

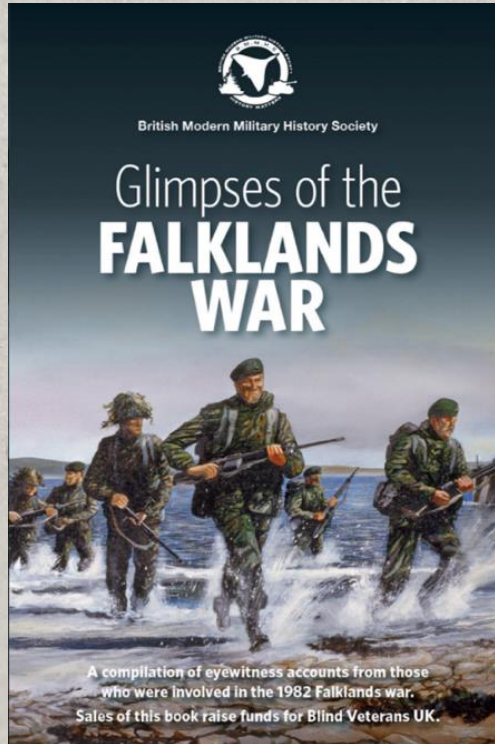


Glimpses of the Falklands War

British Modern Military History Society

Editors: Andy and Jerry Cockeram

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This is the third compilation of eye-witness accounts published in the remarkably short space of 13 months by the British Modern Military History Society ([BMMHS](https://www.bmmhs.org)) in their 'Glimpses of War' series, initiated under the impetus of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sales of each book aptly raise funds for Blind Veterans UK, a registered military charity.

The first two volumes of 'Glimpses of War' (published May and October 2021 respectively) each covered a range of modern conflicts, whereas Glimpses of the Falklands War (published to mark its 40th anniversary) covers exactly what it says. It is all the more cohesive and effective for being so focussed. All aspects of the conflict and its background are covered chronologically in thematic chapters, with accounts by veterans on both sides, as well as by Anglo-Argentines and Falkland Islanders. There are also poignant reflections on the aftermath of this war and on reconciliation.

The decision to create this commemorative Falklands edition was made only in November 2021, with a call for contributors. The appeal obviously touched a cord, with the editors tapping into an unexpectedly rich vein of vivid memories as they were inundated with personal accounts, photos and diary extracts, most of them never before published. Putting pen to paper was clearly cathartic for many veterans and Islanders.

The chapters 'Medics, Padres ... and a Lawyer' and 'Reflections 40 Years On' will certainly resonate with Friends of Millbank, as well as anyone else interested in military medicine or nursing, with it coming as no surprise to read that friends and foe were treated alike and with dignity and compassion throughout. I was very pleased to see that three Friends of Millbank (John Burgess, David Jackson and James Ryan) have contributed their moving accounts of the





struggle to save lives ashore,¹ alongside excellent contributions by naval nurses Liz Ormerod, Geraldine Carty and Nicci Pugh from HMHS Uganda.² Several other contributions elsewhere have medical relevance.

The date of publication, 14 June 2022, commemorates the liberation of Stanley and the ending of the Falklands War 40 years ago. The fighting may have ended then, but the mental and physical scars of this conflict remain, as is evident in several accounts here. The healing is still going on. The book is dedicated to all those who were touched by this war and to those who fought and died for freedom and the right to self-determination.

The BMMHS editorial team, led by brothers Andy and Jerry Cockeram, are truly to be congratulated for their indefatigable efforts in bringing together this superb collection of eye-witness accounts, often enhanced with touches of humour and humanity, all in the space of some seven months. A printing error affected page numbering in the List of Contributors in the first print-on-demand copies, rapidly spotted and rectified within days – potentially adding to future rarity value in what will doubtless prove a popular book.

'Glimpses of the Falklands War' provides an excellent insight into how individuals react and adapt to the challenges and shocks of a closely fought war, without air superiority, against a determined, professional and powerful enemy (especially in the air), thousands of miles away. The lessons from this war and its mass casualty situations remain as relevant now as forty years ago, indeed even more so.³ The book is a glimpse of today.

The overriding message from this war is its clarion call to protect freedom and the right of self-determination, in the face of aggression, whether by Galtieri, Putin or another. This was eloquently stated on behalf of the Falkland Islanders in the mother of parliaments:

"They may be small in number, but they have the right to live in peace, to choose their own way of life and to determine their own allegiance."

Margaret Thatcher (Prime Minister), quoted from Hansard, 3 April 1982

I highly recommend 'Glimpses of the Falklands War' to you, and the others in this series.

David Vassallo
Chairman, Friends of Millbank
21 June 2022

¹ The personal accounts by John Burgess, David Jackson and James Ryan are reproduced, with permission, in the Glimpses of War section of the Friends of Millbank website, at <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/gow/>

² For an excellent overview of the work of HMHS Uganda, replete with eye-witness accounts by staff and patients, see '*White Ship – Red Crosses*' (ed. Nicci Pugh), now in its 6th edition.

³ Readers wishing to examine these lessons in more detail are referred to the British Army Review, No.173 (Autumn 2018), an official MOD publication which includes a special section on the lessons of the Falklands Conflict. For a medical perspective, Historical Branch (Army) has prepared a very useful Battlefield Reader, 'The Falklands War: Medical Aspects', with accompanying documents, available on request to serving personnel.





Chairman's Extras

Here are just a few of the many gems in 'Glimpses of the Falklands War' that resonated with me: Margaret Thatcher, eavesdropping on a conversation with a bomb-disposal team trying to defuse an unexploded bomb aboard HMS Antrim: 'Well, if he's still alive after the war I would like to meet him' – and she did.⁴

Unexpected humour: 'I had become the first, and perhaps only, person to have his life raft sunk by a Sea Dart missile!'.⁵ And for a story featuring an even bigger missile (the two-ton Sea Slug), whose title could be straight out of Gilbert and Sullivan, read: The Chinese laundryman who tried to jump ship.⁶ Look for the punch lines.

Emotion: 'Finally, the other body is committed to the deep and I look up at the captain who has tears streaming down his face. It is only then I notice so have I.'⁷

Humility: 'My abiding memory is of attending to and comforting a burned Welsh Guardsman who was sufficiently alert to be taking stock of his surroundings and ask what my rank epaulettes meant. When I told him they meant I was a naval lieutenant (... equivalent of a captain in the army) he actually stiffened to attention on his mattress ... "Sorry, Sir, didn't know. Thank you for 'elpin' me though, it's really good of you."'⁸

Bravery: Historian Nick Brazil has written a great tribute to Hugh Clark, Sea King pilot who flew his helicopter into the thick smoke from the burning RFA Sir Galahad so his crew could winch many men to safety, and who directed the downdraft from his rotors so as to blow life rafts away from the burning ship.⁹

Coincidentally, 'Glimpses' contains a personal testimony for the actions of this helicopter crew by a survivor in one of these life rafts.¹⁰

Helicopter Casevac – and the power of touch. Fred Greenhow's account of helicopter casevac missions on Mount Tumbledown is inspiring. He recounts the words of Sam Drennan, the helicopter pilot, describing his crewman caring for a severely injured soldier: 'He was in a terrible state. Although it was freezing cold, Jay took off his gloves and held his hand really tight. All the time he never let go of Jay's hand Indelibly printed in my mind is Jay holding this dying lad's hand. He looked as if he was willing his strength to go from him to the other guy – and this lad did survive. Jay, who was twenty-one at the time, told me later that he was determined that he wouldn't let him die. He said, 'To see a guy the same age as me, with so much life left in him, dying – I couldn't let that happen'.¹¹

A similar real-life scenario is depicted in the painting, 'What matters most', by military artist Stuart Brown, featuring a young healthcare assistant holding the hand of an Ebola victim, consoling and willing him to survive – and he did. This painting, commissioned by the QARANC Association, hangs in HQ Army Medical Services, Robertson House, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Camberley.

The tragedy of war: Mick Southall was one of five 17-year-old Paratroopers who had joined the Army together and were serving with 3 PARA. His account of some of them being injured or killed is heart-rending. He describes his

⁴ See: Mick Fellows, 'Getting aboard HMS Antrim – Unexploded Bomb', pp.178-187, specifically p. 185

⁵ See: Lee Tindall-Jones, 'The attack on HMS Coventry', pp.238-235, specifically p.233

⁶ See: Peter Galloway, 'The Chinese laundryman who tried to jump ship', pp. 307-308

⁷ See: Brum Richards, 'Burial at Sea', p.268

⁸ See: Alex Manning, 'Treating the casualties at Fitzroy', pp. 271-272, specifically p.272

⁹ See: Nick Brazil, 'A Hero of Fitzroy – Hugh Clark', pp.269-271

¹⁰ See: Steve Walsh, 'Attack on Sir Galahad', pp. 259-262, specifically p.261

¹¹ See: Fred Greenhow, 'Battle for Mount Tumbledown', pp.301-305





emotions on failing to save one of his friends who was fatally wounded on his 18th birthday: 'This was the worst thing that happened for me on Mount Longdon. I know it affected others as well. All these very young lads had done our best for our wounded friend. We had carried him, done all we could, and he still died on the side of that mountain.'¹²

The UK was still sending 17-year-old soldiers to war in September 2000, as I realised when operating upon casualties on board RFA Sir Percivale following a successful hostage rescue mission in Sierra Leone (Op BARRAS). The youngest casualty was a 17-year-old Paratrooper (he survived).

Foxtrot Four – Six crewmen from HMS Fearless were killed when their Landing Craft Foxtrot Four was bombed and sunk. Foxtrot Four is the only Royal Navy vessel lost in this war whose final resting place has never been located.¹³ Foxtrot Four and its dead are remembered still, with an annual memorial service on 8 June, initially on HMS Fearless and now on her successor HMS Albion.¹⁴

Sadness – 'I have always admired the British, and it made me very sad that the only war I ever fought in was against the British.' (Sub-Lieutenant Carlos Vasquez, 5th Marine Infantry Battalion)¹⁵

Leadership Lieutenant Colonel David Chaundler commanding 2 PARA: 'As dawn broke, we captured the final objective – Wireless Ridge – and we could see Stanley. We were counter-attacked twice when suddenly in the valley below us the Argentine Army broke. Our tanks and machine guns were firing into the valley as were the mortars and the artillery when something inside me said STOP, you are slaughtering these people to no good purpose. (There is a moral dimension in war). I ordered a ceasefire. This was some seven hours before the official ceasefire.'¹⁶

Reflections 40 Years On Tim McClement, second in command HMS Conqueror: 'It was imperative for the Islanders, the UK's international reputation and the rest of the world to understand that the use of armed force to take over another country is not acceptable and would not be allowed.'¹⁷

Chairman's Reflections on the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands War

In 1982, the Falklands War was not the only war. The Soviet Union was then involved in a brutal war in Afghanistan, attempting to crush Afghan resistance by overwhelming might. Now, forty years on, Putin's Russia has initiated an even more brutal war against an independent Ukraine, trying to crush resistance by indiscriminate destruction – just as Putin did in Chechnya, Georgia and Syria. A leopard does not change its spots. Millions of civilians are fleeing the country while Ukraine fights for freedom and its very existence. Putin may yet lead Russia into a larger war of aggression, and his modus operandi is clearer than Hitler's Mein Kampf. Moral leadership and courage are called for in perhaps the biggest challenge the world has faced since the end of the Second World War

David Vassallo
Chairman, Friends of Millbank
16 May 2022

¹² See: Mick Southall, 'Mount Longdon – Heavy Fighting and Casualties', p.291

¹³ See: Anthony Lawrence, 'The Tragedy of Foxtrot 4', pp. 265-266

¹⁴ Forces Net (13 June 2022): 'Hunt to find Falklands 'lost wreck' as HMS Albion holds service for Foxtrot 4' <https://www.forces.net/falklands-1982/hunt-find-falklands-lost-wreck-hms-albion-holds-service-foxtrot-4>

¹⁵ See: Chris Nash, 'An Anglo-Argentine Perspective', pp. 454-459, specifically p.458

¹⁶ See: David Chaundler, 'Battle for Wireless Ridge and Stanley', pp.310-312

¹⁷ See: Tim McClement, in 'Reflections 40 Years On', pp.488-489

