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To begin this reflection, I wish to pay tribute to my medical staff working alongside me in the Falklands. Many I had known a long time, but of the eight when we left UK, I only returned with four. L/Cpl Lovett and Pte Dodsworth were killed. Sgt Bradley and Pte Kennedy were wounded.

On Good Friday 1982 we sailed down Southampton Water on the *Canberra*. The send-off was terrific, from the dockside and past Southsea. The *Canberra* and her willing P&O staff looked after us superbly and it was a delightful way to go to war.

On the way south we trained others in first aid and enlarged the medical team. We practiced landings on Ascension and life was good. When we sailed south from there the mood changed in an instant. A blood donor session indicated when we might be involved in land conflict. The nights got darker, the seas rougher and colder. The sinking of the *General Belgrano* elicited no joy, rather the fear of swimming in those waters. We then had news of the loss of the HMS *Sheffield* and we knew we would be landing and fighting.

On D-2 we transdecked from *Canberra* to HMS *Intrepid*. We did it at night in the South Atlantic swell, out from the side of the ship, down scramble nets with full kit into a landing craft. Amazingly we did not lose anyone. Enroute to HMS *Intrepid* we saw the silhouette of the carrier HMS *Hermes* close by, putting up the Harriers that protected us from above.

D Day saw us in landing craft assaulting the beach at Port San Carlos. It was daylight as we went ashore and we expected to be shot as the ramp went down. Luckily, we were unopposed and after wading through the deep and cold water we made our way to the local settlement. We set up our medical facility in the bunk house, a community facility for farmers as they moved across the island. We were made most welcome and it was good both to be ashore and to talk to the islanders.

We received our first casualty, aircrew from a downed helicopter, but the war was mainly overhead and aimed at the ships in the sound and offshore. On D+2 we had a dreadful incident with nine of 3 Para being wounded. I flew to the site with my medical team and others but in a glancing blow the Sea King struck its rear rotor on the ground. After gaining height again and spinning uncontrollably, the helicopter crashed a second time. Luckily it was into the soft ground, allowing us to get out safely and treat the wounded.

We evacuated the wounded on further helicopters and returned to Port San Carlos. There, that Sunday morning, we had our worst bombing raids. I have huge admiration for the Argentinian Air Force and what they did in their fast jets, flying so low down the valley into our fire, knowing that they often had insufficient fuel to return to Argentina.

We heard of the success of 2 Para in Goose Green and had orders to move forward to Teal Inlet. My medical team walked, but I was offered a trip in a helicopter. We set up in an empty house, dug an excellent air raid shelter and waited until morning. That night it snowed heavily.

The following day it was onwards to Estancia House. The farm owners were superb, helping us set up in their house with others outside. Many of our casualties were suffering from the effects of having permanently wet feet, made worse by the cold. We had some

medical supplies but our best news was the arrival of Captain Mike Von Bertele and two of his medics.

On the glorious sunny afternoon before the assault on Mount Longdon, I and my team left on a flatbed behind a tractor, carrying stores as well as people. Capt Von Bertele and his team would travel up afterwards in a tracked vehicle as soon as possible. We lay low in the grass as the sun set and once darkness was established, we set out for the silent march east to Mount Longdon. It was a calm and clear night and we could see the silhouette of Two Sisters to the south of us. In line we crossed the Murrell River on ladders and continued to the western edge of Mount Longdon.

The quietness was suddenly broken with the first landmine detonation and injury. We were greeted with flares and machine guns. On that signal we ran up the west side of Longdon and I managed to find the comparatively safe gulley later depicted in the RAMC painting of Mount Longdon. It was only in retrospect that we realised we had run up the side of the mountain, over the rocks, carrying full kit, with no body armour, into a minefield and direct enemy fire. Not all made it.

Casualties arrived fast and we treated them as best we could in the dark and cold and constant fire. The mortars were the worst as we had no protection. From the small and sheltered gulley the tracer passed safely overhead. Mike Von Bertele then arrived with his team to provide excellent support. We were able to get some casualties out in the few Bandvagn (BV) available. With daylight we were helped by the occasional helicopter, but regrettably we had to hold many patients in our location before they could be evacuated.

Many casualties occurred on the rocks just above and to the sides of our gulley. Many were gunshot wounds but we had frequent injuries and deaths from mortars. Capt. Von Bertele was inspirational in the way he left the gulley, collecting patients and bringing them back to comparative safety. The noise was tremendous, enemy fire close by and with our own artillery inward onto the hills. We could also hear the naval guns firing from offshore, with impact on the hills around.

Life on the mountain was grim. It was the middle of winter and I remember it being dark most of the time. Although the mountains were low in altitude, the wind and weather would come off the South Atlantic and Antarctica. As the fighting quietened, my medical sergeant, Sgt Bradley, went out in a BV to retrieve casualties just south of us. Regrettably they hit a minefield and after he got back he could give no more.

On the second night 3 Para, assisted by 2 Para, made better progress and as day broke it was apparent that the enemy were retreating. Orders were given for the entry to Stanley and Mike and I decided that on this occasion he should lead on foot and I and my team would follow up in a vehicle as soon as possible. When it soon became apparent that the enemy were capitulating, I left in a BV and headed to Moody Brook. I somewhere overtook Mike and a helicopter saw us as the leading vehicle and dropped off the 3 Para regimental flag. We attached it to a Bangalore torpedo and I carried it into the western edge of Stanley where I rightly handed it to a regimental officer to carry forward.

Stanley was a mess. We moved into a damaged house with no electricity, and little food and water. My medics managed to acquire an Argentinian G Wagen and located Argentinian rations. Mike soon arrived and we plotted to relieve the Falklands' Island hospital. This was in the then Argentinian sector, separated by a white line. That night, he and I, with a

medic apiece “relieved” the hospital. The reception we had from Falkland Islands staff was terrific and we spoke as fellow professionals with the doctors and other Argentinian healthcare staff.

A few days later the HMHS *Uganda* anchored in Stanley Sound. She was the main hospital ship and I and Colour Sergeant Faulkner, who had re-joined my team, were able to get aboard. As well as a most welcome shower and meal we were able to meet some of our patients. I well recall a soldier who had been shot in the right shoulder with an injury to his neck. He had a tracheostomy and could not speak, his right arm was immobilised and with that he could not write, but slowly with his left hand in pencil and on a notepad he wrote: “*Thank you doc and colour for saving my life*”. Tremendous soldiers.