonfire some complained that I was being too hard on the Bty and a few other things. The BC and I had a very difficult conversation about this and I said I have always been demanding with everyone and never singled out an individual. If anyone did not come up to standard I always told them, perhaps a tad too hard at times but we were here to do a job and do it well. I also mentioned that he, as the BC required that I kept the guys in line but some of the Officers needed a sharp kick in the pants. Take haircuts I said. You expect me to ensure the guys are neat and tidy at all times but some of the officers we had were down right scruffy in camp. He then made this comment which I will never forget. 'Sgt Maj, the soldiers have their hair cut, the Officers have it cut to suit their personality.' I was enraged and we had quite an argument about this. A long time afterwards when we had both retired we had many chats about this and another statement which will come up later on in this journal.

He then handed out the Candy Bar by saying, 'Oh by the way we are going to Hong Kong in a couple of months, me as the BC and you as the FOO so brief me on what happens there'.

This time we were to be almost solely with the Gurkhas with me assisting the Promotion course for Section Commanders, Platoon Commanders and minor other things as well. We were to be joined by a newly arrived officer Capt CC Brown, CRS Chadwick, Bdr Topsy Turner and a couple of others. 49 Field Regt would also send a small contingent as well.

We continued with Parachuting, Abseiling and of course working with FOST Staff on WX, CX and Live firings. The time came to go to Hong Kong again. We arrived and found that the CRS and me were to be billeted in the Gurkha camp SNCO's Mess. The accommodation we were in reeked of Rum as they still had their daily Tot issue and the store was close by. My room was just big enough for a bed and chair and as it was next to the duty SNCO bunk I was disturbed all night long. We all mustered in Sek Kong camp the following morning and I went to the SNCO's mess there and enquired about accommodation for two. As it was an RAF Mess they were reluctant to oblige but I insisted with some evasive chat about what we were doing there. The guy took me along the accommodation and said that they were almost full up. There were 4 occupied cabins and loads more empty ones. But they have not been made ready yet he stated so I told him to get them done as the two of us were moving in that evening. In the evening as we entered the dining room the 4 members, one of them a woman and three gents, gave us a very long stare. In my usual sarcastic manner I asked if the empty seats at an adjoining table were taken and one of them muttered he did not think so. It was a very frosty SNCO's Mess.

I had a good time with the Gurkhas helping them with Section Commander, Platoon Commander and other tactical things. The Maj Coy Cdr I worked with was a rugged calm considerate professional soldier. When helping with the tactics of Advance to Contact, or Contact, or Withdraw from Contact he got the JNCO's together and briefed them in Gurkhali of course. At the end he always said to me 'Any Questions Sgt Maj?' to which I always said 'What did you say Sir?' It was a sort of game. Then he got each JNCO to give me his plan in English. Some were very good but others struggled. The Coy Cdr always said 'to struggle is to learn.' I went over the effects of Air Strikes, Field Guns, NGS and Mortars with them and hope I helped. We would put each JNCO's plan into effect with the rest of the Coy. The Gurkhas had an insatiable appetite for learning as I had witnessed on my previous tours to HK, Singapore, Malaya and Borneo.

We had some time off most nights in Sek Kong and there were a couple of bars in the local village. We took advantage of the hospitality. One evening CRS Chadwick and I went out and entered one of the better friendly looking bars. It was an unusual shape with a long bench alongside the bar. We sat down and the waitress came along and took our order for 2 Sam Miguel. At the end of the bar was a telephone which just happened to ring. The staff were all busy so I took hold of the receiver and answered in Cantonese. I said words to the effect 'Hello there, this is the Bar can I help?' There was an audible gasp at the other end so I guessed they were confused with the accent. I repeated the question and the person said could they speak to Miriam. I answered of course, please hang on. I then shouted out in Cantonese, 'Miriam, phone call for you'. The bar girls all turned round in unison and stared at me. I waved the receiver and said 'Hurry up Miriam'. The bar went quiet and the Mama San came over to me and spoke to me in English to which I answered in Cantonese. It was well known that any 'White Eyes' who could speak Cantonese were in general with the Police. I assured her that I was just a Squaddie and we got on very well thereafter. We were given VIP treatment and each bar girl came over to chat and hear me speak. I had learned mostly from a book which had been written by a Roman Catholic missionary and then honed up my skills in bars. They were fascinated.

Maj Harvey had arranged that I would have the use of a Scout Helicopter for some Abseiling with the main objective of teaching the Pilot and Crewman how to do it. With all the High Rise buildings in HK it may be of some use one day he thought. I conducted a full programme and acted as the Crewman throughout. I decided that I would have a singleton exiting first until the Pilot and Despatcher were proficient then move onto two at a time. All went well and I catted them both for one year.

In due course we had to move out of Sek Kong Camp and go to HMS Tamar on the Island. The bus arrived and then we went round to pick up the Officers. They were all standing at the door with drinks in their hands and looked quite happy. The journey to Kowloon Ferry was not without incident. Maj Harvey and Capt Brown were quite merry and sang some bawdy songs. Then they asked if those who did not have a Green Beret to sing. Not in that tone of course but in Squaddie Slang. 'We call on the c\*\*\* h\*\*s to sing us a song', and so on. At one stage someone, I will not name names, wanted to pee so they did it into their water bottle and poured it out of the window. Unfortunately we were in



traffic and a Rickshaw driver and passenger got most of it over them. We arrived at HMS Tamar which was a multi storey building, about 30 floors I think. Maj Harvey exited the bus rather unsteadily so I said I would organise the booking into reception. He said no Sgt Maj I will do it but I then said more emphatically that I would do it owing to his condition.

The room allocated to me was massive. Chad came along and was a tad jealous. Then the WO1 from 49 Regt knocked on the door to have a chat with us. He was a bit annoyed about the bus journey and the conduct of certain people. I said it was normal for us to have some fun and I had it all in hand. He continued to go on about it. I said do you want to come ashore with us? He looked a bit taken aback but said OK. We went down the bars of HK Island then got a Ferry to Kowloon which I knew like the back of my hand. I said would you like to go to The Bottoms Up Club which was a strip club/girlie bar notorious for its appearance in the 1974 James Bond film *The Man with the Golden Gun*. I said it was just round the corner in Kowloon where I was stationed in 1964. All the bar girls are topless. He said with glee he would like that. We arrived and I showed them around the many side bars and we chose one of them. Each Bar was in a circle and sat around 10 people. In the middle was the gorgeous Bar Girl, topless and sitting on a rotating high stool. I warned Chad and the WO1 not to gloat or make any advances at all as there would be 100 Chinese on their backs in an instant. It was the start of another good evening. Of course my Cantonese came in handy and we got special treatment.

One of our Ex Bty Matelots, Mac McCubbin was now working for a GCHQ Station in HK and invited Chad and me round one day. We visited the Station, not all of it of course, and then went to the Rugby Club Mac was a member of. Most of the other Members were Aussies and there was a game on that day in which Mac was playing. The Capt agreed that I could be a Sub for Mac in the second half. I was given a Tee shirt afterwards and became an Hon Member. That evening we went into a Hotel Bar where all the British Airways crew members were staying between flights. We had a table to ourselves at first but after much singing we were joined by most of the BA Crew, just for fun of course.

All too quickly we had to return to the UK. At the Airport Maj Harvey introduced me to his replacement, saying 'This will be your next BC'. He was just about to complete a tour as the liaison between the British Forces HK and the HK Police. As he shook my hand and smiled I had a strange shivering creepy feeling sweep over me. Little did I know how my world was soon about to change dramatically.

One of Maj Harvey's final things he organised was a Tactical Exfiltration by Herc. I had to concede that I had never heard of that procedure before. What it entailed was a Herc with no lights at all arriving at a given point to pick up a number of men in a fully tactical mode as quickly as possible. If a L/Rover could drive along any surface at 30mph for 1,500 yds without difficulty then so could a Herc it was stated. The SAS trained for this and had achieved a time of 11 mins plus a few seconds from touchdown to lift off. Maj Harvey had somehow got permission for us to try it after a day parachuting at Hullavington, which was then a disused RAF airfield but still used as a Para Packing Unit of the RAF. He discussed the procedure with me and we made up a plan to execute it. The day's program was one Clean Fatigue followed by equipment followed by a dusk resupply then at late evening a pick up. Very ambitious but with 148 Bty it was totally achievable. The jumps and resupply were standard. On a Resupply we could achieve 10 metres accuracy on most team drops which entailed calculating aircraft speed, throw forward, wind, humidity and some other tech stuff.

The Exfiltration was a bit harder to plan. We had obtained the SOP from Special Forces Flight at Chelsea and poured over it. In essence it required a line of lights for 1,500 metres down the port side spaced out at 100 metres intervals and opposite them the same lights spaced out alternately. At the beginning, opposite the first light and 50 metres at right angles there was to be a light flashing the pre arranged letter in morse code by torch. Each member of the party would place their pack behind the first light on the Port side and one person was allocated to ensure each pack was picked up and every head counted. He was to be the last person to board and report to the Air Load Master 'All men and kit accounted for' The Herc would then take off at the rush. The lights were supposed to be hexamine blocks which would simply burn away but would leave a burn mark which could not be helped. I suggested Cool Lights but was informed that would give away the possible Nationality of the Exfil Troops. US, UK or French.

Maj Harvey and I planned in detail picking our best runners for the far away positions. The idea was that at minus 2 mins pick up time the torch would aim into the approaching Herc which was of course

invisible being totally blacked out. That was my job. I had to keep flashing all the time. When the Herc touched down it would complete an emergency braking and attempt to come to a halt asap then execute a 180 Dg turn and go back to the start. I had to turn round and continue flashing to give the pilot an idea of width. As the aircraft passed each marker the individual would run to the assembly point as fast as they could. John Rycroft was our best runner so he was the furthest away and he beat the Herc to the final turn point which was me. When the Herc had made the final turn it slowly moved forward and each man picked up a pack and scrambled aboard. I was last but one to get aboard and CRS Chadwick the counting man. He reported to the Air Loadmaster as the engines went to full power. The tail was still open and many were not seated and strapped in. The Loadmaster said to me 9 mins 45 seconds. I passed the time to the guys and we all cheered. We had bettered the time of the SAS. Maj Harvey had been in the Herc in the cockpit all the time and later related what he had seen. He said it was totally dark and he thought we had messed up. He kept looking at his watch then at minus 2 he saw the flashing light and all the Hexi blocks light up. He said there was an audible sigh from the crew. From my point all I heard was an increasing sound of engines then suddenly this massive rush of air and a deafening sound as the Herc went over my head at about 20 feet. Each member of the Bty had his own story but we had achieved another milestone in our training. We later received a phone call from the Pilot giving us a big hearty well done.

We had a new BK arrive at the Bty. He had just been Commissioned from being RSM of 7<sup>th</sup> Para. His name was Capt Bob Harmes and we got on very well. He had somehow looked at my background and saw I had completed P Coy and was amazed that it was still a necessity in 148 Bty. There was a trip to Puerto Rico for STANAVFORLANT group to conduct live firings and I was to be the NGFO so I took Bob with me to show him what we did in 148 Bty. He had a ball and loved playing golf in Roosevelt Roads. I also took him on a Canadian Ship when I did my Liaison visit with the NGLO Maj Peter Moss. Bob was surprised that a WOII BSM was allowed to do all this so I gave him a full background of NGS from 1941. He was completely on board from then. The only thing he found difficult was eating at a table with a knife and fork, something which he later confided with me almost made him not pass his commissioning course.

Before Maj Harvey left it was report time and he called me into his office to discuss mine with him. When it came to the part 'Do you recommend this soldier for promotion' he asked me what I wanted him to say. I said, as I had always done with the previous BC's that I had no interest in being an RSM of a Regt. Previous BC's had said yes but added a caveat about my thoughts. The report was good as all the other ones had been and we left it at that. After he departed we had to wait for his replacement to arrive because he had to complete a Para Refresher Course and do his BC's Course. When he was due we learned that owing to undisclosed reasons he would be further delayed. Capt Kevin Arnold, an excellent Officer and Soldier acted as temp BC. He and I organised another Fiery Cross Exercise similar to the last one but with an Interrogation Phase at the end. We went to Scotland to look at the sight for the Interrogation phase at a place called Gairloch on the West Coast which was ideal for our purposes. All went well at first until the phase where each team was to be transported by Helicopter and dumped out. The weather was bad and the pilot spoke on the intercom that he was short of fuel and needed to land very soon. The crewman looked at various charts and found the only place to get rid of the 6 of us was to land at Faslane and dump us off then go for fuel at a nearby base then collect us again. We nodded. As we landed on the 'H' at Faslane the helio dumped us off and then left. Suddenly we heard sirens and a then group of armed Matelots stumbled towards us brandishing their weapons. Capt Arnold and I tried to talk to them and explain but they were not having anything of it. The 4 guys of the Team had their weapons taken from them and were frog marched to the Police Office with us two in tow. They were put in cells, thinking this was all part of the Ex whilst Capt Arnold and I were questioned by an Officer. We were then taken to see the Base Commander who was not a happy bunny. He asked why we had landed on a Secret Nuclear Submarine Base without permission and lots more. During his tirade it came out that there should have been a mobile crane placed on the 'H' to stop things like this happening. I could see that Capt Arnold was following protocol and not mentioning that if it had been there we could not have landed so this would never have happened. I however was not an Officer and did not follow protocol so mentioned it, politely, to the Base Commander. He glared at me and conceded the point. He asked for full details of what we were doing and as it all unfolded we realised that there was a Gairlothead near with a RM Detachment and that's what all the confusion was about. The Helio Pilot had headed for there and not the correct place. We were taken up to Gairlothead for the night and shared a room and wondered what would happen next. We organised for our 3 Tonner to collect all the other teams

and then made our way to the real Gairloch miles away. Apart from the Interrogation phase being shortened by this cock up all went well otherwise.

The new BC arrived around Mid April 1981. He addressed the Bty in the Para Trg room with his hands on hips swagger and smirking smile. He said he was going to make the Bty even better and we were to go to many places not visited before. I thought we had been all over the World so where else is there to go. After his pep talk he called me into his office and said he was having a Cocktail Party in his Quarter on Napier Road and he wanted 3 waiters from the guys for it. He wanted names so I said I will go and ask and left his office. Nobody volunteered so I returned and told him the news. He responded by telling me to get 2 then. I asked if he wanted me to detail them and he got a tad angry and said just get me 2 men now. I returned and asked the men again and related that once my Officer in Malta, Capt Riddell, had made me a waiter at a similar party he held. I pinched and patted lots of lady's bottoms and pocketed a couple of bottles of spirits as well. None of the guys were impressed by my story so I again returned to tell the BC the news. He was not happy so I said if you want me to detail two soldiers just say so otherwise we are at stalemate Sir. He just told me to get out of his office. Capt Arnold, who was in the BK's Office had heard raised voices so decided to see what was going on. He later came to see me and told me he had a conversation with the BC and let him know in no uncertain terms that these 148 Bty guys are not waiters.

A little while later on the BK Capt Bob Harmes called me into his office and closed the door which was very unusual. He had also heard about the waiters discussion with the BC and said to me in no uncertain terms 'Look Sgt Maj, I have just spent the past 3 years defending guys like you from idiots like that. Just be careful as I can see his a Staff Officer and not a soldier. I will defend you all I can but take care'. I was amazed with his candidness and we got on even more closely after that.

We all went on an Exercise with the Paras and Armour again on Salisbury Plain. I was in the BC's party with two NGFO teams out with the Paras. I had rigged up as usual a LWB L/Rover as command vehicle. The two teams were billeted in an old office with me some of the time but the BC was in the Officers Mess. The L/Rover was his taxi. He never walked anywhere. One afternoon I needed to know the plans for the next day so went to the Officers Mess to see him. I asked at the reception to see him and was told they would send a message. I could see him sat in an arm chair reading a newspaper through the door. After around 25 mins he came to the reception and asked what I wanted. Can I have the plans for tomorrow so we can get sorted out please. He just said report here at 0800hrs and I will tell you then and walked back into the mess. Next morning we were ready at 0800hrs and around 0900hrs he emerged and tore us apart for not being ready with the correct kit. I had occasion to be with him alone during the day and said a few things all which went over his head. As we returned to camp L/Bdr Oliver who was driving the L/Rover parked it next to our Office building. The BC said what's going on, take me to the Mess. The mess was about 250 Yds away. Ollie looked at him and took him to the mess but parked alongside the building. He told him to drop him off at the front door. Many more minor things like this happened during the Exercise but I won't go into them all.

A few weeks later we had another Exercise planned which required we jump in. The BC had, through Staff channels which he lived by, failed to get an aircraft. He called me into his office to let me know which was strange for him. I said do you want me to get an Aircraft which made him a tad angry. How could I when he had failed through Staff Channels. I took note of the details and went to my Office and called F/Sgt Doug Fletcher and told him about this. In 30 Mins he rang back and said I had a Herc from Special Forces Flight all that day. I went in to see the BC and told him and he went ballistic.

It was now report time again and I was asked into the office to sign mine. It was devastating. He said I was not performing my duties as a BSM to his requirements; I was insolent and a bad example to the Bty. He also did not recommend me for promotion. As I read it he said just sign it. A couple of day's later he called me in again. He told me he was not happy with me and he wanted a real BSM not someone who was an FAC, FOO, NGSFO, NGLO, Abseil Instructor and many other things he wanted a real BSM with a stick to get the men into shape and to follow Staff Duties. He then turned round and said 'I am going to finish you'. I said 'What did you just say?' He said for me to leave his office.

I began another NGA Course which was my 13<sup>th</sup>. I had some of the usual help from the CRS and a couple of Sgts and Bdr's. During the course I was told I had to report to the CO at Plymouth. I went into the BC and asked what was it about to which he replied he had no idea. I found that strange to say the least. I went to Plymouth and reported to the Adjt Capt J J Keeling who had been an NGFO



with 148 Bty. He said he didn't know either. I thought back to Singapore when a similar thing had happened with my promotion to Sgt. I thought this time could be different. The CO Lt Col Holroyd-Smith called me into his office. I saluted and said 'WOII Richards reporting as ordered sir' He did not look up and told me to remain at attention. He then ripped into me and said he would not have a situation where one of his BSM's and BC's are in conflict. He told me I have 3 months to change my attitude otherwise I was to be posted. He then dismissed me after some other words of wisdom. On my return to Poole I got all the SNCO's together and related what had happened. They were as confused as I was. This is the end for me I thought.

The NGA course finished and CRS Chadwick and I went in to give the BC our findings. A couple had failed but one, Gnr Gardiner needed two more weeks of intense Morse to get him up to 12 WPM. He was older than the others and just wanted to be part of 148 Bty. He had failed his first P Coy with a recommendation to return in 2 months which he did and he passed and got his wings. The BC said just pass him as he is going to Plymouth tomorrow for 2 weeks to do all the Volvo Training. He was a good Volvo Driver and mechanic as well. Back in the day a Volvo had to complete 300 miles on the road prior to a massive service and final deployment to Norway. We both said we cannot pass him because he needs two weeks more. The BC said he is going to Plymouth tomorrow so just fail him.

1982 arrived and I was given the news that on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> April I was to be posted to Germany as the SMIS of RAGTE. To me Germany was the Gnrs graveyard and RAGTE was where jumped up Bdrs became WOII SMIG's after a 12 months course. The Gunnery Careers Course had yet to be invented. Strangely when I was a Bdr I had been asked if I wanted to do such a course but declined. I was dined out of the Sgts Mess in style just prior to deploying to Norway for the 7<sup>th</sup> time. We were to go to Elevgardsmen near Eveness for the initial training followed by a week of parachuting. We had perfected parachuting to a fine art and were recognised to be the best in the British Forces at it. Then we would move onto the final Exercise of 8 day's where I would be with 13 Coy 1 ACG again.

We arrived in Norway without the BC who had 'pressing things' to do in Poole. I found out he had never done an Artic Survival Course. Capt Arnold was in charge. The weather took a turn for the worst with a massive thaw taking place. The Volvos were parked in the MT Park deep in slush after the big thaw then suddenly it froze hard. They were trapped and it took ages to free them. Capt Arnold had to telephone the BC back in Poole daily with a report. When he told him that Skiing was impossible the response he got was get them out running then, this from someone would not even walk anywhere. The weather changed and it started snowing again and we were able to get the new guys out on skis. Next we had 6 days parachuting along with M&AW Cadre from 45 Cdo. The BC joined us at the start. We all turned up for the first day at Eveness Airfield and were allocated the end part of a hanger used by the Norwegian Military. We were all dressed in our Combat Whites but the Booties from the M&AW Cadre arrived in an array of attire, most of it non standard military. The first day was for 2 jumps so we always started with a Clean Fatigue just to shake the cobwebs off. As I have mentioned we were jumping regularly and were very good at the whole thing from arrival to the final RV. We were slick. I had put the guys, as usual into sticks and assigned a Stick Commander to each and let them get on with rigging up. We always stayed in line for this operation and when all were kitted up I used to go along and make a cursory check. Each man presented himself for the 3 numbers check in turn. The Booties looked like they were all at the New Years day sale in a superstore. A total mess and their PJI had some difficulty in getting them to line up with all the parachute boxes in the way and nobody knowing just what stick they were in. Our PJI, Doug Fletcher just nodded to me and we went down the line recording all the Main Chute, Reserve and Static Line numbers. The Parachute boxes were all stacked up neatly which was state normal for us. We waited and waited. Next we boarded the aircraft and took off. The Booties were jumping first because as they said it was their Aircraft. We watched as they all exited in their sticks then we did the same. Doug Fletcher just had to raise an arm and nod then each stick stood up and checked equipment and waited for him to do his checks. When the red came on he would simply point at it and then again point to the tailgate when the green came on and the stick was gone in a flash.

As usual I was in the first stick and as I looked down at the DZ which was a frozen Lake I saw chutes all over the place and guys standing chatting to each other. My stick landed and we packed up and grouped together and made for the Intermediate RV which had been decided on. There were still Booties wandering around the DZ. When all of the Bty had grouped at the RV the last Bootie stick arrived.

## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

There was a break in the day's proceedings and we then did it all again only this time we had our containers. Same thing happened again with the Bootie chaos and our discipline however we could not find the BC anywhere. We jumped and then all went back to camp. I asked Capt Arnold if I could accompany him to the Officers Mess to see what had happened to the BC. He was also quite interested. He went into the Mess and after a while came out and told me the BC would see me soon. I waited and waited then he finally came to the front door after around 15 mins. He wanted to know what I wanted so I just asked where he was for the second jump to which he replied 'I have done all the jumps I need to do. I have other work to do'. I told him jumping was not optional but a requirement which started another argument between us. I wish I had the guts to charge him with refusing to jump which used to be a Courts Martial offence. All I could do was salute and walk away.

Next day we arrived at the hanger and lo and behold the Booties were all dressed in Combat whites and they looked a bit more organised. They tried to follow our lead rigging up as well. When we were all kitted up both PJI's walked us to the Herc. Their PJI stopped and said to his charges, 'The Bty will be first to jump. Just take note how they do it'. I almost had to hide behind someone else in embarrassment. We completed two Equipment jumps that day with the last one involving a 4K tab to an RV which was the Lorry. The next day was called off due to the weather deteriorating and I was invited to join all the Herc Crew for a drink in their Hotel. Both PJI's were there and as I arrived I recognised some of the crew from previous Para Programmes at Poole. There was also a C/Sgt from the Booties as well. He came over to me and said 'Sir, can you teach me how to do what you guys do regarding Parachuting'. I was amazed that a SNCO would admit to that. I said to him that as ML's you should always be top of the game. Always Parachute with full kit so if you ever have to do it for real that is one worry off your mind. There is nothing wrong with Military kit so always wear it. If you break your own you will only get Military replacements. Remember Parachuting is only a method of entry and once your feet touch the ground your mission begins. We talked a lot more that night.

The day after they arrived fully kitted up and I heard a few moans about bloody Pongos. We had requested in the UK that the Air Despatch unit make up some sort of sledge so we could jump with Skis and some of the heavier Equipment. We always had snow shoes, something that surprised the Booties from 45 Cdo, which we put under our harness so we were able to get to any load quickly. The Air Despatch guys had produced a fabulous trial sled which was about 6 feet long and consisted 4 fibre glass strips about 5 inches wide. There was even some para cord attached as well which could be used to drag it and afterwards for whatever. On this we could put our skis and some other stuff. In the worst case the strips could be broken down and used as skis as well. The Booties looked on in amazement and awe. Again we were first to jump after each sled had been pushed on the roller and the canopy had deployed. It was a great success.

On the way back to camp on the coach I was sat at the front behind the driver as always. I suddenly felt a presence close behind me and turned round to see all the NGFO's there. Capt's Arnold, Brown, McManners, McCracken and Bedford. One of them said they all realised what was going on between the BC and me but protocol dictated they could not intervene. One of them suggested that when we got back to the UK I could get all the SNCO's, all 8 of them, to request a posting at the same time. They said that should get the CO to ask what was happening in the Bty and then they could give their story which would back me up rather than the BC. I thanked them and said I was going to be posted anyway but they said it should not be like this. I felt a bit better after that intervention but was resigned to my fate. I had enjoyed my 19 years time in the 'Bty'.

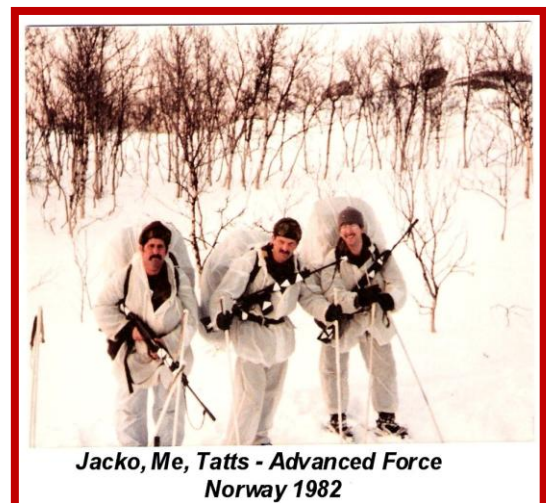
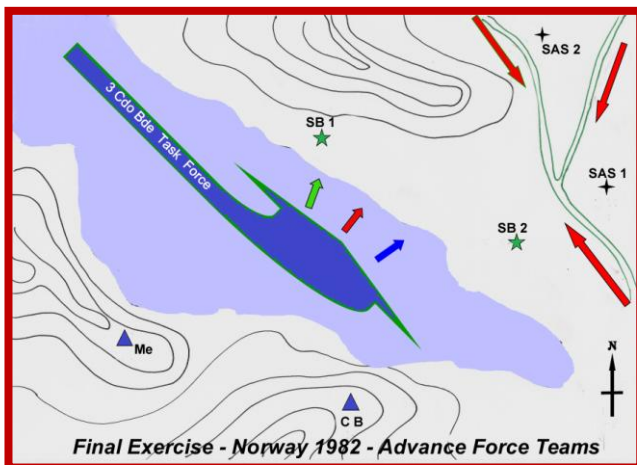
The next day we changed the DZ for the one alongside a road which had many birch trees all over it. The idea was to steer and group into space between the trees. The final day we had one jump on the roadside DZ and the final one on the frozen lake but with a resupply at the end for each of the five teams. One team achieved a 10 metre accuracy.

There followed a pause whilst the Cdo Bde prepared for the final Ex. There was one incident which needs telling. Our SNCO's,



Me, the BQMS Ivan Pothin, Sgts Thompson and Rycroft were billeted in a garden shed adjacent to the Sgts Mess. Yet another indignity bestowed upon us by the powers that be. The guys were crammed into other accommodation equally demeaning. The camp was spread out over quite a distance with the HQ Buildings as the centre, the Officers Mess about 400 yds away, Sgts Mess equal distance, main barrack 500 yds and the Main NAAFI and galley around the same distance. All in all a rambling site. Early one morning someone from the Sgts Mess knocked on our door asking for me to come to answer a phone message. I got my boots on and smock and went to take the call. It was the BC telling me he needed transport to attend a meeting in the HQ Building. I asked when and he said a time which was very close. I had to explain that I would have to walk to the main block, get his driver out of wherever he was and then he would have to start the Volvo up for some time before he could move. SOP's dictated that a Volvo had to be fully warmed up prior to it moving. That would all make it impossible to meet the time he wanted to be picked up. The BC would not listen and told me to get it done so I again said to the driver could not make it in time. It was only about 500yds walk for him to the HQ Building anyway but he did not want to hear that. I hung up and got dressed and walked to the main block. The driver was there and I explained his detail to which he repeated exactly what I had explained to the BC regarding the Volvo having to be warmed up before it could move off and he could walk there much easier. He could see I was exasperated by all this and said he would do his best but I added that he should not cut any corners. I then left to wait for a bus to run me over which was the best outcome I could hope for. The driver was of course late and the BC arrived at the meeting late and he was not happy. Afterwards he remonstrated with me yet again. I swear I just wanted to hit him there and then.

Next came the briefing for the final Ex. Capt Brown and I were to be parachuted in with two teams from the SAS and two from SBS. We had tasks to achieve but the most important part was the Comms Plan. The NGS teams had to communicate direct with GCHQ by morse which would then be passed to Northwood, the SAS to Gibraltar and then it would be passed to Northwood and the SBS direct to Hereford who would then pass it onto Northwood as well. A Sgt from 3 Cdo Bde Sigs Sqn briefed me and kept emphasising how secret it all was. He kept saying as this was Advanced Force stuff I should take good care of the codes, One Time Pads and the frequencies which changed every 6 hours. I had to stop him and say this was not my first time and in fact I had been doing this before he even joined up but said it politely. He seemed satisfied with that.



I got hold of Capt Brown and his guys and mine and went through the plan in detail. The jump was cancelled due to high winds so we were inserted by Seaking. We would be in the covert OP for 4 day's prior to the landings and our observations may change the overall landing plan. My team were to be first off the Helio which would then take Capt Brown round to the next mountain and drop them off. We had 2 x PRC 320 HF and one PRC 344 UHF with several spare Bty's and a hand charger. The photo was taken by Gnr Muncer just after the helio had departed.





**Covert OP in Norway - Feb 1982**

The next photo is me laying out the wire antenna for the first comms with GCHQ. I had worked out the length of each frequency and marked it on the wire so we could change without too much exposure outside of our tent sheet.

It was nice and cosy once we had sorted ourselves out. The time for the first comms was approaching and I was ready for it. At the appointed time I began sending our call sign and opening message header. Nothing. I was devastated as I had always taken pride on my comms ability. I tried again but this time I took two clicks either side of the stated frequency. There they were 1.5 offset. I realised the dumb RM Sgt had not told me we were working Duplex and not Simplex. I quickly looked

through my Q and Z codes to find ?QSU would fit the situation and added 'wait 5 seconds before responding as I have to manually offset'. I could have set up the other radio but that was excessive use of our Bty's. It worked and we had GCHQ from Norway 5/5 at a distance of 2000 miles approx. We got 5/5 comms every schedule whilst we were in the OP.

I gave Capt Brown a quick call on UHF, which was strictly forbidden and told him about the offset. As far as I was concerned it was an emergency.

We looked for any sign of the SBS conducting their beach Recce but to no avail. The SAS teams were making road blocks for the expected counter attack once the landings had taken place.

The time for the landings drew near and we were ready. As the fast Jets attacked Capt Brown and I directed them onto pre selected tgts and then we did the same for NGS. I was loving what was to be my last Exercise with the Bty. The landings were deemed to be a success and eventually we made contact with the SACC who were with Cdo Bde HQ. The message from the BC was that we were to be extracted at a certain time and to 'Pull Pole' 15 mins prior. We did this but the Helio did not turn up. We waited for a message from the SACC but none came. Suddenly, after a while we received the message that the exfil had been delayed until tomorrow. I was a tad pissed off as we now had to set up again when the message could have saved us all that nausea. We again set up and the next morning called the SACC for timings. The BC could not be found was the response. Perhaps he had overslept I thought. In due course we received a message for the Exfil and a time to Pull Pole. I wanted a guarantee of this from the BC direct on the radio. I never got one so we decided to get as ready as we could and hope. All but the tent sheet was made ready and we could Pull Pole very fast if necessary. I heard the sound of a helio but could not quite make out what sort. The Norwegians may well be operating near at hand. We were not allowed to make comms with the Helio unless it was an emergency. I then saw a Seaking making it's way slowly up the mountain. We Pulled Pole and got hidden at the Grid Specified. The Helio hovered right over us and I waved which surprised the pilot. With the Crewman's help we scrambled aboard and I went up to the front to see the pilot. I put on a headset and spoke to him. He looked about 20 years old. He then passed me a map and said 'You guide me to the next pick up as I am a bit busy here'. He said it was hard finding us and the next one was even more remote. We found them and they all got aboard and we went to about 2 k from Bde HQ. Capt Brown led with his team and I followed. As we approached the Bde HQ position we got our teams into a hide and we both skied into the complex. We found the SACC Volvo and poked our heads inside the cover. There was no reaction from the BC but Capt Brown said hello and asked what the next task was. The BC said I was to join up with 13 Coy 1 ACG and Capt brown another Coy from the same Unit. When Capt Brown asked where they both were the BC waved his arm and said 'Out there somewhere. Go and find them'. With that he went on with something else. Capt Brown and I made our way back to our teams and shrugged with amazement. Capt Brown said something to me which I cannot repeat. We both found our Volvos and made our way 'Out there somewhere'. In a while I found 13 Coy and was welcomed like an old friend. A bit different from the non welcome I had received from the BC. Our Volvo joined up with the Company Commanders and we were ready to go on skis again. We mucked about for a couple of days then were summoned to Bde HQ for a brief on the final phase. The Coy Cdr, as usual kept reminding me to be in his pocket at all times by patting his hip and saying, 'Stay close Sgt Maj OK?' We sat and took notes during the briefing and learned that 13 Coy was to act as a blocking force to delay the Norwegian attack. We were to be lifted in by Huey

Helios following after their ML's who were to be on the first lift followed by one Platoon then the Coy Cdrs party of which I was part with two of my team, Bdr Jackson and Herman Muncer. As the Helio landed an Umpire came across to the Coy Cdr and put a white label on him. It said severe wound to the right chest and leg. He acted very well and as he slumped to the ground said 'Sgt Maj, the Coy is now yours. Don't break it'. Quite dramatic. I was a tad shocked but then things clicked into action. I briefed the ML's to find a route up the Mountain and the Platoon form all round security for the next lift which was due in about 10 mins. The 2i/c was on the last lift so I was now Temp, acting, unpaid Coy Cdr of 13 Coy 1 ACG. I wondered how much a Coy Cdr got paid in the Dutch Marines. It was lucky that most of the Dutch Soldiers knew me so well. As the other Platoons arrived I had the Coy Cdrs Signaller update them with the situation. It took around 3 hours to get into position and as each Platoon arrived I gave them defensive positions to occupy and all the normal stuff the Infantry do. The Umpire followed me all the time. Some while later a Huey appeared in the distance so we challenged it and allowed it to land. The Coy Cdr appeared and came over to me. I said that was fabulous Medical treatment you received to which he responded 'Yes, but the Nurses were so ugly.' The Dutch were always renowned for maintaining a good sense of humour. Show me around the defensive positions he then said. We went round all of them and he said he wanted to make some changes. I was a bit disappointed at this but asked which ones. He then pointed to a few adding things like 'That one has to move one metre to the left, that one back 50 cm and this one up the hill a bit. He was of course joking as usual. He then patted me on he shoulder and said 'Well done. How would you like to transfer to 13 Coy 1 ACG as my 2i/c?' Now that was praise indeed. The final attack took place and as usual the Norwegians won. We all made our way to the main road to get into packets to return home to the UK and Holland. A coach arrived and I jumped on board with the SBS from Poole. I had arranged this myself prior to the final Ex. I arrived at Lyneham with only my respirator case which had my washing and sundry items in it. I was being posted in a couple of weeks time but had enjoyed, for the most part, the final Ex where I had put into practice all I had learned over the past 19 years. I had been a Coy Cdr for goodness sake.

We all went through Customs where the staff held heir noses as we did pong a bit not having washed for 8 day's. Got back home and had a good bath. A few day's later the remainder of the Bty arrived and sorted themselves out. I briefed my relief who I found out had been put on some courses by the BC prior to his taking over. The Para refresher was obvious but then an FOO and Abseil instructors was just what the BC had said he did not want from a BSM. The report from the FOO course, which I saw, stated that he should not be allowed to conduct live fire missions without supervision which defeated the whole purpose. One day whilst on morning physical I tripped over the kerb and sprained my ankle and had to be helped back to the Sick Bay. What a way to go out I thought. As Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> approached I had planned to muster the Bty, less the Officers and to walk along the line of soldiers and Matelots offering to shake each one by the hand and say a few words to them each as an individual. I planned to say to the assembled Bty that they could choose to shake my hand or not as I realised that I had upset quite a few with my methods. That was for Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> around 1200hrs. Fate, however intervened.

What follows is the Diary I kept, without any alterations, as it happened.





# THE Falklands WAR

By

WOII M D (Brum) Richards



Chapter	Page
Introduction	2
Build Up	4
Departure	7
Operation Paraquat - South Georgia	9
Operation Corporate - The Falklands Islands	25
Operation Sutton - D - Day Landings	44
Gunline Duties to the East	55
Operation Keyhole - Southern Thule	69
Summary of all missions	71
Summary of Ships I was involved with	72

## Introduction

I was asked, along with many others no doubt, to keep a diary of all that I was involved in. This is exactly what I have done in the following pages. It is only a small part of what turned out to be a very big and intense campaign. I was in a very privileged position being given access to many details which are not generally available to those with much higher rank than I had. I was also involved in the planning of some of the advance force operations.

During my time I saw many acts of bravery and a few acts which are best forgotten, especially from some of our so called leaders who did not perform that well under pressure. The campaign was over too quickly for them to be found out.

255 of the men who set out did not return and all were not lost in the heat of battle. It does not seem that many compared to other wars but it was enough. I knew a couple of them very well.

I am unable to describe very well such feelings as fear, joy, anger, elation and others that I experienced and the reader will have to attempt to put themselves into the mood of the moment.

This account is written mostly in a cold diary form and was filled out later from the brief notes jotted down as incidents happened. I attempted to simply report what happened without making any alterations later on it the intervening years but when I committed it to my PC in May 2012 I did change some grammatical errors in the original hand written manuscript. Also using the technology previously unavailable to me I have enhanced some of the hand drawn maps and other things.

**The facts as they are presented here, along with my views at the time still remain the same. History and those who were not there may well tell a different version but what is written here is what I knew at the time it happened to and around me.**

This is a **true and factual** account of events that took place from 2 April 1982 until 14 July 1982 called 'The Falklands War'

## The Build Up

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1982**

At around 03:30 hrs I receive a telephone call at home telling me to report into camp as we are to be deployed to the South. For the past week the news has been concentrating on the Argentinean build up around South Georgia and the subsequent landing there. The Argentinians have raised their national flag in South Georgia on what is recognised as British territory.

We all report into camp and begin the task of drawing kit for what outcome we do not yet know. The general feeling is that we will not go but of course we have to go through the motions anyway. As we are not due to take vehicles the Bty is ready very quickly. Technically it should have been my last day in the Bty after 19 years service. I was being posted to RAGTE (Royal Artillery Gunnery Training Establishment) as the senior Comms WOII (SMIS) in Germany and at 1230 hrs I was due to go to the mess for a couple of beers.

At 1000 hrs I and two others, Lt Col Eve and LRO Wilcox are briefed that we are to prepare to be parachuted into the sea somewhere off Gibraltar to rendezvous with the task force of ships which have been diverted from Exercise Springrain. This was a large naval exercise in the Mediterranean. They are now on their way South at the rush.

We prepare and I brief the others on what we have to do. A C130 Hercules is tasked to pick us up from Hurn Airport. The exact spot we are to be parachuted into is not yet decided on but who cares as long as it is near the Task Group. I suggest that dry suits are preferable to wet suits as we will be able to take more equipment. Just as we are ready it is all called off so I decide to pay an old mate of mine in SBS a visit to see how they are coping. They have 2 SBS en route to Faslane due to embark on a 'Boat' and 6 SBS due to fly out to Ascension to meet up with HMS ENDURANCE very soon.

12:00 hrs and we hear that the Argies have now landed on the Falkland Islands and after quite a battle with the RM Garrison have secured a surrender. This is getting serious.

By 1245 hrs the Bty is ready to go in all respects but now comes the waiting. The Falkland Islands are some 8000 miles away and cannot be reached in one go so the Island of Ascension is to become a stop off point.

We are stood down at one hour's notice. Information is very hard to come by and there would now begin the long wait which many soldiers have had to do before. 'Hurry up and wait' is to become the in phrase.

**Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> of April**

By 0900 hrs we are all turned too and waiting again for any news. The television and press are full of items about what we should and should not do.

We have been issued with maps of:

A: South Georgia - which we do not believe will be used. They are mostly just sketches from various British Antarctic Survey Expeditions and don't always join up with each other.

B: Falklands - which consists of a set of 29 maps. The big problem with them is that there are no grid lines on them so we have been invited to grid them up ourselves. They were in the process of being reprinted by the Royal Engineers.

During the morning we are given various briefings on how we may be deployed but there are no definite plans as yet. It begins to sink in to us that the government mean what they say about taking back the Falklands by force. The forces of course refer to the Task Force and 3 Cdo Bde. The other problem is that with the potential battlefield being an island 8,000 miles away the RN will have to neutralise the enemy Air Force and Navy first before any landings could take place. Therefore our Navy want to send down HMS HERMES and HMS INVINCIBLE packed with Harriers and Sea Kings but no troops as yet.



3 Para have now been attached to 3 Cdo Bde so we have to deploy one team with them, namely NGFO 4 (Capt Arnold). They are due to fly out very soon and there is talk of a big Para drop on the Falklands.

Once again by late PM we stand down to one hour's notice after proof firing our personal weapons. I begin to grid my maps with the help of my wife who is a great help in this matter. As we conduct this task I make a very detailed study of all the prominent features and attempt to familiarise myself with the terrain.

### **Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> of April**

The BC departs for Plymouth to get a comprehensive brief on the situation which will include the loading plans, meanwhile we continue to prepare for what we do not yet know but at least we are now able to obtain equipment otherwise not previously released i.e.:- M16's, Laser Binoculars, PRC344, Gemini plus 9hp engine, Stornaphones and much more. All of this equipment had been on demand for a long time but Ordnance would not release it during peace time. With the arrival of all this new equipment there is some substantial re-packing to be done. I have already re-packed three times having had my role changed as many times.

Later on in the afternoon the BC returns with quite a lot of news. As expected owing to the great distances involved there is no great rush to get all the land forces down there because of the predicted Naval battle mentioned before. The RN has priority and is due to depart on Monday on the first tide. It will take them at least three weeks to reach the battle zone with speed of the slowest ship. The land forces will be off loaded at Ascension where they will conduct some further training and some major reorganising.

SS Canberra has been called into service as the main troop carrier and will take 40 Cdo, 42 Cdo, 45 Cdo and 3 Para plus their supporting units. MV Elk has also been called up and will carry all the stores. On Monday we will send the following teams away:- BC's party on FEARLESS with HQ & Sig Sqn and NGFO 1 on LSL Sir PERCIVAL. The remainder of the Bty will go on SS Canberra on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April. Once again we stand down but now to four hours' notice. More time to grid some maps up.

### **Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> of April**

This morning HERMES and INVINCIBLE sail out of Portsmouth to a very emotional send off. I for one think it is good to see such patriotism for a change. It is quite a moving scene. By now all the British public want is to see the invaders removed in no uncertain manner. The FEARLESS slips out of Harbour almost unnoticed along with the PERCIVAL. It is quite an achievement to have put to sea a task force of such considerable size at such short notice. The USA for one quite openly says it would have taken them a very long time to achieve such a task. For the remainder of us it is a matter of just waiting. Even if the task force was to turn back in 24 hours those involved will be saying 'we were there' and with us still sat on our packs in camp.

By now the daily task of gridding up the maps and is becoming quite a pain but I have to thank my wife for her invaluable help. I am the grid line drawer and she adds the numbers. What a team.

### **Tuesday, 6 April**

When we all turned too this morning there is a message that each unit due to go by the Canberra is to send a representative to Southampton at 0730 hrs tomorrow. The meeting is to sort out who will get what accommodation and exactly where. I am nominated as our unit representative which suits me because at least I will be doing something other than sitting around or marking up maps. All this hanging about is getting to me. When I do go in the morning I will take all my kit with me, just in case, less for my skis which are already packed in the main container. We all stand down again to four hours' notice.

### **Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> of April**

I arrived at the RV in Southampton docks and report to an RCT WO2 Movements expert who is just about to set himself up. On board the Canberra there is a small RM detachment who flew to Gibraltar to set things up and count just how many pers we can get on board, you can always get more service

## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

pers on a ship than civvies. When she docks the remaining passengers will be encouraged to get off in quick time so the military can take over and the docks will be closed. That is the plan; however plans can and do sometimes go wrong.

A meeting of all Unit Reps is held to explain the current situation to us and how the accommodation is being allocated. There is plenty of space for all but some of the representatives, namely some officers, want to change things to suit themselves. There is a Cpl of Horse who says that his CO, a Lt who is about 24<sup>th</sup> in line to the throne should have equal status to that of a Lt Col. The RCT Movements Maj in charge tells him not to be so silly and to bog off. We all have a little laugh. 148 Bty of course is not on the list and there is also some confusion about which Gunners are going to come along. 29 Cdo have not sent a unit representative from either 7, 8 or 79 Bty and I cannot help as I have no idea of their plans. I'm only interested in 148 and after a quick chat with a RM RQMS on the planning team, who I happen to know, we are all allocated very good cabins. I am quite satisfied.

At 1200 hrs there is a telephone call for me. I am told to return to Poole immediately for a brief which cannot be further explained over the telephone. On my return to Poole I am told that Lt Col Keith Eve (RALONGS) and Capt Brown (NGFO 5) have been flown to Plymouth by a Lynx Helio from RNAS Yeovilton for a secret meeting. More than that nobody knows any more details. Later they return with some very exciting news. When all the troops are embarking on Canberra with much press and TV coverage M Coy 42 Cdo are to remain hidden in the gym of their camp. They will then make their way to Brize Norton in darkness to be flown to Ascension along with 12 of us from 148 Bty. There we will meet up with a small task group which will take us to South Georgia where we will 'take it back'. We are all due to fly out on Friday under a cloak of secrecy so we now have to change the Canberra plans and prepare for our little jaunt.

### Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> of April

This is what the battery ORBAT now looks like.

#### Departed Mon 5<sup>th</sup> April

##### **SACC 1- ( FEARLESS)**

BC  
Sgt Rycroft  
RS Booth  
LRO O'Brien  
L/Bdr Burton  
L/Bdr Dunn

##### **NGFO1- (Sir PERCIVAL)**

Capt McManners  
Bdr Allin  
Gnr Bedford  
Gnr Nixon  
RO1 Hoyland

#### SS Canberra Departing Thu 8<sup>th</sup> April

##### **NGFO 3**

Capt Bedford  
Sgt Thomas  
L/Bdr Leigh  
Gnr Pennington  
Gnr Booth

##### **NGFO 4**

Capt Arnold  
Bdr Abbott  
L/Bdr Turner  
Gnr Clifford  
Gnr Bayliss

##### **HQ**

Capt Harnes BK  
LRO Wilcox  
WO2 Malcolm (New BSM)

#### With M Coy RM fly to ascension Fri 9<sup>th</sup> April then on to South Georgia by RN transport

##### **NGFO 2**

Capt McCracken  
Sgt Jukes  
Bdr Jackson  
Gnr Barfoot  
RO1 Hardy

##### **NGFO 5**

Capt Brown  
Bdr Oliver  
L/Bdr Burke  
L/Bdr Ferguson  
Gnr Muncer

##### **NGLO 1**

Lt Col Eve (RALONGS)

##### **NGLO 3**

WO 2 Richards

#### Rear party Poole

Capt Macintosh  
S/Sgt Pothin (BQMS)  
CRS Chadwick (RALONGS)  
Sgt Graham (MT)  
Sgt Phillips (Chief Clerk)  
Bdr Bone (Tech Storeman)  
Cpl Hotchkiss (RAPC)

Gnr Richardson  
L/Bdr Renahan  
L/Bdr Kenny  
Gnr Gardiner (Q Stores)  
Gnr Pimm (Clerk)  
Pte Rigg (ACC)

Cpl Summers (REME)  
LRO McPherson  
Gnr Ridley (KAPE)  
Bdr Tattersall (Cyprus)  
Bdr McNeill (Hospital)  
Cpl Hartree (ACC)  
Gnr Ainsley

## Departure

### Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> of April

M Coy RM are due to fly out of Brize Norton at 2359 hrs. Our equipment is taken up before us so all we have to do is arrive and board the VC10. All of our main equipment is to go by C130 out of Lyneham. In all there are 2 x VC10s and 4 x C130s allocated to us.

The plan goes very well and we meet up with M Coy without a hitch. The Airport is very quiet and we are handled with calm efficiency because we are on a secret mission. It is all very dramatic and you can feel the tension in the air. I'm sure the rest of the guys feel a little like I do. This is a serious business. The flight is due to take about 8 hours.

As we take off I cast my mind back to other 5 occasions that I have been on active service. I managed to survive those and hope that I will continue my run of good luck. During the flight I go over what I have learned from those occasions. We have quite a lot of men who have not had the benefit of previous active service. Our training has been hard and I believe geared at the correct level. Train hard, fight hard.

### Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> of April

At 0900 hrs local time we land at Ascension and begin to help unload our kit. Most of it has arrived before us by the C130s. There is an 'O' group for the Coy Cdr and Lt Col Eve and when it is over we are briefed on where we are all going. The task group will consist of the following ships.

HMS ANTRIM (CTG); Lt Col Eve, NGFO 2, NGFO 5, O/C M Coy, Mortar Pn, Recce Tp.  
HMS PLYMOUTH (Gunship); with me.  
RFA TIDESPRIING (Troop Carrier); with the remainder of M Coy.

These ships, along with HMS SHEFFIELD, were detached from the main Springtrain group and have only just arrived at best speed.

At the conclusion of the brief I am told there is a Wessex helicopter on its way to pick me up and take me to HMS PLYMOUTH. The Wessex helicopter arrives and would you believe it I know the crewman on board. We take off and I have just spent a total of one and half hours on Ascension Island.

When I arrive on board HMS PLYMOUTH the Capt calls for me to come to his Cabin. His name is Capt D Pentreath. He asks me what is going on so I tell him almost all that I know keeping just a little back for good measure. He gives me the impression that I know more than him about forthcoming events and therefore we build up a strong relationship. As we are talking there is a knock on his door, it is the CRS with a massive signal for the Capt. He begins reading it and eventually looks up and says 'Mr Richards, you are exactly right in every detail of what you have just told me' He asks me not to mention our conversation or what our mission is yet to any of his crew. He gives me direct contact with him but as I am familiar with Naval protocol I will always go to the 1st Lt before just knocking on the Capt's door. The remainder of the day we spend taking on board loads of stores including arctic clothing. The ship was due to go to the West Indies on deployment and all she had on board were flip flops, sunglasses and shorts.

I try to get myself quietly settled on board amongst all the strange stares from the ship's company wanting to ask who this Pongo is they have taken on board.

### Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> of April

Our small task group is still at Ascension due to the large amount of stores which need to be loaded on to the ANTRIM and TIDESPRIING. We will be able to transfer the rest of ours when we are underway South. I have mentioned the old term 'hurry up and wait' well it applies here as also.



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

I try and find out why the SHEFFIELD is here but get no reply. It is believed she was sent here to protect Ascension and to act as the early warning for the task force which are still some 3000 miles away. If this thing is now called off at least we can say we were well on our way.

The Capt calls a meeting and introduces me to the key personnel on board with whom I will be working. The 1st Lt, Gunnery Officer, PWO (U), PWO and Navigator. They all seem quite a good bunch and begin to ask many questions to which I give vague answers to the current tactical situation ones and specific answers to other technical ones. By their friendliness and obvious desire to continue with their questioning I seem to have passed the first test. I am accepted by then. In peacetime or on an exercise I would not even have met the Capt face to face or any of his main fighting team.

The rush to get here was obviously necessary but it will still take a long time to reach South Georgia which is some 4000 miles away. Such is the state of modern comms that C in C fleet will be able to speak direct to Northwood so they will even be able to fight the battle with us as the pawns.

I begin to make plans for a work up of the NGS systems aboard. If I can get the crew to a high degree of efficiency then whatever is to come will be so much easier to handle. It is always hard to get the RN to exercise seriously so to get them up to battle efficiency will be even harder. They do however seem keen which I believe is due to the leadership from their Capt and Gunnery Officer.

Later afternoon we set a course due south. Line ahead with ANTRIM leading, TIDESPING and PLYMOUTH following. If the Argie Navy come out to meet us now I don't think we will stand a chance.

## Operation Paraquat – South Georgia

**Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> of April**

On board we begin to settle down to a series of drills for an operation we all secretly hope will not take place. If we can get down to South Georgia without being discovered then we may have a chance of conducting a landing. Should we be discovered then who knows what will happen. If we meet the enemy on the high seas then international law will be against the attacker but if we are in the declared 200 mile limit it is a free for all. There is however no reference to South Georgia by our government on BBC World News, perhaps they are trying to draw the Argies and the world's eyes towards the Falklands.

The Capt is keen to prepare his crew for any possible outcome and calls a meeting each morning at 1000 hrs to review the situation. The format is as follows:-

1. Capt's briefing and up-date
2. PWO update on the tactical situation
3. EWO report
4. Our position geographically
5. Future training
6. Discussion on what may be in the Argies mind
7. Rules of Engagement, which seem to change daily

I am invited at times to speak on subjects concerning a military nature details of which the RN are still in the dark about such as exactly how we would land troops, how will they fight, how will we support them and how long will it take?

A series of lectures is to take place for each watch to include:-

1. The composition of our task force
2. Effects of cold weather – here I am called for
3. Effects of NGS and how it is controlled – me again
4. Military tactics in attack – me again
5. Attack and defence against enemy surface forces

The Argies have two type 42 destroyers, Hercules and Trinidad (the SHEFFIELD is a type 42).

The crew learned quite a lot from me and I learn a lot from them. In 19 years I thought I knew the navy but clearly I was wrong. We are all given lots of first aid and damage control lectures. Two very important areas.

**Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> of April**

Lt Col Eve pays me a visit today to see how I am proceeding and seems pleased with progress. He gives me and the Capt the latest plans one of which the PLYMOUTH is to play a rather kamikaze type of role. This is of course kept from the crew but I begin to plan for it within our daily training. This helps my relationship with the Capt who is after all a full Colonel.

We are due to RV with HMS ENDURANCE in a couple of days where she will be able to give us a lot of local knowledge. Our charts and maps are far from reliable. She has been in the area for many years and indeed landed the Royal Marines, 22 of them, to defend South Georgia. They managed to shoot down two helicopters, damage a Corvette and dispose of several enemy. They had to lay down their arms and are now on their way back to Uruguay to be sent back home to the UK with those from The Falkland Islands.

We are a small group of three ships on a secret mission and completely out of touch with the remainder of our task force but in daily Satcom with Northwood. That is the only means of communication we have. Other than that we are under total silence. The flashing light comes into its own yet again.

### **Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> of April**

We are well into daily drills in all departments and apart from gunnery I am called upon to help in methods of tactical questioning of any prisoners we may capture as I have previous experience in this field. The language problem is going to be difficult to overcome so I simply suggest just shouting at them.

We practice action stations and the first one takes 25 minutes before we are fully closed up. I feel sure it will take less time later on if we have to do it for real. PLYMOUTH was on exercise Springtrain and perhaps the crew are a little tired of dry runs all the time. Their NGS drills are a little rusty as well but I feel sure they will be better in the end however we must avoid over training.

Also we conduct anti Exocet drills. They have five air launched Exocet we are told but would not be able to launch them in our area due to the great distances involved. There are many Top Secret signals of how to avoid this deadly missile. I have these drills explained to me as I have TS clearance by cannot explain them here. Suffice it to say it involves chaff, bits of string and some black masking tape.

### **Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> of April**

Today is much the same as yesterday. I am interviewed on the ship's broadcast system and asked about whom I am, who 148 Bty are and what we do. Also I am asked to describe what it was like in the UK when the HERMES Group sailed out of Portsmouth. This ship was on its way back to Gibraltar when she was diverted south so they missed all the excitement.

Twice daily our three ships have to close up to each other because a Russian spy satellite passes over the area and by closing up this may confuse its picture. The thing has only recently been launched. So far we have not been spotted but there are also Bears flying out of Angola looking for us.

### **Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> of April**

Today we meet up with the RFA FORT AUSTIN which is on her way back to Ascension having completed a RAS with ENDURANCE. To my surprise there is a Sqn of SAS on board who are due to transfer two Troops to ANTRIM and one Troop of to PLYMOUTH very soon. When the Troop are transferred to us I discover that I know two of them, small world.

They are completely out of their depth being on board a ship. Their boss is a WOII who I become mates with and we begin to make plans of our own. He says when they get ashore they will feel much safer knowing I am on board and understand the communications and tactics having worked with the SAS previously.

They have with them some portable Satcom gear on ANTRIM and astound the RN when they talk back to Hereford quicker than the Navy can communicate with Northwood by RATT. I do not envy the C/O of M Coy.

On completion of the RAS we continue south. Our mail is taken off by the Ft Austin but it had to be censored by the Master at Arms. It is to be our last mail. The Capt now tells the crew exactly what we are about to do as there is no chance of a leak now we are on our own. The mail will take at least two weeks to arrive home so they could not alter events however secrecy can never be overlooked.

### **Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> of April**

Today we meet up with HMS ENDURANCE who has sailed north to get out of the bad weather and conduct some essential maintenance. We heave too and let her sail amongst us as we line the upper decks and give her a big cheer. It is all quite an emotional scene because we are the first warships that she has seen for a long time and must now feel quite well protected.

On board she has a detachment of SBS who were rushed down to her when this all began. Now we have quite a motley Task Group with an even more motley landing force. Heaven only knows how



the C/O M Coy will be able to command it all. The SAS work for the MOD, SBS work for the MGRM, we work for the MGRM but come under the Navy as well and the RM come under Brigadier 3 Cdo Bde. Roll the dice for the next move.

After much light flashing we all group up and continue south.

### **Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> of April**

The same routine continues as regards training. There is one change however as the SAS wish to carry out some boat training. They want to practice boarding their Gemini's coming alongside and climbing aboard different types of ships. It turns out to be quite a mess and they seem to be out of their depth at this routine and perhaps should leave it to the SBS who after all are masters of this skill. I begin to wonder what is to come all of this.

In my experience the SAS have always been reluctant to ask advice from anyone. They should swallow their pride once in a while and seek advice. They also declare that they will control the NGS when they get ashore but I say no to that. It has taken me many years to train our men to a high standard and the SAS now want to simply 'cuff it', they must be joking.

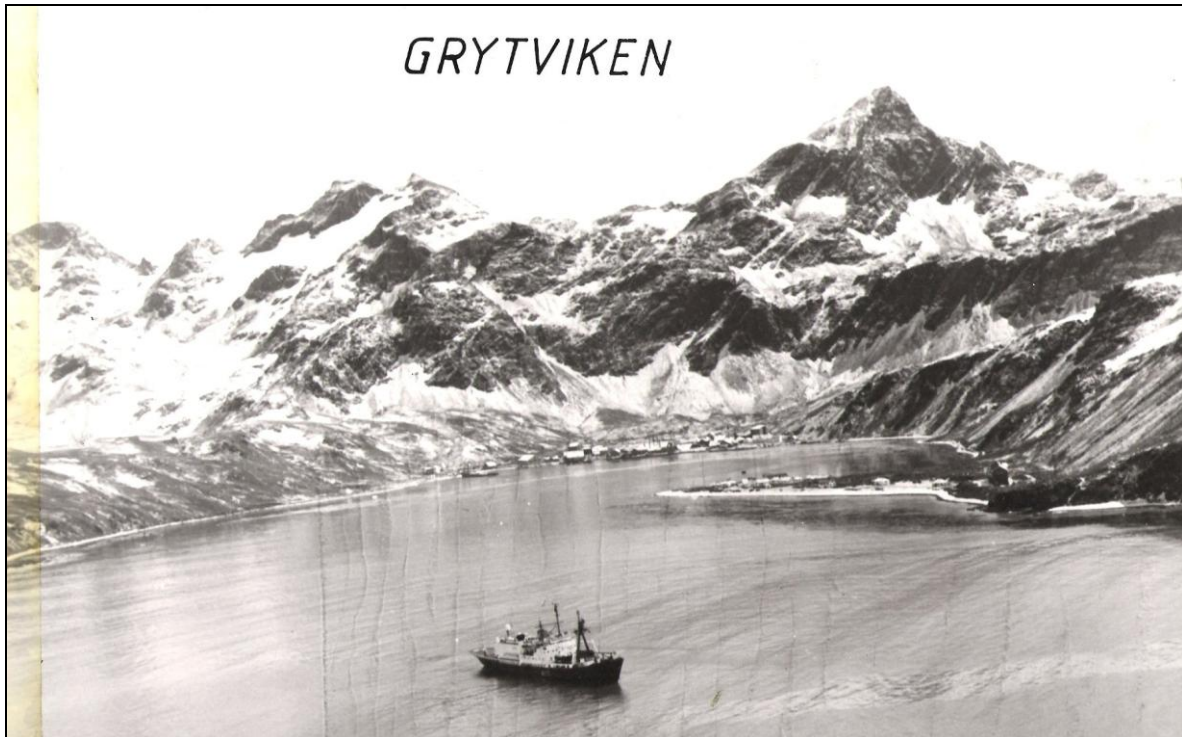
### **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April**

Lt. Col Eve again visits and gives me the latest plans. The SAS are to conduct a recce from ANTRIM by helicopter on to a glacier north of Leith. They will then approach Leith to see how many Argies are there. They will be inserted by helio early am 21st February onto Fortuna Glacier. The experts of the BAS (British Antarctic Survey) on ENDURANCE have advised against this saying they can be landed closer to Leith than on the glacier without being detected. The suggestion is rejected.

The SBS are to insert a recce from ENDURANCE by boat into Hound Bay where they will have to cross the ridge before being able to observe the whaling station of Grytviken.

It does not escape my notice that the two Units will be dropped off exactly the same distance from their targets. Is this a race I wonder? The ANTRIM will remain to cover the SAS and we will cover the SBS. No NGS teams will be landed at this stage as they are considered too valuable an asset.

I begin to prepare for just about anything in the way of support. Selection of an FSA and gunline is quite difficult without compromising their situation. The alternative plan is to send PLYMOUTH into Cumberland East bay and blast away although this is thought to be a bit too dramatic and would not give the SAS any chance of some glory. They are not 'arctic in date' so to speak. The SBS are in their element. The stage is therefore set for Act one Scene one.



### **Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> of April**

We cross into the 200 mile limit declared by the Argies to be their territory so we are now in the enemy's back yard. Our intelligence says there are no enemy surface vessels in the area. We have treated the situation as very serious and decide we are at war. We now have four British warships in the area and I am aware that CONQUEROR the hunter killer submarine is around somewhere and she is going to act as goalkeeper for us.

We are now closed up in complete defence watches and it is quite tense. If anything should happen to the ship and the order to abandon came we would not last more than 2 minutes in the water. Wearing a survival suit would only prolong the agony by about 5 minutes. Their Air Force fighters cannot reach us as it's too far but they can put a C130 in the air as a recce. We believe that we can handle the surface threat because of our better tactical training. A C130, if within 40 miles of ANTRIM would not stand a chance.

### **Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> of April**

At first light the SAS recce is inserted by helicopters from ANTRIM on to Fortuna Glacier in very bad weather. The insertion seems to go well so we move off to the SE with ENDURANCE to cover the SBS insertion. ANTRIM remains to cover the SAS with TIDESPING in support.

Later on in the day we hear on the BBC World Service that some papers in the UK carry a story about our mission although it is reported as speculation. We all feel a little betrayed as we have managed to get this far even though there has been a satellite and bear aircraft looking for us. Surely the press should check before they publish such sensitive things.

After last light the SBS are put ashore also in bad weather and have to be guided in by radar. I monitor all of this on UHF. All we can do now sit and wait and relax at action stations. I take the time to visit most parts of the ship and chat for sometime to one of the engine room chiefs. He tells me his father was also an engineer in the second war and was torpedoed but the torpedo did not explode and jammed in the engine room. I do not spend much more time in there after that revelation. God help them if we get hit.

Note: Below is a copy of the article mentioned previously. My wife kept the main papers whilst I was away and this article was in the Daily Mirror Wed 21<sup>st</sup> April. I pasted it into my diary when I returned using selotape which does not photocopy through hence the typed bits I had to add.

I wonder just who's side the media were on.

PAGE 2 DAILY MIRROR, Wednesday, April 21, 1982

# Generals play the treaty ace



**ARGENTINA** yesterday gambled its last ace—the treaty of Rio—in the diplomatic struggle to prevent war with Britain. The Argentines called on their partners in the Organisation of American States to invoke the treaty.

America has signed the 1947 treaty under which member states must support any nation attacked by an outside power.

The Argentine gamble is designed to embarrass President Reagan by threatening to wreck America's whole Latin American Policy.

At the Washington conference considering the treaty move, Argentina seems sure of the backing of most other OAS members.

The organisation voted last night for a special meeting of foreign ministers next Monday to consider the Argentine call.

The vote was 18-0 with the United States, Colombia and Trinidad.

Officially, American Secretary of State Alexander Haig insists that the Rio Treaty is "not relevant" to the Falklands crisis.

Twice during his negotiations with the Argentines he has persuaded them against invoking it. But this time he failed.

The treaty gambit was thrown down by Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez just before Haig flew back to

**From PAUL CONNEW in Buenos Aires and CHRISTOPHER BUCKLAND in Washington**

Washington from Buenos Aires.

Haig had slapped shut his folder of papers and told the Argentine leaders: "If Britain doesn't accept your plan it will be war."

Costa Mendez countered: "Okay—if it's war you'll be responsible."

Haig made it plain to the Argentine leaders that the United States would never come out militarily against Britain.

Meanwhile Argentina's military rulers were facing a meeting with 13 of the country's political leaders to defend their handling of the crisis.

Criticism was beginning to emerge publicly for the first time.

One leading civilian politician, Francisco Manrique, spoke of "the great danger that the Army thinks it owns the country."

## Warships 'race to outpost island'

A MAJOR part of the British task force has broken away from the main fleet and is heading fast for South Georgia, it was reported yesterday.

Destroyers, aircraft carriers and troopships were said to be steaming towards the remote island.

The splinter group was believed to be less than 48 hours sailing time from South Georgia, now in the grip of 100 Argentine troops.

The junta's military experts know they could do little to block a counter-invasion.

If it comes to the crunch, the Argentinians are determined to make their stand at Port Stanley - main destination of the UK Fleet. They are convinced

that their 10,000 heavily dug-in troops could repel the British and that Mrs. Thatcher would not risk a heavy casualty toll.

Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> of April

Early this morning the SAS recce, led by Capt Hamilton, requests immediate exfiltration due to 80 mph plus gales making movement impossible. Two Wessex from TIDESPRING go to pick them up but both crash and are write offs. It is a miracle that no one is hurt. The Wessex Mk 3 from ANTRIM, Humphrey, takes off to affect a rescue which is, to say the least, ambitious. The pilot decides that he will only have one chance so he lifts 17 personnel at one go in a white out. In normal circumstances a lift of five men would be difficult. He makes it back to the ANTRIM but has to crash land on a heaving deck. The SAS are forced to leave all their kit behind less their weapons of course.



The SAS now decide to be inserted by Gemini so the ANTRIM gets close up to Leith Harbour to conduct the insertion. Of the five Gemini three engines pack up so one tries to tow the others. One breaks away and drifts out to sea; next stop was the South Pole and four dead men. The remaining Gemini manages to get to the shoreline. Once again the Wessex takes off in search for the lone Gemini and after 7 hours in appalling weather finds them by picking up a transmission from their Sabre Beacon. One of them is an ex member of 148 Bty. The SBS seem to be doing OK and we continue to cover for them.

#### **Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> of April**

The SBS are now also having problems with the weather conditions and one of their craft sustains a puncture from small pieces of ice which break off the glacier. They have to be recovered by the ENDURANCE.

I think we have greatly underestimated the conditions which are much worse than in Norway. An Argentinean C130 arrives in the area to have a look at what is going on; no doubt the enemy buy the UK daily papers as well. We spot it on radar and activate our fire control systems on to it which makes it turn away. Therefore it can safely be assumed it was on a reece and had its EW gear switched on. It comes on in at us again this time we wait before locking on and at 40 miles distance it again veers away. They stay out of missile range.

I failed to mention that we are at action stations and I can clearly see the C130 on the radar screen.

The recovery of the SBS is complete and all but 10 of the SAS have also been recovered and we are no nearer knowing the strength and dispositions of the enemy. To make matters worse we now find out there is an enemy submarine in the area. They only have 4 very quiet subs which are all Second World War vintage. They can quite easily get past the CONQUEROR which is designed to hunt nuclear subs which make more noise than the old fashioned diesel ones.

The ANTRIM Capt orders us and TIDESPRING to follow him to the 200 mile limit and for the ENDURANCE to stay and hide amongst the ice flows. To us on board this looks like we are on the run and morale is very low.

BRILLIANT has now been ordered to RV with us at the 200 mile limit and she has two Lynx helicopters which will come in very handy. At the RV we will conduct a RAS and await further orders. We all feel very low as my mind again turns to thoughts of engine room staff and submarines.

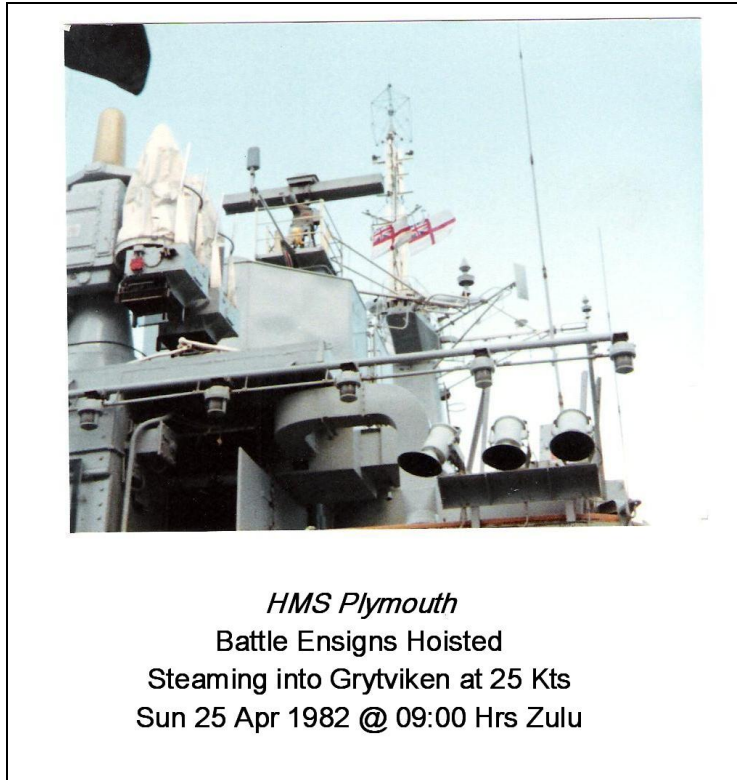
#### **Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> of April**

Very early this morning we departed the area for the RV with BRILLIANT. Her Lynx will not be able to replace the Wessex but they will be a help. She was all that could be spared from the task force which is getting nearer to the TEZ, Total Exclusion Zone around the Falklands. At the RV is the tanker Brambleleaf, which will allow TIDESPRING too refill her almost empty tanks.

Later in the evening ANTRIM and us depart once again for the enemy area to be followed by the BRILLIANT when she has completed her RAS. Morale is once again high.

#### **Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> of April**

I am now on the bridge of the PLYMOUTH witnessing a very rare sight, that of three British warships in line abreast crashing through the heavy swell at 25 knots. PLYMOUTH has hoisted her battle ensign. It looks, after all that has passed, we now mean business.



The composition of the little Task Group is quite effective with ANTRIM as Air Defence/Gunship; PLYMOUTH as Anti-Submarine/Gunship; BRILLIANT anti Air/Missile with anti sub helicopters and CONQUEROR somewhere in the vicinity able to counter any subsurface threat.

The TIDESPING with the majority of M Coy is to remain outside the 200 mile limit because to have her in company with us would mean one of us would have to protect her. Also she would not be able to maintain this speed.

At 0931 hrs we are off Grytviken and at action stations. One of the BRILLIANT's Lynx hears a VHF transmission and almost the same time sees the submarine Santa Fe on the surface at 0947 hrs heading out to sea. The Wasp from ENDURANCE engages with an AS12 Missile and we all realise the Falklands war has just begun. The submarine turns about and heads for Grytviken and shallow water as she has been hit in the conning tower. Now the helicopters from BRILLIANT and PLYMOUTH join in with machine gun and AS 12 missiles, the sub is seen to be leaking oil.

By 1013 hrs the submarine is almost in the Harbour with helicopters swarming around it for the kill but as they begin to take fire from ashore they back off.

At 1016 hrs or so it beaches and the Capt of ANTRIM calls a meeting on board to see what to do next. I am pleading with the Capt of PLYMOUTH to conduct a bombardment of the submarine and surrounding area but we are not allowed to do so. The O/C M Coy also wants action but the navy want to have a debrief of the previous action first.

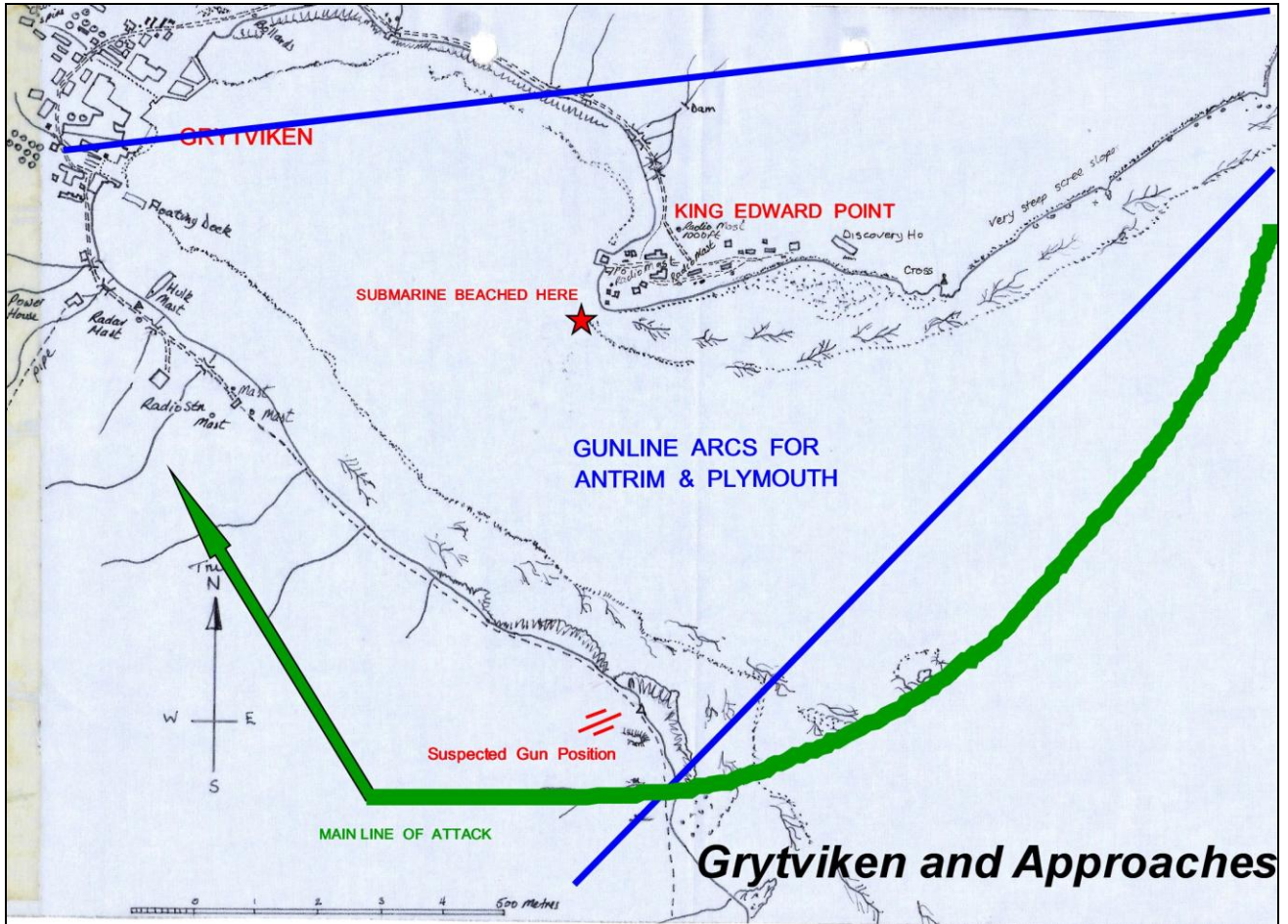
At 1115 hrs we get permission to begin preparing for NGS, we are of course ready in all respects there are however rules to be followed.

1. We cannot hit the submarine – That is deemed to be unfair
2. We cannot hit the buildings – They are National Treasures

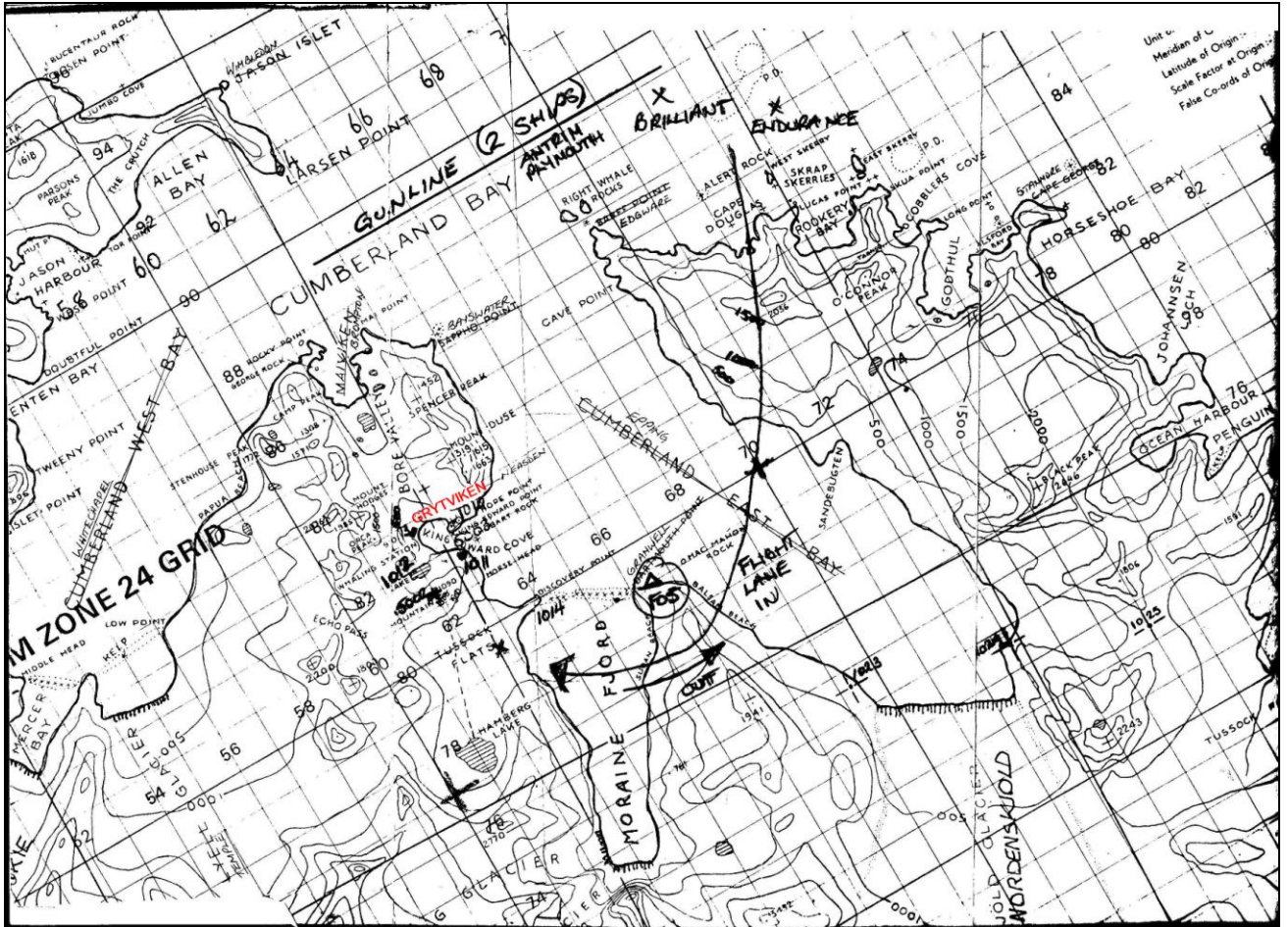
The landing plans are now being sorted out and the main LS will be Brown Mountain or 1½ kilometres to the South. The final decision will be made on the run-in. We have been given two 6 figure grid references of expected enemy positions one is a gun position on the shoreline of Brown Mt and the other is of a helicopter? Both of these positions were given to us by a satellite recce from the U.S. It appears they have nudged one a bit further South in secrecy for our use.

With M Coy still 200 miles away to the East the landing force will comprise SAS, SBS, NGS teams, RM Det from BRILLIANT and Recce Tp of 42 Cdo.

## Plan of attack for landings at Grytviken







At 1402 hrs NGFO 5 (Capt Brown) goes aloft in a Wasp from ENDURANCE and I get good UHF comms with him. As he is running into Dartmouth Point Lt Col Eve sends me the fireplan to cover the main landings. It is all happening at once now. If this were a peace time exercise it would not be possible because of safety. With helicopters flying and ships manoeuvring within close proximity at the same time as firing guns and landing helicopters it is quite a headache.

Capt Brown lands and called me up on HF. We have good comms so I pass to him the fireplan targets. He begins to direct fire on to the reported enemy gun position and onto Brown Mountain. One ship on each target. We are pleased because we are the first to open fire therefore becoming the first warship in a long time to engage the enemy. We check that our battle ensign is still flying.

When we reach the western limit of the gunline there are anxious moments as we engage the southern shore line of King Edward Cove. The reason for this is that I have calculated that we would not be crested by the higher ground at Mount Duse and as we are now engaging targets in direct support of our advancing troops I am concerned that my calculations may not be correct. I have no need to worry because as we engage a particular target which is due south opposite King Edward Point the 40 salvoes land bang on target. The trajectory passes directly overhead the buildings where all the enemy are located. There are white flags to be seen. The time is 1715 hrs. Our own troops have not even come under fire yet. The enemy were simply frightened into surrendering after a devastating display of controlled accurate NGS. It even surprised me and I have been doing this for 19 years. The speed and accuracy is unbelievable, perhaps it is all because there were no safety restrictions.

The SAS troops begin to race towards the buildings with the hope of accepting the surrender but the O/C M Coy calls up a Lynx and beats them to it. When the SAS troops do arrive the enemy commander is amazed that they are all OK because they have just passed through a minefield he had recently laid. It is amazing that the whole action was bloodless.

There is still the question of the enemy at Leith. The Capt and I decided it would be nice for us to go round there and invite them to surrender as well. The ANTRIM is involved at Grytviken so her Capt lets us go. ENDURANCE does not want to miss out so decides to come along as well. The Troop of SAS that we have onboard are still anxious to get ashore to do something. They have comms with the small team of SAS who are ashore to the south so the OC of the SAS and a Spanish speaking Trooper are taken by our wasp to Leith just as we enter Stromness Bay.

1845 hrs, I am on the bridge and will be able to control the fire of our guns if it is necessary. We warn our pilot that the area may be mined so he makes a pass over Leith and lands near Harbour Point where the SAS recce is. They get comms with me which is quite lucky because the commander of the enemy at Grytviken tells us that there is a Special Forces Unit at Leith led by Capt Alfredo Aziz and he refuses to surrender. He has not heard all the gunfire some 10 km away such is the nature of the terrain. I pass all this onto the men ashore and tell them that we are sending the remainder of the SAS ashore to join them. We send six more ashore but when they land they discover the others have gone on towards the ridge overlooking Stromness.

Once again the first group contact me and I update them. There are 39 civilians and 14 Special Forces in the buildings at Leith and that the area is heavily mined. I suggest they set up an ambush on the track at Bath Harbour Point and wait for orders from me. At 2030 hrs I am able to tell the ambush party that the 39 civilians are to be allowed to pass through them on their way to Stromness. They do this and report to me that all 39 have gone through. It is now very dark. The other SAS men who are at Stromness have no comms with any one so do not know what is going on. As the 39 civilians approach their position they open up on them with GPMG's and everything. There is a lot of screaming but by some miracle no one is hurt. We tell the ambush party to allow the 39 pers to pass and then go to ground and wait further orders. We have a planning meeting in the Capt's cabin with the following present: - Capt PLYMOUTH, Capt ENDURANCE, O/C SAS, O/C SBS and me. After much discussion of the current situation for some reason they listen to me when I put forward a plan. It is talked over and without too many changes we come up with the following;

*'Land the remainder of the SAS from PLYMOUTH now. At first light the ENDURANCE will land her detachment of SBS by boat at Harbour Point and they will meet up with the SAS. At 0830 hrs PLYMOUTH will be on station midstream in Stromness Bay to conduct direct fire controlled by me on to the blubber tanks Red 55. The action will begin by our wasp launching an AS 12 missile attack against Red 12 which is the enemy radio building. The wasp would then turn north and loiter out of range of small arms fire. We will then bombard Red 55 for 10 minutes and under cover of this the SAS and SBS will be able to move along the track made by the civilians which must be mine free. When we lift our bombardment we will lay on building Red 17 and be able to engage anything if called for using the coded map. The SAS and SBS can then have a field day with a house to house of the area.'*



# Leith - House to House SAS Plan

APPROX SCALE 1:2000

0 50 100 METRES

## LEITH WHALING STATION - HARBOUR

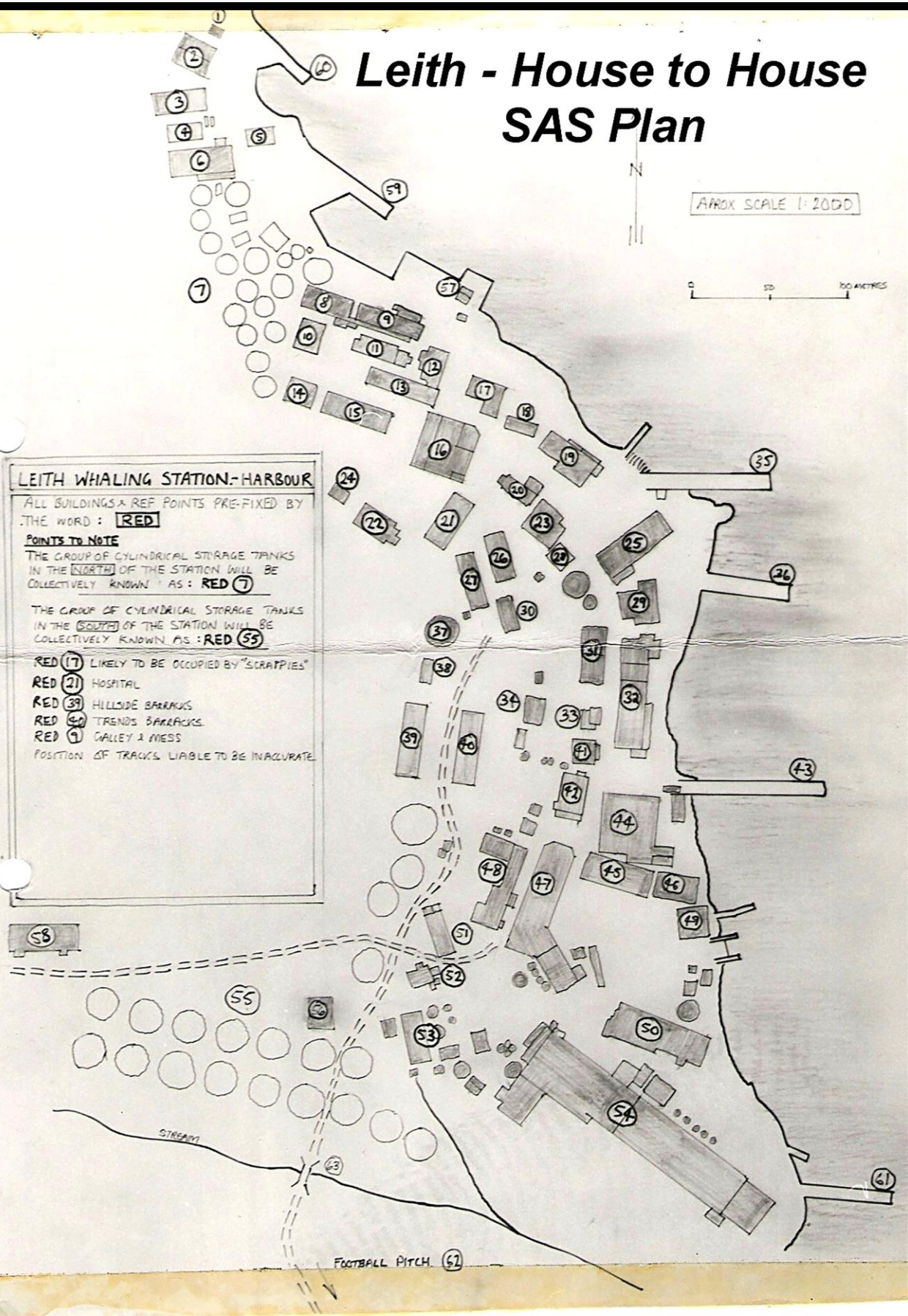
ALL BUILDINGS & REF POINTS PREFIXED BY THE WORD: **RED**

### POINTS TO NOTE

THE GROUP OF CYLINDRICAL STORAGE TANKS IN THE **(NORTH)** OF THE STATION WILL BE COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS: **RED 7**

THE GROUP OF CYLINDRICAL STORAGE TANKS IN THE **(SOUTH)** OF THE STATION WILL BE COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS: **RED 55**

- RED (17) LIKELY TO BE OCCUPIED BY "SCRAPPYIES"
  - RED (21) HOSPITAL
  - RED (39) HILLSIDE BARRACKS
  - RED (42) TRENDS BARRACKS
  - RED (9) GALLEY & MESS
- POSITION OF TRACKS LIABLE TO BE INACCURATE.

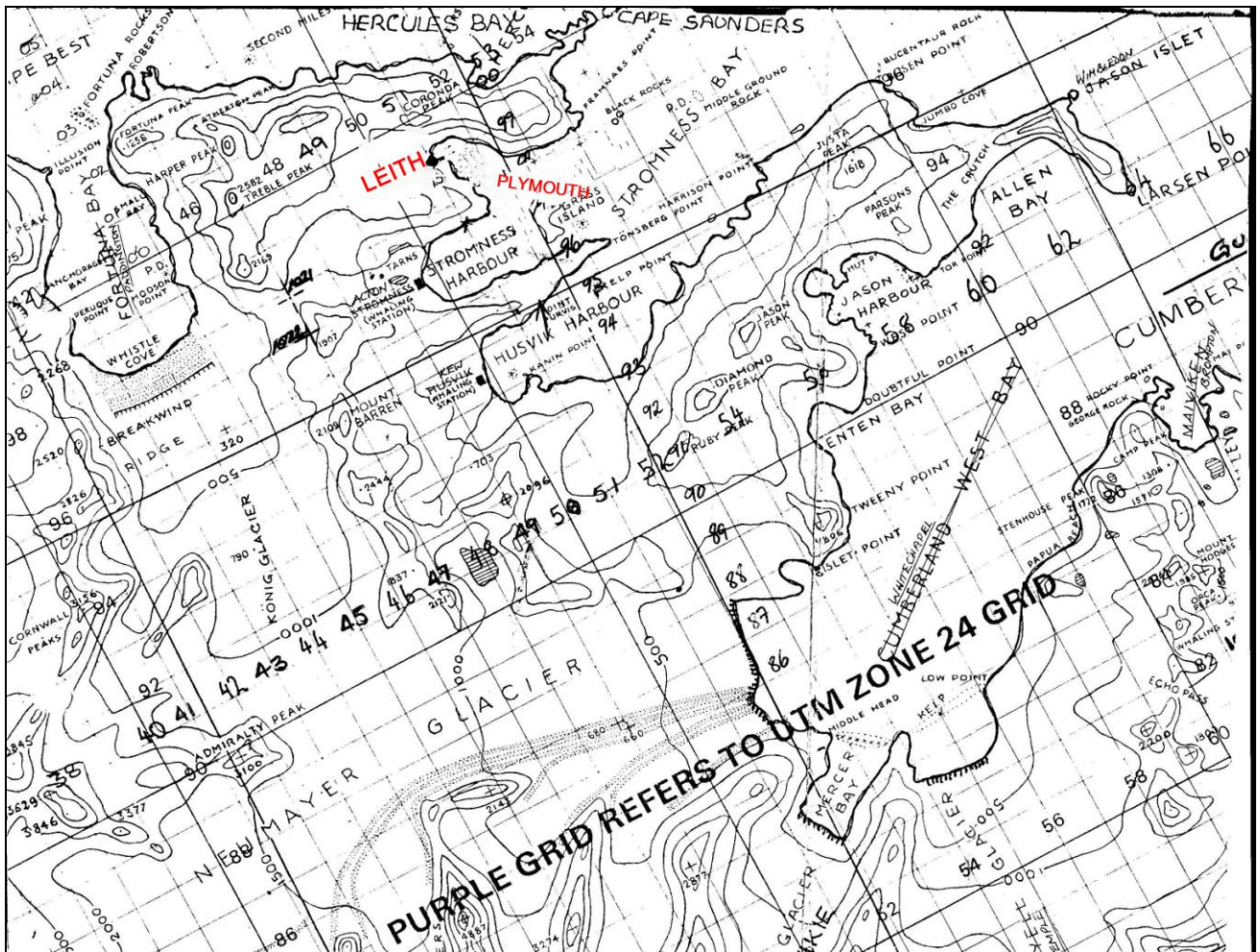




All depart for their respective ships and the landing of our SAS Det goes ahead. We then move to just outside Stromness Bay and I remind the Capt that our guns are still loaded. We clear them into the glacier behind Leith. The enemy immediately call us up on channel 16, the international coastal navigation frequency, and say they will now surrender at 0900 hrs. Clearing our guns must have scared them. We still go ahead with our plans, just in case they change their minds. I pass this on to the men ashore.

**Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> of April**

I just noticed that the time is 0130 hrs and have no idea if I have eaten at all today. It has been a very long day so I decide to try to catch a couple of hours sleep. We have fallen out of action stations but the gun crews remained closed up at reduced action stations. I am turned to very early to ensure things are all set up but need not have worried.



At 0900 hrs we cannot see any white flags but the enemy are calling us on channel 16. They assure us they are showing the white flag but we tell them we can't see it. Suddenly they put up some white flags which we can now see. We invite them to parade themselves at the main jetty but they decline this as it is mined so we tell them to move towards the hillside in the direction the civilians went. They agree but I suggest to our Capt to tell them to do it in single file with the first man and last man holding a white flag. I also suggest each man put his hand on the man's shoulder in front of him so the SAS can see them easily and count them from a distance. They comply with this order. The enemy certainly look a sad sight as they file out and I cannot help but feel a sense of pity for them, even though yesterday I would have quite willingly have blasted them away.

They are very surprised when the SAS and SBS teams suddenly appear out of cover and surround them. As one the Argies quickly and energetically raise their hands in the air. They are quickly and I

must add robustly searched for any weapons and prepared for tactical questioning. The SAS are certainly making the most out of this rare chance for some invaluable training.

By 0930 hrs it is all over and we inform the ANTRIM that Leith is secure, however it is heavily booby trapped and mined. The battle for South Georgia is now over with only two injuries. One was the submariner who was accidentally shot a RM guard when he attempted to meddle with one of the internal gauges and an RN medic who sprained his ankle when he jumped out of a helicopter. Both sides could have lost significantly more but I guess we were both lucky. Later on we discover that the HLS clearly marked with an 'H' had explosives packed under it.

We receive a signal to proceed to the Task Force off the Falklands. I fear the battles there could be a little harder and even bloodier.

### **Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> of April**

The signal states that we are all to be transferred to BRILLIANT and PLYMOUTH, that's 129 people all told. PLYMOUTH takes on all the SBS and NGS teams and BRILLIANT embarks the SAS. TIDESPING is to remain with the ANTRIM and ENDURANCE and PLYMOUTH is due to return to S Georgia once the transfer is made. In all there are 190 prisoners to be taken to ascension when other things are sorted out.

④

1086/00

VV USD162DIA113 HH  
 \*\*\*\*\*Z RBDFNU  
 DE RBDEC B0278 1161547  
 ZNY SSSSS  
 Z O 261531Z APR 82  
 FM CTF 317  
 TO RBDFNT/CTG 317.8  
 RBDFNU/CTG 317.9  
 INFO RBDEC/CTG 324.3  
 RBDFNK/CTG 317.1  
 RBDEC/MGRM CDO FORCES TAC NORTHWOOD  
 BT  
 S E C R E T  
 SIC 19F  
 OPERATION CORPORATE  
 A. CTF 317 261201Z APR 82  
 B. CTG 317.1 260904Z APR 82  
 FOLLOWING PERSONNEL REQD TO JOIN TG 317.8 ASAP:  
 A. 1 SQN SAS (93 RANKS)  
 B. 2 SBS (16 RANKS)  
 C. 6 SBS (14 RANKS)  
 D. NGFS PARTIES (2 I/C PLUS 12 RANKS).  
 ACCOMPANYING KIT/EQUIPMENT EST APPROX 3500 CU FT.  
 O/C DISEMBARKATION 6 SBS (REF A) BRILLIANT TO BE DETACHED TO

ANTRIM  
 PLYMOUTH  
 CONQUEROR  
 BRILLIANT  
 ENDURANCE  
 TIDESPRING

PAGE 2 RBDEC B0278 S E C R E T  
 PROCEED WITH ALL CONVENIENT DISPATCH WITH PERSONNEL AND KIT AT  
 PARA 1 EMBARKED TO R/V WITH TG317.8. IF LOAD TOO GREAT FOR BRILLIANT,  
 PLYMOUTH TO BE DETACHED IN COMPANY WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO RETURN  
 SOUTH GEORGIA AFTER TRANSFER. BRILLIANT TO REMAIN WITH TG 317.8.  
 CTG 317.8 PASS PRESENT PIM TO BRILLIANT, CTF 317 AND CTG 317.9  
 ANTRIM ENDURANCE TIDESPRING TO REMAIN SOUTH GEORGIA AT PRESENT.  
 INTENTIONS FOR GARRISON AND POW EVACUATION FOLLOW.  
 CTG 317.9 ACKNOWLEDGE

Osr: Capt *[Signature]* Rush to Mr Richards  
 So *[Signature]*  
 Rusty *[Signature]*  
 NNNN

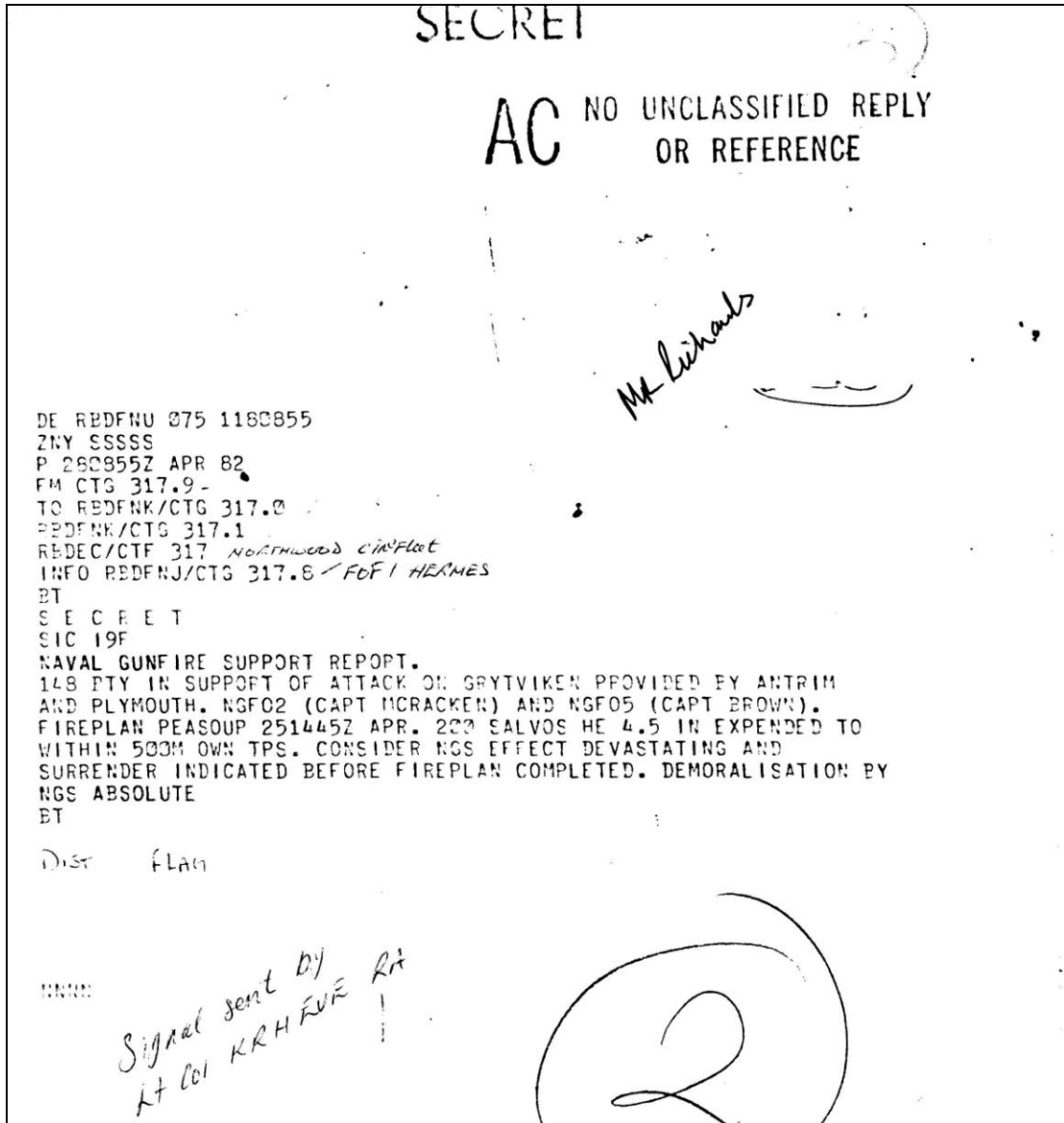
The mammoth task of transferring men and stores begins as a storm hits us but we have to continue. CONQUEROR suddenly surfaces amongst all the mayhem. During these transfers two SBS men get blown off the casing of CONQUEROR by a Wessex. They are quickly rushed to ANTRIM to enjoy a few moments in the Capt's hot bath.

A Lynx helicopter lands on our flight deck and creates a first. It is a tight squeeze but it can be done. The pilot receives a bottle of champagne from our Capt because it is the first time a Lynx has ever made a landing on the flight deck of a type 12 Frigate. Eventually the weather wins and all transfers have to be stopped.

**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> of April**

At first light the transfer continues. This is the first time I've seen all our blokes since Ascension and with SBS being on board it is quite a reunion. Lt Col Eve sends an NGS Summary Report.





At 1330 hrs we depart with BRILLIANT in company for the RV. When we reach the RV Lt Col Eve and I are to go to HERMES with the SAS and the rest of our blokes to INVINCIBLE with the SBS. I begin to wonder why the split?

What is ahead next? At least we have had our 'warmer into the bank'. The Task Force is in two groups with most of the Naval fighting elements now down here and the land forces, 3 Cdo Bde, still at Ascension. We are about to RV with the task group consisting of:-

- HERMES,
- INVINCIBLE,
- GLAMORGAN,
- BRILLIANT,
- BROADSWORD,
- ARROW,
- YARMOUTH,
- ALACRITY,
- SHEFFIELD
- GLASGOW

plus some RFA's.

With us being the only ground forces at hand I can visualise what is going to happen next?

This is what is about to happen next I guess.

281557

WR Richards (7)

tot 1/7

HH

**P 281557Z APR 82**

FM CTG 317.8  
 TO HMS GLAMORGAN  
 HMS HERMES  
 INFO TU 317.8.4  
 HMS BRILLIANT  
 BT

**SECRET**

**UK EYES BRAVO**

SECRET UK EYES BRAVO  
 SIC 19M  
 OPERATION CORPORATE - NGS/DETACHED SAG

A. CTG 317.8 19F 271700Z APR 82 (OPGEN P12)  
 B. CTG 317.8 AAA/19M 281550Z APR 82 (OTC DIRECTIVE 1)  
 \* C. CINCFLEET 280300Z APR 82 (INTELLIGENCE SITREP 28 - STANLEY AIRFIELD DEFENCES)  
 D. CTG 317.8 19F 271100Z APR 82 (MINEFIELD)  
 E. DCDS(1)/26 OF 15 APR 82 (GENERAL INTELLIGENCE)  
 1. GLAMORGAN (CSR) ARROW, ALACRITY WILL FORM NGS GROUP/DETACHED SAG WHEN ORDERED.  
 2. NGS.  
 A. PLAN TO CONDUCT NGS AGAINST STANLEY AIRFIELD AND AIRSTRIP IN ORDER TO DENY THEIR USE TO ARG AIR AND GROUND FORCES. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR NGS ARE:-  
 (1) AIRCRAFT ON GROUND  
 (2) AIR WARNING RADARS  
 (3) AIRFIELD DEFENCE SYSTEMS - GLAMORGAN  
 (4) STORES DUMPS AND VEHICLES  
 (5) TROOP CONCENTRATIONS  
 (6) RUNWAY  
 AVOID COLLATERAL DAMAGE TO FALKLANDS CIVILIANS/PROPERTY  
 B. HERMES SUPPLY RELEVANT MAPS  
 C. NGSFOS TRANSFER FROM FORT AUSTIN/TG 317.9 IF TIME PERMITS  
 D. NGSLOS TRANSFER FROM TG 317.9 IF TIME PERMITS  
 E. TIMING. NGS GROUP WILL BE DETACHED TO PROCEED AHEAD OF REST TU 317.8.4 IN TIME TO COORDINATE BOMBARDMENT WITH AIR ATTACK.  
 F. AMMUNITION. ADJUST EXPENDITURE TO ALLOW GUNLINE TO BE MAINTAINED FOR ONE WEEK. RAS (A) WILL BE ARRANGED ON OPPORTUNITY BASIS.  
 G. INTELLIGENCE. REFS C, D, AND E. HOWITZER HAS 9NM RANGE BUT MINIMAL CAPABILITY AGAINST MOVING TARGET.  
 H. SUPPORT. CAP SUPPORT WILL BE PROVIDED AS PART OF OVERALL AIR DEFENCE PLAN. YARMOUTH AND 2 X SKD MAY BE PROVIDED FOR ASW IN SUPPORT UNDER CTG CONTROL.  
 3. SAG. BE PREPARED TO BREAK OFF NGS OPERATIONS FOR REDEPLOYMENT AS SAG  
 BT

**SECRET**

DIST 8 - FLAG OPS DIST LOGS  
 Act 2 - CC  
 REFSE - AS STATED  
 CUT SEC 032 TO D 0350Z NHTRM 29 APR 82

**UK EYES BRAVO**



## Operation Corporate – The Falkland Islands



### Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> of April

At 1400 hrs we meet up with the INVINCIBLE in a bank of fog. PLYMOUTH has made a flag which depicts a white broken submarine on a black background. This is hoisted on the mast as we steam by INVINCIBLE at speed, unfortunately it goes unnoticed.

The transfer begins at 1615 hrs to the respective carriers. The carriers, of course, believe they are where it is at and that the war will revolve around them. They all know about South Georgia but never mention it to us because apparently it was not as tough as their passage down here. I meet up with an old mate of mine from Poole, Sgt Jim Murray who is the RM Det Sgt Maj on board and he organises a bunk for me.

By 2015 hrs I am all settled in and sorted out when there is the pipe for me to report to Flag Ops. I set off in search of this remote place and when I eventually find it I meet up with Lt Col Eve. We are briefed by the Flag Staff of the plan for the first attack on a Stanley which is to take place on 1 May. The briefing is classified TS at this stage.

In brief there is to be a Vulcan bomber strike with 1000 pound bombs on the airfield, timings not yet decided due to the number of refuelling RV's to be made and total distance to tgt. The bombing raid is to be followed by a mass Harrier strike on the airport buildings. This is to be followed up by three ships conducting NGS on the airfield and surrounding buildings followed by 24 hour period when we pick off whatever there is available in turn. That is as far as we have planned at the moment. Lt. Col Eve and I are to be taken to HMS GLAMORGAN for a complete brief with her staff at 0900 hrs. There being nothing more we can do with both depart for some sleep, only I wish I could sleep.

### Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> of April

There has been a slight delay in the transfer and it is 1000 hrs when we finally lift off for GLAMORGAN. At 1200 hrs we finally arrived at the GLAMORGAN owing to the fact we paid the rest



of the fleet a visit first. The GLAMORGAN is OTC SAG (Surface Attack Group) and is of course well out to sea between the enemy and the carriers. The Capt and staff brief Lt Col Eve and me on the attack plan. They also have the latest signal with the enemy positions on it so tell us to get on with the target priority list. They will get us there, we decide what to hit and in what order.

Here is a copy of the 'Latest Signal' mentioned just to show the complexity and content of it. We had to read it, understand it and then check it for any errors and ensure any grid references were accurate. My life was to be governed from now on by such signals, sometimes up to 5 a day.

291655

(8)

OUT 027

W/O RUMBLE

29 APR

VZCZC DE GO GO GO  
 HH  
 OO RBDENJ  
 DE RBDENJ 027 1191656  
 ZNY CCCCC  
 O P 291655Z APR 82 ZPW 010800Z MAY  
 FM HMS GLAMORGAN  
 TO RBDENJ/HMS ARROW  
 RBDENJ/HMS ALACRITY ←  
 INFO RBDENJ/CTG 317.8  
 RBDENJ/HMS YARMOUTH  
 BT

SECRET

S E C R E T  
 SIC 19M  
 OPERATION: CORPORATE  
 SUBJ: TEZ - NGS INSTRUCTIONS.  
 REF A. CTG 317.8 19F 271700Z APR 82 (OPGEN PI 002)  
 B. CTG 317.8 AAA/19M 281550Z APR 82 (OTC DIRECTIVE 01)  
 C. CTG 317.8 IBO 281557Z APR 82 (NGS DIRECTIVE)  
 1. TASK. GLAMORGAN, ARROW, ALACRITY (NGS GROUP) BOMBARD TARGETS  
 IN PORT STANLEY AREA FROM C DAY FOR UP TO 24 HOURS, THEREAFTER  
 AS DIRECTED BY CTG.  
 2. MISSION. DENY ARGYS USE STANLEY AIRFIELD.  
 3. THREAT.  
 A. AIR - STANLEY BASED - PUCARA, PUMA, BELL, HUEY, CHINOOK

PAGE 2 RBDENJ 027 S E C R E T  
 AUGUSTA 109, S-2E TRACKER (PRINCIPALLY THREAT TO HELOS).  
 MIRAGE ROMAN THREE AND FIVE POSSIBLE BUT NOT CONFIRMED.  
 MAINLAND BASED AIR ASSESSED LIKELY TO BE TASKED (WITH AAR)  
 AGAINST NGS GROUP.  
 P. SURFACE - STANLEY BASED - 1/2 X AN/TPS 43/1X SUPERFLESER-  
 MAUS RADARS SITED CANACHE CREEK - 155/105 MM HOWITZERS AT MOUNT  
 WILLIAM, SAPPER HILL, CANACHE, AIRFIELD AND HIGH GROUND SOUTH  
 OF STANLEY (MAX RANGE 9 MILES). ROLAND SAM, TIGERCAT, BLOWPIPE,  
 44MM AA GUNS ALSO LOCATED IN IMMEDIATE AREA. 2 X PATROL CRAFT/  
 20MM FALKLAND BASED. ARG MAJOR SURFS ASSESSED BY CTG AS LIKELY  
 INITIALLY TO REMAIN CLOSE TO MAINLAND COASTS.  
 C. ASW - SAN LUIS (TYPE 209) LIKELY IN AREA IF NOT SUNK BY SSM/  
 ASW GROUP. SALTA QUES.  
 D. MINES - MINEFIELD LIMITS ASSESSED AS SEMI CIRCLE 020/200  
 RADIUS 12NM CENTRED ON CAPE PEMBROKE LT. NINE TYPES UNKNOWN.  
 LATER AIR LAY POSSIBLE.  
 4. TARGET PRIORITIES.  
 A. PRIMARY. REF C PARA 2A.  
 B. SHORE BATTERIES OPPOSING NGS GROUP  
 PRIORITIES ON THE DAY WILL BE DEPENDENT UPON WEATHER AND

PAGE 3 RBD/ SWN 027 S E C R E T

RESIDUAL EMBRY CAPABILITY O/C AIR STRIKES. PROXIMITY OF CIVILIANS AND DIRECTIVE TO AVOID COLLATERAL DAMAGE TO FALKLANDERS MAY LIMIT TARGETS.

5. EXECUTION.

A. APPROACH PHASE.

(1) ON DETACHING SHIPS WILL BE FORMED ON LINE OF BEARING 6000 YDS APART, GLAMORGAN GUIDE AND CENTRE SHIP FOR FAST LLZZ, OFFSET APPROACH TO 52 35S(5) 053 00W(3) THENCE TO 052 25S(4) 05315W(9). SHIP TO BE FULLY DARKENED AND IN TOTAL EMCON SILENCE. LINK TO BE USED IN SINGLE REPORT MODE ASSUMED/CONFIRMED HOSTILE TRACKS ONLY. 182 TO BE STREAMED SETTINGS AS PREVIOUSLY PROMULGATED BY CTG.

(2) ALL HELOS TO BE AT ALERT 30 FROM DETACHMENT (WESSEX ASW ROLE TWO X MK II ALACRITY LYNX OTHH/SKUA, ARROW LYNX MK44 UNTIL AOP) TILL 30 MILES TO GUNLINE THEN ALERT 1/15. SPEED WILL BE REDUCED TO 12 KTS (CAVITATION INCEPTION SPEED) FOR APPROACH TO GUNLINE ETA 0945Z (PRE DAWN).

AT FINAL APPROACH, SAFE SPEED WILL BE ORDERED. FULL SELF PROTECTIVE MEASURES IN FORCE.

(3) ANTICIPATE INITIAL HELO EMPLOYMENT :- ALACRITY. SURFACE

SECRET

PAGE 4 RBD/ SWN 027 S E C R E T

PROBE LF MGS AREA APPROACHES (EMCON SILENT) IF REQUIRED PRIOR TO ARRIVAL AT GUNLINE THEN SPOTTERS. WESSEX ASW/GUNSHIP, ARROW ASW/SBY AOP

(4) OVERT EMCON (BUT NO HF, VHF OR E/F) WILL BE ORDERED BEFORE ARRIVAL. E/F AUTOMATICALLY RELEASED AT ARW RED

B. INITIAL OPERATIONS ON GUNLINE.

1. NAVIGATIONAL CHARTS/MAPS/GRIDS TO BE USED WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO UNITS BY CTG. NAVIGATIONAL REFERENCE POSITIONS/GUNLINES ESTABLISHED AS FOLLOWS :- WOLF ROCK - GRID 485688(9) - POINT KATHERINE

5200S(7) 05800W(3) - / - POINT JANE

200 WOLF ROCK 10 MILES - GRID 424513(9) - POINT SARAH

235 WOLF ROCK 10 MILES - GRID 333560(0) - POINT ELIZABETH

5150S(1) 5755W(2) - GRID 368570(9) - POINT ROSE

GUNLINES ARE 020 - 055 ON WOLF ROCK AS CONVENIENT, SHIPS REPORTING RUNNING BEARING DIFFERENT RUNNING BEARINGS SHOULD BE CHOSEN TO STOP ARGV PLOTTING THE GUN LINE. O/C RUN BALE OUT TO STARBOARD KEEPING WOLF ROCK OPEN TO SEAWARD OF PEMBROKE POINT

LINES DESIGNED TO AVOID KELP AND MINEFIELD LIMITS MINIMISE

PAGE 5 RBDFSWN 027 S E C R E T

CAPABILITY OF SHORE ARMAMENT AND ALLOW MAXIMUM TIME FOR FFE. APART FROM INITIAL ALL OUT EFFORT, AIM WILL BE TO HAVE ONE FIRING SHIP ON THE LINE THROUGHOUT, REMAINING UNITS PROVIDING ASW/AAW DEFENCE. ANTICIPATE WOLF ROCK SHOULD PROVIDE ADEQUATE BEACON.

2.A. ORDER OF FIRING SHIPS ALACRITY ARROW GLAMORGAN. (SEE PARA 2B) ORDER OF HELOS FOR SPOTTING AS SHIPS (ONE HOUR SORTIES). AT INITIAL APPROACH ALACRITY LYNX TO BE AVAILABLE FOR SPOT O/C SURFACE SEARCH WESSEX WILL ACT IN MUTUAL SUPPORT AS GUNSHIP.

INITIAL TARGETS AS CALLED FOR BY LYNX TO ENSURE OWN AND THEN SHIPS SURVIVABILITY (MUCH WILL DEPEND UPON RESULTS OF EARLIER STRIKES) THEN AS ORDERED NGS CDR (SEE PARA 2B)

B. THERE MAY BE REQUIREMENT TO STARHELL ILLUMINATE/DIRECT NGS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL OF HELO AT AOP. ALL SHIPS WILL FOLLOW IN WAKE OF ALACRITY INITIALLY AND BE READY TO ALL FIRE ON AIRPORT DURING FIRST RUN TO ENSURE NEUTRALISATION OF LOCAL AIR ASSETS. O/C GLAMORGAN WILL ORDER SECTORS FOR NON FIRING SHIPS TO OFFER ASW/AAW SUPPORT TO FIRING, SHIP/ SPOTTING HELOS.

PAGE 6 RBDFSWN 027 S E C R E T

SECRET

EM SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

A. ASW. SONAR POLICY DEPENDENT UPON SAN LUIS PROSECUTION. INITIAL AIM TO USE GLAMORGAN WESSEX FOR ACTIVE SONAR/VISUAL SEARCH AS AIRBORNE WEAPON CARRIER O/C GUNSHIP ROLE. PROSECUTE ANY CONTACT TO DESTRUCTION.

B. AAW. BE PREPARED TO FORM SAG AT SHORT NOTICE, IF ORDERED BY CTG.

C. AAW. GLAMORGAN AAW GUARD AND CAP CONTROL THROUGHOUT, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF 966 MTI TO AVOID BEING BOUNCED FROM OVERLAND.

4. AMMUNITION

A. FUZING - VT HIGH OR LOW (HIGH MIGHT GIVE BETTER RESULTS AGAINST SOFT TARGETS BUT CLOUD MAY PREVENT USE).

B. EXPENDITURE - SUBJECT TO TASKING. REPORTS TO GLAMORGAN O/C EACH RUN. BE MINDFUL OF NUMBER OF BULLETS HELD.

5. MISC

A. ANTICIPATE ACTION STATIONS (RELAXED AS CONDITIONS PERMIT) THROUGHOUT FIRST 12 HOURS ON GUNLINE

B. NGSLO/NGSFO MAY BE AVAILABLE EX TG 317.9 AND/OR FORT AUSTIN.

6. STAY VERY VERY LOOSE

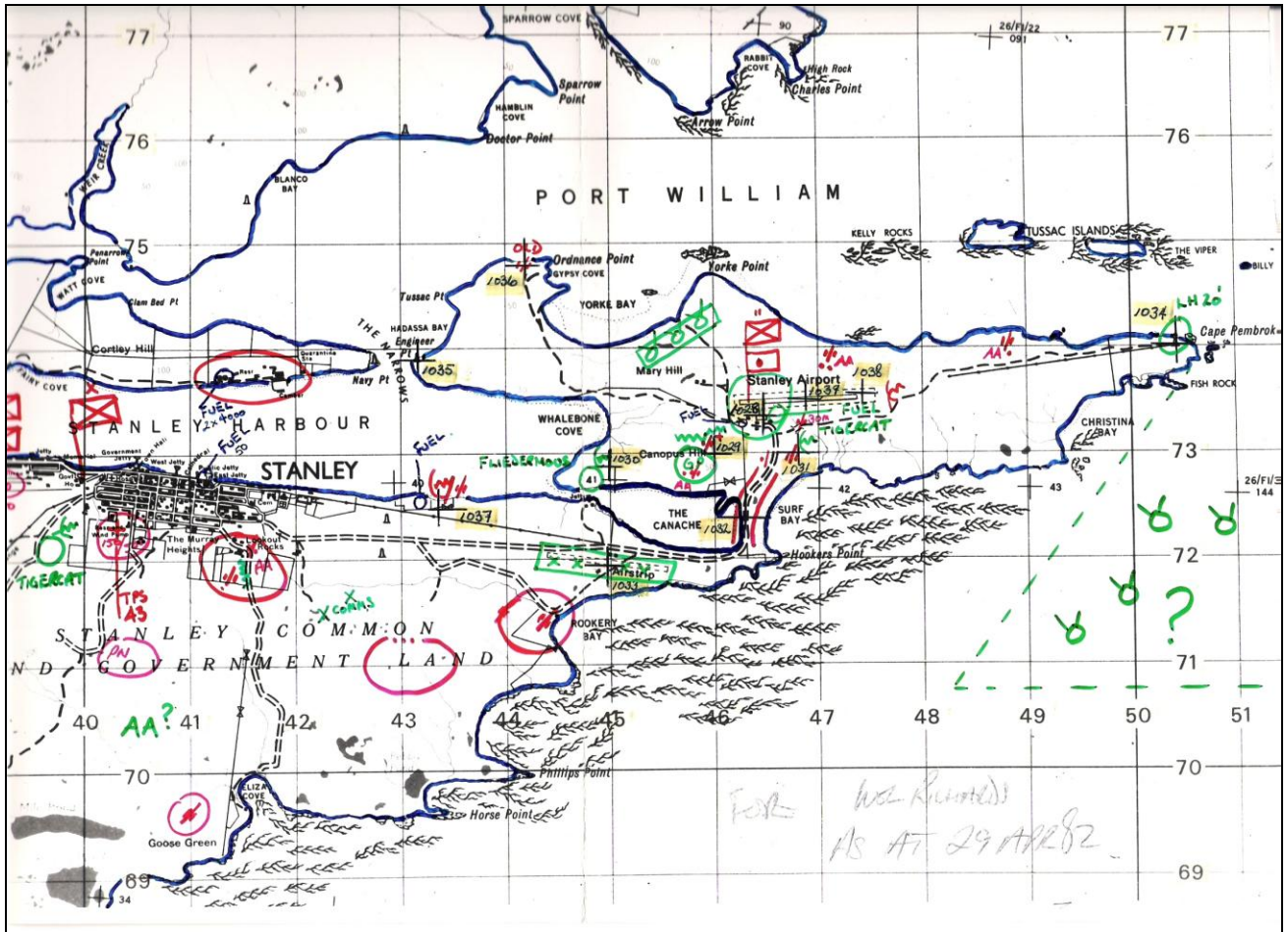
BT

NNNN

REF: OPS AA-09		FAIR FILE				
ECONOM/HELLO OFFICER:						
REF: SELF EVIDENT						
INDEX:						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No.	TOR/D	SYSTEM	DATE	OPERATOR	INIT
OUT	27	2206	D/C	29/4	BTG	



MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY



How Stanley looked as interpreted by our Int guys. Given to Lt Col Eve and me to make up a target list for the three NGS ships to bombard the airfield in daylight.

Priority one is to get the two NGFO teams over here for a briefing although they will not be required as yet they will be much better off over here. The deployment is to be as follows:-

- |               |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| HMS GLAMORGAN | Lt Col Eve                 |
| HMS ALACRITY  | Capt Brown & Me            |
| HMS ARROW     | Capt McCracken & Sgt Jukes |

The remainder of the men from the two NGFO Teams will stay on GLAMORGAN. Capt Brown and Capt McCracken will be available to go aloft in the ship's Lynx to spot as required. The Wessex from GLAMORGAN is to be used as gunship to protect them when they are spotting.

On completion of the Harrier attack all three ships will steam south of the minefield and then turn NNE line ahead; GLAMORGAN, ARROW and ALACRITY. When we reach the gunline we are to follow in GLAMORGAN's wake onto an Easterly course. If it is estimated that when we, ALACRITY, reach the turn we will all fire 50 salvos at the centre of the runway and by that time GLAMORGAN will be near the minefield. She and ARROW will then bail out to the South and allow us to continue along the gunline engaging targets selected by the spotters in the helios. The plan is quite clear and the magic phrase 'stay loose' is used too often for my liking.

At 1900 hrs Capt Brown and I are transferred to ALACRITY. I leave my sea kit bag behind and only take my bergan with me. Capt Craig, the Skipper, immediately calls for me and we swap notes and plans. He is a very professional man and asks me a great many technical questions all of which, luckily, I am able to answer. He then introduces me to the rest of his fighting team and begins detailed briefs on forthcoming events.

**Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> of May**

We are still going over the final detailed plans with the ship's staff. Capt Brown wants to be up in the Lynx to observe the first impact of the engagement by all three ships. He wants to hover or land on a hill called Mount Low which is the next piece of land north of Stanley. I think it will be too risky so the Capt becomes the arbiter and we both put our case to him. The flight commander is on Capt Brown's side. The Capt however decides to send a signal to GLAMORGAN stating his intentions are to launch the lynx prior to G-Hour to allow it to position itself north of the target area. If GLAMORGAN agrees then its final and I agree with that decision.

At 0050 hrs the Capt is called away to the Ops room. There is an unidentified surface craft within the TEZ and we are detached to see what it is. After stalking the vessel for some time we can see it is only a fishing boat, so we fire two illumination rounds over it at 0330 hrs and order it out of the TEZ. It quickly goes away no doubt reporting our movements. We return to the SAG. Am I once again to be involved in the first rounds being fired in an action I ask myself? Perhaps.

We try and grab a couple of hours sleep but once again it is very hard to sleep. Here we are within the 200 mile limit inside which the enemy say they will attack anything that moves.

At 0810 hrs we are stood too at action stations. It has been decided by higher authority that we will remain on Zulu time from now on. It will not be light until about 1000 hrs and the theory is that when the enemy are waking up we will have been awake for 3 hours or so and therefore should be more alert. We will see.

We are now waiting for the Vulcan raid to go in. At 1045 hrs we hear that the Vulcan has gone in and was on target. That must have given them quite a shock in Stanley but now they should be on full alert. There are now two Mirages closing in on us but they are chased away by Sea Harriers which are on combat air patrol (CAP). The big Harrier attack is now going in and my pulse begins to race. We are next. It is all so unreal. The raid goes very well with all the Harriers returning back to carrier safely. They now have to refuel and re-arm to cover us on our mission.

My position is in the OPS room with the Capt and I can listen to any circuit on my headset that I wish. At the moment I am on the Air Warning Control (AWC). It is strange listening to the controller talking in a calm voice to all the ships about hostiles approaching.

At 1200 hrs there is a submarine contact reported on another circuit and on the Computer Assisted Indication System (CAAIS) up pops a Link number. This number appears on all the radars of ships fitted with these systems. This is just like star wars. YARMOUTH, with BRILLIANT as her cover is detached to investigate.

At 1430 hrs there are several hostiles reported approaching and once again they are chased away by the CAP. This carries on for some time and we soon discover that the enemy are trying to seduce the CAP away with the idea of having a go at us. There is still no sign of the enemy navy.

1600 hrs and the NGS trio are 30 miles SE of Stanley and are about to find out if the reports of the supposed minefield limits are correct. At 1604 hrs GLAMORGAN spots a life raft in the water and we all slowdown to investigate. This trick was used in WWII by the German U boats. The British will always stop and look at such things and when they do, zap!!! We keep our eyes, ears and most other things open. The life raft is empty and remains a mystery.

It is now 1700 hrs and we are 20,000 yards off Stanley which is well within our effective gun range. We are easily able to lock onto the lighthouse at the end of the runway with our fire control radar. The beacon holds well. We are in business, the destruction business that is.

At 1715 hrs we pick up a submarine contact so launch our Lynx to investigate but his reports are negative and we recover her. It is now 1730 hrs and all three ships are on station and are ready in all respects. I get an update of targets from Lt Col Eve and enter them into the system and I then pass them onto Capt Brown who is in the Lynx which is now sat on the deck 'burning and turning'. It is due to launch at G-25 minutes. Once again the scene is set for something, the outcome of which no one can imagine.

We launch our lynx at 1800 hrs and it makes its transit too it's loitering position to the north of Stanley. As it crosses the mainland of Murrel near Kidney Island a small fishing boat is spotted which opens up on the helicopter with small arms fire. They make a circuit of a small island and then run in on the boat and open fire on it with the ship's schooley operating the GPMG. The helicopter then makes another circuit running in again and firing on the boat only to be met with a hail of fire from a patrol boat which has suddenly appeared on the scene. The pilot of the Lynx had turned his head to look out of the portside of the helicopter and as he looks ahead again there is a neat hole in the windscreen. The round would probably have gone through his head had he been not be looking left. They decide to carry on with the mission and touch down near Mount Low. Capt Brown jumps out and notices they have a fuel leak and have sustained a couple more hits. They call me up as I am on the NGS freq and inform me of their status which I Pass on to the Capt. He tells them to get back as soon as possible and that if they have to ditch our mission must be priority. We will pick them up later when we are less busy.

At 1842 hrs our helicopter is well on its way back so ARROW now launches hers with Capt McCracken on board. I have good comms with him. The Wessex from GLAMORGAN is also launched as gunship guard. Our helicopter touches down safely and 1900 hrs but is in quite a mess. The crew come to the OPS room for a debrief and look quite shaken.

It is now 1922 hrs and all three ships begin to engage target number ZJ 1039 at the centre of the runway. Capt McCracken sees them all land on target. We find 51 rounds.

At 1943 hrs our group is attacked by three Mirages. The radar operator on our ship reports 'Hostiles closing fast' and tries to lock onto them using CAAIS (*Computer Assisted Action Information System*) but has some difficulty accomplishing the task. Our CAP cover is away to the north chasing some of the hostiles at the moment so we are on our own. We still cannot get locked on to the hostiles since they come from the land and are closing in fast and low. The three Mirages are taking a ship each and I am quite frankly scared out of my skin. I have been shot at before but this is different. I am gripping the metal side of the radar screen and watching an orange blip about to attack us. Suddenly there is the familiar sound of a jet aircraft passing over us fast followed some 3 secs later by an almighty explosion which moves the ship a little. We all look at each other with startled expressions. I inwardly wish that I was anywhere else in the world right now. There is a lot of talk now on the open line internal circuit when the Capt calmly tells us all to report only relevant information and to stay calm. He orders the officer of the watch to come up to 25 knots and zig zag 5 degs either side of a southerly course. He ends up with 'Now let's get out of here'. His clear calm approach works and we all carry on with our jobs quietly.

The other two helicopters are still aloft and will have to wait until we are clear before we can slow down onto a steady course to recover them. I am talking to them both on my circuit.

Each Mirage had selected a ship to attack. GLAMORGAN had two bombs land just astern of her which went off under her and she was lifted out of the water. She sustained some minor steering damage. ARROW was raked from stem to stern by cannon fire and one man hit in the chest by a ricochet. We had a bomb pass between our funnel and mast which exploded 10 yards off our port waist which rattled us and caused us to take some water on board. None of the ships returned fire because the 20 mm crews did not realise they were under attack and had not been given orders to fire. I think the enemy were as scared as us as they brought down one of their own Mirage with AAA batteries on Stanley as he flew back home. We were very lucky.

I must admit again that I was very scared. It is obvious our training, with regard to opening fire, is geared towards safety too much. I give the 20 mm gunners a little pep talk and explain that they might as well fire for all they are worth if we get into the same situation again. May as well take one of them with you if you're going to go I say.

There have been quite a few intense conversations between the Capts on the Bakerlight UHF Speech Secure Circuit. The GLAMORGAN sends a Sitrep to the Admiral and at 2025 hrs it is agreed that daytime NGS is out of the question for the time being. The ships do not have the capability to defend themselves so close to the shoreline. Radar clutter is making locking onto targets very difficult.



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

We are now well clear of the danger area and the two helicopters have been recovered although the Wessex was very close to running out of fuel. At 2122 hrs we received a signal from the HERMES to 'Go in tonight and do it all again'. The threat during darkness of an air attack is assessed to be minimal. The threat of surface and sub-surface is however still the same. The night plan is as follows:-

2300 – 2359 ALACRITY - 4 targets spotted by Capt McCracken in Arrows Lynx (Ours is still u/s)  
0001 – 0100 ARROW - as above  
0100 – 0200 GLAMORGAN - four targets possibly spotted by Lt Col Eve in GLAMORGAN's Wessex.

We note that we are to go in first again. It is 2241 hrs and we are on station on the gunline when we suffer a computer crash. The system is primed again with another programme and I check all the targets are entered correctly. No pressure there. All systems are go again at 2251 hrs and I have good comms with the helicopter. The atmosphere is very tense. We have all been on the go for quite a number of hours by now. The first of our targets selected is to be the control tower. The radar plotters as are keeping a good look out for contacts as are the sonar crew.

At 2314 hrs we fire on TN ZJ 1028 and Capt McCracken reports we are on target but makes a small adjustment. After the third round is fired our gun breaks down. An essential part of the hoist mechanism has sheered off and the EWO states it will take a couple of hours to make another one in the Engineers shop. We pull back and let ARROW continue with her targets. After a further look at the damage the EWO estimates we may be ready to continue by 0130 hrs.

### Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May

It is now 0050 hrs and we are South of the airfield when we pick up a surface contact which we believe to be a FPB. All we have is our 20mm cannon to defend ourselves and at a push our Seacat Missiles. ARROW is still bombarding her targets and GLAMORGAN is standing off as early air warning. We lock onto the contact with our fire control radar in an attempt to scare it off. The contact disappears at 0100 hrs. The enemy must believe that we are about to conduct a landing because there is a lot of AAA being thrown up. In fact the news today states that they had repulsed our landings earlier on.

The time is now 0155 hrs and we are ordered to withdraw the area as ARROW and GLAMORGAN have completed their firings. We try and get an extension because our gun is almost ready. At 0200 hrs we are told to depart which we do reluctantly. By 0240 hrs we are well clear of the coast and fall out of action stations and reduce to defence watches. It has been a very long day and there must have been gallons of adrenalin used up. We all feel that after this first bleeding, so to speak, we are ready for them now. Once again I try to grab a couple of hours sleep.

0800 hrs and I am again in the Ops room alongside the CAAIS operator. At the next display are the Capt, PWO and Gunnery Officer. All day we have reports of hostiles approaching but they always get chased away by the CAP. As we are at defence watches, the state where the ship can be defended at all times, we have to come up to Action Stations every time there are hostiles reported. This only takes about 3 mins as the off duty part of the ship are always fully clothed at all times. My routine is when the Capt is awake then so am I.

It now appears that the enemy Carrier Group may well be approaching the 200 mile limits so the SAG should be in the action quite soon. At 2010 hrs I receive a target list for a night bombardment. The tgts have been selected from Hotphotreps flown by the Harriers after their sortie yesterday.

### Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May

We prime the system with the Tgts and wait until H – Hour which is set for 0145 hrs. Each time we have to conduct a bombardment there are a lot of things to prepare. The Capt always consults me on many of the items such as:-

1. Route in and out
2. Best gunlines. It would be unwise to remain on a steady course during a bombardment.

3. Target Selection. With regard to relative position on gunline. Cresting problems.
4. Action on being attacked
5. Action in Contact
6. Action on hitting mines. And many more aspects which do not spring to mind easily.
7. EMCON policy

At 2040 hrs we detach and steam towards the gunline. This is the time when the Capt can relax so I follow his example and catch a couple of hours sleep.

2301 hrs we are at action stations due to our close proximity to the enemy coastline when we suddenly receive orders to return to the main CVBG with all dispatch. No reason is given. The Capt tries to explain to the Admiral, by secure comms, that we are almost on the gunline but it told again to make for the CVBG asp.

### **Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May**

0441 hrs a Lynx from HMS Coventry has contact with a tug and engages it with Sea Skua missiles. At the same time a helio from GLASGOW scores a hit on another small vessel. Both ships were to the North of the Falklands. Why were they not pulled back like we were? Later on this morning we find out why we were called back. One of our subs HMS CONQUEROR was tracking three enemy ships that were making their way around the 200 mile limit to the South. They would have posed a threat to us and later on the CVBG so the order came from MOD to sink the largest one. It was the Cruiser Belgrano. She was hit with 2 x Mk 8 Torpedoes and sank almost immediately. The two escorts in fact chased the CONQUEROR and tried to depth charge her but without any results. As we were the only other ship to the South it was a good idea to pull us back.

At 1300 hrs I get a message that some of the Bty are about to join up with us. They departed Ascension some time ago on the RFA FORT AUSTIN and are expected to transfer soon. NGFO 3 are due to join me and Capt Brown is to be transferred to the INVINCIBLE to brief SBS on the area in which he was when the helio came under fire.

The remainder of the day is quiet and we all await the enemy reaction to the sinking of their second largest ship. We all feel for the 300 men who are reported lost. Even though they are the enemy we cannot help but feel for a man who has lost his ship from under him. 'There but for the grace of God etc.'

### **Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May**

At 0700 hrs Capt Brown transfers to the INVINCIBLE for his task. He is then due to rejoin his team on the GLAMORGAN. If I know him he will wangle some more action very soon.

At 0845 hrs another Vulcan bomber carries out a similar raid on Stanley as the previous one. When he has delivered the load he calls on a special frequency we have all been ordered to monitor. We are the first to pick this transmission up and hear him calling out for a fuelling RV with a tanker. We relay the message onwards and feel quite proud of ourselves.

At 1330 hrs NGFO3, complete, transfers to us and I brief them on a few things. By now we have made up two firing positions each side of the bridge where we have mounted Bren guns. I deploy the men as follows for action stations.

Capt Bedford - to the bridge where he can assist the Officer of the watch with recognition etc.

Sgt Thomas & Gnr Pennington - Port Bren

L/Bdr Leigh & Gnr Booth - Stbd Bren.

They tell me they are used to action station drills because they have been on many practice runs whilst on the FORT AUSTIN. I explain they are now on a warship and we have been attacked once but am met with yawns and 'Swing the lamp'. It is no use I tell myself, they will soon find out. At 1415 hrs whilst I am still briefing them the action station alarms sound for an air raid Red. They move off with remarkable speed. When I get to my station in the Ops room I hear that a Super Etendard's radar, the Agave, has been picked up so that means Exocet are in the area.

The controller on INVINCIBLE believes it was a false echo and orders state Yellow. Our Capt decides to always remain at Red for a further 15 mins after Yellow is called just in case. We fire chaff as well. A few moments later we hear that SHEFFIELD has been hit, but as yet we do not know by what. The YARMOUTH reports a sub in the area and begins to lay down a depth charge pattern. She also reports that a missile had passed over her.

Things now begin to get a little confused with all this going on at once. I go up to the bridge to see for myself that the SHEFFIELD, about 4 miles away is ablaze with ARROW and YARMOUTH alongside trying to put out the fires. There are quite a number of Helios in the air also. A ships 182, the torpedo decoy which it towed behind, suddenly explodes in a great plume of spray. I catch a glimpse of the guys from NGFO3 at their Bren guns and they look concerned.

Now things are becoming more organised. The SAG, less ARROW are despatched on the threat bearing. The YARMOUTH on anti sub patrol and the remaining 2 x Type 42's on air picket duties.

At 1800 hrs we hear that the Capt of SHEFFIELD has given the order to 'Abandon Ship'. It has been a long time since any RN Capt has had to issue such an order. We all receive the news with great sadness. How can one of our modern ships be caught out like that? It is now confirmed that it was an Exocet missile, launched below the horizon that hit the ship. There are around 20 dead on board.

At 1820 hrs we fall out of action stations and I meet up with NGFO3 who all look quite shocked. They have now stepped over that invisible line which divides exercise play from war.

It is now 1930 hrs and SHEFFIELD is ablaze but it is thought she may not sink after all. At 2015 hrs we go to action stations again due to aircraft in the area. There is a renewed haste about closing up now and all upper deck lookouts suddenly develop 20-20 vision. The hostiles are once again chased off by our CAP. At 2115 hrs we stand down again and all of us are left with our private thoughts.

The enemy lost the Belgrano and 300 men, we lost SHEFFIELD and 20 men yet the situation is very strange as we know that in an all out battle we must win but we are still roaming around to the East of the enemy area. We have a quiet night with both sides licking their wounds. I find it hard to sleep because each noise sounds like something else and each wave that hits the ships side sounds like ..... well, you can guess.

### **Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> May**

The SHEFFIELD is still afloat and the Admiral decides to use her as bait. If he can lure the enemy submarines or aircraft into the area then we will have a go them. The news is given out that she is damaged but not sunk. Perhaps we can get them to try and finish the job. The trap is now set.

The remainder of the day and night are very quiet. There is always the Seaking in its Anti Sub role dipping near the SHEFFIELD. No contacts are made.

### **Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> May**

On the 0800 hrs BBC world news they say the Argies are willing to allow the UN to intervene until a peace settlement is agreed. That would let them consolidate their positions and get their defences sorted out. Mrs Thatcher says as long as the enemy remain in the Falklands she will not give in. Good for her we all say. She wants the Falklanders to decide their own future and they want to remain British. If the UN becomes involved we could be here for quite a time, doing nothing. We must see this through now.

The SHEFFIELD is still burning but still remains on an even keel. She is to remain the bait for some time yet. The three NGS ships are to revert to their primary role as SAG which does not go down too well. The enemy navy are now all bottled up in Harbour. We have four SSN hunter killer nuclear submarines guarding the east coast line of Argentina and their navy can't get out. They know it too. We all believe that NGS must be carried out now as a softening up measure until the main task force, which is still at Ascension, gets here. The Capt and I have long talk about it.



At 1100 hrs news again mentions the U.N. But it is obvious the enemy only want delaying measures. We are now given some targets around Stanley which may be engaged in the near future. Perhaps the powers to be are having a change of mind.

At 1215 hrs we suddenly pick up speed and form the SAG to intercept some surface contacts near the SHEFFIELD. It is a fantastic feeling being on a type 21 Frigate when she suddenly puts on the power. You can feel the stern dig into the water and within 90 seconds be doing 28 knots. We form up on an intercept course. The Seaking, which is loitering near SHEFFIELD, picks up two fast moving contacts closing. The weather is very calm but there are many fog banks about. The CAP are called down and vectored onto the contacts. We are still on our way at high speed. Suddenly the two CAP disappear from all radar screens. They do not answer calls and it is assumed they must have crashed because there was no mayday sent or anything. Two pilots wasted. This is another blow to our morale. I wonder how the crew of the Seaking are feeling now.

At 1547 hrs we spot a survival suit in the water and slowdown to investigate. When we come alongside the suit we note it is upside down. This can happen when a man does not tie the tabs in the legs tight enough. The air in the suit tends to get trapped in the lower region and the man is then inverted. If there is anyone in the suit he must be dead but we can now see it is empty. Perhaps it came from the SHEFFIELD. Another mystery.

1800 hrs and there is another air raid Red called. We, the SAG, feel a little exposed out here so we fire Chaff just to be on the safe side. By 1809 hrs we get the Yellow from HERMES but remain at Red for another 15 mins as usual.

Later on this evening we hear the official casualty list of the SHEFFIELD. 20 dead and 25 casualties of which one is VSI. The damage control drills are tightened up and we all now carry respirators as well as the usual survival suit. Also we always wear anti flash gloves and hoods in the relaxed position during daylight hours. At 2300 hrs we get another air raid Red but it is only a recce aircraft because it loiters is just outside Sea Dart range. We all hope that it will make a mistake and come closer. It does not and we all stand down again.

### **Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> of May**

Once again they are waiting for something to happen after all the recent incidents. The SHEFFIELD is still the bait for the enemy but they are not accepting the offer.

At 1100 hrs the Capt calls for me and we talk about NGS again. Someone up top does not believe it is an effective weapon system but luckily for me Cdr Craig does and wants me to plan something to prove so. The enemy had said that the two Vulcan raids, followed by the harrier sortie then our two goes at NGS only produce one 50 gallon oil drum being punctured. Someone on our side believes this rubbish.

I look at a place called Fox Bay and believe we have two serious options:-

1. Put a small team, NGFO 3, ashore by night silently, then the following day they would be able to observe the area for a night bombardment.
2. Put a small team ashore and about 2 hours later conduct NGS then withdraw them and clear the area are all in one mission.

With these two guidelines I produce a detailed plan for a raid. The Capt looks over it and does a few calculations with reference to time and distance etc. We talk it over with the Flight Commander, who now has his helicopter back and he says it is possible. The team, which would consist of four men who could take both Bren guns with them. The plan is put forward but the only answer we get is 'wait', along with a comment 'Our hands are tied'. We take this to mean that we are all pawns down here and being moved about by people at Northwood.

At 1515 hrs we go to air warning Red because the enemy have a converted Boeing 707 which is being used to gather intelligence. Because it is unarmed we are not allowed to engage it so the CAP chases it away. It flies over us before departing.

At 1807 hrs and we go to air warning Red again no doubt the result of the Boeing 707 recce. We all stayed in the fog banks to make it much harder for them but still fire chaff just in case. Exocet is not bothered by fog.

At 1850 hrs we get the order to go to Yellow but as usual wait 15 more minutes. No one complains about it.

*Note: the Exocet in the air launched mode only has to be programmed with a target and it will find it. The pilot simply has to see a blip then go down to sea level out of our radar picture to program the missile and then launch it. He then turns for home. It is the first 'fire and forget' missile out. The missile locks onto the first contacted it sees which we all hope is our chaff. SHEFFIELD did not to fire chaff, YARMOUTH did.*

### **Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> May**

0800 hrs finds me in the Ops room again. It starts to get light at around 1030 hrs but by that time we will all be wide awake and alert. At 1015 hrs the Capt calls for me with the news that we are to go in tonight and bombard the Airfield and surrounding area. Good news. Whilst I am planning a gunline and other things at 1100 hrs we go to action stations against surface contacts. We lock onto something which is not ours and at 1108 hrs open fire with our Mk 8 gun. We follow the rounds and they hit the contact. The contacts could have been caused by the bad weather conditions but no matter we hit what we were aiming at. The gun is OK again.

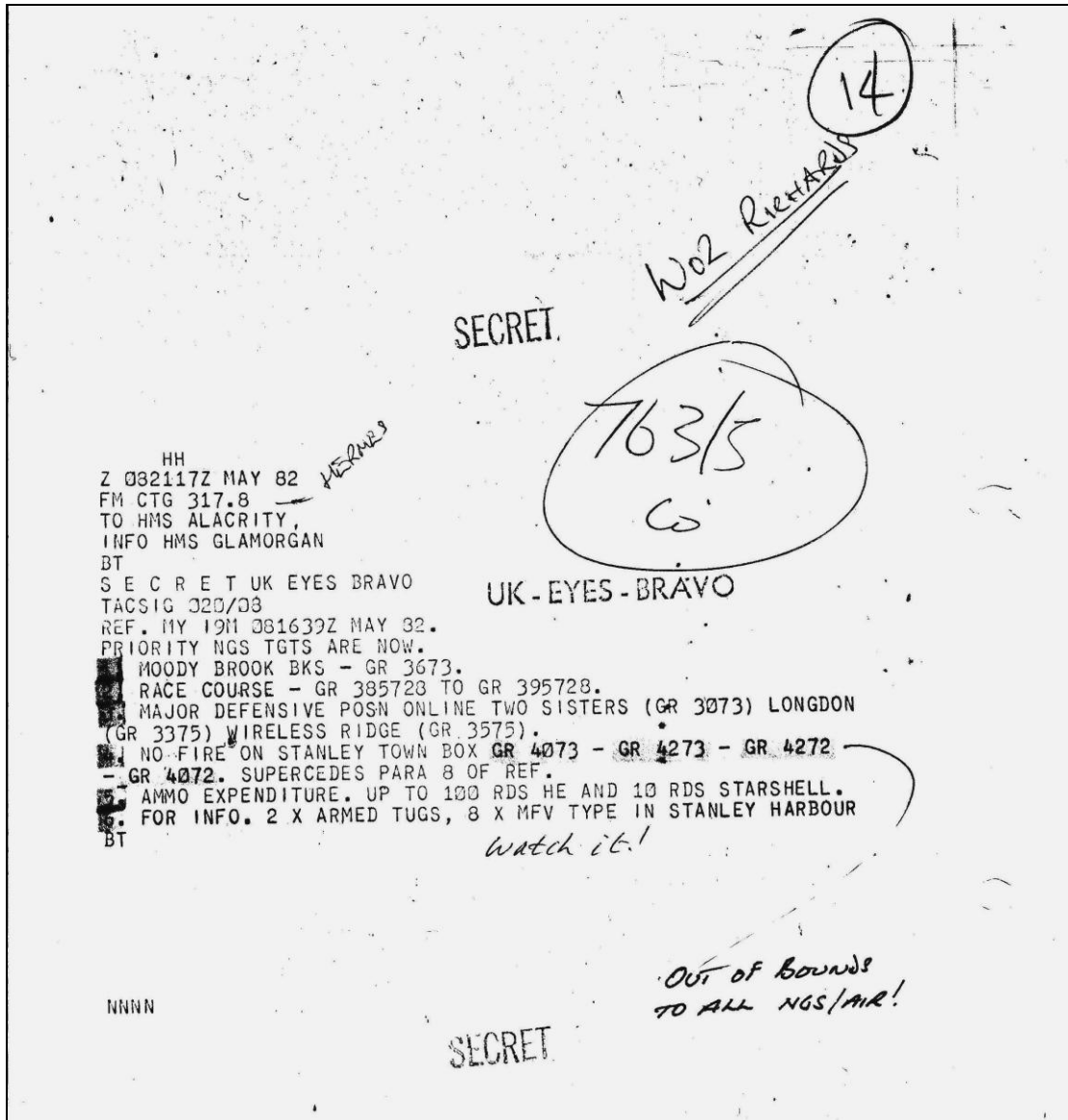
1130 hrs we stand down and I continue to make plans for tonight. I want it to be a good one.

1530 hrs and we go to action stations for an Air raid Red only to be stood down at 1615 hrs.

1850 hrs air raid Red again and this time two Mirage are identified closing fast but they are chased away by the Cap. We stand down at 1915 hrs. It seems that we are the centre of attention at the moment because we are on our own and closing into Stanley.

1952 hrs there is another air raid Red owing to a C130 landing at Stanley airport. The only ship in the area is us of course us but we cannot do anything about it with no missiles. If it comes within range of our gun we will have a go but that will give the game away. The C130 takes off again but it is out of our range as it fly's over land but its two Mirage escorts look as if they are coming to take a look at us. They turn away before they come into range. We are becoming a little jumpy now.

By 2130 hrs I have received an up to date target list which just about covers the whole of Stanley area.



At 2350 hrs our sonar operator reports a contact. Boy are we getting the lot tonight.

### Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> May

We still hold the contact and the Sonar Operator swears it is a Sub. We know where all of ours are in general so there is no chance of Blue on Blue. We launch our Lynx at 0006 hrs armed with a torpedo. The Sonar Op guides the helio over the top of the contact and it drops a depth charge torpedo. No hit is recorded so we are forced into believing it was a large lump of Kelp. The Kelp is so dense it gives the same readings as a sub. Whales also give off the same sort of echo. We will no doubt have Green Peace down here soon.

At 0015 hrs we have good contact with another aircraft taking off from Stanley. Once again he fly's over land and we loose him. At 0215 hrs I get an up dated target list with new priority targets so I supervise the programming of the computer and carry out all the checks with the operators. We decide that it will be a good idea to launch the Lynx with Capt Bedford (NGFO3) aboard so he can observe the fall of shot. We are going to predict the Tgts because we want to achieve shock results. Also some of the Tgts are going to be too far away for him to see. The helio cannot go too close due to the AAA and Pucara aircraft.

Time is 0250 hrs and we launch the helio. It goes and has a good look around and also tries to DF any enemy radar systems with their EW gear. At 0340 hrs we open fire on Wireless Ridge, Moody



Brook and Mount Longdon where there are known enemy trenches. We are the first ship to engage the enemy deep in the hills. Although Capt Bedford cannot see the actual target he reports all salvoes landed in the right area based on bearings to the flashes of the explosions. We also engage 2 Tgts to the South of Stanley. We cease fire at 0450 hrs having expended 89 HE/VT and 3 Illumination. There was a small problem with the gun but it did not last too long. At least we may have done some damage to the enemy, if not in casualties but in morale.

At 0451 hrs we recover the helio. When we are 30 miles clear of the area we fall out of action stations. At 0625 hrs we go to action stations for an air raid Red. There are 2 contacts closing fast. We are on our own and very exposed. There are a few moments of total silence while we wait confirmation from the INVINCIBLE that these two are enemy or not. Just in time we find out they are two CAP on their way home from a bombing run. It is a good thing we were not a Type 22 Frigate armed with Sea Wolf otherwise they would not be here by now. We hear them pass either side of us fast and low. The Capt is none too pleased and goes away to compose a signal. We all stand down again and breathe a sigh of relief.

At 1030 hrs I learn that a new system will be tried for NGS. A Type 42 (COVENTRY) and a Type 22 (BRILLIANT) will be stationed off Stanley to form a combo. The idea is that the 42 with Sea Dart will be able to take out any aircraft at high level and give a good radar picture to the 22 which will be able to take out low flying aircraft and missiles. The 42 will be able to conduct NGS at the same time. Lt Col Eve is going to transfer to COVENTRY with Capt Arnold (NGFO4) for the first try.

Throughout the day they are stationed off Stanley and repel a few attacks. The enemy are no doubt wondering what they are doing there. BRILLIANT fire 3 Sea Wolf but all miss. This is because the Tgts were Pumas and went below the hills. CAP claim one Puma splashed.

Later this afternoon 2 CAP attack a fishing boat which turned out to be an EW ship. One pilot dropped a 1000 lb bomb on it which failed to explode but landed on the bows. Quite a shock to the crew of the boat I bet. Later on two other CAP flew over the boat and saw a life raft in the water but it was empty so they cannon the boat. Some time later a team of SBS are sent to the boat with the hope of using it but it is so badly damaged they scuttle it. In the news the Argies say we cannoned the survivors in the life raft. The pilot of the CAP says the enemy flag was still flying so he attacked it.

At about 2200 hrs we receive out night orders. We are to transit the Falkland Sound to see if there are any mines there. WHAT!!!! That is tomorrow night.

### **Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> May**

So we have been given the task to transit the Falkland Sound which is the gap between the two main islands. We have also been given authority to attack any enemy vessels that we contact. The sound has not been navigated by anyone on our side yet but it is possible for large ships to do so. Because at some points it is narrow it may well be mined. We are to find out if it is. I ask how that is to be done and am told 'by bumping into one'. England seems so far away right now.

There may well be enemy gun Btys placed along the shore either side of the sound and the Capt asks me to make a plan to predict the obvious places. After a close map study I come up with some possible places and hatch up a plan to counter any attack from them. In brief I will know our position from the CAAIS computer display at any given time therefore if we are fired on the lookouts on the GDP will be able to give me a bearing of the flash. I could then work out the likely grid and alt which I would enter into the system and engage it. Simple !! The only problem is that the Capt will be on the bridge at all times and all the navigation will be done from there. I devise a method to overcome this which the Capt is satisfied with.

At 1130 hrs the Capt makes a main broadcast address to the ships company about our night's task. He makes it quite clear that he has no intention of losing his ship to the enemy by mines, shore fire, FPB or any other way. We will fight our way out of any situation to the last if need be. The aim is to enter the Sound from the South and leave it by the North where ARROW will be waiting for us. His broadcast has the desired effect and each man is left with his own thoughts for a long while. The Capt's calm and determined voice is an example of leadership which is all too rarely found.

At 1900 hrs we detach and 'orft we jolly well go'. During the transit we will have to run 'Ultra Quiet'. That means there cannot be any noise of any sort, even the heads will be closed. They need to be open I think.

2200 hrs we launch our Lynx to see if there are any enemy radars activated. She will stay aloft at all times for this task mainly but also in case there should be any rescue needed. All non essential crew are back aft and above the water line. The Capt briefed us on the chain of command should there be any casualties and we all know where the key players will be. Being as the Capt will be on the bridge the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt will be in the Ops room. A second team are to be in the emergency steering room, which is aft, with a duplicate set of charts. There is a towing cable ready and life rafts are made ready. We hope nothing has been overlooked. We are fully closed up at the highest state of NBCD. The atmosphere is very tense. I am only too glad that I will be fully occupied. Many of the crew will have to just sit it out or lay down on the bare decks because there will be no Sitreps on the main broadcast unless we are under attack.

As we enter the sound at 2300 hrs we have Fox Bay on our port side. I take a good look at it on the radar and get the beacon to lock onto a couple of points for gunnery. I am convinced that a raid on it will be easy. I make several notes. We slip silently past and enter the Sound proper. To the left there is a very high mountain range which I do not think could harbour any enemy because there are no roads or paths, although a radar site could be helicoptered up onto one of the high points. The land to the right is much different though with flat terrain and many inlets which could hide FPB's or anything for that matter. We continue silently on.

## Tuesday, 11 May

At 0035 hrs we pick up a radar contact ahead about 5 miles. We are 2 miles South of Swan Island. The contact looks like a medium size surface vessel which came out of an inlet to the East. We track it and match its speed. It is obvious that it does not know we are behind it because it maintains a steady course and speed. It looks like it is headed for Port Howard. When we are level with Swan Island the Capt decides to engage it.

At 0109 hrs we fire one Illumination round ahead of the vessel. It turns about which may be to attack us but more likely he believes we are ahead of him so he is about to run. At 0111 hrs we engage with rifle fire, that is we fire 5 salvos HE from our 4.5" gun rapidly and I spot the rounds on our radar. We overshoot so we give the system a drop correction and fire again. I can see we are on target so suggest some VT. Suddenly at 0119 hrs the enemy vessel explodes in a gigantic ball of fire and disappears from our radar picture.

We see two white lights ahead in the water at 0134 hrs and prepare to look for survivors but when we get to where the enemy were there is no trace of anything at all. It is a mystery. We move on. They now know we are here. It is 0150 hrs and we are abreast of Port Howard so fire 2 Illumination rounds at the harbour hoping to entice something out but nothing comes. We know there are a lot of enemy there and they must have been someone waiting for the vessel we have just sunk. They do not want to play obviously. Our Lynx reports no EW activity. There may be some problems with cresting if we have to attack this place I note. It will be possible but a good gunline will need careful planning. We now move on to what may be the most difficult part of this phase.

We now have to negotiate the narrow exit of the Sound which has two mountains on each side of the gap. Also there is a rock right in the middle of the exit. This is an ideal spot to lay mines. The hills each side tower over us. At 0250 hrs we have two radar contacts to the North. One is air and the other surface. Just outside the gap to the West is Pebble Island which has an enemy airstrip on it so we believe they may well be waiting for us. ARROW should be there though but we have not heard her reporting any enemy contacts. We lock onto the two contacts with our fire control systems. Very quickly ARROW calls us and identifies herself and her Lynx. Phew.

At 0308 hrs we are clear of the sound and have ARROW in company. We make our way back to the CVBG in a jubilant mood at 28 kts. When we are clear of land we fall out of action stations. It is great to be able to make a noise again and to use the heads. The men who did not know what was going on tell me they were worried when we opened fire. It must be quite difficult for them.

The Capt calls for me at 1230 hrs with the news that the powers that be still do not have much faith in NGS. He sends another signal with an updated outline plan for the 'Fox Bay raid'. He adds 'Let us prove it works'.

The remainder of the day is quiet with the weather on our side that is awful. Cloudy, mist and a heavy swell. I take time to review what has happened in the short time since 2 April. It hardly seems possible. I have been at sea 32 days now of which 22 are in enemy waters. The longest single stretch at sea before was 22 days back in 1966 on the way to Australia on HMS Victorious.

### **Wednesday, 12 May**

A signal comes out which gives the redeployment of all the NGS teams. I am thankful to stay with ALACRITY. NGFO 1 (Capt McManners) and the BC's party are still with the main task force which seems to have just left Ascension. They left the UK first.

GLASGOW and BRILLIANT are now on duty off Stanley and Lt Col Eve and Capt Arnold have transferred to GLASGOW. At 1710 hrs they come under a concentrated air attack which comes in two waves. The first wave of 2 manages to hit the GLASGOW but the bomb fails to explode and passes right through the stern section of the ship and out the other side. The 2 aircraft are splashed by BRILLIANT and the second wave comes in. One of them is also splashed. There was a third wave but they turn back reluctant to follow their mate's fate. The combo has proved itself and the tactics used are to be employed from now on. The Type 22 is a great ship but it is a pity we only have 2 down here.

We are now on screening duties out from the CVBG when a Seaking ditches about 2 miles ahead of us. We can see the red flares but are unable to get a radar contact due to the heavy seas. We go flat out to get to them. Two other Seaking are in the area almost at once and we are able to vector them onto the area of the ditching. As we arrive like a speed boat the last of the 4 man crew is being winched up and gives us a wave. The Seaking is upside down but will not sink so we are ordered to sink it with 20mm and Bren fire. When we do eventually sink it our request for it to be recorded by us as a kill are denied.

At 1838 hrs we go to air raid Red but the CAP chases them off again. Another quiet night.

### **Thursday, 13 May**

Today was a very quiet day but the following incidents are worth recording.

GLASGOW is being patched up and reports that she will be OK but with a reduced fighting capacity. During the NGS she was providing Capt Arnold was up in the helio when the enemy 40mm Btys opened up on them. The helio was able to sit just outside the range of them and continue with its task. This must have angered the enemy gunners. The rounds were landing 280 metres short of the helio said Capt Arnold.

HERMES was suddenly detached for duties to the SW but was pulled back almost at once. There was no task given or reason for it being cancelled.

We receive some UK newspapers today and they report on the taking of South Georgia. They give a blow by blow account of the action. It is a complete load of rubbish and bears no resemblance to the truth at all. My faith in newspapers has gone down somewhat.

### **Friday, 14 May**

This morning there is a signal for me which states that all the NGS pers are to report to FEARLESS on 18 May for a briefing. The signal is from the BC but gives no pick up arrangements or any other information. As we are all spread around different ships, of which he knows the locations, it would have been obvious that he book a Seaking for the task. Capt Bedford decides that we will wait further orders because if we try to go by Lynx it will take two or even three trips. That is just our team and there are four other teams here. With this news we become a little more depressed as we are quite happy working on our own but now with the impending arrival of the FEARLESS and the Staff things will be so much more different.



The raid on Pebble Island took place last night with Capt Brown on it. The SAS raided the airstrip and managed to destroy 11 aircraft on the ground and were able to withdraw under cover of NGS from GLAMORGAN controlled by Capt Brown. The island is in a very strategic place which covers the Northern entrance to the Falkland Sound. It is a great boost to morale. The raid is credited to the RM but I know different. At the moment all Special Forces actions are being credited to the marines to avoid the enemy gaining any political or propagandist advantage.

### **Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> May**

The weather is becoming very bad now and the best place is near land where it is much calmer. Unfortunately as we are SAG we have to be in open water just on the horizon from the CVBG.

We receive a signal that we are to get some more people on board for insertions. They will comprise the following:-

Two four man SBS Teams  
One five man NGS Team  
One four man SAS team

They are all to be inserted by us into the Falkland Sound near Sussex Mountain. Further details are to follow, all top secret. At 2057 hrs Capt McCracken and his team Sgt Jukes, Bdr Jackson, RO1 Hardy & Gnr Barfoot come on board with the SBS team which is led by an old mate of mine Sgt P B. They tell us that the SAS part has been cancelled.

Prior to their arrival I had prepared the ships two Gemini and briefed the seamen on how to rig and launch for a clandestine insertion. I do not yet know the full details but these things are always the same. The main thing now is for the teams to get as much rest as they can.

*Note: We discover that the vessel we sank on the 11<sup>th</sup> was a new tanker which was carrying 340,000 litres of aviation fuel in barrels on the upper decks. No wonder she went up with such a bang. She was so new she wasn't in Janes Fighting Ships listings. A good kill.*

### **Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> May**

Both teams and I get into a huddle to discuss plans. Very briefly they are as follows. The two four man teams will be inserted into Grantham Sound from ALACRITY by 2 Gemini. We will lay one mile off the landing point to give cover if required. The SBS team are to move on to San Carlos overland to recon the area and mark the beach for the forthcoming landings on 21<sup>st</sup> May. The NGS team will move to an OP in the Sussex Mountains to observe Darwin and any Troop movements prior to and during the landings.

We go over the plan in detail because Sgt Jukes and I will be the only other people who know the full details of anti ambush RV's and Helio exfiltration details. Sgt Jukes will be taken to HERMES by our Lynx when the insertion is complete and be the link there. Once we have the plan finalised we present it to the Capt because after all it is him who will be placing his ship where we want it. He gives his involvement the OK and gives a guarantee that the ship will be able to remain exactly one mile off shore.

He then asks what the rest of the task is but we cannot tell him. It is a bit like the movies but he just has to do his job and that is all. He is a professional and therefore understands the reasoning.

At the same time as we are to insert the BRILLIANT is due to insert two SBS teams by canoe North of Fanning Head. If all goes well it should all be over by 0300 hrs. There are however two bits of bad news.

1. It will be a clear night.
2. There is a known enemy strength of about 100 men around San Carlos.

I have trained the NGS team and only hope they will remember it all. I am very worried about their safety. We all shake hands.

**Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> May**

It is now 0001 hrs and we are well on our way into the Sound again but this time from the North. We get a report there is an enemy ship in Port King but are ordered not to engage it. The insertion is Top Priority. Our helio will be launched to act as an EW source while we carry out our task. It is launched at 0050 hrs.

At 0055 hrs we go to 'Ultra Quiet and Total Blackout State' once again passing through the narrow North gap at 0145 hrs with Fanning Head towering over us on our Port side. The night is so clear the enemy OP there must see us. It is very tense. I am selecting various beacons to track so we will be able to engage anything that may open up on us. Time now 0230 hrs and we have made a big sweep to the South and begin to run into the drop off point.

0245 hrs and we are running in from the South and are 2 miles off the beach. Suddenly the skies to our East are lit up with Illumination rounds. The Capt asks me to assess what it is and if we are the Tgt. Although it is a long way off I believe it to be GLAMORGAN on her bombardment run off Stanley area. He is satisfied with my answer but it still seems so close. Stanley is the other side of the Island. GLAMORGAN in fact is to bombard the Stanley area then select tgts along the coast South to Fitzroy area.

At 0246 hrs we are still and steady in the water one mile off the enemy beaches. We are primed to engage anything either direct or indirect. I am on the bridge with the Capt to give him a running commentary. 0247 hrs and the first Gemini with SBS is in the water. The second with the NGS team follow quickly. I am impressed with the seamen's efficient handling of the two launches. In each of the Gemini's there is a Cox from the ship and Sgt Thomas & Gnr Pennington of NGFO3 who will cover him should anything happen. The insertion is split into three main phases:-

- Phase 1.** The journey to the recce point which is to be 400m off the beach. The SBS Gemini will lead with the NGS Gemini in the Stbd wake some 30m behind. When the 400m point is reached the SBS will recce the beach area visually with NOD and also heat sensitive gear. If all is clear they will approach the beach with the NGS team covering them. If there is any contact up to this point they will abort.
- Phase 2.** The landing is the trickiest phase. The SBS land and fan out to cover the area. When they are secure their boat returns to the NGS one which then moves to the beach to insert. Should there be any contact during this phase they fight it out with our help.
- Phase 3** The two Gemini return to us. We can guide them in by radar using UHF. Should there be any contact during this phase the two teams are on their own. Our main concern would be the recovery of the two Gemini intact but only to assist if called for by NGFO2.

At the same time as we are conducting our insertion BRILLIANT is completing Phase 1 of hers. I can hear the controller directing the canoes ashore but just when they are starting Phase 2 they have to abort. There are too many enemy around the beach area. Once again we were lucky. All canoes manage to get back to the ship OK so that is good news.

At 0410 hrs our task is complete and we move off to clear the Sound again passing Fanning Head. The enemy there must see us this time for sure so again we up our all ready activated state. At 0500 hrs we are clear and in company with BRILLIANT on our way back to the CVBG. We cannot believe the enemy has not seen us. Well perhaps they have but are not ready for a fight yet. We fall out of action stations and get some rest. My thoughts are with NGFO2 mainly but also with the SBS team.

At 1130 hrs we go to air raid Red. A super Etendard has been picked up on radar but must have gone home or something because the raid comes to nothing.

1300 hrs and we are in the queue for a RAS (S). The area for this daily routine is well to the East of the CVBG in what is considered a safe area. The fuel tankers and stores ships are doing this every day because we all have to be kept topped up. Some of our crew have been at action stations all night and are now on the upper deck taking on stores. We also collect some more 4.5" ammo. I give them a hand which they appreciate.

Tomorrow we are to RV with the FEARLESS.

**Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> May**

We are all packed up and awaiting news of how the transfers are to take place. It would appear that the HERMES group and the FEARLESS group, which were to RV well to the East have passed each other by and now we have the following situation:-

HERMES Group – to the NNE of the TEZ  
FEARLESS Group – to the NE of the TEZ without any Air/Surface cover.  
The SAG/NGS Group – within the TEZ East of Stanley

By 1300 hrs however it has all sorted itself out; thank goodness the enemy did not put in an air raid. I am with the PWO in the Ops room watching the radar picture when we see a helio go onto GLAMORGAN. It is there some time so we ask what it is doing. The reply is 'Picking up NGS teams, am on my way to you next for 6 pax'. That gives us about 5 mins to get organised and onto the flight deck with all our gear. We make it with seconds to spare and are all winched up followed by all our kit. The BC could have sent a signal with details.

We are all deposited on the flight deck of FEARLESS at 1420 hrs and the Bty is all together again less NGFO2 of course. There is much rolling of shoulders, banter and some lamp swinging. Some of the guys, those who have yet to see any action, are genuinely interested in what we have been doing. Not so the BC. His opening words are 'You have all been playing so far and we are now here to do things the correct way'. He does not even know what ships we were all on nor does he seem to care.

We are all briefed. It is nice to meet up again with those I have not seen since the UK and once again those who were in S Georgia. When certain points come up that we know to be a little difficult to achieve, through our recent experiences, we are told 'It has all been planned at the highest level etc. etc.' some of our officers look towards me with despair.

In summary the main landings are to take place into San Carlos 210630hrs Z. We, the NGS teams, are to deploy as follows:-

<b>Team</b>	<b>With</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>In support</b>	<b>NGLO</b>
NGFO1	SBS	Fanning Head	ANTRIM	Lt Col Eve
NGFO2	Still in San Carlos		ARDENT	Capt Harnes
NGFO3	40 Cdo	San Carlos - Blue Beach 2	PLYMOUTH	Me
NGFO4	2 Para	San Carlos - Blue Beach 1	PLYMOUTH	Me
NGFO5	SAS	Darwin/ Goose Green	ARDENT	Capt Harnes
NGFO6	3 Para	San Carlos – Green Beach	PLYMOUTH	Me
SACC	3 Bde HQ	On FEARLESS		

**Tasking**

NGFO1 - Are to be put ashore by Seaking prior to the landings to take care of the enemy Coy on Fanning Head. They will have a strong SBS raiding party with them. ANTRIM will be conducting a diversionary bombardment near Pebble Island but will be on station to support the Fanning Head raid.

NGFO2 - To remain in their OP and report enemy movements prior to and during the landings. ARDENT is on call for any problems that may crop up.

NGFO3 - They will be in the lead Landing Craft on the second wave. Their beach is Blue 2 Bonners Bay. PLYMOUTH will follow their Landing Craft up to provide direct/indirect support.

NGFO4 - They will be in the lead landing craft of the first wave and should be amongst the first ashore on Blue 1. PLYMOUTH will follow them up to the beach and give support if required.



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

NGFO5 - They are to be with the SAS who are conducting a raid on Darwin in an attempt to keep the enemy there during the landings. ARDENT is also available to them.

NGFO6 - Bdr Tattersall will be attached to 3 Para for the landings onto Green Beach only being as the BC of 29 Bty was once an NGFO and he will be able to manage with one man. They were going to use me for that task but decided that being an NGLO was more important at this time.

YARMOUTH is to be a spare asset should anyone need it. The transfers will be at 0830 hrs.

My next major task is to brief NGFO4 (Capt Arnold) on what arrangements have been made when 2 Para meet up with NGFO2. The last thing we want is a Blue on Blue. I tell him the signals, expected location and that both the SBS and our NGS teams will also be wearing their Anti Flash hoods to aid recognition. We know the Argies do not have that bit of kit.

We are now issued some new maps so we are able to throw away all those we gridded up ourselves. The Bde HQ has had them for some time now. Pity someone did not think of sending some down for us to use earlier. My copies are a little battered now. Also there is the problem of the Mercator projection which falls exactly over the Fox Bay area.

## Operation Sutton - The D – Day Landings - San Carlos

### Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> May

At 0825 hrs we are all waiting to transfer. Now it is 1130 hrs and we are still waiting. The BC is conspicuous by his absence. At 1230 hrs a Seaking arrives to take us off to our various locations.

I am lowered onto PLYMOUTH again at 1330 hrs amongst old friends. When they see me some say 'Christ we must be going in the front again'.

There is a letter from my wife waiting for me which is a nice surprise; it is the first one to get through to me.

Again I am in the Capt's cabin giving him a brief on the landing plan. The remainder of the day is spent in preparation for landings and support. At 2230 hrs the CRS shows me a signal telling of a Seaking which has ditched with 30 SAS men aboard. 20 are reported dead of which 18 are badged SAS. It is a blow, what a waste. A little later he also shows me a copy of a signal with the nominal roll. Some of those who were with us in S Georgia are on the list and I just stare at the names.

Late this evening we lead off a convoy of 9 ships which include Canberra and Norland. We will have to approach from the NE and head for Stanley but later in the evening of 20<sup>th</sup> alter course due West for San Carlos. This, we believe, will lead the enemy to believe we are going to assault Stanley. The day of the 20<sup>th</sup> will be a trying time because we are only one of four groups that are conducting this manoeuvre and we will all be exposed to air attack.

The Canberra and Norland look massive and they are made to look even more impressive due to the very tight formation we are keeping. The Capt of PLYMOUTH tells me he has never been in such close company before with non RN vessels and looks very anxious.

### Thursday, 20 May

All day is spent on passage to the landing area and the weather is fantastic. Low cloud, mist and a heavy swell. None of us thought we would pray for bad weather. The enemy will not be able to fly today. They have been reported as saying they will launch a massive Air Strike should we attempt to land. They know we are due to assault because the BBC has told them so and you can always believe what the BBC says.

The darkness that descends at 2030 hrs is a welcome sight.

I take stock of things for a moment. I have been married 6 months today and since then I have spent 2 weeks in America doing NGS, 4 weeks in Norway and the rest of the time at home and down here. It is at moments like this one begins to appreciate the little things in life and wonder what is most important. I try to get a couple of hours sleep.

### Friday, 21 May

We are at action stations at 0300 hrs when NGFO1 who are with the SBS report there are around 25 enemy in the area of Fanning Head. ANTRIM is not yet ready to support them but as the enemy are no problem it is decided to keep to the schedule.

At 0445 hrs ANTRIM begins her diversionary bombardment of the Western island. The Tgts are near Mt Rosalie and the area to the East of Pebble Island. Because the enemy on Fanning Head are still quiet they must think they are safe. We hear that there is to be a delay of about one hour in the landing programme but there is no reason given. I am on the GDP which is in the open section above the bridge just below the director. The skies are now clear and the land looks close enough to touch. It will not get light until about 1000 hrs so we have a good deal of time yet. Fanning Head is looming over us and it is very hard to believe that there isn't an enemy sniper drawing a bead on me at this moment. There are only five of us on the exposed upper deck. From this position I will be able to control fire either direct or indirect.

There are two radio boxes either side of the GDP on which I can monitor the NGS frequencies. I am all set up and test the internal comms only to discover that when I transmit, a green light, which looks like a searchlight to me, glows vividly. An engineer with some good old Black Masking tape solves the problem. Now all I have to do is await a call from NGFO4 then NGFO3 to tell me they are in their landing craft. It will be easier for me to direct fire for them from my high vantage point.

At 0600 hrs I can see the dark shapes of the 12 Landing Craft as they pass by our Stbd side. We were the first ship into San Carlos waters and the Landing Craft have to pass by us. All the troops who are in the Landing Craft know we are there to give them support if called for by the two NGS teams. They also know the NGFO's are in the leading craft of each wave. It has been planned to boost morale. I have good comms with Capt Arnold and there is a strong hint of relief in his voice. As the last Landing Craft passes by we follow on behind. The landings are to be silent so we will only open fire if fired on and then go noisy.

At 0715 hrs the leading Landing Craft of 2 Para hits the beach. They report no enemy contact at all and the only people they meet are the SBS team we inserted a week ago from ALACRITY and have marked the beach landing zone.

ANTRIM now begins to engage Fanning Head for NGFO1 who are involved in quite a fire fight. I can see the salvos landing and the tracer arching on its way between both sides. The sounds of the shells whistling on their way followed by the loud crump and the shock wave all make the whole scene so unreal.

When the 12 Landing Craft have discharged their human cargo they return to pick up 40 Cdo. It is noticeable they hug our side whilst passing by. We turn and follow on after the last craft. The same routine is repeated again for 40 Cdo and all seems to be going very well. NGFO1 report they have captured some enemy, killed some others but the remainder have run away towards the general area of Port San Carlos which I notice is near Green beach where 3 Para are due to land next.

At 1100 hrs 3 Para are landing and we are stationed at the mouth of the bay of San Carlos between Fanning Head and Chancho Point where we can engage tgts in either 2 Para, 40 Cdo or 3 Para area. Some LSL's are now beginning to filter into San Carlos to be in a better position to unload stores etc. During 3 Para's landing a Gazelle is shot down by enemy fire. The pilot is OK but the crewman is VSI. NGFO6 call for immediate helio casevac. We move up a little closer and lay on a Tgt which NGFO6 calls for but are not able to engage because there has been a fighting patrol sent from 3 Para to see what enemy there are.

About 15 min later there is a call from Bde HQ on FEARLESS to verify the request for a helio. NGFO6 replies 'Don't bother, he is dead'. I am angered by the delay from Bde HQ. The enemy have all withdrawn leaving behind their mark. By 1200 hrs San Carlos is pretty crowded with various ships but we are still the only warship. Outside in the Sound we still have On Station ANTRIM, ARDENT, and YARMOUTH. There are some others as well but not on gunline duties. We cannot believe there has been no real enemy reaction to this landing.

At 1228 hrs we get the first of the air raids. The ships in the sound get most of the attention but some Mirage and Skyhawks fly over San Carlos and drop bombs on us. We have a very near miss. At first I am stationed in the Ops room trying to give warnings to the troops ashore through the NGFO's of the forthcoming air raids but after one attack I do not like being in the Ops room amongst all the radar and other equipment. Each time an aircraft attacks we have to get down on the deck. I make up my mind that if I am to get it I would rather be on my own two feet and fighting. There is a remote box on the bridge so I can still keep in touch with the teams ashore. I decide it will be better to be on the bridge where I can help spot aircraft, direct the guns and man the LMG's but still keep up to date with events.

When the next attack comes I see 2 Skyhawks coming straight for us but I somehow feel I have more control of my destiny. The ANTRIM takes one bomb which does not explode and cannot take part in any more NGS so comes into San Carlos waters where she will try to defuse the bomb. We are cruising around all the ships that are anchored and shooting up anything which tries to attack us or anything else. At one point I see one of our missiles going straight for the bows of Norland where a Skyhawk has just disappeared behind in an effort to evade all the flak which greeted him. The missile controller manages to skip over the bows of Norland and hit the shore line behind her. It occurs to me



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

that all of our ordnance is terminating in the hills where our troops are so I rush around to brief all concerned. They are very good about it and at least missiles are taken skywards to destruct from now on.

The ARDENT is hit badly and tries to make for shallow water and protection by other ships. YARMOUTH goes along side her and we go to help but the order to abandon is given. It is a very sad sight to see yet another ship go down.

There is another attack and this time it is the ARGONAUT that is hit but again the bomb does not go off. She comes into San Carlos but cannot steer so we offer a tow which is rejected. Her Capt says 'We may not be able to move but we can still fight'.

By late PM with the approach of darkness all is quiet. It is believed the enemy launched 40 fighter /bomber aircraft at us. It was incredible. It is estimated the enemy losses were:-

1. 10 Mirage
2. 3 Pucara
3. 1 Puma
4. 6 Skyhawks

However we suffered the following:-

ARDENT sunk with 22 lost  
ARGONAUT hit with 2 killed and 1 UXB  
ANTRIM hit 1 UXB  
2 Helios Shot down, 1 Crew killed

We were under almost constant air attack for 7 hours but the enemy never attacked the troop ships or the landing ships, they only went for the warships. Never will I forget the sight of us weaving in and out of such ships as Canberra, Norland etc. blasting away with Seacat Missiles, 4.5" guns, 20mm and LMG at aircraft that were attacking us at sea level. How we never shot up our own ships or how we never got hit I will never know.

We relax to defence watches and have some action messing and a brew. Ashore we have:-

2 Para; 3 Para; 40 Cdo; 42 Cdo – less M Coy in S Georgia; 45 Cdo; Elements of 3 Cdo Bde HQ



### Saturday, 22 May

It was a very quiet night thankfully. Today we, PLYMOUTH, have been given the task of Air Defence control of San Carlos waters. All ships are now inside because it is considered too dangerous to have any vessels in the Sound. The Capt consults me on the layout of the area and with the Rapiers not yet in action we deploy the warships about the bay close to the shore line. We now sit and await our fate.

There is a lot of helio and boat movement to build up the beach head. Yesterday it was very much a case of 'take care of yourselves' so today we aim to control the fire much better. Once again I brief everyone on where our troops are ashore to avoid any stray rounds landing amongst them. The day passes without any attacks. Strange.

At 1740 hrs someone in an OP believes he can see a sub in the sound. As we are one of the anti sub Frigates we are despatched to see. As we enter the sound we receive an air raid warning so scoot back into what is now called Bomb Alley. On our way back we have to pass all that is left of ARDENT which is her mast section sticking up out of the water like a monument. We mark this as a hazard to navigation with a buoy.

The Coventry and Broadsword are stationed to the North of the entrance to the Sound to neutralise the air raid. They are the only type of warship that is safe there but only when together.

2005 hrs Nightfall. The only enemy activity was the two skyhawks. At 2030 hrs we are given a mission to take an SBS team with 4 Royal Engineers around to the West of the Falklands to King George bay where there is an airstrip which the enemy are believed to be using. The RE's are to blow it up protected by the SBS. At 2100 hrs we slip out of Bomb Alley on the mission. I begin to make plans to support the raiding party should it be required.

### Sunday, 23 May

Due to other circumstances the mission is cancelled but we are still to drop off the SBS team who have a secondary mission and pick up another SBS team who have been on a recce for a few days. All goes well and by 0300 hrs the task has been completed.

The BRILLIANT came across a fishing boat (?) but we do not hear of any follow up action. I believe we are the first British Warship to have penetrated so far West in the Falklands. At 1000 hrs we are back in Bomb Alley and at full action stations. Although we are still able to fire NGS we are set up in the Anti Air role. At 1330 hrs I am monitoring the Air circuit and hear that two of our CAP have spotted three enemy Pumas operating in the sound and engage them. They manage to splash two of them and the third crashes into the hillside whilst attempting to manoeuvre his helio in a fashion not thought of by the designers. We do not know if they were carrying any troops aboard.

At 1645 hrs we get an air raid. We are stationed just inside the gap alongside the shore and get attacked by 4 Skyhawks coming from the East. YARMOUTH launches a Seacat missile but the leader manages to dodge it. The BRILLIANT launches a missile but it is a rogue and falls back into the sea. The aircraft, all 4 of them make a low pass through the gap followed by our 4.5" shells. Two of them return for another attack on the ANTELOPE specifically and one of them puts a bomb in her but as he passes very low over her clips her mast. A split second later a missile from BRILLIANT hits the aircraft and there is the most amazing explosion I have ever seen. I cannot see anything hit the water around the ANTELOPE. An almighty cheer goes up from those of us on the bridge. The total raid was assessed as 5 Mirage – 1 splashed and 4 Skyhawk – 3 splashed. If the one Skyhawk ever got home we will never know.

The bomb that hit ANTELOPE did not go off and so she moves into shallow water about 200 yds off our Stbd beam. We get our fire fighting gear ready to help if required. An LCU is hovering around the area also should it be required. At 2016 hrs an EOD S/Sgt is on board and will attempt to defuse the bomb. Most men have been located forward of the bomb as a safety measure. The bomb goes off at 2026 hrs and we move in to help fight the fire which follows the explosion. She has an anchor chain down so there is no danger of her drifting but she is also in the middle of the stream which is a hazard. The LCU comes alongside and takes off all non essential crew.

The fire is getting out of control aboard ANTELOPE and we are quite close to her. I am manning a fire hose on the quarterdeck. Suddenly at 2147 hrs her Seacat magazine explodes and we all have to take cover in a hurry because all manner of bits and pieces are flying about. I take cover behind the Mortar Tubes but land on top of a pile of Gemini fuel cans which have been stowed there. I begin to wonder if I have made the right choice of protection but decide I am not going to move just at the moment.

At 2200 hrs the ANTELOPE is abandoned and left to burn herself out. The Capt of the ANTELOPE is brought aboard us and passes me on the quarterdeck. I simply look at him and say 'I am sorry Sir'. He just nods at me and rushes up to our bridge. I would rather not see any more ships die if at all possible.

### **Monday, 24 May**

A pattern of events now begins to develop in our area. At daylight hours we are under air threat and therefore must protect the surface vessels in Bomb Alley. At night the gunships will depart the area to conduct one of the following tasks:-

1. NGS raids
2. Escort duties – ships leaving and arriving
3. Patrol the Sound

At 1345 hrs we go to Air raid Red and are attacked by 8 enemy. They put in a well planned attack. The first wave came at us from the South. There are 3 Mirage who drop bombs all of which land in the water. One of the Mirage is hit and leaking fuel. They pass so low over us we are unable to train our weapon systems on them. As they depart through the gap and climb 2 Skyhawks come in through the Gap from the Sound at sea level. They are met with a wall of fire and quickly depart the area to the South. The third wave of 3 more Skyhawks come out of the East but in trying to evade all that is thrown at them they are unable to put in a serious attack on anyone. They really are brave and skilful pilots.

Rapier claim 2 and CAP another 2. Sir Galahad was in fact hit but again the bomb did not detonate.



When the attack is over the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt, who was in the Fleet Air Arm and a pilot, and I get together and discuss the attack. With my FAC experience I suggest that it must have been co-ordinated and directed by someone who could observe because the 3 that left the gap went high and those who came in were low. I ask him to imagine he was attacking us and he agreed. We put our findings to the Capt, also ex Fleet Air Arm, with the suggestion that an FAC must be on the top of Mt Rosalie. He passes the Int on. At 1840 hrs Galahad is beached and abandoned. The UXB is lodged next to 200 tons of explosives.

Our task for the night is to conduct a RAS (L) owing to the fact we are low on fuel and also we are given the task of burying at sea the two young sailors who were killed on ARDENT. At last light we slip out of Bomb Alley bearing the two bodies that are placed on the quarter deck, draped in the Union Flag and with two sailors in full dress uniform to guard over them. The Capt makes a broadcast to the ships company to the effect the burial will take place at 2230 hrs from the stbd side aft and anyone who would like to pay their respects may do so.

At 2215 hrs the quarter deck is packed with all non essential pers in smart clothes one of whom is me. It is a very moving sight. I am right next to the guard rail where the bodies will be committed to the sea and the Capt is opposite me. One of the sailors was 18 years old and the other 21. At 2230 hrs we come to slow ahead for the ceremony and the CofE padre conducts his service. We are not allowed to show any lights which makes the ceremony, using shaded torches even more eerie. When the padre finishes the body is committed to the deep right in front of me. The RC chaplain is next to conduct his service which is more dramatic than the previous one. Finally the other body is committed to the deep and I look up at the Capt who has tears streaming down his face. It is only then I notice so have I. Nobody seems to want to fall out and we all stand there at attention for ages. Everyone is stunned by this service and there are not many dry eyes. At last some begin to move away and go back to their duties. We proceed on towards our RAS RV.

### **Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> May**

By 0400 hrs our RAS is complete and we set a course for Bomb Alley again.

Now it is 1230 hrs and we get an air raid Red. COVENTRY and BRODSWORD are again stationed off Pebble Island on Air picket duty. One of the aircraft is taken out by COVENTRY. There are more raids but nothing much exciting comes out of them. Suddenly at 1526 hrs we are hit by 4 Skyhawks which is quite a surprise because there was no warning of any sort. One of them is hit by a Seacat from YARMOUTH just a split second after the pilot ejects. The pilot comes down near FEARLESS and is picked up by boat at once. He has a broken knee or leg. A big raid is developing at 1800 hrs with two waves of four attacking COVENTRY and BRODSWORD. Between them they take out 7 of the attackers but both ships are hit. Coventry is on beam end within 15 mins and the bomb that hit BRODSWORD passes through without going off.

There is an instant response from all the helicopters in the area who rush to help. They manage to save all but 17 of the COVENTRY crew. As all this is going on we hear the Atlantic Conveyor has been hit by an Exocet and has been abandoned. She was carrying stores amongst which were a Sqn of Wessex and Chinooks. This is the worst day yet.

At 2000 hrs we take on a 7 man team for a raid on Fox Bay. At last my plan is to be used. The team is 5 SBS men and NGFO1 (Capt McManners & RO1 Hoyland). The plan is to approach Fox Bay and drop off the team by Searider then for us to go to the gunline. When they are all set up in the OP on Knob Island we will engage specific Tgts. On completion of the bombardment we will recover the men at an arranged RV and all go back to Bomb Alley. Once I am fully briefed on their escape plans and various scenarios to cover all eventualities. They also leave behind an old mate of mine from SBS, Sgt DD as their link man to help me. We go into a huddle and formulate a plan. At last light we slip out of Bomb Alley.

### **Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> May**

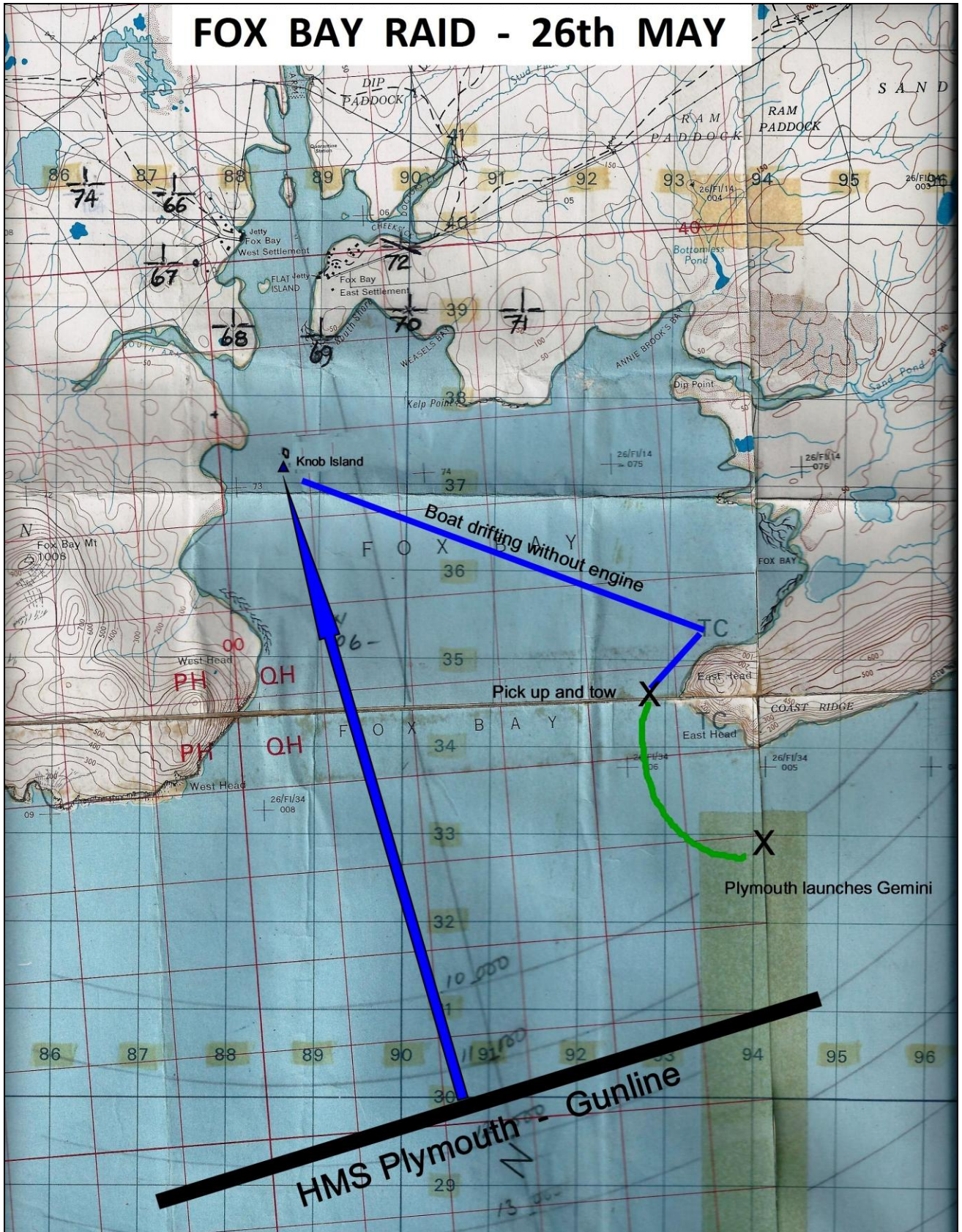
At 0100 hrs the insertion begins but the weather is quite bad and we cannot see the boat on our radar. The Capt is very concerned and DD and I have to assure him that the normal procedure in cases like this is to wait. The men on the ground know what is happening, they will dictate events. We

are On Station and ready when our EW Operator tells us that we are being illuminated by enemy radar so they know we are here and doing something. The tension mounts. We now hear from the team ashore they are set up in their OP. They tell me to start hitting the Tgts we have planned. After a few salvoes we loose comms with them and quickly check our systems. DD has gone up on deck with a VHF radio but also hears nothing. Once again all we can do is sit and wait. 45 mins pass and all the time we are illuminated by the enemy radar. The Capt asks me what I think has happened and what I suggest we do now. I take him to one side in the Ops Room and quietly tell him that one of the following must have happened:-

1. They have been captured – unlikely because we have heard no fire fight or codeword passed on by radio prior to it happening.
2. Both their radios are u/s – possible due to the bad weather.
3. The enemy are very close and they cannot transmit.
4. We have hit them by accident.

My last point stuns him but I assure him we must wait for things to develop. After another 15 mins we get comms again but only on VHF. They tell me to carry on engaging which we do. They also inform us their engine is u/s and they have drifted from the OP on Knob Island towards East Head. They will keep us informed of their progress but to keep on firing as planned. When we have completed the targets, 174 salvoes in fact, we move off to try and pick the team up. By 0615 hrs we are at the RV but no sign of the team at all. They call us on VHF again and say they can see us so we decide to close within 1000 yds of Fox Head keeping our gun arcs open on Fox Bay. This is a very dangerous situation now because we are still being illuminated by the enemy and are close to shore. We launch our Gemini and guide it to where the others say they are. They meet up and the ships Gemini tows the other boat back.





At 0700 hrs all are safely back on board and we depart for Bomb Alley again, to fight off attacking aircraft no doubt. We go over what went wrong. We can thank our lucky stars that the enemy did nothing.



At 1040 hrs we are safe in Bomb Alley and at relaxed action stations. 1220 hrs Air raid Red

Once again during the past 7 hours we were attacked several times but it is becoming quite old hat now and has lost much of the excitement value. At 1945 hrs I get a message to transfer to YARMOUTH for an operation against Mount Rosalie where the enemy FAC must be directing ops against us. The YARMOUTH sends her helio for me and at 2015 hrs I find myself on board her. As soon as I am on board we slip out of Bomb Alley

We are to remain on a gunline in the Sound and engage Tgts called for by the NGS team going ashore with the SBS raiding team. Sounds quite simple and I prepare the system.

#### **Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> May**

At 0100 hrs we get a signal stating our mission against Mt Rosalie is cancelled. There is an SAS patrol in the area somewhere but no one knows exactly where they are and there is no contact by radio with them so the area is declared a 'No Go'. We continue to patrol the Sound all night until 1100 hrs when we again return to Bomb Alley. I transfer back to PLYMOUTH at 1130 hrs. Then at 1210 hrs I am told to go ashore to Bde HQ for a briefing. I manage to get a loan of the Searider which has been fixed following the Fox Bay raid. I meet up with some of the Bty at Bde HQ; they seem bored because nothing has happened to them at all yet. I also meet up with NGFO3 who are with 40 Cdo. They likewise have had a very quiet time. The brief is as follows:-

1. 2 Para with NGFO4 are to assault Darwin and then Goose Green where there are believed to be around 600 enemy. They will have ARROW in support and 3 guns of 8 Bty.
2. A Tp of MAW with SBS and NGFO1 are to recce Mt Rosalie to find the enemy there.
3. D Sqn SAS with NGFO5 are to insert into Mt Kent
4. SBS are to insert into Salvador waters for recce of Teal and Douglas settlements. 45 Cdo & 3 Para are to move on foot across country from San Carlos to those 2 objectives.

There are other aspects of future Ops which I am also briefed on. At 1600 hrs I am back on PLYMOUTH having said cheerio to my pals ashore. Almost immediately I am told to go back to YARMOUTH for a special mission tonight. Again I get the use of the Searider as my taxi and at 1630 hrs am back with YARMOUTH. A few moments later the 6 man SBS team arrive with NGFO1 (Bdr Allin & Gnr Nixon) and we set about planning the mission. The SAS have been watching Port Howard for a week now and have given us all the enemy locations there. I remember back to when I was on ALACRITY and we passed Port Howard, there were some cresting problems that I had noted down. They will now come in very handy.

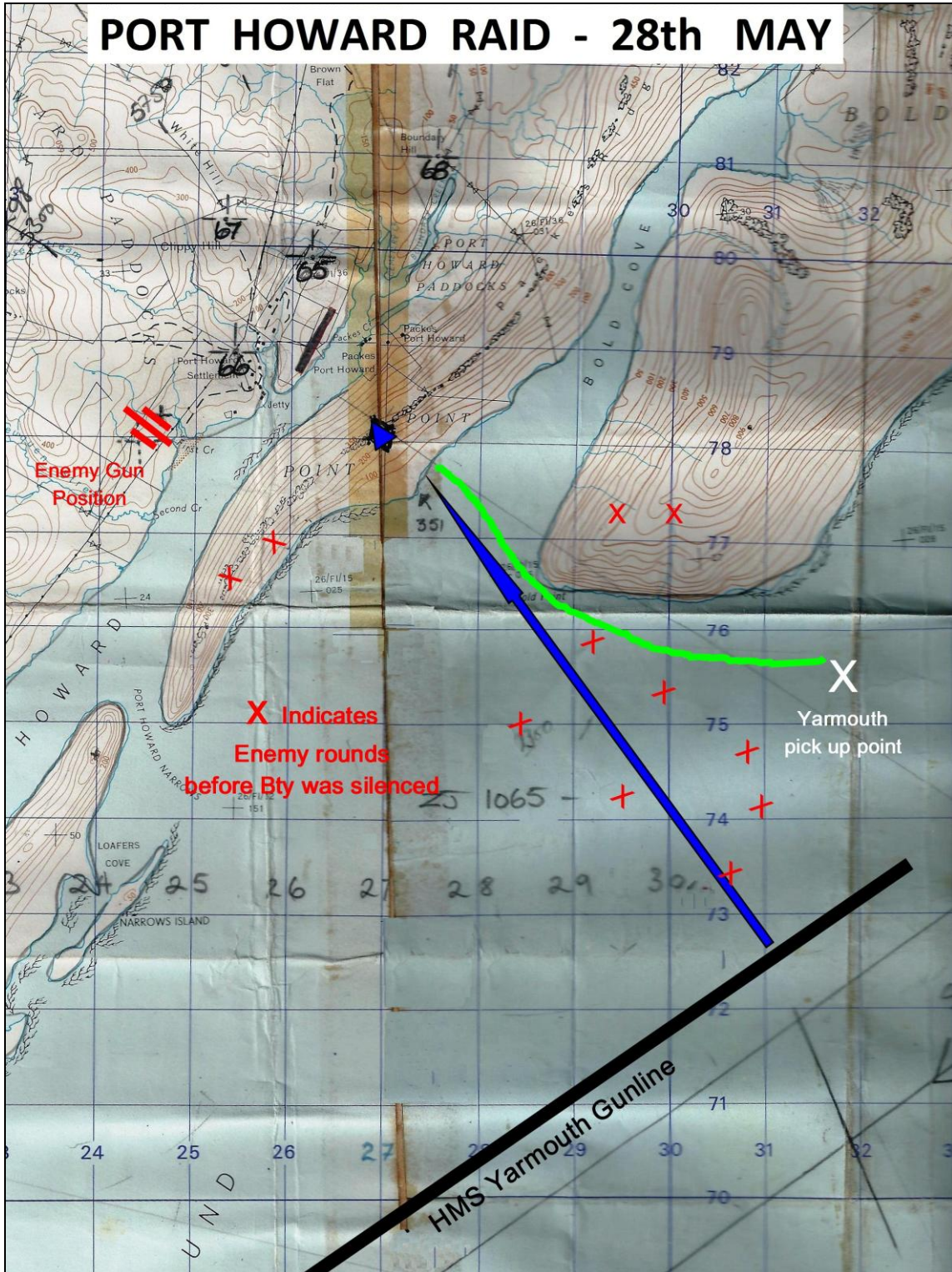
At 1735 hrs we are suddenly attacked without any warning by 2 Mirage. One comes in from the West and drops bombs short of Bde HQ. I was only there a short while ago. The other comes from the South and bombs the refrigeration plant at Ajax Bay which is about 150 yds from where we are stationed. The plant is being used as a hospital and ammo dump. One of the bombs scores a direct hit and kills 4 men of 45 Cdo and injures 13 others. The ammo continues to explode for another hour and all we can do is watch. Both aircraft are brought down. We feel so helpless on board watching the carnage not far away. I can clearly see bodies being carried away.

At 2030 hrs we slip out of Bomb Alley on our mission with ARROW following us for hers in support of 2 Para. Our plan is to drop off the 2 teams in Gemini's shielded by the high ground to the North of Port Howard and then take up a patrol line south. Then we will turn north checking our arcs and cresting solutions. Also we can get a good fix on the strong current within the Sound and so hopefully avoid any 'Trending'. When we turn south again we should be ready on a good gunline and the team ashore should be in position. They will use UHF with HF as back up. They will simply tell me to begin as from then on it is all planned but they can make adjustments as and when. 20 salvos are planned for each Tgt.

#### **Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> May**

0045 hrs we launch the 2 Gemini's. We follow them on radar all the way to the beach. When they are ashore and have completed the recce of the immediate area they call me up with an OK. Now they set off up the hill towards the OP. They manage to get into position very quickly and call me again at

0200 hrs with a ready. We quickly respond and the bombardment begins. There is a low mist which makes spotting difficult. During the engagement a shore Bty opens up on us but the rounds do not come very close. I advise the Capt that they are firing wildly and we should be quite safe. Bdr Allin gives us a big correction to the enemy gun position and we begin to lay down fire. In all we fire 60 salvos at them and the firing ceases. The team ashore say we have hit the gun position because our rounds landed amongst the enemy gun flashes. We continue with the other planned tgts.



At 0300 hrs I tell the team ashore to call it a day and get back to the beach. We will remain on the gunline to cover them. I guide them to us by radar. One engine packs up on them but the other



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

Gemini tows them in. In all we fired 300 rounds. It was a very successful mission. We conduct a debrief and relax. The ship now goes on patrol in the Sound.

At 0750 hrs I am called by NGFO4 (Capt Arnold) who is with 2 Para and having a hard time in the battle for Darwin. ARROW has broken down with the NGS support and he asks if we can help. I check with the PWO and we make for Darwin immediately. Capt Arnold seemed quite relieved when I told him we were on our way. We may just be able to reach Darwin with our guns but not Goose Green. At 0815 hrs we are on station but ARROW has now fixed her gun and is giving good support and engaging 2 Tgts at the same time. We stand by should we be needed. At 0930 hrs we have to depart the area with ARROW because it will soon be light again soon.

We enter bomb Alley just as it becomes light and at 1030 hrs I am transferred back to PLYMOUTH. All day long 2 Para have a hell of a battle at Goose Green in which the CO is killed during an attack on some machine gun positions. We are kept up to date of the battle by NGFO4 and one incident sickens us. The enemy once showed a white flag and when a young Lt went up to take the enemy surrender he was gunned down. I pass this on to all stations. It will not happen again I bet. All day long they are under attack from Pucara, Arty, Machine Guns and lots more. We are left alone in Bomb Alley as a result.

Just before last light to OC of 2 Para uses our net to call Bde HQ requesting a fire power demo. He believes if we can hit the enemy hard with Arty, NGS and Air Strikes they will give in. 3 Harriers are sent in with cluster bombs and attack a position occupied by about 70 men and vehicles. When they finish the attack there is not much left. White flags are seen but no formal surrender takes place.

At 1800 hrs I am told to go back to YARMOUTH who will be on station to help with 2 Para's withdrawal. It seems crazy. 2 Para however take up positions all around the settlement of Goose Green and we sit in the mouth of an inlet ready. There is an enemy APC reported on the shore about 600m from us but we cannot see it. Hope it cannot see us!

Without any warning we are overflown by an unidentified aircraft which appears to come out of the Goose Green area. We try to check what it is but at 0527 hrs it has gone in a Westerly direction. We assume it must have been one of the big wigs escaping the battle. The terrain would have made it very difficult to engage with any degree of accuracy.

The first reports are now filtering in about 2 Para's battle. 17 KIA (The CO and Adjt amongst them) 25 CAS and 250 enemy estimated KIA or wounded.

Also we get news that 45 Cdo have arrived at Douglas Settlement and 3 Para at Teal. They tabbed it all the way with massive loads.

2 Para had no contacts during the night and at first light the enemy surrender. There are estimated to be 1400 of them, there were around 600 on our side.

1030 hrs and we are again back in Bomb Alley and at 1115 hrs I am back on PLYMOUTH. Throughout the day we get more and more reports of what is obviously a fantastic victory at Goose Green. The BBC World Service, which we all monitor hourly, announces the defeat. I pass the official news onto NGFO4 who in turn pass it on to all of 2 Para. It is a great moment dulled only by their losses. This action will no doubt be placed on the battle honours list of 2 Para.

We have another quiet day. No doubt the enemy are deep in planning just what will be their next move. Goose Green is a strategic point and has a very good airstrip which we could use for the GR3 Harriers. The defences would be another problem of course but that can no doubt be resolved.

At 1500 hrs I get another message that I am needed ashore for another briefing. The Capt will let me use his Searider only if I can get some more fuel for it. We are down to only 4 galls so I say I will try. I get ashore again at Bde HQ. They are still in the same spot as last time only more well dug in. The brief I get is very secret but in brief it is this;

The activity will now be concentrated on the Eastern side of the Island around Stanley. An area I know quite well. I am to be deployed in that area so will go there and come under command of the Flag Gunnery Officer who will deploy me wherever I am needed most. That means most raids or NGS



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

missions basically I guess. On the way I am to cover another insertion into Volunteer Bay where a 21 man team will be put into that area with the mission of observing the area North of Stanley Harbour and clearing it of enemy. The team will consist of 16 SBS pers and NGFO1 complete. I am to give them support for 5 nights at least. During daylight hours they will have air support if needed.

The only problem is that the HERMES Group (CVBG) will be operating 160 – 180 miles to the East of Stanley and will not come any closer. Any ship that I am on will have to commute to be on station by midnight. That means we will have to leave at 0600 hrs to make it back to the CVBG for escort duties in daylight hours. The powers to be have decided it is far too dangerous to leave lone ships exposed in daylight hours. Makes sense to me. I argue that I want to go ashore with my own team to the job I have been trained to do but am told that being an NGLO at this time is more important. Suddenly I am the Master Gunner / Controller of NGS.

On completion of my brief I return to PLYMOUTH with 20 galls of fuel for the Capt. How I got it will remain a secret forever. The Capt has just received his orders and I am able to clarify some points for him also give reasons for some of the orders. We are due to embark the 21 men later then make for the RV with HMS AVENGER (type 21) at 0200 hrs where we will transfer all of them along with myself. The men will be inserted from AVENGER asp. That means transferring them to AVENGER and then inserting them. The Capt of PLYMOUTH and I attempt to get the plan changed so PLYMOUTH inserts them and then departs i.e. only one lot of shuffling all the men. The alteration is not accepted. We again argue that there are too many working parts in the plan and ours is simpler. No one is listening so I ask for it to be put back 24 hrs but the OC SBS who is on FEARLESS will not budge.

At last light PLYMOUTH with all its passengers slips out of Bomb Alley. Will I ever come back here again I ask myself. I have managed to survive the last 9 days here. What is in store for me now I wonder? As we leave we are over flown by a single Skyhawk. He must be lost because he does not attack us.

## Operation Corporate - Gunline Duties With CVBG

**Sunday, 30 May**

We make the RV at 0200 hrs but find that the AVENGER's Lynx is u/s and that we are to use AMBUSCADE's. This is most unsatisfactory and we do get the authority to delay the insertion but complete the transfer. It is a lucky omen because to have attempted the insertion without a comprehensive brief would have been tempting fate too much.

At 0440 hrs we conduct a diversionary bombardment to the North of Volunteer Bay to test the fire control system. I am satisfied it is OK even though we suffered a computer crash. I get the WEO to run a check programme during daylight hours.

We depart the area to meet up with the CVBG. At 1230 hrs I am in the Ops room and have good comms with Bde HQ, they are 180 miles to my West so it is good. I can apparently talk to stations that they cannot get some 10 miles from them. I am now a relay station which improves our overall comms situation 100%.

At 1500 hrs I hear that NGFO5 is conducting some FAC from Mt Kent. As one of the Harriers completes his attack he is hit by AAA but manages to get to within 7 miles of INVINCIBLE before ditching. The pilot is picked up almost immediately and is unscathed. I pass this onto NGFO5 which pleases him no end.

1700 hrs and we detach from the CVBG and begin our run in to the insertion area. We will have 3 hours of daylight where we will be alone and be vulnerable to air attack. We have been going for 35 mins when we have a contact. The incident I am about to relate covered around 8 ½ mins and I knew exactly what was going on all the time and freely admit I was scared like never before in my life.

*I am stood next to the main CAAIS operator when the EW Operator shouts out from behind his curtain at his station to my right 'HANDBRAKE HANDBRAKE bearing 297 deg' which means he has picked up an Agave Radar contact from the deadly Super Etendard radar which controls the Exocet missiles. Immediately, and without any order being given, the CAAIS operator stands up and fires all his chaff in one go and we go to full Action Stations from defence watch. The CAAIS Operator picks up 4 contacts at extreme range which we assess as 2 Super Etendard and 2 Mirage or Skyhawk escorts. The EW Operator calls out 'Missile Launch' and we fire more chaff. I am watching this like a movie on the radar screen. We now have 4 clear contacts which have been marked and 2 more which suddenly accelerate towards us. They are the Exocet missiles. We see two contacts, which must be the S Etendards, turn away to the West. We lock our fire control system onto the contacts and the computer accepts the data. Our 4.5" gun begins to engage with 1 salvo every 2 seconds. After about 4 salvos the gun stops firing but is instantly put into manual and continues. We put up more chaff. One of the Exocet explodes either because we hit it with our gun or more likely the pressure wave which caused it to detonate. The other one still comes on towards us.*

*The CAAIS Operator suddenly stands up and pointing to the other side of the Ops room says in a clear loud voice 'The missile will hit us there in 15 secs'. The spot he points to is an aluminium bulkhead about 25 feet away from where I am stood. What can I do? I am amazed just how calm we all are being faced with certain death. I decide to tell Bde HQ by simply stating 'Contact Contact'. The missile is seduced by our chaff and passes harmlessly by but very close, so close that the bridge see it clearly and some of the SBS attempt to shoot at it with their small arms.*

*The 2 escort aircraft still come on at us flying very low. One drops a bomb but it is so low he blows himself up and the other turns away.*

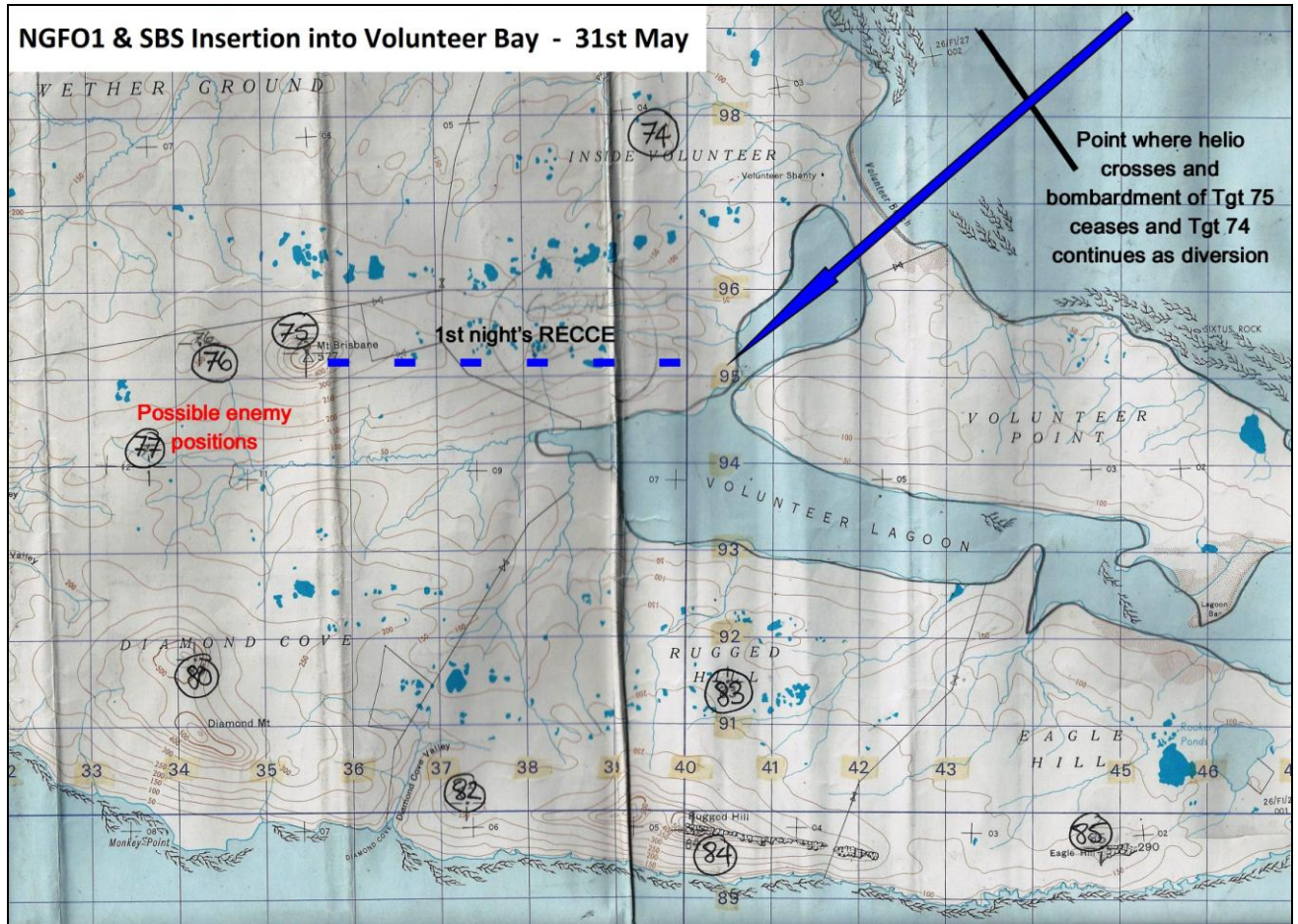
After searching the spot where the aircraft exploded and only finding bits of the pilot and some pieces of his aircraft we continue with our mission at 1800 hrs. We are all left with our own thoughts.

**Monday, 31 May**

At 0100 hrs the insertion begins. The plan is to bombard an area (Tgt 74) along the coast to the North until the Lynx crosses a line about 2 miles out to sea and then bombard the hill (Tgt 75) to the West of

the LZ. This second bombardment continues until the Lynx again crosses the same line on its return journey. We then begin to bombard the secondary target again. The whole procedure is repeated 6 times until all the men are ashore. It all goes like clockwork.

We remain until 0600 hrs on station and ready for any problems and then detach the gunline for the CVBG. The Lynx then returns to AMBUSCADE with me. We will return to this area every night for the next 5 nights. We are due to arrive and be on station at midnight and depart at 0600 hrs. This is the first time I have had definite plans for a long time.



By 0800 hrs I am well settled into the ship and even have my own bunk. Sgt Jukes is on board as well but he is going to return to HERMES at some time today. He was put on here in the event I could not make it. He gives me a shake at 1300 hrs. I have managed to get 5 hours deep undisturbed sleep. It is the first real sleep I have managed since I joined PLYMOUTH the day before the main San Carlos landings. I can also now change my clothes and have a good shower. It is a good feeling but I know the guys ashore are not so lucky.

We are with the CVBG about 180 miles to the East of Stanley and in comparative safety. I will now be able to settle into a routine as follows:-

1. 1200 hrs - In Ops room on radio watch
2. 1800 hrs - When we receive final night intentions from Flag I will prepare systems
3. 2000 - 2300 hrs - Grab some rest
4. 2300 - 0600 hrs Gunline duties ops room / bridge
5. 0700 - 1100 hrs Rest

This is what I plan to do but of course the enemy and Flag Ops may have other ideas.

17800 hrs Sgt Jukes is transferred to HERMES. We receive our night orders which are as planned. The journey in is a chance for the Capt to get some rest so I do the same.



We also receive a full report of the attack on AVENGER that has come from Staff at Flag who have analysed it in detail. The Capt shows me a copy and I am able to colour it in a little more and he also does some revising of his ship's anti Exocet drills. I now realise just how lucky we were. The SHEFFIELD and Atlantic Conveyor were not so lucky.

### **Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> June**

We are on station at midnight at full action stations but there is no contact with NGFO1 yet. At 0100 hrs I get in contact with them by using HF to transmit and UHF to receive. This system works well and should make it difficult for the enemy to DF or understand what is going on. They say they do not need any support tonight as there are no enemy in their immediate area and they are progressing well. I tell them we will remain until 0400 hrs and also arrange to contact them at 1700 hrs in case they do not have anything for us tonight. It will save us a long journey for nothing but as usual I leave the final decisions with them.

At 0400 hrs we depart the area and return to the CVBG at a very leisurely pace.

After a very refreshing sleep I am back in the Ops room at 1200 hrs when I hear NGFO5 call for an air strike on an LSL type vessel which is near Stanley harbour. I have no idea what the results of his request are. There is some good news at 1351 hrs. A Harrier has shot down a C130. We will never know what it was doing but it is good news.

At 1700 hrs we get ready for our 160 mile journey and I have good comms with NGFO1. They tell me we will be needed tonight. With that good news we detach the CVBG and off we go again.

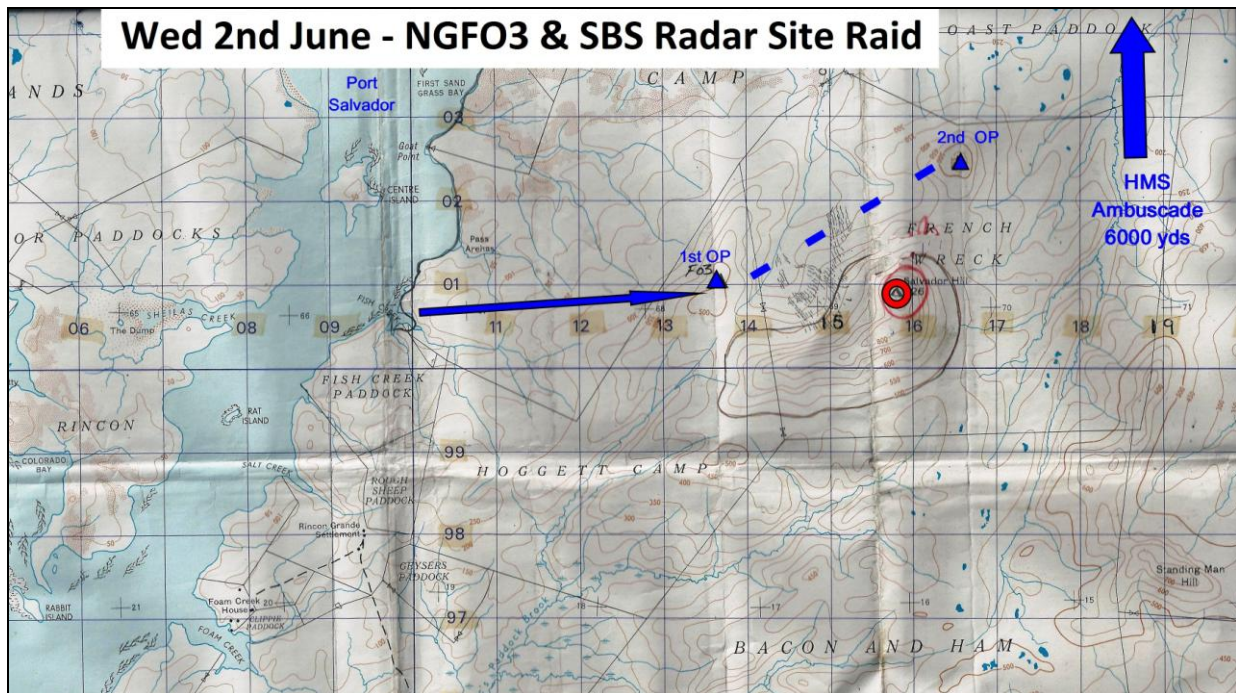
2245 hrs I get a message that NGFO3 are to go on a raid against a radar site with SBS and want me to support them. The idea is to see what NGFO1 have for us and to complete it and then move to support NGFO3 who are not too far away. I have no details yet of NGFO3's task so will have to play it off the cuff.

### **Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June**

I eventually establish comms with NGFO1 at 0145 hrs and explain the situation to him; He tells me that if NGFO 3 have definite hard tgts then his can wait. I explain this to the Capt and we move off to a point East of Port Salvador.

At 0310 hrs we are on station and ready. The SBS with NGFO 3 have landed and are waiting to move off. We begin to engage the tgt at 0415 hrs but NGFO3 are not in a good enough position to observe so we hold the tgt whilst he moves to a hill nearer the tgt. They are also hampered by low mist. We engage again at 0456 hrs but observation is again difficult although we are hitting the tgt but exact results are not possible. The other thing that worries me is the men ashore are on the Gun Target Line and we are using VT.

Time is beginning to run out for us and since the tgt has not reacted I tell NGFO3 that the best plan is for us to bang the tgt and depart. He agrees so we do just that and give the enemy position a total of 63 salvoes.



At 0627 hrs we depart wishing the SBS, NGFO3 and NGFO1 good luck. We are well clear at 0700 hrs and fall out of action stations.

A very quiet day follows and the next significant event is an air raid red at 1620 hrs. The raid comes to nothing and yellow is called at 1745 hrs. The enemy cannot hit us way out here now that they cannot use the airfield at Stanley. If the CVBG goes any further to the East they will all be entitled to South African LOA.

At 1800 hrs we are again on our way to the gunline.

### Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June

On the way back to the gunline again we develop some problems with our fuel filtering system which will make us late on station. CARDIFF and ACTIVE, who were due on the Southern gunline, are suddenly pulled back. It is believed the enemy have placed some Exocet missiles somewhere near the coast of Stanley with arcs of fire to the South. Being as the threat is to the South we are told to continue on with our mission. We are a little more keyed up this time as the enemy could move the missiles quite easily and aim them to the North.

We arrive on the gunline at 0200 hrs but get no comms with NGFO1 so I call Bde HQ up on their freq to see what is going on. They have had no comms with either the SBS or our guys. It is a mystery. The Capt says he is willing to remain in the area just in case we are required. At 0600 hrs I contact Bde HQ and tell them we are returning to the CVBG.

Owing to the problem with our filters we will not make the CVBG until after 1<sup>st</sup> light so they will give us air cover. That is good.

Once again we have a very quiet day and because of our filter problem we are to remain with the CVBG tonight. This means I will get a full night's sleep and a good meal. I am so used to nights now I cannot sleep.

### Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> June

1200 hrs and we are still with the CVBG 156 miles East of Stanley in thick fog. I have good comms with Bde HQ. There seems to be a lull in the battle now because we are not required again tonight. In fact what is happening ashore is the build up of stores which takes time. A very quiet day until there is an air raid called ashore at 1903 hrs. The enemy drop some bombs in Berkley Sound. There seems no logic to their attack because we have no troops near there in force.

Today the BBC world news announces that Cdo Bde HQ Tac is at Teal Inlet a fact the enemy did not know. Perhaps their bombing run was slightly off because it is on the same line as Teal. Bde HQ has been at Teal for three days now. Well done the BBC again. That is the third incident of its kind to my knowledge.

**Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> June**

As I am listening on the radio in the Ops room Sgt Rycroft, who is with Bde HQ, tells me that CAS 40 is dead. When I check on our CAS list I find that it is Sgt Graham our MT Sgt. He was left behind in the UK. The time is 1030 hrs. We understand he has suddenly died from a rare form of cancer. All around us there is death and destruction and this has to happen. It is quite a blow.

At 1247 hrs we get a signal with the night intentions which are as follows:-

1. Northern Gunline - ARROW and ACTIVE
2. Southern Gunline - CARDIFF and YARMOUTH. I am to transfer to YARMOUTH.

We are also given the probable Exocet arcs of fire and have to stay well outside them. Who needs telling? I have had quite enough excitement to last me for a long time yet.

*Below is a copy of the 'Signal' again showing the complexity of it. I had to ensure the Comms Office Staff always knew of my whereabouts so they could ensure I got hard copies of such signals immediately. To miss one would have been unacceptable. CARDIFF did not in fact get an NGLO on board her even though the signal stated one would be allocated. They could get hundreds of signals daily.*



JUN  
GBXZ  
3814701  
0 042330Z JUN 82 ZPW 051230Z JUN 82  
FM CTG 317.8  
TO ZEN/HMS CARDIFF  
ZEN/HMS ACTIVE  
ZEN/HMS YARMOUTH  
RBDENJ/HMS ARROW  
RBDENR/CTG 317.3  
INFO RBDENR/CTG 317.1  
RBDAPZ/CTU 317.1.1  
RBDAPZ/CTU 317.1.2  
ZEN/HMS AMBUSCADE  
BT

*A Good copy*

*1146#*

*MAR*

SECRET  
SIC 12F

OPERATION CORPORATE - NGS IN SUPPORT 3 CDO BDE NI 5/6 JUN.

A. CTG 317.1 19F 041430Z JUN 82 (NGS REQUEST) (NOTAL)

B. CTG 317.8 19F 022050Z JUN 82 (NOTAL)

1. CARDIFF, ARROW, ACTIVE, YARMOUTH ALLOCATED TO NGS TASKS REF A.  
2. SITUATION. 3 PARA AND 42 CDO ESTABLISHED ON LINE MT CHALLENGER/  
KENT/LONG ISLAND, AND WILL REQUIRE NGS DURING MOVE FORWARD NI 5/6  
JUN.

PAGE 2 RBDFOHL 132 SECRET

INTELLIGENCE. EAGLE HILL AND MURPEL PENINSULARS NORTH OF  
STANLEY VIRTUALLY CLEAR OF ENEMY. COAST TO THE SOUTH OF STANLEY  
FROM BLUFF COVE TO 28 EASTING ALSO VIRTUALLY CLEAR OF ENEMY.  
SHIPS SEE ALSO REF B.

4. OWN FORCES. A. VOLUNTEER POINT. ARROW (CDR) ACTIVE

B. BLUFF COVE. CARDIFF (CDR) YARMOUTH.

5. MISSION. TO PROVIDE NGS TO UK LAND FORCES IN AREA BETWEEN MT  
KENT AND STANLEY

6. EXECUTION.

A. ARROW ACTIVE. WHEN DETACHED PROCEED TO VICINITY EAGLE POINT.  
(5132S(1) 05743W(2)) MEET CALLS FOR FIRE. LEAVE GUNLINE 3 HRS  
BEFORE SUNRISE. REJOIN CMBG. SHIPS NOT TO PROCEED INTO BEPKELEY  
SOUND WEST OF LINE JOINING EAGLE POINT WITH KIDNEY ISLAND  
(CHART 2547)

B. AT 051300Z WHEN DETACHED CARDIFF TAKE YARMOUTH AND PROCEED  
TO GUNLINE VICINITY 5152S(1) 05805W(2) MEET CALLS FOR FIRE.  
LEAVE GUNLINE 3 HRS BEFORE SUNRISE AND REJOIN. (0700hrs)

7. INTENTIONS ON REJOINING. CARDIFF, ACTIVE, ARROW, PAS(L) PAS(R)  
THEN SCREEN. REQUIREMENTS FOR NI 6/7 JUN NYK.

8. REPORTS. CDRS MAKE BOMBARDMENT REPORT O/C TO CTG 317.3,

PAGE 3 RBDFOHL 132 SECRET

CTG 317.1, CTG 317.8, CTU 317.1.1 AND 2.

9. COMMUNICATIONS. ESTABLISH COMMS ON COT 375A WITH C/S C113  
(5 JUN)/1TFM (6JUN) AND REQUEST OFF.

10. PERSONNEL. NGLQS. HARMES TRANSFER EXETER TO CARDIFF (CARDIFF  
TO ARRANGE) AND MALCOLM REMAIN ACTIVE. RICHARDS TRANSFER AMBUSCADE  
TO YARMOUTH (YARMOUTH TO ARRANGE).

11. FOR CTG 317.1. REF A FINAL SENTENCE, 10 HOURS

BT

At 1418 hrs I am called to the Radio room to see the latest casualty list. I see to my sorrow that Sgt Kiwi Hunt SBS from Poole has been KIA by the SAS in a Blue on Blue mix up. I know him well and on top of the other news I am shattered by these two needless deaths.

1800 hrs I am told to remain with AMBUSCADE.

2000 hrs I am called to the Ops room and the Capt tells me that in fact I am required on YARMOUTH but he will send his Lynx for me when YARMOUTH returns to the CVBG. I arrive at YARMOUTH at 2250 hrs and we are well on our way to the gunline. She has not been to this gunline before and the CARDIFF is well ahead of us. I pass onto the Navigator all the local knowledge I have gained on my previous visits here. We are called up by CARDIFF on the speech secure circuit and she tells us she has no NGLO aboard. I get on line and assure her that I will be able to advise her once we are on station but pass onto her a target list.

### **Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> June**

As we approach the gunline I am still briefing CARDIFF on tgts and the Exocet arcs as well as the grid orientation. I assure her that I will pass on to her any requests from the NGFO's ashore and keep comms by this secure means. We decide to stay abreast of each other with us on the inside as we draw less water also she has all the magic gear i.e. EW, Missiles and a computerised modern system. NGFO3 call me at 0130 hrs and tell me that the visibility is down to 20 yds. They give me the tgts they want us to engage but of course will not be able to observe anything. I make sure that YARMOUTH has calibrated her system correctly and the radar overlay is good with the grid projected accurately. I also check CARDIFF has a sound contact with her Fire Control System and we make a few checks for any errors. At 0219 hrs we open fire and I select targets for CARDIFF. She has a Mk 8 Gun with the greater range so I select accordingly. We both bang away quite merrily pausing at times to let the enemy settle down then hit them again. That way we can inflict more casualties. Each time we fire I think of Sgt Graham and Sgt Hunt.

CARDIFF has a problem with her gun at one stage but manages to resolve it and continues. They are very keen to give the enemy as much as they can and it takes some strong control from me to rein her in from time to time. As it is their first time I forgive them their enthusiastic approach. She is very keen but keeps on straying from her gunline Position so I am obliged to constantly tell her 'Station Station' indicating she is drifting.

By 0555 hrs I decide that we have both done enough so call it off at the same time checking with NGFO3 what they have thought of the performance. CARDIFF fired 277 salvoes and we fired 161 with all being directed onto known positions. As we depart CARDIFF picks up 4 surface contacts and decides to investigate some more. I believe them to be LCU's taking some of 5 Bde to Bluff Cove but CARDIFF launches her helio and fires illumination over the contacts. Cdr Morton, Capt of YARMOUTH, and I try to check CARDIFF in her enthusiasm but as he is junior in rank she just over rules us both. He sends a strong message to CARDIFF on speech secure prefixed with 'Please be advised our intentions are to leave the contacts alone because they are friendly' CARDIFF releases a missile at what we do not know. We again try to check her enthusiasm.

At 0700 hrs we depart the area feeling a little safer with CARDIFF alongside but still wondering what the missile was all about. The RS rushes into the Ops room with a Flash signal for the Capt. He also secrets a copy for me and stuffs it into my pocket. When I am alone I read it and it appears that CARDIFF has shot down a helicopter, one of ours. Other than this bad news I feel we had a good mission. YARMOUTH is a good sound ship with a professional crew.



VZCZC DE GK GK GK  
 HH  
 OO RBD FNR RBDAPZ  
 DE RBDFOUL 004 1570647  
 ZNY SSSSS  
 O 050646Z JUN 82  
 FM HMS YARMOUTH - ~~RICHARDS~~  
 TO RBD FNR/CTG 317.0  
 RBD FNR/CTG 317.1  
 ZEN/CTG 317.8  
 RBDAPZ/CTU 317.1.1  
 RBDAPZ/CTU 317.1.2  
 INFO ZEN/HMS CARDIFF  
 BT

**SECRET**

Com Number 2774/2

S E C R E T  
 SIC 19F  
 OPERATION SUTTON.  
 REF CTG 317.8 042330Z JUN  
 NGS BOMBARDMENT REPORT BY **NGLO 3.** HMS YARMOUTH. READ IN FOUR  
 COLUMNS

TN	GRID	DESCRIPTION	ROUNDS FIRED
6003	347711	TPS DUG IN	20
6002	367736	ADMIN AREA	79 (161)
6002	333720	TPS DUG IN	51
6004	352741	AA GUNS	20

2. SPOTTER UNABLE TO CONTROL ALL MISSIONS FROM CARDIFF AND YARMOUTH

PAGE 2 RBDFOUL 004 S E C R E T  
 DUE TO LOW MIST. **NGLO 3** ON YARMOUTH CONTROLLED INTERDICTION/  
 HARRASSING FIRE ONTO KNOWN ENEMY POSITIONS. FIRING CEASED AT  
 JUN

3. HMS CARDIFF. READ IN THREE COLUMNS

TN	GRID	DESCRIPTION
6005	353750	AA GUNS
6006	333717	155 GUN
6007	373740	RADAR
6008	352756	GUN POS

4. ALSO ENGAGED TN'S 6002/6003/6004/6000  
 TN 3010 GRID 294716 TROOPS POSITION. **NGFO 3** SPOTTED  
 TN 3011 GRID 297705 TROOP POSITION. **NGFO 3** SPOTTED

5. TOTAL ROUNDS FIRED BY CARDIFF 281  
 6. REQUEST ANY INT FOLLOW UP ON DAMAGE ASSESSMENT  
 BT

Dist Curt ops room secret log logs

**SECRET**

281  
 161  
 442  
 sec

OUT INVICER 09197

NNNN

An example of the NGS Bombardment Report I had to send to Flag on completion of each Gunline Mission.

At 1600 hrs I am back on AMBUSCADE and I am told to take her up the gunline with ACTIVE. At 1800 hrs I am on course for the same gunline only this time on AMBUSCADE.



*MNF*

NNNNONPG  
GBXZ  
B81A178

0 061032Z JUN 82 ZPW 072359Z JUN 82

FM CTG 317.8  
TO ZEN/HMS ACTIVE  
ZEN/HMS AMBUSCADE  
INFO RBDENR/CTG 317.0  
RBDENR/CTG 317.1  
RBDAPZ/CTU 317.1.1  
RBDAPZ/CTU 317.1.2  
ZEN/HMS YARMOUTH  
ZEN/HMS CARDIFF

091

BT  
SECRET  
SIC 19F

OPERATION CORPORTE - NGS IN SUPPORT 3 CDO BDE NI 6/7 JUN.

- A. CTG 317.1 19F 041339Z JUN 82 (NGS REQUEST)(NOTAL)
- B. CTG 317.1 19F 051614Z JUN 82 (NGS REQUEST)(NOTAL)
- C. CTG 317.8 19F 032050Z JUN 82 (SPECIAL HANDLING)(NOTAL)

- 1. SITUATION. 3 PARA AND 42 CDO ESTABLISHED ON LINE MTS CHALLENGER/KENT/LONG ISLAND REQUIRE HARRASSING FIRE ON ENEMY POSITIONS IN AREA WEST OF STANLEY.
- 2. ENEMY FORCES/INTELLIGENCE. COAST TO SOUTH OF STANLEY VIRTUALLY

PAGE 2 RBDFOHL 030 SECRET

CLEAR OF ENEMY TO 28 EASTING. SHIPS SEE ALSO REF C.

- 3. OWN FORCES. ACTIVE (CDR) AMBUSCADE
- 4. MISSION. PROVIDE NGS HARRASSING FIRE TO UK LAND FORCES IN JREA BETWEEN MT KENT AND STANLEY.
- 5. EXECUTION. AT 061800Z, WHEN ORDERED, ACTIVE TAKE AMBUSCADE AND PROCEED TO VICINITY 5150S(1) 05805W(8) AND MEET CALLS FOR FIRE. LEAVE GUNLINE 3 HOURS BEFORE SUNRISE AND REJOIN.
- 6. INTENTIONS ON REJOINING. RAS(A) + (L) THEN SCREEN. INTEND CARDIFF AND YARMOUTH NGS NI 7/8 JUN.
- 7. REPORTS. ACTIVE MAKE BOMBARDMENT REPORT TO CTG 317.0/1/8, CTU 317.1.1/2.
- 8. COMMUNICATIONS. ESTABLISH COMMS ON CCT 375A AND REQUEST CFF.
- 9. PERSONNEL. NGLOS. MALCOLM REMAIN ACTIVE. RICHARDS TRANSFER YARMOUTH TO AMBUSCADE (AMBUSCADE TO ARRANGE)

BT

B81A 722 1522 JACee

NNNN

## Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> June

ACTIVE is due to begin her bombardment in support of 3 Para with NGFO2 first and we are to loiter off to the South. When she has finished we are to go in support of 42 Cdo with NGFO3.

0230 hrs ACTIVE opens fire. At 0315 hrs she develops a problem with her gun and requests we come in and begin our bombardment. Once again visibility is down to 30 yards so NGFO3 gives me his target list. I have to tell him we are now restricted to 100 salvoes per ship each night and can only exceed that for self defence. They are not aware of that. After firing 84 salvoes we develop a hydraulic problem in the gun and have to cease. The Mk 8 gun is always having problems due to the defence cuts and equipment being made of inferior materials. When it is working it is the most accurate gun system in the world. But when it is not it is simply just a lump of useless metal.

ACTIVE manages to get off all 100 of her salvoes. At 0559 hrs we both depart the area in company. At 0800 hrs when we are 30 miles off Stanley 2 illumination rounds suddenly appear. There is no explanation for them at all. They may have been Exocet but we will never know. We break all records for closing up to action stations.

At 0900 hrs we stand down a little baffled. I get a message at 1330 hrs to go to YARMOUTH and will remain with her for a few days which are good news because I can get some laundry done and she has a gun system that works. At 1500 hrs I am again back on YARMOUTH and as soon as the flight deck crew see me they say 'Here we go again'. I am becoming quite well known now and when I appear it means 'Gunline Duty'

At 1902 hrs the BC calls me up and tells me that I will be working with NGFO2 and 3 Para tonight. I explain about ammo restrictions, Exocet dangers, Gunline, due to 3 Para's location we will have to run aground near Sapper Hill to reach targets, the time he wants me on station will be impossible due to our CVBG duties until last light. His answer, as always is 'There does not seem to be a problem to me' and signs off.

## Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> June

At 0015 hrs I once again have good comms with NGFO3 with whom I am to work with. Perhaps my talk with the BC worked. NGFO3 gives me 7 tgts which I ask to be reduced to 5 for maximum effect. He does this but as visibility is once again very bad, he cannot observe. We begin to engage anyway.

CARDIFF is also engaging her tgts for 3 Para when her gun breaks down so she asks us to complete her mission for her. It means that we will have to go into the Exocet arcs to get round the next bay, negotiate some thick kelp and come within range of the enemy guns at Sapper Hill. The Capt calls a conference with PWO, Nav and me to hatch up a plan. We all decide to have a go because the Exocet danger arcs are 15 deg to the West, that is the line on our chart considered to be in the safe perimeters of the danger arc. Being a type 12 Frigate we draw very little water and can negotiate the kelp if we go slowly and I doubt the enemy big guns at Sapper Hill have any Tgt Acquisition Radar so they will have to be very lucky to hit us as the visibility is bad.

We move in to engage the tgts for 3 Para. During the bombardment we come under heavy fire from the enemy with some 8 rounds landing very close. At one stage we were only 1000 yds off the beach. We immediately engage the enemy Bty which falls silent and gives no further trouble. We continue with our bombardment for 3 Para. At 0443 hrs we have completed our mission having fired 187 salvoes of which some were for self defence so we will get away with the excess. CARDIFF had buggered off without us and we feel a little lonely again.

By first light we are back with the CVBG again and at 1400 hrs get a signal that the planned attack on Stanley has been put back 24 hrs due to some resupply problems and all the troops of 5 Bde are not yet in position. The bad weather has caused some delays in the flying programme also.

At 1500 hrs I hear a call for some fire support onto Mt Rosalie. PLYMOUTH, who is stationed in Bomb Alley, is given the task with NGFO5. As she leaves Bomb Alley she is attacked by some Skyhawks which just happen to be near. One drops a bomb on her flight deck which sets off a depth charge stowed there. The explosion rips out some of the CPO's mess, right next to where I used to bunk. 5



men are injured but none seriously. She also gets strafed but manages to bring down one of the Skyhawks. Another is downed by CAP. The PLYMOUTH is just about out of action with lots of damage.

At 1535 hrs an LCU is attacked by 2 Mirage and sinks with all 6 crew lost. I knew the C/Sgt Coxwain very well.

The LSL's Tristram and Galahad with the Welsh Guards on board and are attacked as they are sitting in Fitzroy Bay. 43 are killed and 7 of the crew also. The Galahad is on fire very quickly but the Tristram fared better as the bomb did not do as much damage. In all 7 mirage are splashed.

We are now on our way to the Southern Gunline again which is the area of all this devastation. I also see a signal regarding Comsec. We have to tighten up on our NGS nets as well as I feel we all give too much away even though we are using our own codes.

2015 hrs and I have good comms with NGFO3 again who informs me that our efforts last night/early this morning were observed by callsign 31 who also knew where the tgts were. He says our fall of shot was very accurate. I pass this info on to the Ops room and gun crews who are overjoyed.

### **Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> June**

At 0230 hrs we are on station and ready for NGFO3 to give us our tgts. He gives 6 which he cannot spot due to the distance. These tgts are all to the enemy rear in Mt Harriet. We begin to engage at 0300 hrs and at 0330 hrs have completed all 6 tgts. That is the slickest bombardment I have ever seen. We depart from the area jubilant. The remainder of the day is very peaceful within the CVBG.

### **Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> June**

At 0100 hrs I have good comms with NGFO3 (Sgt Thomas & Gnr Pennington) and they ask me to engage 3 more tgts than that previously asked for. I explain about the 100 max which we cannot exceed but they say these tgts are gun Btys which have been causing some problems. I am quite prepared to do what they ask but we are restricted to 100 salvoes. They have no idea that we are running out of 4.5" ammo down here. The UK is running out of it and cannot get it down to us quickly enough. There is even talk of trying to dive on the ships that have sunk in shallow water to see if they can recover any more.

I call up Bde HQ and speak to the BC who once again cannot see what the problem is. He still does not seem to be aware of the restrictions imposed by Flag. The Capt and I are restricted to 100 max but also want to engage what we are asked to but the BC says engage the lot. After a while he agrees to authorise the extra but for us to use the CO of 29 Regt's name as authority.

At 0300 hrs NGFO3 are in position and we begin to engage the 4 tgts he can see. The visibility is good and the crew on the GDP can see our salvoes landing. All 4 tgts are on Mt Harriet. As we engage the second tgt we hit what is believed to be a missile site which erupts in a ball of fire. We pour a few more salvoes into the area and then continue with the other two tgts. Sgt Thomas estimates 50 casualties which he can quite clearly see because of the fire raging. On completion of the spotted tgts we engage the three Gun Bty positions. As we engage them Sgt Thomas takes a bearing on the fall of shot and confirms they are in the tgt area. We fire 25 salvoes into each gun position.

0430 hrs we cease firing. We are told our fall of shot is devastatingly accurate which is a great boost to our gun crews. In fact the whole ships company keeps congratulating me as if I were responsible but I have to assure them it is a total team effort. This is a very happy and professional crew. The Port gun is manned by Royal Marines with the Stbd gun manned by RN which is of course good competition. We almost have to drag them from the guns or they would empty the magazine given half a chance. Last man standing and all that.

As we depart the area there is quite a furious fire fight developing at Mt Harriet with tracer lacing the skies. I call Sgt Thomas but he says they are OK and will be able to RV with 42 Cdo without much trouble.



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

We get a surface contact on our radar at 0500 hrs just as we are departing the area. As we have no knowledge of our own forces operating in this area we have to investigate. There are 3 contacts in all, two of which we know about: 1 is the remains of the LCU and the other the Galahad.

We launch our helio to check the third one out. It turns out to be the MV Monsumon which is full of Ghurkhas. It was captured by us some time ago and is now skippered by a local who is quite oblivious to all the recognition signals.

At 0600 hrs all is back in order and we do finally depart the area for the CVBG.

Night orders come in very early today, at 1200 hrs in fact and YARMOUTH is not on the gunline. She is due to conduct a RAS (A/L & S). Perhaps I will get another night off but reading on I see I am assigned the ACTIVE to the South gunline working with NGFO2 and 3 Para also NGFO3 with 42 Cdo again. I seem to be quite popular all of a sudden.

I am transferred to ACTIVE at 1500 hrs and begin to prepare the system. She has only conducted two gunline duties before so I go over all in detail without trying to seem too pushy. By 1700 hrs I am satisfied and we are on our way again. On the way we develop a problem with the main shaft which will delay our proposed time of arrival. I inform Bde HQ.

### Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> June

At 0145 hrs I am called by both NGFO2 & 3 so I explain the problem to them. It is decided that when we arrive NGFO3 will work with us and ARROW, to the North will work with NGFO2. We manage to get on station at 0230 hrs and begin to engage tgts. After another successful engagement we cease fire at 0400 hrs and depart the area. By first light we just manage to RV with the CVBG and I am transferred back to YARMOUTH at 1300 hrs.

Tonight is the 'Big Push' towards Stanley with major attacks on all fronts. The delay has been 5 Bde who took some time to reorg after Bluff Cove. The following ships will be in support tonight:-

Ship	NGFO	Supporting	Area	Gunline
ARROW	1	G Sqn SAS	Mount Low	North
AVENGER	2	3 Para	Mt Longdon	South
YARMOUTH	3	42 Cdo	Mt Harriet	South
GLAMORGAN	5	45 Cdo	Two Sisters	South

There is a massive Tgt list come fire plan which takes about 3 hrs to check, correct, plot and enter into the ships system. Owing to the importance of tonight's support we all detach from the CVBG in company at 1500 hrs assured that this little task group will be able to cope with anything. We have enough fire power should we be attacked but co-ordinating it could be difficult. We have to consult the 'Bridge Card' just to see who is who regarding seniority. When it gets dark the Northern gunline ship breaks off and we continue onwards.

### Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> June

By midnight we are all on station and ready. This is fabulous news and a good start to the proceedings.

At 0700 hrs we, YARMOUTH, begin to give covering fire to 42 Cdo as controlled by NGFO3. Our fire is reported as accurate and we do not need to be given corrections as all our opening salvos are on tgt. All the preparation was worth it after all. As we are using old steam equipment and the thickness of a chinagraph pencil tip if not sharpened can be about 100 yds on land. With the computerised ships that is not a problem.

42 Cdo conduct a spectacular attack from the beginning with one Coy attacking from the rear. The enemy are caught in their sleeping bags but after the initial setback all hell breaks loose. 42 Cdo suffer 7 KIA. They capture 3 x 120 mm mortars intact.

The other attacks go well with some KIA and more CAS. Ammo restrictions have been lifted for this major attack and in all we are expend the following ammo onto the enemy positions all controlled by NGFO's;

YARMOUTH	-	261
GLAMORGAN	-	167
AVENGER	-	121
ARROW	-	239

A grand total of 788. It seems the enemy has been broken.

At 0600 hrs we three depart the Southern Gunline in company for the CVBG with GLAMORGAN leading the way. She tells us to follow her as she clips the corner of the Exocet danger area. We decline her offer as does the AVENGER and we go the usual longer route. I am stood next to Cdr Morton when he says on the speech secure net 'Be advised our intentions are to go South for 22 miles then turn East and set a course for the CVBG' The response from GLAMORGAN is 'We are clipping the corner. See you later'

At 0635 hrs GLAMORGAN is hit by a land launched based Exocet. We see the missile arc towards her. She had also fallen out of action stations and was not fully prepared. We push up loads of chaff and wait and look at each other in the Ops room with fear in our eyes. The missile seeks out GLAMORGAN and hits her Port Side aft near the hanger. 9 are killed and many injured. The fire that rages claims 4 more. We are closing in fast to her aid when a lookout on our Port bridge wing shouts out 'Missile Release bearing 360 dg' We push up 9 more chaff which is 6 more than necessary but no one complains. A Petty Officer and I look at each other and share a moment I cannot describe in words. I pat him on the shoulder and give a wry smile. My mind is working at warp factor 10 as I recall a similar moment on AVENGER. We all wait as the order 'Hit the deck' echoes out over the ships tannoy. I remain standing as I refuse to die crawling.

Suddenly the GDP lookout calls out 'Belay the last, they are only illumination rounds'. With GLAMORGAN blazing and listing nobody chides the lookout, a RM Sgt who is commanding the detachment, in fact he is praised. AVENGER and us escort GLAMORGAN back to the CVBG as she can only make 15 kts with the 9 degree list. It need never have happened.

At 1252 hrs the night intentions are released with 4 ships on the Southern gunline with YARMOUTH as o/c. I feel this is a great honour for her Capt and his ship which is one of the oldest in the task force. The Capt and I work out the best station for each ship from the target lists. When we have completed the plan and have put it into signal format the advance is cancelled. They need more time ashore to regroup and resupply. At 1400 hrs we ceremoniously ditch our plans.

We have a very quiet night with the CVBG and it is also quiet ashore. Tonight would have been my 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive night on the gunline. That is approx 2240 miles travelling. Only wish I could get a claim for duty travel.

### **Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> June**

There have been some conflicting reports about the GLAMORGAN incident so at the 1200 hrs schedule I attempt to get NGFO3, who saw the missile fired, to give more details. Bde HQ will not allow him to give the information to me. As soon as he saw it he reported it over the net. The matter seems to be closed.

The enemy put in an air raid on Mt Kent where 3 Cdo Bde HQ is. 4 aircraft attack and drop bombs but there are no casualties.

At 1900 hrs the BC at Bde HQ sends a coded message to all NGFO's saying the following ships will be on station at 2300 hrs. YARMOUTH, AVENGER, PLYMOUTH, now fixed and ACTIVE. I have information from Flag what they have planned which differs so try to let the BC know. I tell him it has been planned that only YARMOUTH and AVENGER will come first followed by two others two hours later. The answer is 'I don't see the problem, all will be on station by 2300 hrs' The Capt gets the signal for me which confirms what I have just advised the BC of. He will not believe me. The one sided conversation goes on for a while with the final word from the BC being 'Four ships have been

allocated and I expect them on station at 2300 hrs' A general call goes out to the NGFO teams with the following information.

NGFO5 with 2 Scots Guards  
NGFO3 with 1/7<sup>th</sup> Ghurkhas  
NGFO2 with 2 Para

They will have one ship each with the other one as a spare. We are detached from the CVBG at 1700 hrs with AVENGER and I tell Bde HQ ETA 0130 hrs. At 2025 hrs AVENGER breaks down with a damaged propeller and we are ordered to remain with her until darkness has fallen. I call Bde HQ and ask to speak to the BC but he will not come to the set so I pass on the following information to the operator in code of course, *'AVENGER broken down, we will try and make the gunline by 0130 hrs, AVENGER should be 1 ½ hrs behind. The other two ETA 0300 hrs'* there is no response from the BC

At 2324 hrs I have good comms with NGFO5 who gets me to change to his frequency where he explains he has heard all the previous transmissions and fully understands the situation. He adds 'well done'. I tell him I will call again with an update of our ETA. His answer is 'No sweat'. NGFO5 knows we are breaking our necks to get on station ASAP. At least those at the 'sharp end' are aware of the realities of war.

### Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> June

I do not know how we made it but by 0100 hrs we are on station having even dropped a Dan Buoy in Berkley Sound to assist the Type 21's with radar. They need to acquire a good beacon and there are none in the vicinity so the buoy will be a great help.

At 0126 hrs the Scots Guards are on their start line at Tumbledown and almost ready to move out. Suddenly we pick up 4 Mirage on radar closing the area of the Southern gunline. They are no doubt looking for any ships they can bomb. Thank goodness we are on the Northern one. Being as we are the only ship here we are reluctant to give our position away and get the undivided attention of 4 Mirage. If only we had a Type 42 with us she could just take all 4 out. The Mirage circle around the South for a while looking for the flash of a ships gun which is considerable. NGFO5 understand our plight and will wait as they will only have around 10 mins loiter time left before they will have to head for home. We are now faced with a 3 Bn attack and only one ship in support.

I am still watching the 4 Mirage on radar when I see them go on towards San Carlos where they drop their bombs. One is shot down by Rapier and another one by HMS Exeter from San Carlos using Sea Dart missiles. I watched in fascination as the two blips just disappeared from the screen.

At 0138 hrs we begin to engage tgts in direct support of 2 SG. The first tgt we engage we hit with the first salvo and then put 20 more into it. NGFO2 come up and ask us to hit a Gun Bty which is causing 2 Para some casualties so we oblige by pouring 20 salvoes into it and then returning to NGFO5. He has another tgt which is a MG position and is holding up the 2 SG advance. Once again we hit it with our first salvo and destroy it. This is like a fairground shoot. Once again NGFO2 are being troubled by another gun Bty so we neutralise it for them. AVENGER now turns up and joins in so we give her to 2 Para. She also keeps pounding away at Sapper Hill during missions.

By 0400 hrs there are 4 ships all engaging tgts at once. It is a spectacular and very noisy sight. Ashore there are mortars, MG's, flares, grenades; you name it and it is there with loads of tracer to boot. Surely the enemy cannot hold on much longer.

At 0600 hrs we all depart the area and return to the CVBG in company.

The results of ammo expenditure are:-

ACTIVE	-	288
YARMOUTH	-	244
AMBUSCADE	-	228
AVENGER	-	156
		grand total 916



I hate to think what it would have been like on the receiving end of that. We must have done a lot of damage. I know at one stage Capt McCracken was calling down rounds as close as 50 yds to own troops.

The fighting continues all day but the enemy broke at 1556 hrs when white flags were seen outside Stanley. NGFO2 were with 2 Para as they entered the outskirts of Stanley.

Tonight there are to be 4 ships on the Northern gunline again just in case there are any enemy who do not know what has happened. At 2059 hrs we hear that Gen Menendez has signed the instrument of surrender. The Air Force say they will continue with the fight.

### **Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> June**

Once again we are on the gunline and PLYMOUTH is with us just in case we are required. Two other ships are to join us later on. They are to come from San Carlos Waters which takes longer. We were on station at 0100 hrs. At 0111 hrs we hear that the surrender has been accepted to cease fighting in the Falkland Islands but once again the Air Force say they will fight on.

A very quiet night is had by all although we are still at action stations throughout. At 0430 hrs we detach from the gunline and make our way back to the CVBG. We had hoped to enter Stanley Harbour at 1<sup>st</sup> light but the threat from the enemy Air Force is too great. The BBC news at 0600 hrs states there are approx 11,000 enemy in Stanley and they are much better off than we thought. They did not have the chain of command and logistic support that we have which led to their downfall.

As we, YARMOUTH, are approaching the CVBG RV area we get orders from Flag Ops to go to S Georgia to meet up with ENDURANCE and M Coy 42 Cdo. We are then to go to Southern Thule to take back the Island which has been used as a spy station by the Argies since 1976.

I call Bde HQ and explain the situation to the BC by radio and he tells me to join FEARLESS. I have to explain to him that FEARLESS has been in San Carlos for the past 3 weeks and still is and I am now about 250 miles to the East. He then loses interest in my situation and is about to sign off so I tell him I intend to remain with YARMOUTH as NGS will be needed ending with the comment 'that's why Flag has tasked her'.

At 1600 hrs we pick up the RFA OLMEDA and escort her to S Georgia. She will act as the troop ship for M Coy. There are no plans yet for the recapture of the Islands and we do not even have maps of the area. ENDURANCE is busy making them up for us now.

MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY



Southern Thule is a very long way.

## Operation Keyhole - Southern Thule

### Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> June

During passage to S Georgia we, in company with Olmeda, passed through the worst storm that I have ever experienced. There were some 50 gall oil drums lashed to the deck on the Port Waist which were ripped away including the ring bolts to which they were attached. One of the bridge windows was also shattered. It was impossible to get any sleep at all that night. I was thrown out of my bunk many times.

### Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> June

On passage to S Georgia clearing up and making good the damage.

### Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> June

We conduct a RAS (L) with the Olmeda off the NE coast of S Georgia in the most glorious weather, so much different to when I was last here in April. On completion we sail into Cumberland Bay with me giving a running commentary of the events of 25/26 April to a small but interesting gathering.

The ENDURANCE has sailed off with the Recce Tp of M Coy accompanied by the tug Salvageman. She is keen to get some action at all costs having missed most of it so far. Olmeda proceeds to embark the remainder of the Troops needed for the planned operation.

### Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> June

On passage to S Thule and we should be able to make good time and catch up the others without too much delay. The weatherman tells us that the ice is beginning to close in and I wonder how a Type 12 Frigate would cope as an Ice Breaker. A plan has evolved and in brief it is as follows. I am to be put ashore on Cook Island to conduct NGS in support of M Coy who are to attack the main buildings. There are many problems with that simple plan as I do not have any maps of the area; in fact nobody does because none exist. One of the Antarctic Survey boffins on the ENDURANCE produces a map from a chart with a grid superimposed on it and we are in the game of NGS again, when I can get a copy that is.

We are due to RV with Salvageman tomorrow at 0400 hrs to collect the plan and maps. We are told H – Hour is to be set for 1000 hrs. I set about making a plan and decide to take two radios with me, one HF and the other UHF. This will give me comms to YARMOUTH for NGS and any other orders and comms with the Helios. As I expect to be kept busy with NGS I ask for one of the RM Det on board to be my protection ashore and to help with the radio load. A Mne Chin steps forward and I brief him on what I know and what I expect him to do. We will be armed with SLR's but I decide to use Bren Mags which hold 30 rounds each. The only enemy action I foresee is long range and I do not believe they will have any also it is a pretty bold move putting me ashore on Cook Island. They should not expect that. If they do and send a helio for us we will give it a hard time landing at least. All is now set except for the maps and final plan. In the Commando world one is taught to be flexible but this is . . . . . well.

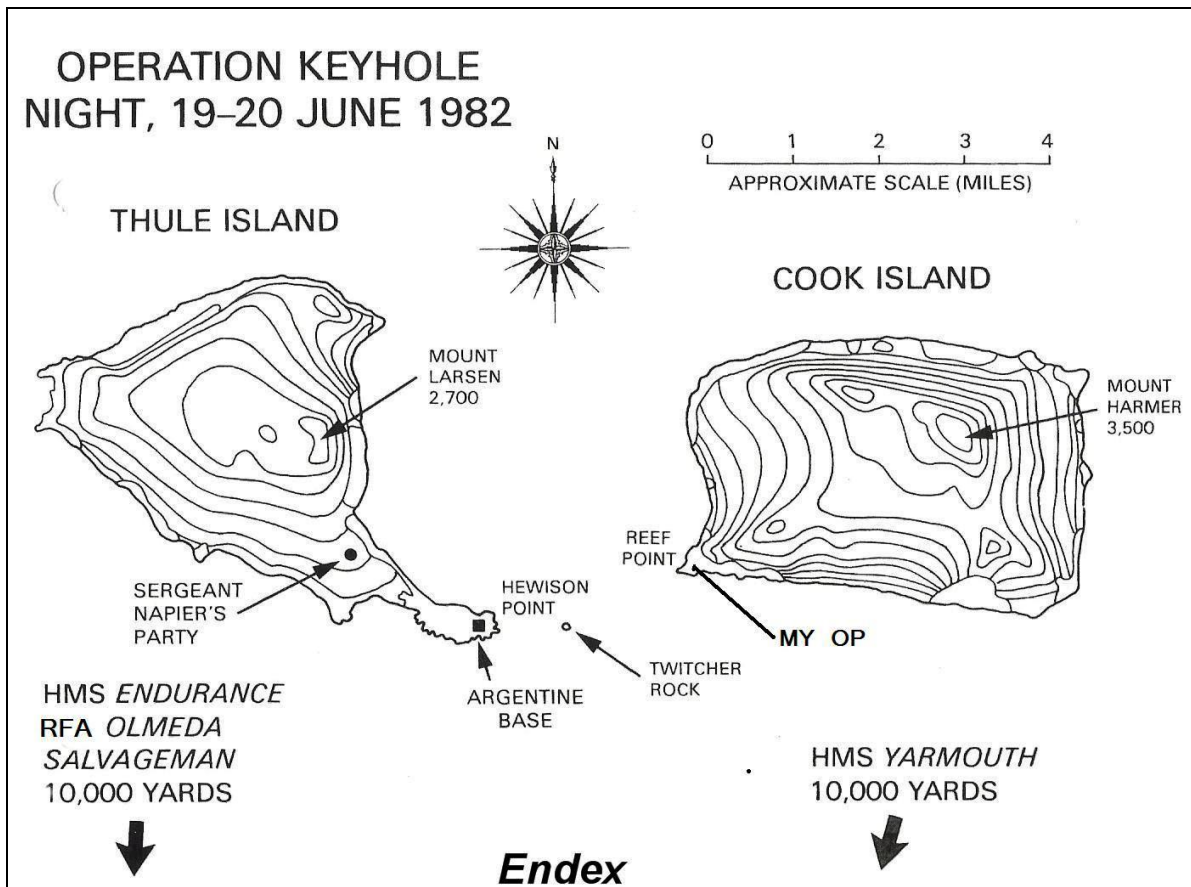
### Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> June

Why do most exercises begin on a Sunday? The 0400 hrs RV is delayed due to the weather and we finally make it at 0930 hrs. H-Hour is now put back and I am on 30 mins notice to go. I feel quite out of place waiting in the Ops room in full arctic kit and to make matters worse the Pilot insists we wear 'once only' survival suits as he is a little concerned about the flight in and subsequent landing, there being no recce possible. It will have to be a very quick, in, down and out you get. The survival suits are day-glow orange which I say may attract the attention of any enemy. As we are discussing this fact I notice when turned inside out they are white. This satisfies me and him also. I hope the properties of the suit are not compromised by having them on this way.

At 1200 hrs we get the word to go and in what seems like just a few mins we are lifting off with the pilot and crewman/missile operator in the front and Mne Chin and me in the back. Within about one



min the left side of my face is numb with the slipstream there being no doors on the back of the Wasp. The outside temp is minus 23 but with the wind-chill it is minus 40. I think about the past two months and all that I have managed to survive as we skim over the murky grey sea towards Cook Island from the SE. The Pilot quickly selects the only flat spot which is conveniently on the West side and we are deposited in no time at all. What a sight we must have looked as we stumbled for cover cocking our weapons as the helio swept away. Suddenly it was very very quiet and the enormity of the situation hit me. Quickly shaking off the feeling I busied myself with getting comms with the ship, the radios already being set to the correct freq prior to our departure. Comms are established at once and I tell YARMOUTH that I am ready. In the distance I can hear a lot of helio activity which must be M Coy inserting. There is now a lull in proceedings which enables me to take in my surroundings. Behind me 400 yds to the East towers Mount Harmer (3500 ft) but immediately behind us is an enormous ice overhang which threatens to come down when the ship opens up with her 4.5" guns on Twitcher Rock to my front. This rock was chosen as a 'fire power demo' tgt and should the enemy be unimpressed with it the next thing I will do is engage them in the buildings. The rock seems very close to me and although I have complete faith in YARMOUTH's gunnery I do feel somewhat exposed. I give Mne Chin a wry smile to conceal my feelings my face now having thawed out a little. What a godforsaken place this is. I have no idea if any other human being has ever set foot on here and why should they have anyway?



With 2 mins to go before the H-Hour of 1230 hrs I hear the enemy have decided to surrender without a shot being fired. Suddenly it is all over and we can all go home. The YARMOUTH sends her helio for us and I am amused to note the pilot makes a text book approach after completing one circuit first. We climb aboard and the crewman ensures we are all strapped in which is some comfort as he was less concerned on our outward journey. There were 9 Argies in total and they are embarked on Olmeda for passage to S Georgia and subsequent transfer to YARMOUTH for their final destination of Stanley. The Capt of ENDURANCE subjects the senior officer, an Ensign, to the full surrender procedure and making him hand over his sword.

Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> June

We depart S Thule for S Georgia at 1400 hrs with OLMEDA in company. The POW's are aboard her. I send a signal to the BC asking him what his plans are for me on return to Stanley on 25<sup>th</sup> June. There is no reply.

**Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

Still on passage to S Georgia at a very reduced pace. Princess Diana has a baby and we 'splice the main brace'. It tasted so good.

**Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June**

We arrive at S Georgia and the transfers begin. The POW's are embarked on board us and we depart once again for the Falkland Islands. There is still no response to my signal to the BC neither is there one from the Capt to the Admiral requesting to know where to bring the prisoners. We feel like the forgotten few.

Today I hear that the FEARLESS is due to go back to the UK. Until now there has been no mention of the return plan and we all believe we will be required to remain in the area for a few months yet.

**Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> June**

I now hear that more ships are due to return to the UK namely; Canberra, Norland, FEARLESS, INTREPID, PERCIVAL, Elk and Stromness. There is still no answer to my signal to the BC on his plans for me.

**Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> June**

Today it is my birthday. At 1200 hrs we are at action stations as we enter Stanley Harbour. The Norland is just leaving with 2 & 3 Para aboard.

We try, in vain, to find out what is going on but cannot find anyone who knows. I do however discover that the Canberra is due to sail today and decide to call her up on the radio. She will accept me so I say my farewells and at 1500 hrs manage to get aboard her. At 1530 hrs we sail out of Stanley Harbour. I only just made it. The rest of the Bty are on board as is the whole of the 3 Cdo Bde. The BC and Capt Arnold are on the FEARLESS. Unable to believe it all I watch as we depart Stanley. I get to the Sgts Mess and have a good birthday drink.

ETA Southampton 11 July 1100 hrs. ENDEX

**Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> June - Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> July**

The trip back was a nice way to wind down after what was a hectic time. At times things were intense and at others it was nothing but a bore. On the way back the men were left to do almost what they wanted which was nice. I had my own cabin and the food was fabulous.

On the morning of 11<sup>th</sup> July we came into the Solent to a sight never to be forgotten. There were hundreds of small boats to escort us home. At the dockside there were an estimated 30,000 people and my wife was amongst them. It was nice to be home. We and SBS were the last to be allowed to disembark as we were stationed only 30 miles away at Poole. Others had to drive to Arbroath and Plymouth. We didn't mind that at all. We had a Police escort all the way and traffic was halted to allow our coach to pass by to many cheers.

I later on discovered I was the only serviceman to have been involved in all three areas of operations namely: South Georgia, The Falklands and Southern Thule not that anyone ever noticed. Well why should they anyway?

Those highlighted in Yellow were controlled by me

MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

SUMMARY OF NGS AMMO EXPENDED

Date	Yarmouth	Avenger	Plymouth	Ambuscade	Alacrity	Cardiff	Glamorgan	Active	Arrow	Glasgow	Antrim	Ardent	Exeter	Coventry	Total
25 Apr			166								69				235
1 May					50		54		50						154
1/2 May					3		72		56						131
8/9 May					93										93
9/10 May														14	14
10/11 May										221					221
11/12 May										67					67
14/15 May							102								102
16/17 May							142								142
18/19 May							106								106
19/20 May							101								101
21 May							97				217	168			482
25/26 May			174				146								320
27/28 May	300	109			100		50		157						727
29/30 May		100		84			103		102						389
30/31 May		125													125
31/1 Jun					130										130
1/2 Jun		293		63				118							474
2/3 Jun									108						108
3/4 Jun			150												150
5/6 Jun	161	171				277									609
6/7 Jun				85				100							185
7/8 Jun	187					11									198
8/9 Jun	124														124
9/10 Jun	164														134
10/11 Jun								104	87				44		235
11/12 Jun	261	121					167		239						788
12/13 Jun			83						108						191
13/14 Jun	244	156		228				288							916
															7651



**MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY**

**SUMMARY OF THE FIRINGS IN WHICH I WAS INVOLVED**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Ship</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Supporting</b>	<b>Salvoes</b>
25-Apr	Plymouth	S Georgia - Grytviken	SAS - SBS - NGFO 2 & 5	166
01-May	Alacrity	Falklands - Stanley Airfield	Vulcan & Harried Attack	51
01-May	Alacrity	Stanley Airfield	Harassing Fire	3
09-May	Alacrity	Stanley Area	Harassing Fire	92
26-May	Plymouth	Fox Bay	Insertion raid NGFO 1	174
28-May	YARMOUTH	Port Howard	Insertion raid NGFO 1	296
30-May	Avenger	Volunteer Bay	Insertion of SBS & NGFO 1	50
31-May	Avenger	Volunteer Bay	Advance of NGFO 1	125
02-Jun	Ambuscade	Salvador Hill Radar Site	Insertion of SBS & NGFO 3	63
06-Jun	YARMOUTH	Stanley Area West	NGFO 3	161
06-Jun	Cardiff	Stanley Area West	Known enemy positions	277
07-Jun	Ambuscade	Stanley Area West	NGFO 2 with 3 Para	84
08-Jun	YARMOUTH	Mt Harriet	NGFO 3 & NGFO 2	187
09-Jun	YARMOUTH	Mt Harriet & Moody Brook	NGFO 3	124
10-Jun	YARMOUTH	Mt Harriet & Sapper Hill	NGFO 3 onto Gun Positions	174
11-Jun	Active	Mt Harriet & Sapper Hill	NGFO 3	100
12-Jun	YARMOUTH	Mt Harriet	42 Cdo & NGFO 3	261
14-Jun	YARMOUTH	Tumbledown & Longdon	2 SG & 2 Para NGFO 5 & 2	244
				<b>2632</b>

**Totals for Individual Ships I worked with**

YARMOUTH	1447
Plymouth	432
Cardiff	277
Avenger	175
Ambuscade	147
Active	100
Alacrity	146
	<b>2632</b>

**Not in Direct Support**

11-May	Alacrity	Sunk vessel in Falkland Sound	Isla de los Estados	51
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A few weeks later I had a telephone from the RSMI at Larkhill. He wanted me to come and see him for a chat about my posting. I went there and we sat and chatted. I had no real idea what the duties of the SMIS of RAGTE were and he saw that. He suggested that if I thought I was not up to the task he would arrange for it to be changed and get me posted somewhere else. That enraged me but I kept it to myself. Here was a WO1 telling me that he thought I could not handle the job. In BAOR there were 24 Regts of the RA where I would be responsible in ensuring the standard of comms were maintained as well as instructing on all manner of courses. Also I had to report to the 3 BRA's and the MGRA on my findings and here was this man who sat at a desk in Larkhill with no tangible responsibilities as far as I could see. I said I thought I was up to the task and had I not gained a 'B' grade on my RSI's course? Which I thought said something for my abilities. He looked a tad surprised at that and sort of slumped back into his chair and said nothing else.

7<sup>th</sup> Sep 1982 I arrived in Germany and moved into a Quarter with my wife. It was OB 3/1 and inside the massive camp called Hohne which was around 2 miles from Bergan Belson Concentration Camp. They had kept the quarter for me since April when I should have taken it over. As the first person to arrive in the camp from the Falklands I was looked at with suspicion. The SIG Lt Col Lawrence McNaught was all over me and his first question after the welcome was tell me what happened SMIS. I said it would take ages to tell him about the War but he interrupted me and said not he war but at 148 Bty. I asked him what he meant. He then said he had got hold of my past reports along with my service record and wanted to know why the most senior WOII in the RA had not been promoted or even commissioned by now. I was a tad taken aback by this statement and simply said he would only hear my side of the story if I said anything. He wormed it out of me but I was careful not to say too much as this may affect my time at RAGTE if he was a mate of the BC. I later found out that nobody was a mate of the BC wherever I went.

I met up with the guy I was taking over from who just happened to be the guy who was sitting to my left in the course photo from my RSI's course at Larkhill in 1970. There was an Exercise later that week and I had to accompany him to learn the ropes. He could see I was not familiar with BOAR soldiering and in the evening he drew 1 British Corps Complan for me. He went through all the missions and order of battle should the 3<sup>rd</sup> Shock Army attack. As he finished he asked if I had any questions to which I said not many but to sum up it all looks quite simple in fact. Just like the Infantry system of Section, Platoon, Company, Bn, Div, Corps but different words like Section, Bty, Regt, Div and Corps. He sort of stared at his drawing and said well yes in a way. I said 'Sorted'. I was right, everyone tried to make things look difficult but if one gets down to the basics then just works their way up it all fits. In principle a Section Commander in the Infantry could direct a Division as the tactics are similar, one up two back or two up one back and so was the RA chain of command, or that's what I thought anyway. I also asked what sort of communication he had with the RSMI at Larkhill and he said not a lot. He also said he had been trying to get the post of SMIS RAGTE upgraded to a WO1 post just like the one at Larkhill. He agreed with me that the UK post was a doddle compared to the one in Germany which was sort of the front line in those days of the Cold War.

The first task I was given by the Master Gunner was to take over as RAGTE Bar Manager. Why me I asked to which he replied we always give the new guy the task. I had a word with the WOII who was currently doing it and from the outset realised he was incapable at it. I made him aware of my feelings but took on the task. The bar opened up every Friday at 1200hrs or whenever we had a function which was quite often. There was also a wives club which my wife joined. When there were courses run sometimes there was an ad hoc coffee shop set up for the mid morning and afternoon break and my wife volunteered to take on this task. I was quite surprised but she had made some friends quickly and two said they would help her.

He left and went back to the UK and I was then sort of in charge of all the SMIS's in Germany. I had direct line to the MGRA and he would often task me, through the SIG RAGTE of course. Quite soon after I arrived there was a massive RA Corps CPX being held in Bielfeld which was where the Corps HQ was. It was in a theatre and there was an Int Corps S/Sgt controlling the 'Bird Table'. What the \*\*\*\* was a bird table I wanted to ask someone but did not wish to seem dumb, which of course I was. Most of these guys were BOAR through and through and I was the outsider. As he laid out the 'Bird Table' I sidled up to him to look like I knew what I was doing. The 'Bird Table' consisted of one metre squares of hardboard with the map of the German border on it. He would push things around it to represent the attacking and defending Armies and everyone had a seat around the perimeter. Our side had a representative of every RA unit's FOO and CP operators. It was a tad crowded but I

happened to see Capt Dick Burdon and went to say hello. He had been an NGFO in 95 FOU and was now a BC. We exchanged dits and then he told me how he had tried to join us down the Falklands but was not allowed. He asked a bit about what happened to each NGFO and the NGLO's. He also asked if I was OK with this CPX and I admitted I was not quite and what did 'Regroup' mean. He explained and said he would make sure it went well and I should just watch. Regroup was when we had kept the 3<sup>rd</sup> Shock Army back and then reorganised into an attacking force. Fantasy in my mind as I believed if they attacked we were truly well and done for. From what I had learned NATO was not that well coordinated. The West Germans wanted to stand up to the border and not give an inch, We, along with the French, Dutch, USA wanted to stand back and absorb the first thrust, The Belgians and Danes just wanted to pay the Russians to avoid their soil being captured and the others had not yet played their hand. In the end it all went well and after two days we packed up and went back home. For some reason some of the RAGTE IG's congratulated me on a well done Ex comms wise. I must say thanks to Maj Dick Burden for that as I was out of my depth but learned a lot.

Things in RAGTE settled down a bit but it was a strange place to be. Most of the 15 WOII SMIGS were not fit and the same thing can be said about their Officers and at break times chatted about how they had picked someone up for this or that on a recent Exercise. They strutted around like they were something else. Others were very good and soon there was a slight division in the organisation. I used to go for a run around camp most evenings, around 7 k and this was noticed by some. There was a BFT coming up and most were looking for an out. The two 1<sup>st</sup> Div SMIGS that I shared an office with organised it. We assembled and off we went for the first 1½ Mile squaddened run. Then we stopped and walked around 200 Yds to the start again and it was the same but as fast as you could. I ran off and soon was all alone. There were two younger officers trying to catch me up so I slowed a bit. One of them said 'Went off a bit too quick then I see SMIS'. Well that was it. I quickened my pace and left them behind. As I crossed the line I turned round, hardly out of breath and encouraged them over the line. They were exhausted. I asked how old they were and they told me so I said I was 38. They were flabbergasted. You want to go again I asked to which they smiled thinking I was joking but I said it again. Next day the SIG asked me to start some physical for the pers of RAGTE. I said it would be hard because of their lack of fitness but he insisted. I showed him a programme I had devised to hopefully get them a bit fitter. It was only 2 sessions per week and some came to me to complain so I invited those to come with me to see the SIG. They all declined. The SIG also wanted me to give a presentation about the Falklands one evening. As it happens there was a VHS Video just released of some individuals talking to the camera about their experiences. One was Capt Brown from 148 Bty who had spent most of his time with the SAS and at the end supported the Scots Guards as the NGFO. I made up my lesson plan and off we went. I had to try and keep it simple and make my role out as a sort of IG or even SMIG. That was the only way they could understand. As I described the time HMS Alacrity transited the Falkland Sound to see if there were any mines I said 'We entered the Southern end and silently bimbled along warily'. At the questions a Lt, training to be an IG asked what speed 'Bimbling' was. I shook my head and said that was classified which seemed to satisfy him but others just laughed. I found out later on his dad was a very senior officer in the army and when this Lt was at Sandhurst he set fire to a fireplace and was fined a crate of champagne which he thought was 'simply hilarious old boy'.

Soon there were the live firings and so I had to earn my pay. My main role was to listen to the various Gnr Nets to see if there were any breaches of security, the border not being that far away from Hohne Ranges. For this I had inherited two tape recorders which had the ability, when connected to the headset terminal, to record all messages and when the squelch sounded switch off. I had to listen each night to all the tapes to check. I soon went to the R Sigs HQ and asked them to upgrade the two devices and make me two more which they did in very quick time. Everyone soon recognised my vehicle from the four antennas on it. Some people asked about the Falklands and when I began telling them they either got fed up or started to relate a very arduous exercise they had been on recently. They were all Gnrs and only wanted to hear about Guns. When I told them that the Task Force deployed on 2 Apr 1982 and South Georgia initial landings were 21<sup>st</sup> Apr and there was only NGS there for support and the guns of 29 Cdo only landed on 21<sup>st</sup> May and the surrender was 14<sup>th</sup> Jun they said they thought the guns had landed in April. They quickly seemed to lose very interest when they realised that tiny detail. The 'Guns' were only ashore for 3 weeks at the end.

The SIG arranged for me to be interviewed by all three BRA's and then afterwards the MGRA with the intention of getting me a commission. It was very rare for a WOII to be commissioned without him going through the rank of WOI. I went through all the interviews but to no avail although each one



## MY LIFE IN THE MILITARY

said they would recommend me. I was resigned to my fate. Next there was a briefing from the new Inf Brig of 1 Div to which I was invited. We all gathered in a building in Verden and I noticed I was the only WOII all the others being Officers of varied rank. There were about 8 tables with 10 chairs to each so we were told to be seated. This new Brig strode into the room and began to tell us his plans to defeat the Russians. There were SOP's but he wanted to add his influence to them. He talked then invited each table to discuss and he then chose one to put forward their amendments. One topic was the initial attack where he predicted the enemy aircraft could be shot down when they rose up to get over the massive power cables in the area. He said the Rapier would take them all out and also the aircraft doing the Para Drop. The Rapier would face to the West to complete all it's T&A's before facing the oncoming assault. Now I had seen Rapier working in the Falklands and it was good once it was set up. Our table discussed this and I added my penny worth saying in my opinion the enemy planes would simply fly under the cables as there was enough clearance. Some agreed and some did not. When it came time to respond the Brig chose our table and one of the Officers made a comment to the effect that we were divided in our assessment of the attack. This resulted in a discussion and eventually it came to me to have my say. I said what I had added to the conversation previously to the Brig who glared at me and asked why I thought that. I simply said that to underestimate the enemy was not a good idea and to prepare for the seemingly impossible. Strangely I never got a Christmas Card from him.

1984 came and again I was interviewed by the three BRA's and then by the MGRA afterwards. The position as SMIS RAGTE was now officially a WOI post and I had been recommended for it by the last SIG and the new one as well. The BRA of 1 Div was Brig Brian Pennicot who was of course the CO of 29 Cdo Regt when I was in the Bty and he was in the Falklands as the BRA as well. He had called me to see him in Verden and asked me what I wanted to do with my career. He said he wanted to see me as a BK and then RALONGS at Poole. We would see what happened after the interviews.

I had to go to the UK for a SMIS convention but that was just a cover. In fact I went to NI on a very hush hush mission doing a round robin of positions showing the guys the new codes and call sign system. I had to wear civvies and travelled with a R Sigs undercover Cpl in a different car each night. I was bricking it all the time I can tell you. It was nerve wracking in the N<sup>th</sup> degree. All I had was a 9mm Pistol with a spare mag. I also had to report on what improvements could be made to the RA posts there. Why was the RSMI of Larkhill not doing all this I wondered. When I left the Army I looked on my records but never found any sign of this tour but then I spent 2 years in Hong Kong and my record shows only 2 weeks. Back then Pt 2 and Pt 1 orders were all hand written or typed.

My wife was with a group of RAGTE ladies that managed to get a trip to Berlin which was of course inside East Germany. Their clearance was all carried out and they spent a week in the Edinburgh Hotel which was in West Berlin. She told me all about it and around a year later we decided to go along with two of the WOII's from RAGTE and their wives. The clearance was obtained and the briefing attended. The three of us WOII's would have to wear uniform if we wanted to go into East Berlin. I had just purchased a new 2 Litre Sierra Ghia so I was to take one couple with us and the other couple travelled with us in their car. The crossing was to be at Helmstead and then down the corridor into West Berlin which was cut up into three zones, US, French and British. To enter East Berlin the only crossing point was Check Point Charlie which was famous for a stand off with Russian Tanks in the 1960's. We arrived at Helmstead and had a thorough briefing by the Military Police on what we had and had not to do. We then entered the Corridor and drove through the barrier and then after around 100yds came up to the East German (Russian) manned barrier. Our documents were inspected in great detail and we were allowed to pass. I drove very nervously at the required speed and then we came across another East German (Russian) manned barrier where we were once again



**Checkpoint 'Charlie' East Berlin - 1984**



**Wanna fight? - East Berlin 1984**

checked as were our vehicles. My new Sierra got special attention. Then we were allowed to pass and came up against the British barrier manned by RMP's and our details checked again. We then had to all go upstairs to be debriefed on our passage through the corridor and what our itinerary was going to be for the next week. We had asked to go into East Berlin so our additional documentation was checked and checked again. Got to Edinburgh Hotel and settled down. One of the waiters recognised my wife and the other two wives as well which made me a tad suspicious about what they had been doing when the wives club visited previously. West Berlin was throbbing and it was fun. The day came for our visit into East Berlin and the famous Checkpoint Charlie episode.

The photo below shows the East German Changing of the Guard on the Tomb of the Eternal Soldier.



The Goose Step was more pronounced and the legs came up at right angles but I could not seem to time it. No digital photos in the day of course. It is a shame that so many people and Soldiers today have no idea just how tense things were between the Eastern Bloc and the free West. We were followed about closely by agents all the time we were in East Berlin and my uniform had particular attention paid to it. One of the agents would stand right in front of me and just stare at my Para Wings, Cdo Dagger and Medal Ribbons. It was quite unnerving I have to say. Fortunately one of the other wives was bilingual in German and the other two guys spoke very good German so they let it be known to avoid any troubles.

Another thing I had to do whilst at RAGTE was to observe the Site Guard and issue of Nuclear Weapons from the Sites. The Site Guard was a very secure area where Troops were locked in to guard the Nuclear Ammunition stored inside. I had to check details and make out reports accordingly. When an Exercise had programmed a Nuclear (dummy) weapon to be issued I had to also observe the strict procedure from drawing it from the Site until it being loaded into the Gun. It never got rammed but to all intent and purpose the whole procedure was completed. The Vehicle escort was like a ballet with all four members having to carry out drills in unison like mounting or dismounting the vehicle and opening up the box containing the weapon. It was very intense I can assure you. It is strange how I cannot get a permanent pass into Poole camp nowadays with all the high security I have undergone in my past.

I worked closer with the BRA 1 Div than any other. He always seemed to have confidence in me and gave me tasks to do. Once he had his 3 Gun Regt's on Hohne ranges conducting live firings and asked me to go along the OP ridge and take the FOO's out of their 'Metal Box' as he called it and give them each a mission using only the remote handset, a compass, map and protractor. I complied and the first one said he needed his Ack to help. The next could hardly use the compass and the others all had something to cause me to make notes. Next day I was summoned to the Bra's Command Post tent. As I found it I could see his Vehicle and asked the driver where he was. In the tent he said so I approached and knocked on the pole. I was told to come inside but as I entered I paused. There were the CO's of the three Regts before me. I apologised and attempted to get out only to be told to come back by the Brig. He then said to the assembled Officers 'This is WOII Richards who I know very well. He was BSM of 148 Bty for 7 Years and also in the Falklands. He will be inspecting your OP's in 2 hours. I want them out of the 432's and using radios in a cammed OP'. Then he left the tent. I stood there and said sorry to the Officers but the CO of 1 RHA just said not to worry we will do what he Brig wants you do what you have to do as well. They all nodded and scurried off to tell their FOO's.

On another occasion we were on the ranges again and the Mortars were doing nothing as they had not been included in any serials. The Brig came to me and said to follow him. We arrived at the MFC position and he told them I was to act as the IG for them to carry out as many missions in the next 3 hours as I gave them. He then left and the MFC looked at me and his face lit up. If the Brig had not done this they would have just sat there doing nothing. I selected tgts as if they were FOO's and they quickly cottoned on and we had a very successful 3 hours. I think we almost exhausted all the ammo.

Another occasion I got a phone call to report to Verden. The Brig was going to execute a call out of 49 Regt, called 'Active Edge', which was common to test the reaction time. The Regt had to crash out of camp, get ammo from the Ammo Dump and report to locations prior to war breaking out. It was very

serious stuff. He wanted me to meet him at the main gate of Hohne at 0400hrs in two days time but not to let anyone know. He gave me tasks to complete. At 0400hrs I was at the gate when he arrived. The guard challenged him and we went to the Guard Room and a sleepy soldier came to the window. Can I help he said then noticed the Rank on his combat jacket. The Brig said 'Yes, I am Brig Pennicot, BRA of 1 Div and I am issuing Active Edge code word \*\*\*\*\* to you. Carry on with your duties'. The guard looked a bit shaken and called the Sgt to who he repeated the message. The Sgt asked to see the Brigs ID Card and when satisfied he initiated the call out. So far so good. We went to the Adj't's office to await his arrival. He arrived a bit dishevelled and asked me what I was doing so I told him. He had to get the codes and frequencies out of the safe and then get them circulated. He was so nervous he couldn't get the combination right saying they had only just changed it last week. Eventually he got it and all was well. The guns were made ready and the Stalwarts loaded up the ammo and the convoy departed camp to go to the pre arranged positions in a nearby wood. There was to be no radio messages yet as this was all part of the plan. I looked around the area to see if I could see any 5th columnists as I had been instructed to do. Int had always said there were sleepers everywhere in our camps and each time an Active Edge was called they observed where we went and which trees in the woods we connected our lines to. There were many pre set cables on specific trees to avoid any radio transmissions. It looked like we had beaten them this time so far. After some while I had to initiate a Radio Ex just to test all comms and then we all returned to camp at around midday for a debrief. All in a day's work.

I had not passed the interview board so the SIG told me to ask for a meeting with the Records Rep who was due in a couple of day's. I resisted at first but he insisted saying whatever the outcome I would at least know why I had failed twice and why I had not been promoted into the post which was now official. A Maj Turner came to RAGTE and gave me a bit of his valuable time for an interview. I can remember vividly every bit of the meeting. We used the SIG's office and sat in arm chairs either side of the fireplace and he had documents on the coffee table between us. He started by asking me why I had requested this interview. I told him what I had planned with the SIG who said this was how to do it then the Maj got my folder and browsed through it dramatically. He then said and I paraphrase here, 'Well you were a WOI in 1975 with 95 Cdo FOU but chose to revert when they disbanded. That tells me you have no ambition. Then in 1980 you were not recommended for promotion from WOII to WOI by Maj Harvey and after that the next report from your last BC wrote you down to unsatisfactory. Your career has been within a narrow field of expertise and not in the conventional Gunners generally. It will take you, in my estimation, 3 to 4 years of Exemporary reports to rectify all this'. He then turned to me and said what are your thoughts about what I have just said. I then went into explaining that I had been to more countries than most Gunners, been to more wars than many, worked with a variety of NATO and non NATO military and was more qualified than a large proportion of the RA FOO's having carried out many live missions. His reply was that all being said I had not served in a Gnr Regt and my knowledge of the various disciplines was none existent. I was stunned by his response. I left the room utterly despondent. The SIG consoled me and I said it was OK. I enjoyed Germany and so did my wife but I realised that the Army was no longer for me. I blamed myself but I do think I could have had a bit more firm direction from some others along the way. I have been told since by many Officers who were in the Bty and later became very senior officers that I could have ended up as Lt Col RALONGS as others without any previous experience in NGS had done. Some Gnrs who I failed on their NGA course became BK's and Maj's for goodness sake. Grrrrrr!!!!

I asked the Chief Clerk of RAGTE to make out my discharge papers as I had just completed 23 years service. He chatted with me and suggested I should apply for the Long Service List. I had no idea what that was but just by chance the bungalow opposite my Married Quarter was occupied by a WOI RA and he was on that list so I popped over to chat. He said there were two lists, one Barrack Services which he was on and the other Recruiting. Barrack Services was to be in charge of the Married Quarters, with a big staff of course and Recruiting was to run an ACIO somewhere in the UK. I said I would think about it. As I departed RAGTE I have to admit it was not as bad as I had expected at first. I had learned a lot and been on some high powered Exercises and made a lot of friends. In the three years I had kept very fit and had run the Hohne 10 k race and the Langesmanshoff as well which was 62 Kilometers. My last time was 6hrs 30min 25sec. I had also to give presentations to the MGRA, BRA's and all CO's of the RA. I had found out who my relief was to be from Mick Arnold, Ex 148 Bty, who was the SMIS of 22 Air Defence. He told me the relief had been caught Drinking Driving when he was a Sgt and had been busted and therefore had an entry on his Regt Record. He was due to leave the Army but he had somehow made it back to WOII and was on his last 6 months when he



was asked if he would like to extend and go to RAGTE as the first RSMI. It should also be noted that he had spent all his service in Swingfire systems and had never served in a Field Regt. I thought what I had been told about my limited experience and all that. I just thought it was a total injustice.

I was dined out in the Mess which was very good. I claimed my last 6 months in the UK and at Poole specifically. We returned to my house in Upton and cleaned it up as the tenants had not left the kitchen in a very good state. After a couple of days I was called to Exeter to be interviewed by the Long Service List people. I took my wife along so she could do some shopping and we left our son with my Mother in Law. My wife stopped in Tesco's cafe as I went to the Camp. I was in a big office looking at two massive boards headed Barrack Services and ACIO's. The Officer interviewing me waffled on a bit and then said there were no Barrack Service posts available only ACIO's which I was reluctant to go for. Just then someone came in and pointed at me saying this is the man we were talking about and handed the Officer a file. I thought that perhaps they were going to have me shot as all everyone wanted to do to me was crush me but I was wrong. He said please to follow him down a corridor and into another office where a Maj R Sigs was sitting. He was polite and friendly and began to explain that he was offering me a post in BAOR as a WOII initially to be the Comms Expert for the AAC in BOAR. I had more experience than any other R Sigs officer as I had just been involved with the introduction of Ptarmigan and other things to the theatre. Also I knew more about the Russian threat than almost anyone else. I was taken aback by all this. He said it was for one year until they could find someone in the R Sigs with my skills but he thought that was not going to happen so he said he would ensure I got WOI and a Commission from it. I asked when it would happen if I accepted and he said right now. We want you to go back to Germany asap. He realised I had only just returned and I had my MFO boxes, all 25 of them, unopened in my garage. I asked if I could discuss this with my wife and he said of course but hurry please. I returned to Tesco's and told my wife. She thought about it and then said she did not want to return to Germany and have our son being brought up over there. I had to accept her decision and I would not leave her in the UK on her own either. I returned to the Officer and gave him my decision. He reluctantly accepted it and we both returned to Poole.

When my short leave was over I reported back to 148 Bty and walked into the block to see the BC Maj Harry Beaves. He invited me into his office and began to tell me what he wanted from me. He began by saying that my last 6 months was not a leave period but a work one albeit it a reduced one. He expected 3 days every week as the minimum. I must have looked a bit shocked by this statement and he replied by saying, as he pointed at the phone on his desk, 'If you are not happy with that I can easily pick up that phone and have you report to Plymouth'. I was taken aback and responded with words to the effect that any way to treat someone who was in the Bty for 19 years. We were at an impasse so I asked what 'work' had he in mind and he said work for Maj Singer in RALONGS. I asked to be dismissed from his office and went to see Maj Singer. I never spoke again with the BC after that. On the way to the RALONGS at the end of the corridor I passed many of the Bty guys and some said a hearty hello with a hand shake and a couple just nodded and walked past. I entered Maj Singers office and said the BC has assigned me to you for my last 6 months. He grunted in his usual manner and I noted there was a Pilots Course in progress. I asked if he wanted a hand as I had some idea of being an NGLO to which he said he was quite capable and then asked me to sort out all his Vu Foils which had become disorganised. That was the ultimate put down for me. I said hello to RS Alan Vamplew who was RALONGS assistant and we chatted about all things in general. He had been a very good rugby player in the Bty and was in our SW District winning team. He said he was fed up here and was considering trying for GCHQ. That made me sit up and I asked what the entrance levels were. Several of our Matelots had gone there when they had left the Bty, Frank Jones, Alan Atkinson, Benny Benfield, Dixie Dean, Mac McCubbin to my knowledge. My morse was quite good and I was sure I could achieve the entrance level of 24 wpm I think it was. I had a long think. I then went looking around the old Bty and noticed there was an NGA course on at the time. I spoke to one of the guys who was instructing on it and offered my services if he wanted them. He said they were OK thanks.

At home I had a long hard think over what had happened on my return. I did not expect a hearty welcome and parade but I did expect a friendlier attitude after 3 years in BOAR. I found out I was entitled to go on some pre release briefings so I got hold of the document and booked almost all of them. I chose Mon, Wed and Fri at first then filled in a couple of Tue and Thur for good measure. I had no intention of attending many of them but it would keep me occupied. The locations were mostly in the S West so I had to travel. It took around two weeks to get confirmation for them and in that time I used to turn too around 0900hrs then go for a run around the newly created inner camp circuit and afterwards have a shower. Then I would go into the Morse Room and run a Biffer which I used to

hand in to CRS George Booth for marking. I told him I was considering GCHQ. Then I would have lunch and in the afternoon pop into RALONGS to see what was happening. Maj Singer was not all that bothered with me so that was OK. When I received all the pre release documents I presented him with them and he said there was no room for him to use me to which I said 'Oh goodness me I never thought of that'. I made sure the Pay Sgt got all my claims for me as well. During this period I received a call from Exeter to go to Tidworth for an interview for the Bournemouth ACIO which I had applied for as well.

I arrived at Tidworth in my ginger suit and went into the reception. The clerk there checked my details and told me to wait in an office close by. I had noticed him looking closely at my medal ribbons. In those days one GSM and perhaps a UN ribbon was usual so mine were a tad more. I entered the room and there were four other smartly dressed WOII's in there. I said hello and I again noticed they were staring at my ribbons. In due course we were all interviewed by two Maj's and asked a variety of questions, some of them I thought were nothing to do with the job as described but I did my best. Again they both looked at my ribbons and I noticed neither of them had any at all. As I left with a smart salute the Sgt Clerk said would you please wait behind. Oh dear I thought I have upset someone again. He came into the room he had put me in and said 'I think you are in with a shot so I asked you to stay. The others before you were not required'. Oh what a turn up I thought. After around an hour I was called into the Interview room again and one of the Maj's told me that they were impressed with my record and appearance etc but the post was given to someone else. They then said that it was almost certain that candidate would get the post as he had a compassionate reason and I was last to apply and so on and so on. He then said there was an even more prestigious post in Oxford coming up soon and that they both thought I would be ideal for that. It was a Tri Service Office in the heart of Oxford. I said OK I will give it a go then. They warned me that Maj Robertson was in command of the area and he was an Ex Duke of Boots man, very experienced and demanding Officer as well as a Rugby Fan. His office was in Reading and his outstations were, Oxford, Banbury, Slough, Aylesbury and that the Oxford building used to be his HQ and he thought that it still was.

A few weeks later I was called to Aldershot for the start of the process. It was to take two days. I booked into the Sgts mess and made myself known to anyone I bumped into. The next day we were all in our ginger suits and had to report to the ACIO in the town to complete the Army Entrance Test. It was the same one I had completed in 1963 in training at Oswestry. Strange I thought but all 6 of us did it. A couple said they thought it was quite hard. That evening a Sgt, who worked in the ACIO, came up to me at the Mess Bar and started chatting. I thought I had better keep my wits about me just in case he was a spy just checking up on me. He began by telling me that I was the only one to get 100% on the test that morning. A couple of the other guys did not do so well. He also said that if a person walked into an ACIO and got the same score as me they would try and talk them into getting a commission. Well well I thought, why didn't Maj Turner from Records make me take a test when he wrote me off at RAGTE. Next day the interviews took place. I was third to go into the room. There were two officers sat down at a table with a chair opposite for the candidate. I marched in and saluted. One said take a seat please but the other kept looking at the file on his desk. He is going to use the Intimidation technique I thought. He then looked up at me and at my ribbons. He pointed and said 'Been around I see?' I replied 'Just a bit Sir'. The interview lasted around an hour and I was grilled I can tell you. As I left the room a Sgt told me to wait in another room close by. He came in a while later and said he thought I had got the job but they had two more to see. After the interviews were over I was called back into the office and offered the position subject to me passing the Month's Recruiters Course at Sutton Coldfield. I agreed and went back home to let the wife and the Bty know. I never went into the Bty again after that as a serving Soldier.

I attended some of the day pre releases courses and quickly found out some were just going through the motions. One for the Police was especially like that. It was an all day one and the first session went on about the role of Ex Servicemen meant to them. The next session began with the criteria for applying which stated an age limit of 40 years. I put my hand up and said that I was over 40 and I guessed some others here were in the same boat. The presenter said there were no exceptions and I began to argue why was that not stated anywhere on the documentation we all had. He did not seem that bothered so I asked if I could leave as I was wasting his time and mine as well. He said OK and as I got up to leave four others did the same.

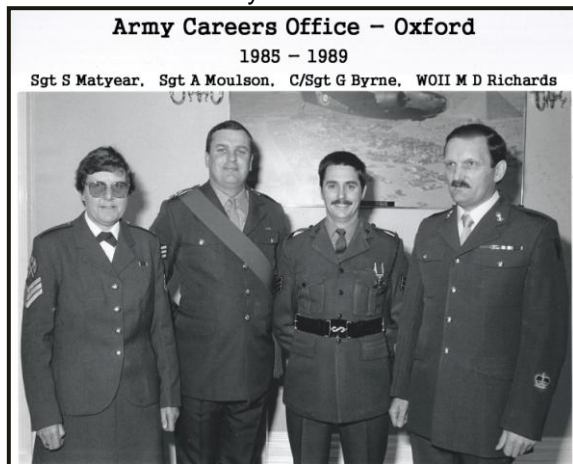
One day I received my Recruiters course instructions to report to Sutton Coldfield. On the course were two types of candidates. One like me to become the WOII Office Manager of which there were

four others and the potential Recruiters, about 14 who were all young Sgts. We did the same course strangely. The instructors were all aging Officers who I guessed were all Ex Rankers and one in particular who always seemed to want us to know it. He sort of looked down on us so I decided to play it cool and one day to show him who was boss. The course was mainly boring with SOP's galore on how we should approach every conceivable situation. The 'Book' was full on legal stuff including The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act which seemed to be subject to how one interpreted any given situation. Much attention was paid to getting the right recruit into the right Unit though which I thought was good. The most difficult to get into was The Int Corps where it could take almost a year to get through all the hoops and over all the hurdles. We had sessions where we played Recruiter or candidate on camera and in some of those I mostly mucked around. One time the Instructor came into a session where I was playing the Recruiter and a Guardsman Sgt was acting as the candidate. He was in tears laughing and we were told off and as the instructor left us to carry on we both burst out in raucous laughter.

One lunch break I went back to my cabin and turned on my portable TV just to catch the news. It was 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1986 1300hrs to be precise and I was watching the Space Shuttle launching then suddenly it exploded. Like many millions I was stunned and thought this could not be happening. I watched and then had to report to the course again and told everyone. They had been in the bar or their rooms not knowing. Many thought I was joking but the news spread around very quickly. I do not recall any of the instruction the rest of that day. That evening I went to the phone box where there was a queue, to ring my wife, no mobiles of course, and we chatted about it.

One day we were all sat in the lecture room with the bolshy Officer I had mentioned before and he was posing a situation for us which I quickly realised was open ended. He pointed to various people for their answer shooting down their theories and then finally to me. This is my chance I thought and rambled on like a defence lawyer for some time giving various options. I had studied the Manual a lot and was confident of my stuff. We began a too and fro battle but I kept my calm and spoke with confidence prefixing most of my statements with phrases like 'But surely' or 'In that case' and 'well let's surmise that' and so on. He almost lost it and I then dropped the bombshell and said 'If you turn to page so and so Para whatever and line something it states quite clearly etc' He changed the subject after that. The other guys on the course all thought I was a hero after that battle as I had kept my cool throughout. A good night in the mess followed.

I passed and had a time to report to Reading to meet the Maj and his WOI. Then I was told to go to Bicester and book myself into the Mess and next day report to Oxford ACIO St Giles. I met the crew



there and made myself at home. The Building was impressive with 5 floors. The Army had the ground and 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, the RAF the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the RN the 3<sup>rd</sup>. There was a basement which was set up as a changing room and a testing room with VCR and a TV. Maj Robertson would come to my Office every Friday to conduct any enlistments I had for him and then he would hang around in his massive office reading the paper or something. All I wanted to do was go back home to Poole with my family. Once when he left the office I passed him on the road in my car but he did not recognise me.

He was a hard taskmaster but I altered some of the procedures and introduced having a photo of the candidate on the front cover of their file. I

made up a board with a card for each applicant which was moved to the right at each stage of their procedure. He did acknowledge it was much more effective that way. I also visited all the other Offices to get to know the staff there and we had to go to Reading around once a month as well. I also had to go to Sandhurst once a year to conduct enlistments for the Officer Cadets along with all the other Office Managers of our area. That was quite a task and once as I was checking all the details of one candidate it transpired that he had been living with his parents in Kenya within the time frame where it had to be shown on his docs. It was not so I called in one of the officials to check. This young Cadet sat there like he owned the place and talked down to me all the time. He was taken to the side and after about 10 mins returned a tad more compliant. He said his Dad was a General or something



and he thought that was sufficient for me to know. I replied that I was not checking his Dad's documentation but his and it was not in order. There was a line of Guards Drill Sgt's standing tall in the corridor and I watched as this young Cadet walked by them. He will be trouble I thought. In time Maj Robertson retired and his replacement was Lt Col the Lord Allenby. We got on very well and he always called me Mr Richards. When we had enlisted all the candidates I had for him we would go to a nearby Pub for a beer and lunch. He was not a tall man and as we entered the bar he would say hello to the staff and say in a loud manner 'A tankard of your best ale for us both please landlord. What do you recommend?'

One trip he told me that the MOD were going to purchase the office and turn it into a show piece. It carried a grade 2 Listing which was mainly for the windows and fireplaces. He told me I was to be in charge of all the refurbishment and had organised all the sub contractors to come to the office the following week for a meeting. They assembled in his office and we all sat around the table where he introduced us all to each other. He then said, pointing at me 'This is Mr Richards and he will be in charge of everything. He will make sure things go to plan.' I had arranged that we would move into two of the Four Married Quarters in Slade Park which was inside the TAVR grounds. The RAF and RN into one and us into the other. That was for around 3 months until the Offices were completed. I had been given a budget of £22,000 for the furnishings and fittings so poured through all the relevant catalogues to find what I wanted. I came in at £20,000 so that was good. We had a grand opening and the next week invited many teachers and career advisors from our area to see what exactly we did. Some were a bit sceptical and anti but at the end of the day I have to say most were with us. The career master of a Blackbird Leys school invited me to come and give a talk and a little fitness session to his class that were due to leave school next year. I had to explain that taking kids on fitness was not within my remit but he said he would be there as well as the PT Teacher to oversee it all. We had a very long chat and all was finally approved by the Schools and the Army. I drove to the School in my Combats wearing my Green Beret and was escorted to the Careers Officers room. On the way a couple of students walked in front of me and began jeering and making comments. The person escorting me told them to go away but they continued harassing me. Safe in the office I related my concerns but was assured it happened a lot. I spoke to the students and then we went outside for a little bit of Physical. This one student was just out to cause trouble and taunted me all the time. He was just plain insolent and disruptive. I had enough of him so called him out to the front. He sized me up and offered me a fight so I called his Careers Officer over and repeated what he had just said. The lad seemed to quieten down a bit and was taken away. There were no further incidents after that. I have to say the girls worked harder than the guys and I told some of them how much I was impressed with their work ethics and that they would fit into the Army very well.

Recruiting was all about numbers I found out and at one meeting in Aldershot comparisons were made of the all Offices. Mine were not at the top of total enlistments for the area it covered and that made me think. When I returned I went through the figures and then the figures for retention over 6 months, one year and the time during my post. Next time when Lord Allenby visited I presented the figures to him. Around a month later he told me he had presented the figures to Aldershot and they had completed a similar check only to find my office had the best retention figures in the district. My argument was it does not matter how many you get through the door it is how many stay that counts.

One day Lord Allenby invited me and my wife and the WOI at Banbury with his wife to accompany him to the House of Lords for a visit. That was something special. At lunch we all went into the restaurant and ordered food and as I looked around I could see many Lords and noticed Lord Willie Whitelaw at the next table. I waved hello to him. In time I had achieved all I could as Office Manager and decided to leave the Army and return to Poole. I had bought a house in Bicester so put it on the market. Luckily we had a buyer and as we had visited Poole and found a house there all was set for the move. In Dec 1989 we moved into the house I still live in. It was good to be back in Poole and out of the Army. I had achieved a lot but my fate was in my hands and apart from serving (?) with the BC I have no regrets. That would have not been the case if I had not done the final Exercise in Norway or been deployed to the Falklands. Had I missed both of those I would have been so very bitter.

Getting a job in Civvy Street was not easy and I had to lower my expectations quite a lot. I had thought things would be easier but I was looked at by some with suspicion and they thought I would take over their empire.