

Culture, Combat and Killing: A Comparative Study of the British Armed Forces at War in the Falklands

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Abstract

This thesis utilises the direct memories of combat veterans to explore the importance of issues such as culture and combat arena and role to the experience of combat and killing. By utilising oral history, in conjunction with retrospective memoirs and contemporary documentary sources, I have compiled and collated a variety of experience in order to illustrate how war impacts at the personal level, and the social bonds and processes that become essential in combat. The thesis explores the role of men in combat, how they related to the act of killing, and how that experience differed in various combat arenas, be it land, sea or air. It is a comparative study of the social and cultural forces present in the British armed forces, and how they mediated and dictated the combat and killing, by comparing the experiences of soldiers, sailors and airmen. The variety of experience has allowed one to analyse and identify salient trends in military culture, and the long-term consequences and enduring nature of these aspects of military life on the individual.

The conflict analysed in this study is the Falklands War of 1982. While short in duration, as the last war fought by the British outside of an international coalition, it was a truly British conflict, and as such the attitudes and reactions to the experience of war were not clouded by external cultures. It also involved all three branches of the armed forces in direct combat, providing the opportunity to analyse how combat environments and weapons shape experience. Significantly, the war was also fought by professionals, who had joined the military in a time of peace. While considerable work has been done in analysing combat experience, it is predominately dedicated to the First and Second World Wars, instances where the majority of participants were civilians in uniform. Yet the experiences of professional servicemen at war were remarkably different and merit further study. This dissertation seeks to continue the trend of analysis of individual combat experience, but in contrast this research seeks to place the experience of the professional British serviceman in its proper context, alongside his historical predecessor, in order to help chart how the cultural responses to combat have changed over the twentieth century for those who have experienced it in all of the combat arenas.

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Introduction

I

This thesis is a study of the cultural and social history of the British armed forces at war in the Falklands in 1982, and how and why they engaged in acts of violence and killing. Via a comparative combat analysis, through the use of predominately oral history, it seeks to identify and explore the differences in culture and social structures of the British military as it was engaged in three combat arenas: land, sea and air. The differing cultures of these units, and the different ways in which they were engaged, had a direct impact on the combat experience of the individual, and significantly affected the ways in which combat and killing were perceived and engaged with. In addition, the concept of enduring military identity and memory for professional servicemen who have carried out such acts will be explored. The contrasts and similarities shall be identified and analysed so as to better understand the concept of combat experience in the professional British armed forces, a focus that is lacking from the existing historiography and one that this thesis aims to provide.

The conflict I have chosen to analyse is the 1982 Falklands War. While short in duration, as the last war fought by the British outside of an international coalition, it was a truly British conflict; save a small number of Gurkhas all the personnel who took part were British, and as such the attitudes and reactions to the experience of war are not clouded by external cultures, but reflect those of British military institutions and values. It also involved all three branches of the armed forces in direct combat. Added to this is the fact that the war was fought by professionals, who had joined the military in a time of peace. Thus, this study is also an analysis of the culture of British professional armed forces at war. The particular branch of the armed forces that a man joined also had a profound effect on the way in which he experienced combat. While each service and combat arm had a particular class association, war did not differentiate between such an artificial construct as social class. Men were still involved in killing, though the manner with which they engaged in this role was different. Combat experience was mediated by physical and mental proximity to the violence, all of which could be amplified by the use of technology, and this is a major theme that will be explored within this study. Yet the different cultures of the different combat services

produced several differences, such as the motivations for fighting, and the environment in which he fought potentially magnified the effect of distance, both physical and mental, between belligerents, and the level of detachment with which their respective wars were fought. There were, however, several common themes between the three combat arenas. Regardless of the arm of the military they belonged to, men relied on their comrades, and fought for them first or foremost, rather than their country.

The study of combat culture cannot simply be an analysis of the period of hostilities. In order to understand fully the experience of combat, the motivations for putting oneself in that situation need also to be explored. This study has identified the direct influence of such motivations on how that combat was perceived by the individual, and how he endured and motivated himself when under stress. This is best understood by analysing the cultures of the various combat arms and how those men serving in them perceived issues such as combat. The recruitment literature that these services produced, what they promised and what they focused on to encourage men to join, and how that differed from the experience of war, are very important in this process. Such sources in relation to the professional British military have not been extensively analysed in a way such as this before, yet are vital sources. The literature reflects the institutional culture, and what it may have promised may have been different from reality, which would go to great lengths to explain the varying reactions to the war in the South Atlantic. To that end, this study has analysed the recruitment literature produced by the various arms of the British military, along with the Ministry of Defence, in conjunction with oral testimony of veterans in order to compile an understanding of the respective cultures of the professional British armed forces before the 1982 conflict, as they had a direct impact on how war, combat and killing were perceived when it broke out on 2nd April 1982.

When it comes to the study of combat itself, killing and war are synonymous. However, while killing was a central aspect of war, very few men who joined the British armed forces did so with the intention of killing, and very little thought was given to the action before it was forced upon them. Those men who joined the various arms of the British military in the era of the 1960s and 1970s did so for a variety of reasons, but only very rarely were they definitively focused on fighting and killing. Even those men who took up less overtly warlike roles within the military found themselves under fire during the

Falklands conflict, counter to whatever they may have expected when they joined. This was particularly true for the sailors of the Royal Navy. In the late twentieth century ships, very few men were responsible for directly firing upon the enemy; yet all were responsible for helping position and maintain the ship so that it could fulfil its primary role as a weapon of war. In order to fully understand the reactions to fulfilling such a role, it is essential that issues such as why men joined and put themselves in a position to be in combat, as such issues have a direct impact on whether such a situation was viewed positively or negatively.

Similarly, the short- and long-term effects of combat can be just as illustrative as the period before hostilities; indeed, an exploration of the social and psychological consequences of being under fire reveal significant characteristics about the nature of combat that would otherwise not be apparent. As such, this study gives a more complete view of the experience of combat than is otherwise available in other works.

II

Military history has seen a shift away from focusing extensively on the manoeuvres of battles or the decisions of generals, and instead looked to the individual soldier, sailor or airman, the agents ultimately responsible for the success or failure of battles. Whereas previous military history often recorded their participation for context, it rarely specifically analysed it in isolation. Recent military history, however, has diversified, in particular in the 21st Century, and there has been a renewed historical interest in the experience of such individuals. This renewed interest was begun by John Keegan's seminal *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme*,¹ which helped bring the topic into the mainstream of military history. However, this trend had in fact originated much earlier, and as a concept the analysis of professional combat experience can be traced back to Ardant du Picq's *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern Battle*,² work interrupted by the author's death in combat in 1870. After the Second World War, such an approach was revisited, most notably by S.L.A. Marshall. In his pioneering study *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*

¹ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London, 2004).

² Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern Battle* (8th Ed., translated by John N. Greely and Robert C. Cotton, New York, 1921).

in *Future War*, Marshall conducted an extensive survey of American troops, interviewing men in 400 Infantry companies from the Pacific and European theatres of war, and discovered that only 15% of those men had fired at enemy personnel or positions during an engagement, even when under direct attack and at high risk of death. It took the direct presence of a superior to encourage and provoke men into firing their weapons. The reason for their reluctance was not cowardice, rather a lack of 'offensive toughness.'³ While applying to America, and drawing questionable conclusions based on questionable methods according to Joanna Bourke,⁴ Marshall's work cannot help but raise questions about the British Infantry.

Such renewed interest in the field of combat studies, and the well publicised work of Marshall, has produced several excellent studies of the Second World War in recent years, most notably John Ellis' *The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II*⁵ and Paul Fussell's *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War*.⁶ While the preponderance for the study of the global conflicts is understandable given their cultural significance, it is unfortunate that the focus of this field remains predominately the era of the two World Wars. Even Bourke's 1999 *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* focused on American, Australian, and British servicemen in the First and Second World Wars and the Vietnam conflict, a comparison Richard Holmes also made in *Acts of War*.⁷ Yet such comparisons ignore some important cultural differences between the two nations. All of these authors draw on a variety of sources from servicemen across all branches of the military in order to form a composite picture, particularly Bourke, who seeks to demonstrate prevailing patterns across various conflicts. This dissertation seeks to continue the trend of analysis of individual combat experience, but also aims to deliberately compare and analyse how these differences were influenced by the theatre in which combat took place for British participants within a homogenous military force, something that is yet to be satisfactorily done. There were important distinctions in the

³ S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (New York, 1947), pp. 54-9.

⁴ Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (London, 1999), p. 76.

⁵ John Ellis, *The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II* (London, 1980).

⁶ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (New York, 1989).

⁷ Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (London, 2004).

ways in which land, naval and aerial combat were perceived by participants that have not been fully explored until now.

Another facet that distinguishes this study from previous scholarship is that the vast majority that deal with the combat experience of the British military focus too heavily on the Army; there has been very little analysis of the other combat arenas of air and sea. In regards to naval warfare, Keegan's *The Price of Admiralty: War at Sea from Man-of-War to Submarines*,⁸ Ronald Spector's *At War at Sea: Sailors and Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century*⁹ and *The Face of Naval Battle: The Human Experience of Modern War at Sea*,¹⁰ edited by John Reeve and David Stevens, are the only real meaningful contributions to this field. Indeed, Reeve himself has addressed the 'veil of invisibility'¹¹ that is drawn over the face of naval battle due to a lack of scholarship into the many factors that distinguish it from other combat environments. The ambiguities of modern naval warfare are best illuminated through a comparison to that which took place on land and in the air, something which has not adequately been done previously and which this study does specifically. By comparing and contrasting these combat arenas, the salient trends of the combat experience can and must be identified and understood; they were not all the same, and should not be considered as such. As it will be seen in the following chapters, the combat environment also played an active role in shaping the culture of the various units engaged within them. The study of the cultures and processes that shape these servicemen, from motivation for joining the services, through training and on to combat, are crucial in understanding their reactions to such an event.

In addition, and perhaps most significantly, the scholarship is currently dominated by the study of civilian soldiers in the two world wars, men who were plucked from peace and plunged into war. However, unlike the much-analysed First and Second World Wars, the Falklands War was fought by professionals, men who had chosen the military as a vocation prior to any hostilities. The fact remains that a civilian who temporarily becomes a soldier had a very different outlook to a professional who had spent his

⁸ John Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty: War at Sea from Man-of-War to Submarine* (London, 1990).

⁹ Ronald Spector, *At War at Sea: Sailors and Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2001).

¹⁰ John Reeve and David Stevens (eds.), *The Face of Naval Battle: The Human Experience of Modern War at Sea* (Crows Nest, 2003).

¹¹ John Reeve, 'Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle', in Reeve and Stevens, *The Face of Naval Battle*, p. 7.

entire career in a military environment, and by going to war was in fact doing his job. Consequently, a study of professional British service culture, such as this, is highly pertinent. Samuel Hynes has identified that, as the Second World War was the second major war fought within a generation, it meant that

In 1939 there was a tradition of civilians at war. By then the first generation of civilian soldiers had written their books, and some of the men of the second generation had read them and even quoted them in their own books... They knew that men who were soldiers in modern wars came home again and reverted to being ordinary civilians. Soldiering was a temporary thing, a period you passed through, like high school. Any guy on the block could do it, should do it, would do it.¹²

Such a culture and belief therefore undoubtedly influenced their reactions to the war. Even veterans of Vietnam who recorded their experiences were often drafted, or volunteered, for a pre-set timeframe in order to complete a “tour,” where the language itself was used to convey the temporary nature of their military existence, rather than seeing out the whole war:

For these short-timers the war was a measured interval between home and home. In that situation, they were bound to hang on to their civilianness, learning the defensive rules of war – how not to get killed – but not really trying to become soldiers, not all the way through, like the regulars.¹³

What then were the experiences of regular soldiers at war, doing the jobs for which they had been trained? Servicemen like those of the British armed forces in the Falklands? They were regulars, professional soldiers who moved from serving in peacetime, to war, and then back to peace. They were men who went to war with units whose culture they had been indoctrinated into over a variety of periods, measuring between months and decades, rather than joining an arbitrary unit as the result of mass mobilisation or conscription. They were men who went to war not knowing how long it would last, but sure their unit would be there for the duration. Only then, in that

¹² Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London, 1998), pp. 145-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

unspecified time in the future, would they return home to normality, which in itself was not the normality of the civilian world but that of the peacetime soldier. Their entire identity was framed around being in the armed forces, rather than it being a temporary or enforced change from their civilian life to which they could return after demobilisation, and their reactions to combat are consequently bound up in such perceptions of their identity. Additionally, the impact of active service on military professionals, of actually doing the job for which they were trained, is something that has not been covered in the existing literature, with again an emphasis on the re-integration into civilian life of the civilian soldiers of the two world wars.

By analysing the British professional armed forces as a whole, this study is both distinct from, but complementary to, the work of Marshall and previous historians in similar fields, and deals with issues in a more scholarly way than the work of Hugh McManners, for example.¹⁴ By extending the time frame to analyse the cultural and social impact of serving in multiple branches of the professional armed forces, this study also builds upon the work of authors such as Nora Kinzer Stewart, who firstly focused only on the land forces rather than the Task Force as a whole, and, having first published within just 9 years of the conflict, could not analyse issues such as legacy.¹⁵ In contrast, this study can confidently tackle and explore such vital issues, analysing the enduring impact of military service for the professional British armed forces for the first time. My research provides a unique study of a unique experience, and seeks to place such an experience of the professional British serviceman in its proper context, alongside his historical predecessor, in order to help chart how the cultural responses to combat have changed over the twentieth century for those who have experienced it in all of the combat arenas.

In regards to the psychological cost of war, there continues to be extensive confusion as to the causes and significance of the damage combat can inflict upon the mind. The concept of psychological damage is not new, and became firmly entrenched in Britain following the First World War and the 1922 War Office Committee of Enquiry into the condition then known as “shell-shock.” As psychiatry has gained in professional

¹⁴ Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War* (London, 1994).

¹⁵ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos: Unit Cohesion in the Falklands/Malvinas War* (London, 1991).

credence so too has the concept of the psychological casualty in war and increasing attention has been paid to the phenomena first by psychologists, such as W.H.R. Rivers, and then increasingly historians. As such, the label attached to the concept of psychological injuries has gone through many semantic changes, from “shell shock” to “battle fatigue,” to the more modern “combat stress reaction” and “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,” but the root causes have remained the same. There is a vast scholarship on this topic from a psychological perspective, but in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, what emerged was a need to see psychological casualties as subjects of history, and not being unique to individual wars and caused by their unique circumstances, but rather as being a product of industrialised war throughout the twentieth century. In *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914 – 1994*¹⁶, Ben Shephard successfully analysed such issues from a historical perspective, and identified lessons applicable to future conflicts from the past. Prior to the Falklands, Britain lacked experience in how destructive late twentieth century warfare could be on human character, as it was only as attitudes towards psychological casualties changed in the 1970s that increasing research was done into this field. Those two nations who have such experience having fought wars in this period, however – the United States and Israel – have since pioneered the study of this affliction, and two of the most significant texts produced on this topic are the American Jonathan Shay’s *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*¹⁷ and the Israeli Zahava Solomon’s *Combat Stress Reaction: The Enduring Toll of War*.¹⁸ Yet neither of these texts focuses exclusively on professional servicemen; by exploring the results of studies and works carried out by non-British psychologists and historians, I have been able to compare the professional British experience with a variety of other nations in order to highlight important differences and issues in managing mental health. Furthermore, it has become clear that, despite extensive experience in Britain of psychological casualties in the twentieth century, there was little understanding of how to successfully treat the condition amongst modern health authorities for those men returning from the Falklands.

¹⁶ Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914 – 1994* (London, 2002).

¹⁷ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, 1994).

¹⁸ Zahava Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction: The Enduring Toll of War* (New York, 2003).

III

Despite the short duration of the Falklands War, there is an abundance of secondary literature in publication. The best of these remains Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins' *The Battle for the Falklands*,¹⁹ despite its publication the year after the war in 1983. The recent official history of the war, written by Sir Lawrence Freedman, is, like much of the historiography, focussed predominately on the command and diplomatic aspects of the conflict.²⁰ The aim of Freedman's work is to develop an objective analysis of the origins and conduct of the war with the use of otherwise unavailable official documents. This thesis, however, explores the far more subjective issue of combat experience as it appeared to the individuals tasked with carrying out the plans of the politicians and senior military figures that otherwise have tended to dominate military history. While the two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they do remain distinct.

Interestingly for this study, many of the dominant histories of the Falklands War, those that have become important components of the historiography of the conflict, are in fact primary sources, to an extent unlike any previous British military campaign. Since 1990 there has been a real upsurge in the publication of military memoirs as ordinary men sought to relate their experiences of war. What began with retrospective accounts of the First and Second World Wars, published long after the conclusion of hostilities, has evolved into an industry where accounts of the contemporary conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are produced and distributed within a very short time of their authors' return to Britain, and are eagerly consumed by the public. Such a trend has been driven by substantially increased levels of interest amongst the modern civilian population, perhaps now more cynical of the "official" accounts than their predecessors, in reading them. Furthermore, as war has returned to being an act carried out by a small, highly professional minority, contemporary civilians have less direct family experience of war to engage with, and thus are seeking out such accounts in large numbers. Falklands War veterans have benefitted from this increased level of interest amongst the public, and have been able to have many of their own accounts published, from both a high-level view to those of the ordinary squaddie. This study has made use of 25 memoirs from

¹⁹ Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (London, 1983).

²⁰ Sir Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign* (2 Volumes, London, 2005).

Falklands veterans, published between 1982 and 2012. In particular there was a flurry of publications around the 10th anniversary of the conflict, when the Task Force Commander, Sandy Woodward's, memoirs were first published, for example,²¹ the 25th anniversary in 2007, and most recently the 30th anniversary this past year.²² The public have similarly consumed such works with great interest, and even certain accounts, such as Ken Lukowiak's *A Soldier's Song*, despite its more negative view of war that is more akin to the disillusionment literature of the First World War, have become extremely popular.²³ The majority of those memoirs published concern the land forces, and 15 veterans of the battles on East Falkland have contributed their memoirs to this thesis, as opposed to a mere 5 from the sailors of the Royal Navy, who were deployed in far greater numbers on Operation Corporate. This confirms, and goes some way to explaining, Reeve's comments above regarding how naval warfare retains much of its mystique in the public consciousness. That there is only a small number of memoirs in circulation from those pilots involved in aerial operations, 4 of which were utilised in this thesis, can be attributed to the far smaller number of pilots deployed on operations to the South Atlantic.²⁴

Autobiography and memoir has been a source of some contention amongst historians. Philippe Lejeune highlighted many of these difficulties,²⁵ that since the nineteenth century, autobiography and memoir have been treated as being dangerous to historians' attempts to establish an objective account through scholarly discipline, as they are very explicitly documents that are attempting to tell stories of the past from their own particular point of view. In the modern era, however, much of the scepticism is now eroding, and autobiography is now seen as being valuable sources in social and cultural history in particular, contexts where historians are more interested in the attitudes and assumptions present in the writings than they are in the factual claims the authors

²¹ Sandy Woodward (with Patrick Robinson), *One Hundred Days: the Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (London, 1992).

²² Woodward's memoirs were re-issued, and new books included: Tony Banks, *Storming the Falklands: My War and After* (London, 2012) and Harry Benson, *Scram! The Gripping First-Hand Account of the Helicopter War in the Falklands* (London, 2012).

²³ Ken Lukowiak, *A Soldier's Song: True Stories from the Falklands* (London, 1999).

²⁴ Other memoirs used included an anthology of experience, and those written by a journalist who had observed a campaign and a Falkland Islands civilian who published his diary of the Argentine occupation. For more detailed references, please consult the Bibliography.

²⁵ Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography* (ed. Paul John Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary, Minneapolis, 1989).

make.²⁶ Thus, autobiography is potentially a valuable source in the context of this study. Daniel Schachter wrote:

Memory is a central part of the brain's attempt to make sense of our experiences and to tell coherent stories about it. These tales are all we have of our pasts, and so they are potent determinants of how we view ourselves and what we do.²⁷

In the context of this study, autobiography is therefore a potentially useful revelatory tool in the study of not only the impact of military cultures at the time of an event but also their long-term legacy on the mindset of those who served in the armed forces.

There is, however, a legitimate concern that factual inaccuracies, or deliberate and malicious distortion of the truth can occur, and that autobiographies and memoirs have been written for a specific purpose and with an additional agenda, rather than simply for posterity, to glorify the subject or distance him from disasters that occurred during the campaign. Such accusations of sensationalism, given the increasing sales of such texts, are easy to understand. It is therefore right that, like all historical sources, autobiography should not be taken as gospel, but rather subjected to rigorous academic examination. But autobiographies are potentially such significant and rich historical sources that it would be foolish to exclude them, as Popkin has argued:

What the autobiographer claims to do by inherent right is what the historian laboriously seeks to accomplish by roundabout means: to describe the experience of the past from the inside, in its emotional as well as its objective dimensions. The historian hesitatingly suggests what it might have been like to be a slave before the Civil War or to have been in the trenches during World War I; the memoirist *knew*, even if the historian comes along to raise doubts about the details of an account or to wonder whether it represents a typical experience.²⁸

²⁶ Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography* (London, 2005), pp. 15, 19.

²⁷ Daniel Schachter, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁸ Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography*, p. 24.

Some historians, such as Wilhelm Dilthey, have gone as far to suggest that autobiography is a genuine source of knowledge, and the highest form of insight into human experience.²⁹ While this is perhaps slightly too enthusiastic, by utilising autobiographies, historians can achieve a level of democratisation of history, as those more traditionally marginalised groups can be given a voice.³⁰ In the context of this study into the Falklands War, this means looking at those of ordinary soldiers who experienced war at the “sharp end,” as well as the traditional works of senior officers. The Falklands was a short war, and one that was well documented by the media, meaning that such potential for either honest mistake or malicious embellishment is somewhat reduced, or at the very least easy to identify. Furthermore, several of the memoirs reproduced, such as Ian Inskip’s *Ordeal by Exocet: HMS Glamorgan and the Falklands War 1982*³¹ and John Lippiett’s *War and Peas: Intimate Letters from the Falklands War, 1982*³², are based on contemporary diaries kept during the conflict, which in many ways helps avoid the distortion that would otherwise come with their retrospective nature. Furthermore, even with their specific leaning and tone, they are still useful documents for interpreting how the experience of combat manifested itself for their authors.³³ Additionally, some books have been written for cathartic reasons, to help the author overcome the burden of psychological difficulty they have encountered as a result of their military service, a form of narrative therapy.³⁴ Thus they are extremely useful both as records of experience, and also as an indicators of how to overcome the social and psychological difficulties that afflict servicemen later in their lives.

The short nature of the Falklands conflict is reflected in regards to primary sources in the archives as there is still a low yield of material available, particularly in comparison with the First and Second World Wars. However, one resource which exists in comparative abundance is the oral history interviews of the Imperial War Museum’s Sound Archive. Great use has been made of these in this thesis, utilising 59 oral history

²⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁰ Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses* (Manchester, 1994), p. 154.

³¹ Ian Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet: HMS Glamorgan and the Falklands War 1982* (Rochester, 2002).

³² Rear Admiral John Lippiett, *War and Peas: Intimate Letters from the Falklands War, 1982* (Bosham, 2007).

³³ The best example is Nigel ‘Sharkey’ Ward, *Sea Harrier over the Falklands* (London, 2000).

³⁴ Two such texts are David Morgan’s *Hostile Skies: The Falklands Conflict Through the Eyes of a Sea Harrier Pilot* (London, 2006) and Tony McNally’s *Watching Men Burn: A Soldier’s Story. The Falklands War and What Came Next* (Wolvey, 2007).

interviews and sound recordings, and this study is the only one to analyse rigorously the Falklands War collection of the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive in a scholarly manner, rather than simply compile them in an anthology,³⁵ thus marking it out from other works on the conflict. Such rigorous exploration of the Sound Archive also led to the discovery of an audio diary recorded during the conflict by Nigel ‘Sharkey’ Ward, giving a crucial insight into his mentality and perceptions of combat as events occurred, rather than retrospectively through use of a formal interview at a later date.³⁶ However, one problem with the Sound Archive is that the majority of interviews concern officers of a higher rank; while useful, it is consequently very difficult to ascertain an ‘ordinary’ viewpoint. In addition, and in direct contrast to the written record with published memoirs, the collection is weighted towards naval veterans, with sailors forming the largest section of the relevant interviews. This is understandable given their preponderance in the campaign and numerical superiority. Consequently, however, the smaller bands of combat troops from the Army, and particularly the fighter pilots, are under-represented. In order to counteract this, and to broaden the historical record in order to build a composite, comparative picture of combat experience, I have sourced and conducted my own oral history interviews with these groups. In total I conducted 32 oral history interviews, 15 with Royal Navy sailors, 14 with Army soldiers and Royal Marines, and 3 from the air forces deployed to the South Atlantic. I have found interviewees by contacting several veterans’ organisations via the internet, harnessing social media, and having a description of my research project circulated in regular publications in online communications amongst veterans’ groups, which has proved very successful.³⁷

In regards to the value of oral history, A.J.P. Taylor’s early assertion has often been the dominant one; that memory fades with age, therefore diluting the value of retrospective accounts. Indeed, Taylor was definitive on the subject: ‘In this matter I am an almost complete sceptic...Old men drooling about their youth – No!’³⁸ However, in recent years many historians have challenged this concept, beginning with Paul Thompson.³⁹ In regards to military memory, Hynes in particular has written extensively on military

³⁵ See Hugh McManners (ed.), *Forgotten Voices of the Falklands* (London, 2007).

³⁶ IWM SOUND 12821 Ward, Nigel David ‘Sharkey.’ Audio diary recorded by commanding officer of 801 Naval Air Squadron, Fleet Air Arm on board HMS *Invincible* during the Falklands War.

³⁷ For more information on the methodology used, see Appendix A.

³⁸ Quoted in Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (2nd Edition, Oxford, 1988), p. 70.

³⁹ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*.

memoirs, documentary narratives that relate wartime experience, and has issued a direct challenge to Taylor and the sceptics by claiming that ‘old men *do* remember.’⁴⁰ He is accurate in this assertion; research has shown that while short-term memory does diminish with age, long-term memory is not similarly impaired. While specific things like dates are hard to remember, often-repeated routines and major incidents ‘are recalled even at a vast distance in time.’⁴¹ While Hynes’ comments are in support of his defence of utilising military memoirs as historical sources, his arguments can equally be applied to the concept of using oral history to record and analyse the memories of veterans in a study such as this. For example, he writes: ‘What other route do we have to understanding the human experience of war – how it felt, what it was like – than the witness of the men who were there?’⁴² Oral history empowers those who have otherwise not committed their memories to paper. As Alessandro Portelli wrote, oral history is about ‘the fact that there’s more to history than presidents and generals, and there’s more to culture than literary canon.’⁴³ Penny Summerfield agrees, and makes reference to the fact that oral history can play a role as ‘recovery history’, ensuring that histories that would otherwise remain hidden can be brought forward into discourse, a way of utilising the experiences of people otherwise excluded from the traditional political and economic elites that dominated “history making.”⁴⁴ When it comes to analysing the combat performance of the British armed forces at war, the memories of direct participants are too rich an historical source to be ignored. This is even more pertinent in a case such as this where there is a need to establish and record the experiences of several groups who are otherwise under-represented and excluded from the historical record, something this study has attempted to resolve.

Oral history should never be elevated above any other historical source, but used in tandem with them, nor should it go unquestioned. As Donald Ritchie attests, ‘oral history is as reliable or unreliable as other research sources. No single piece of data of

⁴⁰ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Penny Summerfield, ‘Oral History as a Research Method’ in Gabrielle Griffin (ed.), *Research Methods for English Studies* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 52.

⁴² Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London, 1998), p. 25.

⁴³ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, 1991), p. viii.

⁴⁴ Penny Summerfield, ‘Oral History as a Research Method’ in Gabrielle Griffin (ed.), *Research Methods for English Studies* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 47.

any sort should be trusted completely, and all sources need to be tested against other evidence.⁴⁵ Portelli has commented that

Oral sources are credible but with a *different* credibility... Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of philological criticism and factual verification which are required by all types of sources anyway, the diversity of oral history consists of the fact that “wrong” statements are still psychologically “true” and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.⁴⁶

Additionally, the distortions can themselves reveal insights into the nature of memory, identity and perception. It is true that oral evidence is undoubtedly highly subjective and subject to considerable alteration over time as interviewees constantly reinterpret and analyse their own motives and actions as they recall and describe them.⁴⁷ However, postmodernist critiques of historical methodologies are highly critical of the possibility that objectivity can ever be achieved.⁴⁸ While historians must be aware of the limitations of memory, and adept in their methods of utilising it, oral history can reveal a potential wealth of information, one that outweighs the perils of retrospective recollection and the possibility that beliefs subsequently changed under pressure from social conventions. Such a potential flaw is also, of course, applicable to written sources, and so the idea of the sanctity of the document over the spoken word is flawed. Additionally, oral sources are able to compensate chronological distance with a much closer personal involvement.⁴⁹

Furthermore, if the historian is studying meaning rather than facts, then oral history is perfect, precisely because it is not like document based sources; it is not predetermined or permanent. If the historian is studying experience, then documents are lifeless, but memory is key, enhanced by the fact that oral history allows for greater empathy on the part of the historian. Thus, there can be no flaw in using it as a medium to compile and analyse trends of experience. In addition, by carrying out my own interviews I have

⁴⁵ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (2nd Edition, New York, 2003), p. 26.

⁴⁶ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’ in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London, 1998), p. 68.

⁴⁷ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, p. 29.

⁴⁸ See Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (London, 2003), for example.

⁴⁹ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, p. 68.

been able to build a picture of why men chose to join the armed forces in the decades following the Second World War and the end of National Service. Such an exploration of motivations is otherwise mostly lacking in archival sources. Moreover, as the vast majority of soldiers, sailors and airmen who served in the Falklands were not able to document instantaneously and record their reactions to their experiences, the conducting of oral history interviews is extremely important in collecting material for further and future historical investigation. Unlike in contemporary conflicts such as Afghanistan where participants make use of the latest modern technology, such as digital video cameras, Falklands veterans have no such way of preserving their memories, and so there needs to be an active policy of gathering this data while it is still possible. Such an approach helps further mark out this study as distinct from previous works.

This study focuses only on combat troops that served in the actual conflict theatres, and it is a specific study of professional troops as they move from peace, to war, and back to peace again. Thus, the civilian sailors of the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, and of the civilian crew aboard several of the Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT) programme, have not been included. Nor have the experiences of civilian or female nursing staff that were not specifically part of the combat units. The experiences of those RAF aircrew and personnel not involved in the Black Buck missions who were based on Ascension Island have not been analysed, as the physical distance between Ascension and the Falkland Islands resulted in a significant mental difference between those who fought in the South Atlantic, and those who did not.

This thesis will answer major research questions about the professional British armed forces that have hitherto been ignored by the literature. These include:

1. A specific analysis as to why British men chose to join the combat arms of the British armed forces in the period leading up to the Falklands War in 1982, to put themselves in a potential combat environment. To explore this, oral history has been combined with a rigorous analysis of the recruitment literature produced by the Ministry of Defence, a previously unused source. This will highlight and uncover several important and differing motivating factors that were applicable to each of the respective services.

2. An identification, exploration and analysis of the key cultural facets of the individual branches of the professional British armed forces that were created by recruit perception, self-presentation, and previous operational experience. Such contributing factors combined with professionalism resulted in these being distinct from those of the civilian military of the two World Wars, who have until now been the main focus of the historiography.
3. The significant influence and strength of these cultural values on the servicemen will also be demonstrated through an analysis of the emotional and behavioural responses of British servicemen to the ideas of combat and killing in the build up to conflict.
4. The diverse combat experience of British servicemen engaged in the three combat arenas of land, air and sea will be explored, demonstrating the vital role played by that environment, the institutional cultures of the units engaged, and the influence professionalism had in mediating and shaping that experience and the servicemen's responses to it.
5. The enduring nature of professional military identity, and the impact of active military service on the individual, will also become clear by analysing concepts such as legacy, something only possible over an extended timeframe such as 30 years. This will make an important contribution to the historiography of the British at war by analysing the impact of professionalism on such concepts.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters and an introduction and conclusion. The first is comparative in structure, dealing in turn with the reasons as to why men joined the armed forces in relation to the theatre they served in, and the formative process that indoctrinated them into the cultures specific to these services. This structure is replicated in the second chapter, comparing how these men reacted to the news of war, and how the cultural idiosyncrasies of their combat arm and their motivations for joining the military influenced this reaction. The next three chapters in turn analyse the experience of combat in each of the theatres, of land, sea and air; how combat was fought and how the combat arena and culture of the units engaged impacted upon the act of killing. The final chapter analyses the short- and long-term effects of combat and the legacy of military service, and the significant impact of psychological trauma that can be as a result.

This structure will clearly show the role and importance of killing in the professional British armed forces, and the nature and significance of the institutional cultures in facilitating this, despite the diverse nature of combat experience across the differing combat arenas. It is the first study to fully embrace the entirety of military life, from joining up, through combat, a return to peacetime service and military retirement. Previous historiography has not analysed such concepts in as rigorously a scholarly manner, and not with the commitment to the sources incorporated in this thesis, marking this out as a unique and important contribution to the historiographical record.

Chapter 1:

Prelude to War: The State and Makeup of the British Armed Forces

When it comes to the social and cultural study of the British armed forces at war, it is not enough to simply study the period of hostilities upon which they are engaged. In any study of man's behaviour in combat, it is essential to study not only the environment in which he fights, but also the nature of the man himself. This includes his background prior to him entering combat, and his motivation for joining the armed forces, as collectively these motivations and perceptions of what life in the services entailed had a strong influence on the cultures of the various units in which men served. This is a particularly pertinent point in the case of the Falklands War; a unique aspect of the professional British armed forces in the Falklands was that they had previously trained for war in a time of extended peace. This meant that they had effectively trained in the committing of lethal violence without being able to carry it out. Instead, their experiences of life in the services were one of training and exercises, rather than war. When war finally came about, therefore, their training and previous operational experiences were so different and resulted in a strong cultural conflict in the men, one that would influence their behaviour in combat when it was joined. The individual cultures of the respective units, in which the men had been immersed, would in turn have a strong impact on the way issues such as violence and killing were perceived.

An analysis of recruitment literature produced by the branches of the armed forces is one way in which the culture of the various units can be interpreted, as the way in which they advertised themselves was a reflection of their own cultural values. Similarly, the literature directly informed recruits and created the opinions and perceptions of what service would entail that in time would come to define them. However, as not all recruits would have seen all of the recruitment literature produced, a concurrent analysis of oral history testimony alongside the recruitment literature was also particularly pertinent in order to see how the two historical records correspond. The oral history used has been drawn from the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive. Yet as their interviews do not extensively cover the pre-war period in the lives of their interview subjects, simply beginning instead with the mobilisation for war in April 1982, the historical record has been supplemented by 32 further oral history interviews that have been conducted independently in order to accurately illustrate and analyse

what motivated men in joining the armed forces, and how this corresponds with what the services were offering in their promotional material. This will reveal how such motivations on the part of the men and self-promotion on the part of the services created and contributed to institutional cultures, which in addition created expectations of service. These were either be confirmed or challenged by combat in the South Atlantic. Such an approach, marrying the two forms of the historical record, has not yet been done for any other conflict in a professional context, marking this study as distinct. Additionally, 7 military memoirs have been used within this chapter to contribute to an analysis of the nature of a serviceman's military service prior to the Falklands War. It will be seen that ideas of the likelihood of military service, and the operations with which the individual armed forces were engaged in, had a direct impact upon their institutional cultures, thus shaping the outlooks and opinions of those who joined them.

I

Joining Up: Land Forces

Unlike the First and Second World Wars, the Falklands War was not marked by a rush to the colours by idealistic youths and volunteers, nor was there any conscription. The men who fought in the South Atlantic were paid and highly trained professionals. Indeed, they were already members of the armed forces when the crisis began. These men had not joined up under the pretence of ideology, or a particularly strong desire to defend Queen and Country. The vast majority of soldiers serving in the British Army had joined during a time of peace, and 'joining the armed forces in peacetime, with no immediate prospect of having to go to war, is presented by recruiters as a career like any other.'⁵⁰ Hugh McManners, who himself served in the Falklands, noted the strange contradiction of military service, that 'military life always has preparation for war as its background, even though individuals join for reasons other than any desire to go to war.'⁵¹ Indeed, McManners ranks patriotism low on his personal list, claiming that most recruits wanted to travel, or improve themselves by gaining useful qualifications.⁵² That

⁵⁰ Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War* (London, 1994), p. 72.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵² *Ibid.*

all of these could be attained within a salaried position, along with the sense of adventure that came with being in the military, and with a pension at the end of service, made the armed forces an attractive career possibility for young men leaving school, either with or without qualifications.

Chris Jackson was one such soldier. Bored of life as a dairy farmer, he saw in the Army the opportunity to see more of the world: 'I wanted to see the world and drive a truck, get a trade out of the thing.'⁵³ John Geddes, who served in the 2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment, had been inspired by American war films and their portrayals of on-screen heroics as a child, and originally wanted to be an actor. His heroes, Lee Marvin and Steve McQueen, had been in the US Marines, so he too decided that if he joined up, it could help him become a more accomplished actor in military roles. He had also met Dirk Bogarde, who had been in the Parachute Regiment in the Second World War, which further convinced him: 'It was obvious that I'd been right and that the military was the place to learn acting and if the Parachute Regiment was good enough for Dirk it was good enough for me.'⁵⁴

The Parachute Regiment, along with the Royal Marines, are the elite units of the British Armed Forces, and were and still are highly selective in their recruitment. They recruited men who wanted the physical challenge of a difficult training regime, and the status of elite troops that came with it. This in particular attracted men who had been good at sport at school. As Steve Newland, who served in 42 Royal Marines Commando, said:

The only thing I was really good at at school was sport... so for me to get a job if you like, if you want to call it that, where it involved lots of sport, well the service, or the Forces, was a good option.⁵⁵

Sport was used by the Ministry of Defence as a major incentive in its recruitment drive, and it featured heavily and consistently in recruitment pamphlets distributed by both the various regiments of the Army and the Royal Marines in the 1960s and 1970s, with

⁵³ Chris Jackson, Interview with Author, 21/02/2009.

⁵⁴ John Geddes, *Spearhead Assault: Blood, Guts and Glory on the Falklands Frontlines* (London, 2008), p. 41.

⁵⁵ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

specific sections detailing the importance of competitive sports.⁵⁶ Indeed, a 1972 recruitment pamphlet for the Army stated that ‘you would have to be a very rich civilian indeed to take part in all the sports available to the average Infantryman.’⁵⁷ The theme of sport was also married to that of foreign travel, and the idea of doing exotic sports not available in Britain was also promoted in order to appeal to the prospective recruit.⁵⁸ While it is difficult to gauge exactly how successful such recruitment strategies were by looking at the recruitment literature alone, by analysing the oral history testimony collected as part of the sample, it is clear that the central messages conveyed by such literature had an impact on the prospective recruit. For example, the sporting aspect, combined with the fact the Royal Marines paid the most, was the main reason Newland gave for enlisting when asked in interview.⁵⁹

Several men were also attracted to the Royal Marines by the notorious and renowned difficulty of the Royal Marine Commando training at Deal, and later Lympstone. For example, being told that it was too tough for them and that they would never succeed by friends, family and civilian work colleagues provided a major incentive for Danny Marshall, Ray Mead and Dave Barrett to complete the demanding course.⁶⁰ Commando training was a fundamental aspect of the unit’s culture, and Lympstone was very much a foundation stone in building that. As a recruitment pamphlet of 1973 stated,

The “instant” Marine does not exist. He is built in body, mind and character. As a Commando he has to be strong; he has to think for himself, work alone or with a companion, or maybe in charge of others with no one around to “hold his hand.” Training provides this kind of man. A man of action and skill, who can be relied upon in all situations to be a professional at his job. It is a job for men who like challenge, change and the promise of adventure.⁶¹

⁵⁶ TNA INF 13/270/7 ‘Men of Action: The Royal Marines’ Recruitment Pamphlet (Southampton, 1964), NA INF 13/37/4 ‘What it takes to be a Royal Marine’ Recruitment Pamphlet (Westerham, 1973), NA INF 13/95/1 ‘Your Life in the Army: The Professionals’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1976), NA INF 13/93/4 ‘The Parachute Regiment’ Recruitment Pamphlet (June, 1975) and NA INF 13/84/5 ‘The Guards’ Recruitment Pamphlet, (London, 1970).

⁵⁷ TNA INF 13/87/2 ‘This is the Infantry’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1972).

⁵⁸ Ibid., and TNA INF 13/95/1 ‘Your Life in the Army: The Professionals’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1976).

⁵⁹ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁶⁰ Author Interviews: Danny Marshall, 06/08/09; Ray Mead, 17/08/09; Dave Barrett, 15/09/09.

⁶¹ TNA INF 13/37/4 ‘What it Takes to be a Royal Marine’ Recruitment Pamphlet (Westerham, 1973), p. 6.

The parallels between recruit expectation as expressed in the oral history testimony, and those expressed by the unit itself, are clear.

In the Royal Marines, the fundamental concept, regardless of postings to ship detachments or shore positions, was 'Everyman a Commando.' Every man was required to maintain a high standard of fitness that was necessary for him to be able to fulfil his function as a Commando, and this was tested throughout the training period. Indeed, the maintaining of such a high standard of fitness was challenged by the Royal Navy in 1963. It was suggested that a second tier of fitness be designated so that men who were not necessarily fit enough for Commando duties could remain part of the Corps. This challenge was rigorously rebuked by the Commandant General Royal Marines (CGRM), who stated that:

If a man is psychologically incapable of completing this test of physical endurance (which really isn't too arduous), CGRM could not possibly take the risk of employing such a man in a Commando unit to the possible detriment of his comrades.⁶²

To fail the course meant being branded as 'Unsuitable' and being invalided out of the Corps, a fate that many recruits suffered as standards and expectations during the assessment process were high. Out of the original sixty recruits in Marshall's training group, only eighteen made it to the end of the course to pass out as members of the King's Squad. He still ranks becoming a Royal Marine Commando as one of the greatest and proudest achievements of his life.⁶³ There were so few of Barrett's original squad left that they had to be merged with another training squad to complete the course.⁶⁴ It left a lasting impression on him: 'How do I look back on Lympstone? I think it's an amazing place, and it does a wonderful job, but it still scares me.'⁶⁵

⁶² TNA ADM 1/28808 'Royal Marines Commandos: Standard of Fitness' (1963-5), Minute Sheet Number 2.

⁶³ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

⁶⁴ Dave Barrett, Interview with Author, 15/09/09.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Lympstone was, and still is, the social and cultural foundation of the Royal Marines, as it is where men became Commandos in both a physical and psychological sense. Understanding the psychological and physical challenges endured there goes a long way to understanding why the Royal Marine acted in certain ways when under fire. It can be seen that, whatever their motivations for applying to the corps prior to undergoing the selection tests, recruits to the Royal Marine Commandos were indoctrinated into the unit's central ideas of excellence, high standards, and the need to support each other, from the earliest possible stage. This required a mental adjustment as much as the more obvious physical one in order to achieve the required standard and succeed.

Recruits to the Parachute Regiment were similarly attracted by the sense of a challenge. For Andy Stone, who joined 3 Para, it was the additional length and difficulty of the training required to become a Paratrooper, and the elite status of the Parachute Regiment, that settled the choice of career for him: 'You don't just walk into the careers office and join the Parachute Regiment. You have to go through a selection process and that's what appealed to me.'⁶⁶ This selection process was reputedly the toughest the Army had to offer. Not only did the recruit have to go through regular Basic Training, he was then subjected to more strenuous training aimed at pushing him to the very limit both physically, but perhaps more importantly mentally. A key element of the Parachute Regiment's training is the emphasis on developing mental toughness:

You have to have the right, positive mental approach. You must develop a belief in yourself and your abilities. It is not your body that limits your performance but your mind. Often, in training, it is not the body that is ready to quit, it is the mind creating excuses why you should not go on. A paratrooper does not fail because it never enters his head that he will not succeed.⁶⁷

Physical toughness could be gained through training, but the right mental attitude was difficult to cultivate. The Parachute Regiment used several tests to develop this, which culminated in Pre-Parachute Company, or P Company. Tests included several individual and team events, such as the Log Race, the Steeplechase, and Milling.

⁶⁶ Andy Stone, Interview with Author, 14/04/09.

⁶⁷ Claire Gillman, *The Paras: Ultimate Fitness* (London, 1996), p. 4.

Milling was highly aggressive single combat between recruits, whereby they fought for two minutes. The aim was to display suitable levels of aggression; if the recruit was too timid, he did not pass the test. Even if the recruit lost, he could still pass if he had demonstrated a willingness to fight. Thus, aggression was an important part of Para culture from the very beginning, as it was required to gain entry into the regiment as a social and cultural group. One of the other P Company tests was the Trainasium, an obstacle course built over a scaffolding-type structure of various heights up to 44 feet. In order to pass, the recruit needed to show confidence completing a number of agility tests on the structure whilst wearing boots and helmet. It was designed to test the recruit's courage and his ability to react to commands even when scared, as he would have to do when either jumping from an aircraft or attacking an enemy position.⁶⁸

The recruit was required to pass all of these tests in order to become a paratrooper; the Parachute Regiment was, and remains, an elite unit, and they released to other regiments in the Army those who could not achieve the high standards expected. There was no fixed number of recruits that had to be taken out of training squads. Like the Royal Marines, if the men were deemed to not be good enough, they were failed and made to try again; standards were not lowered or adjusted. When Graham Colbeck, for example, had finally received his parachutist's wings and red beret after completing the various selection stages, of the forty four strong platoon that had first formed at the initial Recruit Company stage there were just eleven recruits remaining.⁶⁹ Once P Company was complete, and had been passed, the recruits went on to Battle School in Wales, where they had to show military skills to complement the physical and mental resilience they had already shown. After this, the recruit entered the final stage of his training, actual parachute training. This involved first learning the theory of jumping and how to land safely before moving on to actual parachuting. The first jump was 800 feet from a balloon. That was followed by another balloon jump, followed by aircraft jumps, and then a night jump.⁷⁰ In total, the soldier completed 8 jumps in order to gain his wings. Veterans of the Parachute Regiment all recall an immense sense of pride after completing parachute training, as the cultural expectations of becoming an elite that had been inculcated throughout the training and selection period had been

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁹ Graham Colbeck, *With 3 Para to the Falklands* (London, 2002), p. 26.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-5.

accomplished. As Mark Eyles-Thomas, who served with 3 Para recalled, 'I felt alive, independent, and very capable... The feeling of accomplishment and pride was overwhelming.'⁷¹ While parachuting was questionably an obsolete method of tactical movement in military terms, in psychological terms 'parachute training demands courage and fitness and contributes to the esprit de corps and a sense of belonging to an élite that distinguishes the parachute troops of all armies.'⁷² McManners also argues that, as a dangerous activity carried out in peacetime, 'parachuting may therefore be compared with combat, providing a very real sense of danger under circumstances that allow units of soldiers to practice overcoming their fears in relative safety.'⁷³

When Para recruits learned how to parachute they were introduced to the motto of No. 1 Parachute Training School, based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire: 'Knowledge dispels fear.' This was used to encourage men to overcome the very natural fear of jumping out of aeroplanes. Thus, from a very early stage it was part of the Paras' culture to know and accept threats, and to be confident of overcoming them. This mentality was very much prevalent in the Falklands Campaign. The same theory was used in general battle training across the Army; it was consciously made as realistic as possible, and the soldiers appreciated this. Thus the Army and the Royal Marines engaged in this training in order to psychologically prepare them as well as possible for what they would face on the battlefield. They would be familiar with the noises, the threats, and be aware of how to counter them. Indeed, the motto of the Parachute Regiment is 'Utrique Paratus,' or 'Ready for Anything.' It is therefore clear that it was part of their operational culture, and a social and cultural expectation that they would be prepared, and take any obstacles or setback and still overcome them. This cultural and social value was something that each and every man with the Regiment was proud of. Such an attitude is clear even in retrospective oral history testimony, showing its significance to the operational reality. For example, Major Chris Keeble, of 2 Para, utilised the phrase unprompted in an oral history interview held at the Imperial War Museum when describing Goose Green, where he recalled that:

⁷¹ Mark Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers* (Sevenoaks, 2007), pp. 74, 78.

⁷² Shelford Bidwell, *Modern Warfare: A Study of Men, Weapons and Theories* (London, 1973), p. 101.

⁷³ McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 70.

One of the key values of the Parachute Regiment is to be ready for anything, *Utrique Paratus*, and that would mean whether military delays, incompetent leadership, political vacillation, you name it. I don't think that in any way undermined our resolve to pursue the enemy and defeat them on the battlefield.⁷⁴

The prize for passing these difficult tests was the famed red beret and parachutist's wings. The red beret and its reputation were, and still are, used by the Paras to great effect. By praising the significance of the red beret, and by having the training staff maintain a distance and superior approach to non-Paras and recruits, the effect of wanting to be part of the Regiment was heightened.⁷⁵ Para recruits were informed that other regiments issued berets to their recruits during basic training, whereas in the Parachute Regiment they were only awarded after completing the difficult and extended selection process.⁷⁶ As a result, they were viewed as being infinitely more valuable than those issued by any other regiments since they had been earned. Such a prize was worth all the strenuous effort and physical and mental punishment to attain. The beret was symbolic of all they wanted to achieve, and once it had been attained the recruits therefore were compelled to maintain the standards of excellence that it represented. Whilst going through training, camaraderie had also been encouraged amongst the recruits as they had all been attempting to achieve the same goal; once they had passed P Company, this translated into *esprit de corps*. Because they all became part of a select unit through the same arduous selection process without exception, such bonds were very strong, and capable of transcending social class and race. That their beret was a different colour provided a point of difference with the rest of the Army, and helped them forge their own identity. The end result was the psychological belief that, as Paras, they were part of a specific tribe, and a highly selective one at that. This imbued them with pride in both that tribe and themselves, resulting in high morale. This perception of being a military elite within the Army, and as a place to excel, in turn acted as a catalyst for future recruitment and the entire process began anew with fresh recruits.

⁷⁴ IWM SOUND 17148 Keeble, Chris, Reel 1.

⁷⁵ Gillman, *The Paras: Ultimate Fitness*, p. 47.

⁷⁶ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 47.

The Royal Marines did exactly the same with their own selection course based around achieving the status of being a Commando and claiming a green beret. In order to wear the beret, all men, regardless of rank, were required to pass the Commando Training Course, which combined physical and mental endurance, skill at arms, and old-fashioned drill. The beret therefore not only served as a badge of honour for the individual, but in a collective sense it also brought the men together as a corps. Each Commando knew that to be in possession of a green beret meant that a man had passed the same rigorous and demanding course that they had, and that the individual alone had accomplished this; social class, rank, background and race made absolutely no difference. Holding a green beret ensured social acceptance and produced an unquestioning level of professional trust, regardless of the level of their personal acquaintance.⁷⁷ It also meant that racial divisions were overcome; in the Royal Marines a man was not viewed as being black or white, he was a Commando.⁷⁸ Furthermore, when the recruits passed out as a member of the King's Squad at the end of the Commando Training Course, they were given a white lanyard to wear on their uniforms. This served to enforce their sense of difference from those recruits still in training at Lympstone, and also acted as an inspiration for those recruits still in training to achieve this accolade for themselves.⁷⁹ All of these small features created a culture of striving for personal and collective goals within the corps.

Tools such as coloured berets served on one level as a visual reminder of being a distinct entity within the wider anonymity of the British Armed Forces. Furthermore, as they were specific to individual regiments, they also ensured that the new recruit adopted the specific group mentality of being a soldier within that regiment, rather than the armed forces as a whole. By encouraging esprit de corps and a sense of pride in the unit, this resulted in self-regulating standards amongst the soldiers who wore them, improving discipline and effectiveness. It was a system copied across the Army, and not merely found in the elite, though theirs were the most recognisable. As Shelford Bidwell has noted, 'the empirical rule is that the sharper and more numerous the

⁷⁷ Dave Barrett, Interview with Author, 15/09/09.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 1.

distinctions from other regiments are the stronger the esprit de corps.’⁸⁰ Indeed, as Bidwell argued:

To the uninformed and the unscientific observer the trivial differences between regiments in custom and dress are absurd. In reality they are of the greatest importance, for the simple devices of a hackle, a badge worn in the back of a hat, a tartan, a coloured beret, a habit of maintaining parade-ground drill in battle, or a deliberate assumed casualness at all times are each quite sufficient to mark off one military group from another, and serve to trigger off the whole machinery of group behaviour. It is noticeable that if such differential signs are not provided the men will invent their own.⁸¹

This ensured that in a crisis, such as combat, ‘their primary response is to the distant but powerful gravitational tug of their social group,’⁸² rather than their own individual instincts.

The different regiments of the British Army certainly had different cultures, the products of their various different roles and histories. The Parachute Regiment was unique, both in professional operational terms as well as culturally, but it was not the only regiment in the army. It had a distinct culture that made it attractive to new recruits. The Paras were filled with men such as George Brown, who had joined the Parachute Regiment in 1955, initially a three year commitment via National Service. Brown had become bored of an apprenticeship that kept him indoors, and joined the Parachute Regiment because of the challenge it represented given the Regiment’s reputation for tough training and physical excellence, even in 1955, as well as the extra money one received for parachuting.⁸³ After nine years, and promotion to Sergeant, Brown signed on ‘for the full whack.’⁸⁴ It was not only combat soldiers who were attracted to the professionalism and fighting spirit of the regiment, nor was it the regiment alone that attracted such interest; Steven Hughes, who served as 2 Para’s Medical Officer, had admired that particular battalion since he had first seen David

⁸⁰ Bidwell, *Modern Warfare*, p. 102.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁸³ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Shepherd's painting *Arnhem Bridge, 5pm, The Second Day*. He resolved that that he wanted to be a part of such a unit, and considered himself very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to serve as their Medical Officer.⁸⁵

However, Paras cannot be seen to be indicative of the wider British Army of the period, as many men simply joined "the Army" rather than "the Parachute Regiment." Very few enlisted in the Army with the specific intention of joining a particular branch. Throughout their training period, they adopted the cultures of whichever units they found themselves in, rather than actively seeking them out. Tony McNally, for example, joined the Royal Artillery at 16 because 'the man in the careers office was a Gunner; if he'd been in the Catering Corps, this book would be about my unique recipe for pea and ham soup.'⁸⁶ For a lot of soldiers, the Army provided not so much an escape, but a direction and a purpose in an otherwise meandering or difficult life, as it had historically always done. Philip Williams left school with few qualifications and did a series of menial jobs, such as processing slaughtered chickens and labouring before he enlisted in the Army with the Scots Guards, mostly because he feared ending up involved in the increasingly serious crimes being committed by his similarly periodically unemployed friends.⁸⁷ Williams recalls that 'I was glad nobody asked me why I'd joined up, because I had no idea, only that it had seemed like a good idea at the time.'⁸⁸

Significantly, the Royal Marines differed from the Army in that the latter was made up of several small organisations in the various different regiments, all with their different cultures. In contrast, the Royal Marines was one culturally unified corps as every man had gone through the same training. Consequently, while there were several smaller organisations within it, they all shared essentially the same mental outlook, a conformity bred by training.

⁸⁵ Steven Hughes, Interview with Author, 18/12/09.

⁸⁶ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Philip Williams with M. S. Power, *Summer Soldier: The True Story of the Missing Falklands Guardsman* (London, 1990), pp. 3-8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Pre-War Experience: Land Forces

The motivations for joining up and the mental moulding that had occurred in training created and contributed to the social and cultural structures of the various regiments and commandos within the land forces. Another significant factor in shaping these institutional cultures that needs to be explored was the type of service in which the units were engaged prior to the Falklands conflict.

Except for a 12 month period between 1967 and 1968, British soldiers have been killed on operations every year since the end of the Second World War. Thus, British servicemen have 'always had the thought and likelihood of combat in the forefront of their minds,'⁸⁹ although the vast majority of such operations were carried out by the Army. The British Army's long standing operation in Northern Ireland, whereby all units of the Army, bar the Gurkhas, did rotational tours of the province, meant that men from all regiments had some inkling of life on active service; it was not simply confined to the elite, but was a feature of every unit's culture. There was also a social and professional importance attached to it. In the infantry, service in Northern Ireland was seen as 'the proving ground, if not the culmination' of military training, as throughout the training process drill sergeants instilled a sense of urgency by using the threat of potential violence in the province for the inadequately prepared.⁹⁰ Newland recalled that during his Commando training at Lymington, Northern Ireland became increasingly important, and that a new recruit could have no doubts that he would serve there:

When they put you through training you obviously learn lots, so if you didn't know it before you're going to know it when you finish training that this is what we expect you to do, 'cause it's part of the job.⁹¹

Mead was in agreement: 'There's no doubt in your mind whilst you're in there, you're prepared for war or some kind of conflict and active service.'⁹² Supporting this oral testimony is the fact that the Ministry of Information produced a pamphlet for the

⁸⁹ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 100.

⁹⁰ Antony Beevor, *Inside the British Army* (London, 1991), p. 33.

⁹¹ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁹² Ray Mead, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

Ministry of Defence entitled 'Northern Ireland: What is it like for soldiers?', which aimed to explain how and why the soldier would operate in Northern Ireland. While not every recruit would have seen such a pamphlet, that the Ministry of Defence was producing them demonstrates that they were trying to educate recruits as to the likelihood of active service, a message that was clearly being absorbed given the oral testimony used above. For those who did see it, there could be no doubt that they would be expected to serve in the province. The pamphlet takes the form of a series of questions on several topics, such as duties, duration of tours, and the possibility of social interactions. One pertinent question regarding soldiers and Northern Ireland is: 'Are they allowed to refuse to serve there?' to which the answer is: 'No. Soldiers know they have to go where they are needed.'⁹³

Thus, the Army and Royal Marines were unique in that they were expected to undergo active service as part of their careers. The Fleet Air Arm and Royal Navy, however, had no real equivalent experience, though the submarine service came close to conflict on several, if secret, occasions. Ground troops, though, would at least have some experience of conducting themselves in hostile areas. Geddes, for example, killed his first man while on tour in Northern Ireland in 1978. He did not see the body of the man, but was informed of it by intelligence officers, and refers to it as his first 'terrorist kill.'⁹⁴ Service in Northern Ireland not only introduced men to the possibility of armed combat and death of the enemy, but also their friends. Geddes was serving in Northern Ireland on 27 August 1979 when the IRA exploded a bomb at Warren Point, killing eighteen soldiers, mostly Paras. Geddes lost friends, but also knew that it resulted in stronger bonds amongst the survivors, which in his opinion made them better soldiers:

Those of us who were left to go on were harder edged and more effective troops because of those we left there on that bloody road. Northern Ireland's a long way from the Falklands, but the point is that during four tours of the province 2 Para became used to real bullets, real bombs, and exposure to a real enemy that will shoot back. We weren't exercise soldiers.⁹⁵

⁹³ TNA INF 13/91/1 'Northern Ireland. What is it like for soldiers?' Information Pamphlet (London, 1975).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

Northern Ireland was undoubtedly dangerous, but since for many it was the purpose of arduous military training, there was a strong desire to serve there, to complete a tour and put the training into practice. Mead had only just completed his training when the possibility of a Northern Ireland tour came up. However, at just 17, he was too young to go, which caused great disappointment: 'You're constantly training for Northern Ireland... it was an expectancy that that's what we're going for.'⁹⁶ Conducting such operations in a hostile environment resulted in a level of experience amongst the troops that could never be gained from merely training on Salisbury Plain, or in the Brecon Beacons.

However, while it provided similar stresses to combat, Northern Ireland was a counter-insurgency policing operation, not a conventional war. Anti-terrorist activities may have provided good training, but the risks were not the same; the exposure to enemy fire was not as prolonged, nor was the intensity of the violence as high. In war there was no respite from the work, the danger, and the psychological tension that goes with them. The soldiers who served in Northern Ireland were very aware that such operations, despite all their manifest dangers, were not the same as conventional war. This can be seen in the way in which Geddes clearly drew a distinction between terrorists and conventional enemy soldiers in the quotation above; he recorded a "terrorist kill" rather than any other, the particular emphasis used to illustrate the distinction. As Newland said, being a soldier in Northern Ireland is 'a different role, a different job... It's a different type of war.'⁹⁷ George Brown, who served in 3 Para during the Falklands War, but had served in Suez, Aden and Northern Ireland, referred to the idea of the 'unseen enemy' in Northern Ireland, where there were people 'talking to you, smiling at you, who hate your guts,' and who would then retreat round a corner and try to kill the British soldiers.⁹⁸ Christopher Brown had served in south Armagh, 'but I'd never seen general war. As you'll appreciate, Northern Ireland, even in south Armagh is very, very different from the general war situation in which we later found ourselves in the Falklands.'⁹⁹ He had never been under fire, but had been attacked by bombs, including one blast that killed one man:

⁹⁶ Ray Mead, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

⁹⁷ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁹⁸ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

⁹⁹ IWM SOUND 10215 Brown, Christopher Charles, Reel 1.

It is a feature of Northern Ireland that one very seldom comes face to face with the terrorist. It's far more likely to be the victim of an explosion or a rocket attack where one doesn't actually see the man that's pushing the button.¹⁰⁰

In a conventional war, however, the fighting would be man against man, attacker and defender. Robert McGowan and Jeremy Hands noted a similar disparity of experience within the Royal Marines, and that they had 'all had faced the street corner threat of death in Northern Ireland but none knew what a full-scale soldier-against-soldier shooting war would be like.'¹⁰¹ Captain Michael Seear, who had served in Northern Ireland with the Light Infantry, but served in the Falklands with 7th Gurkha Rifles, believed that 'mentally I was caught with trousers down. My sixteen years of military training had been for a war that would never begin and was beyond reality.'¹⁰² Despite his service in Northern Ireland, Seear had not considered that a 'proper' war was a likely occurrence. Indeed, 'twenty months accumulated service in Northern Ireland during the first decade of "the Troubles" never prepared me psychologically for going to war in the purest sense.'¹⁰³ Furthermore, not all the troops sent to the South Atlantic had experience of Northern Ireland. Ray Mead and Andy Stone, for example, effectively went south straight from training. Indeed, the average age of the Royal Marines in the Falklands campaign was just 19.¹⁰⁴ Another difference between Northern Ireland and conventional warfare was that, when serving in Northern Ireland and going out on patrol, soldiers were also issued with the Yellow Card, which told soldiers what the minimum force rules were. Because of the delicate political situation, and also the presence of the media, soldiers were not allowed to fire unless they could clearly see a target, and had to account for every shot.¹⁰⁵ They therefore had to be very restrained. In combat, however, the use of suppressing fire was essential to facilitate movement, and required soldiers to expend a large quantities of ammunition, at times in what they could only assume was the direction of the enemy. The experiences of war in Northern Ireland, and war in the Falklands, were very different indeed.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Robert McGowan and Jeremy Hands, *Don't Cry For Me Sergeant-Major* (London, 1983), p. 16.

¹⁰² Mike Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands: A War Journal* (Barnsley, 2003), p. 47.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. xvii.

¹⁰⁴ McGowan and Hands, *Don't Cry For Me Sergeant-Major*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ TNA INF 13/91/1 'Northern Ireland. What is it like for soldiers?' Information Pamphlet (London, 1975).

Once the crisis broke, there was also a serious disparity in the levels of preparedness, both physical and psychological, facing the troops despatched to recapture the Islands. Some soldiers, such as Tony McNally, and his battery of Rapier Anti-Aircraft missiles, had spent the majority of their military careers in the UK or West Germany. Despite being on the frontline of an expected future conflict, McNally had never been to Northern Ireland, and never considered any war a likely prospect:

I didn't really think I'd end up fighting a real war with live missiles and dead bodies, but we still practiced, just in case... It was something we trained for, but somehow – in my day, at least – didn't quite think you'd ever do.¹⁰⁶

The only violence he had encountered was fights between rival garrison units, or from German police directed at British soldiers. Similarly, the Gurkhas were prohibited from deploying to Northern Ireland, and their experience of active duty had involved working in the jungles around the Hong Kong-Chinese border, catching illegal immigrants attempting to enter Hong Kong. Other units that were being prepared to be sent south in 1982 included the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards which were fresh from having carried out public duties in London, hardly ideal preparation for war. They 'came directly from public duties in London and so at that time were more used to polishing boots, brushing bearskins and being photographed by tourists than operating as infantry.'¹⁰⁷ A large part of their training was dedicated to the rehearsal of parade ground drill for ceremonial events, such as the Trooping of the Colour. The training carried out by the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marine Commandos, however, is very different. All the selection processes used by elite or special force units were designed to achieve two purposes. The first was by applying strict entry standards they maintained both the quality of the unit and its perception of itself. The second was that highly realistic and physically and mentally challenging selection process provided successful candidates with a tremendous and enduring self-confidence that enabled them to overcome seemingly impossible situations when on active operations. While many of the tests were built around physical activity such as assault courses and long marches, the real emphasis was actually psychological. They aimed to, and achieved in, producing men who knew that they could continue to operate well beyond the normal

¹⁰⁶ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, pp. 30, 42.

¹⁰⁷ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 107.

limits of physical and mental endurance. They forced men to realise their own limitations and through necessity develop ways of either working around them, or simply powering through.¹⁰⁸ Thus, when every man had passed through an ordeal like the Royal Marine Commando training course at Lympstone, or the P Company selection process, fitness and combat readiness would naturally always be kept high. In contrast to the Guards, immediately prior to the Falklands 2 Para had completed a full scale company exercise in Kenya in November 1981, and 42 Commando had just returned from Arctic training in Norway at the end of March 1982.

However, the common perception that the Guards, as 'social elite' rather than 'military elite' units, were therefore inherently less effective as soldiers has been challenged. 1st Welsh Guards, for example, had just returned from a tour of Northern Ireland. 2nd Scots Guards had also served in the province as part of the Army's rotation policy, where troops had come under fire.¹⁰⁹ Nicholas van der Bijl and David Aldea claim that:

The problem was that since the Guards were usually seen on ceremonial parades and guarding Royal palaces, they somehow seemed less efficient and fit than county battalions and Light Infantry. The fact is that the Household Brigade is expected to be at the same level of fitness and training as any other military unit... Guards' military culture may be different but that is not a benchmark for combat effectiveness... Those who painted an inaccurate and unsubstantiated myth about the wisdom of sending the Guards to the Falklands have done the Guardsmen a major disservice.¹¹⁰

While there is some validity and sense in this argument, and while the Guards did do their share of duties in Northern Ireland, they also spent half their time in the London area, committed to training for and carrying out ceremonial duties. Consequently, they had a very different culture to the Paras and Royal Marines. They did not move on exercise as regularly as other Army battalions, or engage in the same rigorous training regimes. The greater stability of life in the Guards was in fact used as a major incentive

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁰⁹ NA WO 305/4275 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards Commander's Diary, 28th October, 1973 – 31 December, 1973.

¹¹⁰ Nicholas van der Bijl and David Aldea, *5th Infantry Brigade in the Falklands* (Barnsley, 2003), p. 9.

in their recruitment of officers.¹¹¹ Indeed, a sizeable proportion of the recruitment literature was given over to arguing why living in London and enjoying its social life was desirable, and why the need for a private income was perhaps important.¹¹² A 1975 recruitment pamphlet also certainly invoked the sense that the contemporary Guards officers, in particular, were of a different social class. While the main sports advertised in the recruitment pamphlets of other units included the usual rugby, football and boxing, in this pamphlet the image used to illustrate the 'Recreation' section is that of Household Division officers playing polo at Windsor.¹¹³

Additionally, to send a battalion fresh from public duties into combat, as the Scots Guards were, required a major psychological adjustment on their part. Regardless of physical fitness, to go from ceremonial to fighting soldiers in a short space of time was extremely difficult. Captain Tim Spicer, of the Scots Guards, commented that:

The battalion was completely unprepared for going to war. We'd been doing public duties from Chelsea Barracks for five years, and were exhausted by it; it is very tiring and mind-bendingly dull. We could shoot straight and were fit but our tactics were very rusty. Some of our officers were uninterested in military matters... living the old-fashioned guards officer lifestyle. They had become social soldiers, and needed motivating.¹¹⁴

Even the Battalion's CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Scott, recalls that he was

Convinced that, initially, we were going to be the garrison when the war was won. We would be there for a four-month tour when everyone else had left for home and glory... So it probably didn't matter that we weren't brilliantly trained, straight off the gravel of the Forecourt of Buckingham Palace.¹¹⁵

Both the Scots and Welsh Guards, along with the Gurkhas as part of 5th Infantry Brigade, were sent on a crash training course in the Brecon Beacons immediately prior

¹¹¹ TNA INF 13/93/11 'A Commission in the Household Division' Recruitment Pamphlet, (London, 1975).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 107.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in van der Bijl and Aldea, *5th Infantry Brigade in the Falklands*, p. 15.

to their departure south on the QE2. Thus, one advantage of being the second wave of ground troops sent to the Falklands was that, while 3 Commando Brigade had hurriedly been sent south, the battalions that were to reinforce them had more time to prepare. They were, for example, able to practice platoon and company attacks, as well as FIBUA (Fighting in Built up Areas) in the Brecon Beacons, something 3 Commando Brigade could not do on their ships. However, even this emergency training was governed by peacetime regulations that could only have limited its effectiveness. Seear, with 7th Gurkha Rifles, recalls how night live-firing had strict restrictions that were not relaxed. This 'incompatible peacetime bureaucracy' meant that 7GR would not be able to rehearse the basic yet essential infantry skill, and one that was to prove a defining feature of the war. It was only the willpower and foresight of 7GR's CO that ensured such restrictions and regulations were simply broken.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, whilst on exercise there was a limit on some of the equipment supplied. Milan Anti-Tank missiles, along with Carl Gustav 84mm anti-tank rockets, were in short supply, and with the few provided it was discovered that the trigger pressures on live rounds and practice rounds were markedly different, leading to a worrying lack of accuracy.¹¹⁷ Guardsman Philip Williams found the whole training procedure rather dull and artificial, and poor preparation for going to war.¹¹⁸ However, despite their unpreparedness at this early stage, 5th Infantry Brigade were despatched to the South Atlantic as part of the second wave.

II

Joining Up: Serving at Sea

The Army were only one component of the Task Force being sent South in April 1982. It was the men and ships of the Royal Navy who would have to transport them there, and land them on the islands if the Falklands were to be recaptured. The Royal Navy of the 1980s, despite being faced with heavy budget cuts as a result of the 1981 Strategic Defence Review, was a highly professional and technological force. Its members had joined for similar reasons to those in the Army and Royal Marines; the idea of a

¹¹⁶ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, pp. 56, 57.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *Summer Soldier*, p. 21.

challenge, and doing something fun, exciting and unusual was a major appeal. However, unlike their compatriots who joined the Army or Royal Marines, the men who chose to become sailors did so without expectation of fighting, an importance difference that played a significant role in shaping the culture of, and expectations of service in, the pre-war Royal Navy.¹¹⁹

There can be no doubt that the incentive of foreign travel was a major attraction for prospective recruits to the Royal Navy, and it was a major feature of the recruitment literature produced by the Ministry of Defence throughout the post-Second World War period. The oral history record confirms this; Chris Howe believed that the travel potential offered by the Navy was among the deciding factors in convincing him and a friend to sign up: 'We didn't know what we were going to do. We liked the sound of travel, we didn't fancy staying in our home towns so we just joined the Navy.'¹²⁰ Kevin Smith, similarly unsure about his future, likewise found the travel aspect as being amongst the most appealing positives about life in the Navy. His step-father was in the Navy, and in 1977 had moved to Hong Kong with his family on a married accompanied position for two and a half years. This was the first time Smith had been abroad, and at the end of the posting, on his return to the UK in October 1979, he joined the Navy. Having experienced the lifestyle of living in a Navy quarter, attending a military school, and listening to servicemen talk about the various countries they had been, or were going to go to, Smith believed that 'there was a certain amount of romance involved in it all, and all the fantastic places you were going to go and visit... that had a major part of the attraction for joining.'¹²¹ Shortly after finishing training, Smith 'lived the dream,'¹²² sailing to Portugal, Majorca and Gibraltar. Another appealing aspect of the Navy was the physical training side. Smith had greatly enjoyed sports growing up, particularly in Hong Kong, and, like Steve Newland of the Royal Marines, saw the service as offering a unique opportunity for those interested in physical training.¹²³ The idea that he would ever be involved in a war never crossed his mind, whereas he knew that if he joined 'the Army or the Marines then it would be a definite.'¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Such expectations would also have a remarkable impact on the sailors' reactions to the news of war, and this shall be analysed further in Chapter 2.

¹²⁰ Chris Howe, Interview with Author, 09/06/09.

¹²¹ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

The Navy also catered to those who decided to join spontaneously, and Phil Russo joined the Navy almost on a whim. The idea of travel offered by the Navy certainly appealed to him, and in this case the historical record dovetails with that of the recruitment literature in the cultural representations of the service. In his oral history interview, Russo specifically referred to the images used in the Royal Navy recruitment office, of the sailor in a smart uniform with a drink in one hand and an exotic, native girl on the other.¹²⁵ While Russo originally wanted to be a cartographer, the recruiter convinced him to apply to be an aircraft engineer.¹²⁶ As the Royal Navy became an increasing technological force in the post-war era, there was a concerted drive from recruiters for engineers to oversee the use of and maintain this equipment in a way unmatched in the less technologically demanding Army or Royal Marines. The benefits of having such a skill and qualification in engineering in a civilian world for when the sailor completed his period of service were also stressed and used as an incentive, as completing the training 'can be considered as good as serving a full trade apprenticeship.'¹²⁷ As the years progressed, this sentiment was only reinforced in the recruitment literature, as

Clearly the young man who has the desire to acquire a skill or a trade – who wants to excel in something – is excellent material for a Service that, in its growing technical complexity, is making increasing demands on brains rather than brawn.¹²⁸

Artificers were highly sought after in the recruitment literature circulated by the Royal Navy; in 1958 one pamphlet stated that,

In return for their skill and knowledge, Artificers receive higher pay than other naval ratings and quicker advancement. They are also offered excellent chances of promotion to officer rank. To boys of the necessary quality, the Artificer Apprentice entry into the Royal Navy offers a career of outstanding

¹²⁵ Phil Russo, Interview with Author, 18/12/08.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ TNA INF 13/14/2 'Go Far in the Royal Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1958), p. 3.

¹²⁸ TNA INF 13/18/3 'They're Training for a Technical Career in the Royal Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1960).

opportunity, with the age-old attractions of Naval life, such as travel, plenty of sport and occasional excitement, providing a welcome bonus.¹²⁹

The same pamphlet was reprinted and reissued five years later, with almost exactly the same text, the only change being the drawing of attention to Britain's growing fleet of nuclear submarines, armed with Polaris missiles.¹³⁰ Yet the recruitment literature made it very clear that the Artificers were technical men first and foremost. The major slogan that recurred throughout the pamphlets detailing what they do was 'skill brings its own reward.'¹³¹ Thus they were very much presented as tradesmen, who specialised in maintaining military equipment, rather than necessarily the warriors who used it. Such self-presentation by the Royal Navy undoubtedly had an impact on both the perception of the role of artificers when men joined, as well as the culture of the role itself.

The growing influence of technology found its way into the recruitment literature of other branches, including that of the Seaman Branch. In 1964, one pamphlet pointed out that

Unlike the Jack Tar of earlier years the Seaman today has a specialist job – typical of the age in which we live. He has, in fact, a dual role in the Fleet. He is both a man of technical skill and a man of the sea... His is an increasingly technical job, calling for intelligence and a high degree of technical skill. And it is a tough job; a man's job.¹³²

Similarly, the following year the Navy identified in an information booklet that to cope with the increasing pace of technological change, it must

Seek men with the salt of the sea in their veins who can cope with the quickening pace of technological developments... They must feel as much at

¹²⁹ TNA INF 13/14/1 'A Leaflet about Artificer Apprenticeships in the Royal Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1958).

¹³⁰ TNA INF 13/21/1 'Artificer Apprenticeships in the Royal Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1963).

¹³¹ TNA INF 13/14/1 'A Leaflet about Artificer Apprenticeships in the Royal Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1958).

¹³² TNA INF 13/23/11 'It's a Man's Job...In the Seaman Branch of the Royal Navy. Age of Entry, 15-28' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1964), pp. 1, 5.

home in an instrument-packed Operations Room as their forebears did on the gun deck of an old “man o’ war.”¹³³

It is therefore clear that the use and incorporation of technology was already becoming a fundamental part of the Royal Navy’s culture. Yet despite this growing technological trend, the Navy was also keen to point out that old incentives for joining up still remained as relevant as ever, claiming that ‘some elements of naval life remain timeless: the travel and adventure associated with life at sea; the companionship of a happy ship’s company.’¹³⁴ Such a technological facet of the mere basics of naval life had a huge impact on the concepts of warfare when battle was joined, and had an equally strong impact on how that combat was perceived.

The Royal Navy targeted a wide variety of roles in its recruitment literature, a much broader range than those offered by the Army and Royal Marines. As navy vessels were self-contained communities, they required all the hallmarks of civilian society to make them work, not just engineers like Russo. Thus, there was a call in the Navy for ordinary peacetime roles, such as Cooks, Stewards, even dentists.¹³⁵ Like many sailors, Neil Polley also joined the Navy with the idea of learning a trade, but unlike many careers on offer, his was decidedly unwarlike. Polley wanted to train as a chef after leaving school, but having been unsuccessful in his job applications he joined the Navy, as any qualifications he gained there were recognised in the civilian sphere. After six weeks of square-bashing he went to catering school, from where the Navy chose the best recruits to become Captain’s Stewards.¹³⁶ A Steward’s main duties included ‘catering for officers’ messes, the preparation and service of food, the selection and service of wines, spirits and other drinks, the care of officers’ uniforms, and other personal tasks.’¹³⁷ Preparation for such duties was the main focus of his training. While the recruitment literature focusing on Stewards made it clear that ‘at sea you will be part of the fighting organisation of a ship’ it also added, ‘but your main concern will be

¹³³ TNA INF 13/25/3 ‘Shaping Up to the ’70s’ Information Booklet (Southampton, 1965).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ For example, TNA INF 13/23/1 ‘Serve as a Steward in the Royal Navy’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1964), TNA INF 13/36/7 ‘A Cook in the Royal Navy’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1971), and TNA INF 13/18/8 ‘The Royal Navy as a Profession: The Naval Dental Officer’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1960).

¹³⁶ Neil Polley, Interview with Author, 19/08/09.

¹³⁷ TNA INF 13/36/6 ‘A Steward in the Royal Navy’ Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1971).

to put your specialist training into practice.’¹³⁸ For Polley, that was serving officers, not fighting.

The political circumstances surrounding the Royal Navy in the post-war period were another major contributing factor in recruitment, and played an important role in establishing the institutional culture of particularly the Royal Navy surface fleet in the 1960s and 1970s. Recruitment in the Royal Navy undoubtedly benefitted from the extended period of peace that the Navy was involved in. Alistair Finlan has argued that while servicemen ‘have joined a profession in which the fundamental purpose is to apply violence (often lethal) to achieve political ends,’¹³⁹ they rarely practice the skills they have learned, and this is particularly true of the Royal Navy in the period of 1960-82. Thus, those sailors with families, in particular younger brothers, were able to extol the benefits of a navy life, such as travel, without any negative offsetting factors, such as the Army had with Northern Ireland, for example. Indeed, the Royal Navy recognised this, and in 1962 produced a pamphlet instructing those men leaving the Navy that it was their duty to continue to proclaim the benefits of naval life in informal settings, to siblings, friends and other prospective recruits. The pamphlet also provided leavers with the more complex information they might not otherwise know in order to answer questions accurately and increase their effectiveness as informal recruiters.¹⁴⁰

Family connections had a significant impact on naval recruitment. Tim McClement joined the Navy because he ‘couldn’t think of anything else to do’ after failing to secure the correct grades at O-Level to go on and study to be a doctor.¹⁴¹ He reflected on the fact that his brother and father both served in the Navy, and McClement had seen the benefits first hand. His proximity to naval personnel no doubt helped shape his choice of career, but he didn’t deliberately choose to follow them into the engineering aspect, instead choosing to be a submariner.¹⁴² Similarly, Sam MacFarlane had a brother in the Navy, and joined two years after him in 1966. He was so determined to join that his father had to threaten to get a solicitor involved when the grammar school he attended

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Alistair Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War: Culture and Strategy* (London, 2004), p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ TNA INF 13/19/6 ‘Recruiting Begins at Home’ Information Pamphlet (London, 1962).

¹⁴¹ Tim McClement, Interview with Author, 27/05/09.

¹⁴² Ibid.

would not release him aged fifteen and a half.¹⁴³ Joining the Navy had not always been his ambition, but when he started receiving letters from his brother saying how great naval life was, and the fact they were coming from the Far East, settled it for him: 'I thought, "I'm going to have a bit of this."' ¹⁴⁴

Thus it is fair to say that many men joined the Navy based on the positive experiences of their siblings. Yet in some naval families, perhaps more than in any other branch of the service, the idea of tradition, while not essential, was also important. In a history-conscious organisation such as the Royal Navy, the deeds and achievements of predecessors have always been valued. Thus men with fathers who had served with the Navy often aspired to that career themselves. For David Hart-Dyke, Captain of HMS *Coventry* in 1982, the tradition established by his father in the Navy, and his extended family in the other services, meant that 'as a naval officer's son, during my formative years I thought only of the Navy as a career.'¹⁴⁵ Similarly, both John Wingate's father and grandfather had served in the Navy, and while it was not preordained that he would follow them into the service, 'I know that my dad was absolutely pleased as punch' when he joined the Navy aged 16.¹⁴⁶

Pre-War Experience: At Sea

It is clear that the prevalent attitude amongst those who joined the Navy's surface fleet in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s was one whereby the possibility of seeing any action at all was seen as being extremely unlikely, and very little of their military service prior to the Falklands had challenged this. Such perceptions, along with the fact that it had been a long time since the Royal Navy had been engaged in any direct military confrontation, meant that, particularly amongst the surface fleet, an environment was created whereby combat was seen as being something culturally and operationally distinct from the Royal Navy's main duties.

¹⁴³ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author, 24/06/09.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ David Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May: The Loss of HMS Coventry, a Captain's Story* (London, 2007), p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ John Wingate, Interview with Author, 19/12/08.

While this would seem like a naïve attitude, it was in fact very common. Russo recalled that he had exactly the same perceptions of the Royal Navy when he joined, and that for him the obvious benefits of the Navy far outweighed the potential and seemingly unlikely negatives:

I didn't even think I ever go to war. I just thought I'd join up, wear a nice uniform, get a girlfriend, learn a trade, see the world, spend a few years, get a good pension, leave and carry on with my life. It never entered my head once when I walked into that recruiting office that I could ever go to war.¹⁴⁷

Similarly, Kevin Smith said that, when considering whether to join the Navy, the idea that he would ever be involved in a war never crossed his mind, whereas he knew that if he joined 'the Army or the Marines then it would be a definite.'¹⁴⁸ Likewise, John Wingate believed that while he had a strong sense of patriotism when he joined the navy, he thought the possibility of war was unlikely: 'I had no sort of feelings when I was joining the Navy that it might be because I would have to go to war or get in any conflict. It didn't cross my mind.'¹⁴⁹ Like most young men, Wingate saw war as an almost intangible concept that one never thought would happen, and thus the idea of joining the service to fight for Queen and country was almost defunct as a motivation. Partly this was the result of having undertaken specialist training. Furthermore, with such training in often civil and sedate roles, as exemplified by Polley, and with no experience to counter-act it, it is not difficult to imagine why such men did not see themselves as warriors. To Polley, being a Steward meant that 'you do get a bit of shit, but it's a good job, it's a cushy job,' particularly when it involved travel to exotic places like the Caribbean.¹⁵⁰ Like many others, he had never considered the possibility of going to war: 'If I'd thought that, I'd never have gone.'¹⁵¹

In contrast to the surface fleet, however, the submarine division of the Royal Navy was on the frontline in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Furthermore, with the introduction of nuclear submarines, it was very different in tactical role and operations

¹⁴⁷ Phil Russo, Interview with Author, 18/12/08.

¹⁴⁸ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

¹⁴⁹ John Wingate, Interview with Author, 19/12/08.

¹⁵⁰ Neil Polley, Interview with Author, 19/08/09.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

from the surface fleet. This gave the submarine fleet an almost glamorous appeal in terms of recruiting, as well as appearing to herald the future. Colin Way, who joined the Navy surface fleet as a Writer, or clerk in Navy parlance, in 1965, transferred to submarines in 1967, and spent a further 34 years in the service. While he was unsure exactly why he joined submarines, Way recalls thinking that 'it was the new thing, really. It seemed to be the way the Navy was going. It was the future of the Navy and the in thing.'¹⁵² Jonathan Powis had always wanted to join submarines, initially as a doctor, but then he decided that he wanted to command ships:

I did join the Navy expressly to join nuclear submarines... I think if you'd joined the Army in 1943 you would have wanted to join the tank corps because it was the latest and greatest thing. I felt exactly like that, and I certainly never regretted it.¹⁵³

Such attitudes were very much reflected in the recruitment literature produced by the Ministry of Defence. For example, in the 1956 pamphlet 'The Royal Navy as a Career: An Admiralty Booklet About the Life and Opportunities of Ratings in the Royal Navy', the main images were an idealised artwork of a sailor in front of a British ensign on the front cover, and the cruiser HMS *Belfast* on the rear. The sailor is wearing a hat marked 'HMS *Eagle*', which was an aircraft carrier in service with the fleet at that time.¹⁵⁴ The text of this booklet was also the same as the 1950 equivalent.¹⁵⁵ However, in the 1962 version, the cover image was not of a battleship or aircraft carrier, but instead the focus was very much on submarines. This reflected the changing nature of British naval defence policy, as HMS *Dreadnought*, Britain's first nuclear power submarine, was set to be launched in 1962. The text, however, remained the same as in 1950, demonstrating the limitations of such a shift.¹⁵⁶ Yet by 1976, the Submarine Service was specifically recruiting and producing its own pamphlets.¹⁵⁷ Submarines represented the cutting edge of technology, and this held considerable appeal for some men. Peter

¹⁵² Colin Way, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

¹⁵³ Jonathan Powis, Interview with Author, 30/07/09.

¹⁵⁴ TNA INF 13/10/2 'The Royal Navy as a Career: An Admiralty Booklet About the Life and Opportunities of Ratings in the Royal Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1956)

¹⁵⁵ TNA INF 13/4/3 'Here is the Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1950).

¹⁵⁶ TNA INF 13/19/5 'The Royal Navy as a Career' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1962).

¹⁵⁷ TNA INF 13/41/1 'Deep Navy' Recruitment Pamphlet (Huntingdon, 1976).

Harris, for example, grew up in rural Devon, and when he joined the navy he made the transition 'from turnips to turbines.'¹⁵⁸

Because of the Cold War, the submarine fleet also had a markedly different standard operational culture to the surface fleet, as unlike the sailors of the surface fleet, the crews of Royal Navy submarines had trained and operated in expectation of possible conflict for the entirety of their careers. When they left Faslane or other bases the crews had very little idea where they were going. As one Cold War submariner recalled:

Except in a very few cases when a conventional submarine left its base port to undertake a patrol, the vessel did so in a high state of readiness and, in effect, was on a war patrol. Remember that it was the time of the Cold War and our adversaries in that match, for their part, were deadly serious too, and very aggressive in their tactics, whether it be for avoidance of detection, for intelligence gathering or for downright provocation, we were constantly alert for any or all of the above.¹⁵⁹

Like their colleagues in the Army and their experience of Northern Ireland, submariners, while perhaps never firing on enemy vessels or submarines, had lived and worked on an operational footing. Thus, the submarine crews were used to operating with an aggressive, war mentality, as to them this was their required default operational procedure. The vast majority of the men of the surface fleet lacked any equivalent experience. This lack of experience afflicted the whole of the command structure. Despite confidence in his crew, his ship, and his armaments, Captain David Hart Dyke acknowledged that:

The fact remained none of us had actually been tested in war, and nor, for that matter, had any of the commanding officers in the Royal Navy at the time. A very few had been involved in putting out colonial bush fires or other such low-intensity campaigns, but that was the sum total of their experience of war.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ David Crothers and Peter Harris, Interview with Author, 25/09/09.

¹⁵⁹ Vince O'Neil, Correspondence with Author, 17/07/09.

¹⁶⁰ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 15.

Submariners, however, had trained 'day in and day out for the time when the Cold War with the Soviet Union became a hot one.'¹⁶¹ Even so, conventional war was like nothing they had previously faced, and in 1982 'they were heading into the unknown... It was the wrong war, against the wrong enemy.'¹⁶²

Like the Army and Royal Marines, the Royal Navy had actively sought to encourage its recruits to not only conform in behavioural terms in coming under naval discipline, but also conform mentally. Recruits were introduced to a new culture, and new ways of thinking and approaching problems in order to recast them as naval personnel. Such a process began at an early stage, where in early training 'an individual's entire life structure is completely altered to fit in with the collective whole. The process of assimilation stretches from personal appearance, such as haircut, dress and bearing, to attitudes and beliefs.'¹⁶³ When men joined the Royal Navy, for whatever reason, they became part of a historic institution of rich traditions, one that was distinct from civilian life. Indeed, the period of training itself was carried out by isolating recruits from the outside world, and encouraging them to form new social bonds in the faces of new challenges and adversities. Furthermore:

The Royal Navy actively encourages officers from the start of their careers to not only work together but also to be involved in sport and socialise or in other words to spend as much time together as possible. Consequently the levels of interaction are far more intimate than in most other professions, more akin to family than work mates, and all aspects of personal as well as professional life are known to all.¹⁶⁴

For Jonathan Powis, this quality was essential in producing the high quality of sailors working within the Royal Navy.¹⁶⁵ The point of this instruction was to encourage new recruits to no longer view themselves as civilians, but as sailors, and 'the social separation from society is most effectively achieved through the use of institutionally

¹⁶¹ Rossiter, *Sink the Belgrano*, p. 43.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ Jonathan Powis, Interview with Author, 30/07/09.

specific language.’¹⁶⁶ The new recruits’ induction into this new way of living and perceiving the world was virtually immediate. As a 1973 recruitment pamphlet stated, when men joined the Royal Navy and began their training at HMS *Raleigh*, they are ‘not just starting a new job. They are embarking on a completely new way of life, with a tradition, a routine – and almost a language – all [of] its own.’¹⁶⁷ The Royal Navy, like every other military organisation, possessed its own diction and slang, bewildering to the outsider but completely normal to the initiated. Examples covered all aspects of a serviceman’s life: a bar was a ‘ward room,’ dining rooms were ‘mess decks,’ even the toilets were known by their Navy-specific term as ‘heads.’ This of course created the impression of an “us and them” culture for servicemen and the rest of society. Also, as shore environments used by the Navy were referred to as ships and named as such, this sense of difference was substantial; while geologically speaking Naval personnel may have been on land, in terms of their culture, they were very much at sea. This mental gap was often converted to a physical gap by the presence of armed guards at the entrances to such establishments.¹⁶⁸

Of all the Armed Forces, it was perhaps the Royal Navy that was most conscious of its history. As in the Army, recruits were taught service-specific history at an early stage in order to foster a sense of continuity with the past, and to embrace the importance of tradition. The use of portraits in particular enforced such sensibilities. Their prominence in training and social institutions such as Dartmouth Naval College, or the Army and Navy Club in Piccadilly, London, were for more than just decorative purposes, but served as a form of visual history, as well as pertinent symbols. A mere portrait of Nelson was enough to conjure thoughts of his enduring legacy and the standards of the service that all naval personnel should attempt to maintain, whether in peace or war.¹⁶⁹ The portraits were of naval heroes, and more significantly, they were all victors. Thus, the images represented what young officers should aspire to be. Furthermore, these heroes were distinct ‘almost in a tribal sense from any army or air force equivalents.’¹⁷⁰ These figures permeated all aspects of life. Indeed, social events were linked directly to them; the annual Trafalgar Night celebrations, for example, commemorating Nelson’s

¹⁶⁶ Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ TNA INF 13/37/5 ‘Beginning to be a Sailor’ Royal Navy Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1973), p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁹ Jonathan Powis, Interview with Author, 30/07/09.

¹⁷⁰ Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War*, p. 8.

victory on 21 October 1805 being the best example. As Finlan writes, 'ostensibly, it is just a dinner, yet as a ritual it encompasses everything about the modern Royal Navy in terms of beliefs.'¹⁷¹ Despite the Navy's long, illustrious history, full of victories, it was this single instance that was elevated above all others and used to represent the 'identity' of the service: 'Trafalgar encompasses the ideal image of naval warfare for the Royal Navy and an image that the institution wishes to inculcate into future generations.'¹⁷² Indeed, the preservation of his ship, HMS *Victory*, still a commissioned vessel, symbolised Nelson's importance to the contemporary Royal Navy.¹⁷³ This fascination, bordering almost on idolatry, served to further divide the navy and society, who saw Nelson only as a figure of historical importance, rather than a symbol of identity.¹⁷⁴

III

Joining Up: Fighting in the Air

The third combat arm this study seeks to analyse is that of aviators. Aviation has always been perceived as glamorous, and in war in particular. Indeed, the legacy of the First World War, of men struggling in deep mud, and almost devolving into a subterranean, troglodyte existence, laid the foundations for the cult of the air fighter. For him there was no squalor and anonymity of the trenches, rather the clean purity of the sky. The 'pleasure culture' of war remained strong in the inter-war years, and a major feature in popular literature and interwar cinema was the air war, all of which contributed to the cultural constructs of military aviation. Such fascination with military aviators only intensified following the events of 1940, which were to enshrine the fighter pilots in cultural legend. All subsequent films and books regarding the period highlighted the heroic stereotype of the fighter pilot; boyish, given to high jinks, practical jokes and escapades, users of particular slang and unmoved by the possibility of sudden, violent death.¹⁷⁵ The images portrayed were so culturally dominant that 'these wartime films established a stereotypical image of the fighter pilot which

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun': Aviation, Nationalism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 128-30.

remained virtually unchanged until the late 1980s and which became one of the most enduring heroic episodes in the history of the air fighter.'¹⁷⁶ The images and the characteristics portrayed in popular culture were admired by new recruits in the years following the Second World War and consciously and deliberately exhibited; thus they became part of the culture of the fighter pilot because they were expected following both the Battle of Britain and its attendant coverage in propaganda. Such cultural and social expectations on behaviour endured into the modern era, partly because those new fighter pilots following a generation later very much wanted to display them in order to emulate their predecessors.

With advances in technology, military aviation diversified, and potential recruits could participate in aviation across the armed services, whether in the RAF, the Army, or the Royal Navy. However, in order to attract men to military aviation, similar tactics were used across the services, and the same key areas were targeted for the aviation branch as for the regular form of that service that could be enjoyed as part of the work, such as sport and travel. In their 1976 recruitment pamphlet, for example, the Army Air Corps wrote that 'life is not all work and duties. There is another side to it as well. Nowhere are the opportunities for sport and games better than they are in today's Army.'¹⁷⁷ However, the Fleet Air Arm, RAF and Army Air Corps also had the added advantage of being able to offer the exciting prospect of flight on top of these incentives, and the ability to work with highly complex machinery that required specialist skills. There was an acknowledgement within the services that life as an aviator was more exciting than that of the normal serviceman.¹⁷⁸ The Army Air Corps, for example, extolled the virtues of working with the advanced technology that comprised the Corps as part of a 'young progressive corps with a great future,' as well as stressing the variety of flying roles that were available within the Corps, such as Pilot, Observer, and Airgunner.¹⁷⁹ The recruitment literature also described how those from ground employments could go on to be accepted for aircrew training, moving from being an observer, to airgunner, and also a pilot. This therefore laid out a clear path of career progression for those who aspired to be a pilot, but did not have the right qualifications to immediately join pilot training, making the service even more attractive. The oral history record clearly

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁷⁷ TNA INF 13/95/9 'Army Air Corps' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1976).

¹⁷⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

¹⁷⁹ TNA INF 13/95/9 'Army Air Corps' Recruitment Pamphlet (London, 1976)

identifies that several men took this opportunity to proceed via a different route; Eddy Candlish, a Royal Marine, for example, was looking to be a helicopter pilot in 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, but failed the pilot course. Rather than give up, he instead applied to be an observer, hoping to eventually graduate to a pilot through this path, and passed the Aircrewman's course.¹⁸⁰

Because the Fleet Air Arm was part of the Royal Navy, many of its recruits joined for exactly the same reason as other sailors, namely the option of foreign travel. Mike Watson, who flew Sea Harriers during the Falklands, had joined the Navy in 1965 aged 18 to 'broaden my horizons' and spent 18 months in the Far East. The new opportunities and challenges this represented 'was exactly what I joined for. I thought it was marvellous.'¹⁸¹ From there, he decided he wanted to stay in the Navy and become an officer. This eventually led him into flying; when quizzed at his Admiralty board as to which branch he would like to specialise in, he chose aviation:

Because I'd been on a ship carrying helicopters I thought, "Why not be a helicopter pilot?" It's amazing how impressionable you are isn't it, because I'd never even thought about flying, but I thought, "It sounds like a good idea now."¹⁸²

Other pilots, however, desperately wanted to fly from an early age, and so joined the services the specific intention of becoming aviators. Jerry Pook, who served with No. 1 Squadron RAF in the Falklands, was 'mad keen on flying' from childhood. He wanted to 'see the world from a single-seater cockpit.' His chances of a flying career in the RAF were stronger as the Navy shrunk in size, and this affected his choice of service. He joined the Air Cadets at school and participated in various camps and early flying experiences. He took up a scholarship from the RAF to gain his private pilot's license, which he achieved at the age of 17, and he joined the RAF the following year.¹⁸³ Similarly, Robin Kent joined the Navy aged 16, having grown up surrounded by ex-servicemen, including his father, in the early 1950s. His family mixed with former naval aviators, which inspired him: 'I thought that would be something I would very

¹⁸⁰ IWM SOUND 30109 Candlish, Eddy, Reel 3.

¹⁸¹ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 1.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 1.

much like to do.'¹⁸⁴ For Kent, flying was 'certainly something I would want to strive for,' and 'aviation was always something I thought I would absolutely love to do, if I can do it.'¹⁸⁵ However, he lacked the academic qualifications to become a pilot so joined the service as an Artificer and carried out the courses whilst in the service and went on to Dartmouth Naval College four years later with the aim of undertaking pilot selection.¹⁸⁶ David Morgan's father had served as a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm during the Second World War, which Morgan believes had some influence on his choice of career; by the age of 9 had decided he wanted to fly, and joined the Navy. Morgan remembers 'very, very clearly' being sat in the cockpit of a Spitfire at the Biggin Hill air display as a child, and having grown up in Kent, there was still the detritus of war to be found in the local area, which also piqued his interest.¹⁸⁷

The concept of the air forces being an elite was one that proved attractive in recruitment, and was founded very much in the extensive and rigorous processes all prospective pilots went through in order to first gain a place on the training programme, let alone pass the course. There were various tests for leadership and co-operation, as well as tests for flying aptitude, intelligence, manual dexterity, and hand-eye co-ordination. If a candidate failed any of these, he could not go on to pilot training. While training for ordinary soldiers and sailors in the Army and Royal Navy lasted a number of weeks, for aviators training was measured in years. For naval aviators, with the period at Dartmouth and basic flying at RAF Linton-on-Ouze included, there were nearly four years of flying training

Before you're really doing very much... before you're actually on the front line and flying off the carrier... Quite a lot of acclimatisation goes on even before you go to your first ship you've done something like three and a half, four years in the service.¹⁸⁸

The RAF was similar; after Pook had passed the initial selection process, he went on to the RAF College, Cranwell. There he undertook a full three year course, with lots of

¹⁸⁴ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

¹⁸⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

drill, academics in military history and science and technology, and survival courses.¹⁸⁹ All of this was carried out along with flying training initially on a Chipmunk under full RAF flying procedures and conditions. He then moved on to a Jet Provost as a basic trainer, flying a full 120 hour course, complete with navigation, acrobatics, and close formation flying. Upon successful completion of this, he received his wings.¹⁹⁰ Discipline was tough throughout, and the drop-out rate was quite high. After Pook passed, he went on to RAF Valley in Anglesey for advanced training and the fighter pilot course. Despite the importance of the bomber fleet in carrying the nation's nuclear deterrent, Pook was desperate to be a fighter pilot, rather than be a bomber or transport pilot, as he considered this far more demanding and desirable. Indeed, Pook's statement in his oral testimony that, whilst on the high-pressured, six-month long course, 'if you couldn't keep up to it, you fell by the way side and were sent off to the bomber fleets' confirms such a belief.¹⁹¹ The course was designed to send candidates on to further single-seat, low-level navigation flying. Such low flying was essential for future operations, as Flight Lieutenant Mark Hare noted:

Unless you train to fly really low in peacetime, in war you will stand a good chance of killing yourself by flying into the ground. You must learn to concentrate your entire attention in front of you. During an approach to the target at 50 feet and 500 knots [575 miles per hour], the ground on either side and in front to about 600 yards is just a blur.¹⁹²

This training pushed candidates to their physical limits, and forced them to confront danger. Flying low and at speed made the limitations of human reactions all too apparent. In the Navy, if a pilot failed any aspect of the course, he was finished as an aviator. The drop-out rate was high; on Kent's course, out of nine pilots who started, only four successfully navigated their way through, and that 'was pretty much par for the course.'¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 1.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Quoted in Jeffrey Ethell and Alfred Price, *Air War South Atlantic* (October, 1984), p. 216.

¹⁹³ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

There was also an important distinction between civil and military aviation; while men were able to learn how to fly an aeroplane, but this does not necessarily mean that they could fight it. Rigorous and continuous training is the way in which this distinction is overcome. Watson, for example, had only learned the basics of flying during his course, but acknowledged that it took a lot of time to become proficient in its operational use. In terms of flying, after training

You've really only learned the nuts and bolts of the trade, because the tactics, the way you employ the thing, tend not be taught at such a great depth on the course as you'd like. These things sort of develop within squadrons to a large extent.¹⁹⁴

Indeed, to Watson's mind, tactics could not really be taught at training because they 'are a little bit of a squadron thing. They rely very much on the personalities on the squadron.'¹⁹⁵ Thus, when a new pilot joined a squadron, he needed to be instructed in that squadron's tactics. Training could often push new and less experienced pilots to their limits, as the entire squadron needed to be well versed in combat tactics in order to be effective. An important characteristic of a successful fighter pilot therefore was the ability to learn, but at the same time he needed to be competitive and extrovert in order to make the most of this training.¹⁹⁶ Fighter pilot culture played an important part in building this necessary mentality. A major part of this, and flying training, was based around the idea of constant competition, as one fighter pilot recalled: 'You're in competition all the time with your colleagues, and with yourself, most importantly with yourself, to try and get better, and you have to face many interesting challenges in the cockpit.'¹⁹⁷ The product of such a culture was that pilots developed substantial egos, and as such the cultural environment in which they trained and lived bred a mental response.

Because there could be no passengers who were carried by the rest of the squadron, and because of the cultural requirements, new pilots were therefore regularly beaten in simulated air-to-air combat until they reached a necessary standard. Such simulations of

¹⁹⁴ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ IWM SOUND 12820 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Reel 4.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

course produced yet more fierce competition, as junior pilots attempted to prove themselves against the more established pilots, and stop themselves being the subject of derision. The squadron's Air Warfare Instructors who were responsible for such instruction had themselves passed a rigorous test to achieve such a classification; at 764 Squadron, the Air Warfare Instructor school, 'many above average aviators had been delighted to be selected for this specialist training only to be psychologically destroyed by failing to make the grade when on course.'¹⁹⁸ Yet having passed it, they brought such a distinction into their professional conduct. The jet fighter world was one of continuous competition, based on the belief that competition breeds excellence. Such a culture ensured that aviators lived a boisterous life of one-upmanship, both in the air and when off-duty, and Nigel 'Sharkey' Ward, an experienced naval aviator and commander of 801 Naval Air Squadron in the Falklands, recalled several instances where such a mentality and culture resulted in severe accidents that could well have been fatal for those involved.¹⁹⁹

Therefore not only was there a practical challenge in becoming a successful fighter pilot, the cultures of these units ensured that it was a mental one. This culture produced a mental and emotional response in fighter pilots so that they perceived training, and the idea of air-to-air combat, as a challenge to be tackled aggressively so as to overcome it. Thus it can be seen that the idea of a test appealed to some men, as has been noted above in regards to the demanding selection processes of the Parachute Regiment and Royal Marines. Watson, who had only completed the training course on the Sea Harrier on 3rd April, 1982, the day his squadron embarked on HMS *Invincible* to sail south as part of the Task Force,²⁰⁰ believed that when it came to fast-jet flying, 'there is a challenge there,' a challenge involved in mastering high-speed jet flying: 'In the fixed wing world, I found out subsequently, there is always a lot of scope for improvement; you are never good at every facet of what your aeroplane is capable of.'²⁰¹ Indeed, the concept of a challenge and mastering this is repeated by Watson throughout his oral testimony: 'It's such a challenge. There's so much to achieve.'²⁰² Even after nearly four years of flying training, for example, Kent believed that new

¹⁹⁸ IWM DOCS 92/40/1 Private Papers of Commander N. D. Ward, DFC AFC RN, 'Sea Harrier over the Falklands: A Maverick at War' (1991), p. 37.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-7.

²⁰⁰ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 1.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, Reel 3.

pilots were only capable aviators.²⁰³ Naval aviators, in particular, were continually confronted with difficulties in their basic operation, such as landing on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, especially at night, which for new pilots took 'a lot of getting used to.'²⁰⁴ Indeed, for Ward, 'night flying from a deck at sea represents the most demanding aspect of all domestic military flying operations and should not be approached lightly or without adequate practice: too many aviators have died learning that lesson.'²⁰⁵ Night flying in general required careful monitoring of the instruments, else the aircraft was liable to crash into the ground or sea, as it is possible that the pilot may have thought he was level when he was in fact in a climb, or, more alarmingly, in a dive. Stars in the night sky could easily be mistaken for lights in a settlement ashore, but on nights where cloud obscured the stars and moon there were no sources of external light to help a pilot orientate himself. Combined with military operational flying, that required aircraft to be put through extensive manoeuvres, it was easy for pilots to become disorientated, which could, and sometimes did, prove fatal.²⁰⁶

Because of the physical and mental demands of flying fighter aircraft, they were also therefore viewed as being more exciting, as Pook commented above. Watson agreed, and the idea of flying remained 'an exciting concept.'²⁰⁷ Such views contributed to the institutional cultures of fighter squadrons. Watson himself had initially been a helicopter pilot after joining the Navy, but had transferred to fixed wing fighters purely because of the increased excitement that came with flying fighter aircraft:

We're all show offs aren't we and it seemed like the better vehicle for showing off... There's an element of excitement about flying around in a jet, it's certainly a lot more physically exciting than bumbling around in a helicopter, there's just no comparison.²⁰⁸

Fighter aircraft were more difficult to fly than helicopters, and therefore more difficult to master, which was ingrained in all fighter pilots at training; they wanted to be the

²⁰³ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ IWM DOCS 92/40/1 Private Papers of Commander N. D. Ward, DFC AFC RN, 'Sea Harrier over the Falklands: A Maverick at War' (1991), p. 10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 111.

²⁰⁷ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 1.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

best, and aggressively pursued this goal. Indeed, the perceived greater excitement and challenge of mastering fighter jet flying were what specifically appealed to Watson: 'In a helo you just really fly it around. You don't do any weaponry or take other people on at combat, or employ a weapons system,' whereas in a fighter jet, 'you're a one-man band who's got to be good at three or four really quite specialised facets of the arm.'²⁰⁹ This led him to conclude that 'single-seat is the only place to be, quite honestly.'²¹⁰ Therefore, it can be seen that, like those men in the Paras and Royal Marines, fighter pilots were fully committed to their roles; it was something they had chosen to participate in and excel at, and revelled in. Such attitudes were reflected in the culture of the unit once these men graduated to operational status.

Pre-War Experience: In the Air

British fighter pilots had not been engaged in direct air-to-air combat for many years prior to the Falklands War; the last time a British pilot had shot down an enemy aircraft was during the Korean War. However, while their actual experience of combat was minimal, several factors influenced the cultural and social makeup of both jet fighter and helicopter squadrons, which meant that they were well placed to react to the crisis in the South Atlantic.

As mentioned above, one of the major draws of combat aviation was its difficulty, and part of the challenge involved in flying was the element of danger that was concordant with it. Despite training and operating predominately in a peacetime environment, life in the air force ensured a wartime mentality; flying was full of hazards, and trusting one's life to mechanical machines ensured pilots could never become lax, and always need to maintain high standards. Death could still be a regular occurrence among even experienced pilots through human error or mechanical failure. Even though no British pilots had been shot down through enemy action since Suez in 1956, pilots were in fact quite used to the possibility of imminent death. As Kent stated, 'flying jet aeroplanes in an environment where you're simulating combat is going to be hairy,'²¹¹ and by its very

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

nature, fighter combat training did not leave much room for error. In an effort to perfect fighter combat, aircraft were pushed to their very limits, as were the men operating them, and it was perhaps inevitable that such a policy will result in near misses or accidents. Two pilots were lost on Kent's training course. On the course preceding his, four pilots had been killed, and the fifth had stopped flying. Kent recalls that 'you were conscious there was a risk, there was a high risk factor. You pay attention or you fly into hills.'²¹² Any slight lapse in concentration, or technological failure, when moving at over 400 miles an hour, was fatal. For pilots, training was such a hazardous occupation that having survived it was almost akin to having been in combat. Death through accidents was common in a way that Army and Naval exercises could never replicate. As Morgan remembers:

There is probably only one constant when you fly fighter aircraft: Pilots die. They die at the most unlikely times, in the most benign of circumstances. It doesn't matter what aircraft you fly, whether you are young or old, experienced or a rookie, whether it is peacetime or war. It is the constant that everyone is aware of and no one dares contemplate.²¹³

Morgan had seen his first friend die at 21 whilst serving in Germany. He had even inspected the crash, out of a mix of professional interest and morbid curiosity, and found his friend 'quite dead.'²¹⁴

In helicopters, crashing was an accepted part of aviation, and it was widely believed that every pilot and aircrew would suffer at least one heavy crash.²¹⁵ However, because helicopters operated at lower speeds than fighter jets, the chances of survival in the event of a crash, or the ability to land with a fault, were greater. In a fighter jet, chances were slimmer, but the option of ejecting from a stricken aircraft remained and as a result many pilots were able to walk away from crashes that otherwise would have been fatal. Others, however, did not, and such fatal crashes obviously had an impact on those surviving pilots. More significantly, the regular presence of death had a direct impact on fighter pilot culture. As Morgan points out: 'we had the dubious advantage of having

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ David Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 97.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

²¹⁵ Phil Russo, Interview with Author, 18/12/08.

lost many friends in the air over the years and were well rehearsed in the skills required to put on a brave face and carry on.²¹⁶ Throughout their training and periods of service, pilots grew accustomed to these losses, and the “proper” way of dealing with them, which had much in common with the 1940s portrayals of Battle of Britain pilots. This led to a mentality of remaining outwardly calm and philosophical while internalising any grief. Such a mentality grew organically throughout training and was carried into operational squadron life, in turn becoming self-perpetuating for the next generation of aviators.²¹⁷ There were also practical tasks that were mandatory following the loss of a pilot, such as a Board of Enquiry, and an analysis of the incident to see if any lessons could be learned so as to avoid the same mistake in future. Pilots were therefore able to take a very rational view of the loss.²¹⁸ There was no great emotional investment, and though the death was obviously regrettable, it was treated in a pragmatic way.

Therefore, it could be argued that aviators were better prepared psychologically to deal with casualties, particularly more so than the sailors in the Navy, who for the most part lacked any operational experience. Even soldiers, despite their service in Northern Ireland, were inexperienced in enduring such levels of death. However, because of this acquaintance with death, aviators also lacked the irrational sense of safety that men normally carried into battle with them. Indeed, Solomon argues that this was essential in facilitating a serviceman’s ability to function in battle.²¹⁹ Yet the idea of “it won’t happen to me” did not and could not extend to pilots, as it was perfectly obvious that anyone could be the victim of an accident, regardless of skill. For McManners, the presence of death, and the way in which it remained prevalent for aviators, ensured that ‘the tight-knit life of an operational fast jet squadron therefore has all the traditions and character of a wartime unit, with enough real danger and tragedy to keep everyone thinking realistically.’²²⁰ Therefore, the lack of any real combat experience amongst aviators did not lead to complacency, as it perhaps would in the Army or Navy. Like their historical predecessors, those aviators called forward to serve on Operation Corporate discovered that, while they may have regarded themselves as part of an elite group due to their arduous and highly selective training, death through accidents and

²¹⁶ David Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 100.

²¹⁷ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

²¹⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

²¹⁹ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, pp. 40-1.

²²⁰ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 52.

the coming conflict made it apparent that 'training and mastery of complex flying skills did not necessarily ensure success or survival.'²²¹

Therefore, even though British fighter pilots had, prior to the Falklands, not been in direct confrontation, their training, and the continuous presence of mortal threat, ensured that they already had the mentality necessary to endure conflict. Furthermore, their peacetime exercises were very realistic, where they would simulate air-to-air combat. The combat training was as realistic as possible, and the accepted view for naval aviators was that 'the Navy train right to the edge.'²²² As Ward recalled, such rigorous training in combat was essential in order to master fully the other prospective roles a pilot may be called upon to fulfil:

Doing fighter combat is number one, makes you thoroughly conversed with the whole aeroplane, how it flies to its limits in every way. Everything else is easy after that, ground attack, the whole lot, piece of cake, because you now are the master of the aeroplane.²²³

For those pilots who served in the RAF, the vast majority served a tour in Germany in support of the British forces there. Pook flew in Germany, and he recalled with fondness that there were few restrictions limiting what he as a pilot could do, therefore presenting him with the opportunity to improve and better his skills. For example, he could fly low wherever he liked, developing and increasing his aptitude for this demanding skill that was a necessity of his role as a ground attack pilot. Also, because Germany was so heavily fortified,

Everywhere you went there were real targets on the ground, which you could make simulated attacks on, or take pictures of. And of course there were big exercises; we'd take part in all the Army exercises when they'd have huge numbers of vehicles out, and we'd be on one side or the other. In addition to that, what made it even better, was our rules stated that in flight, in peacetime, any other jet we saw... you could jump on them and attack them, so it really

²²¹ Mark K. Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare: The Allied Aircrew Experience in the Second World War* (London, 1995), p. 60.

²²² Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

²²³ IWM SOUND 12820 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Reel 3.

kept you on your toes. Every airplane you saw was a potential enemy, so we had the most wonderful air combats.²²⁴

Such training was of vital importance, as even though the pilots were operating during peacetime, it was perceived of being a case of when, rather than if, the Soviet Bloc would attack. The impending conflict was viewed with the utmost severity, and the RAF planned for a daily attrition rate of 30%. As Morgan said, 'we were under no illusions that it was going to be a short, sharp, bloody conflict.'²²⁵ Like submariners, aviators conducted their operations under the shadow of imminent war, and they therefore took operations very seriously, as they may have relied upon the skills they were developing and honing to save their lives when battle was joined.

Naval aviators had also participated in a variety of exercises to simulate aerial combat at sea; for example, 801 Squadron had been commissioned in mid-1981 and had served with the American Fleet in the Atlantic and also visited the US Navy in Norfolk, Virginia. At the start of 1982, it had been part of NATO Exercise Alloy Express aboard *Invincible* off the coast of Norway,²²⁶ and therefore had key recent experience in conducting flying operations in the type of wintry conditions that would be faced off the Falklands. Those pilots who had served prior to the scaling back of the organic fixed-wing naval air element, who had experience of flying Buccaneers, for example, had also had the experience of carrying Britain's nuclear deterrent. While not as substantial as the submarine-launched Polaris missile, the aircraft could still deliver nuclear weapons against Soviet targets. When on front line duty aboard the aircraft carriers, the aviators would draw up plans and strategies as to how to deliver nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union from wherever the carrier was based, should the Cold War turn hot. When drawing up these plans, it was assumed that the aircraft would not have enough fuel to make it back to the carriers.²²⁷ Should the United States and Soviet Union have come to war, the British contribution would have been to strike at a certain number of 'tactical targets. Well, they were called tactical targets but they

²²⁴ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 5.

²²⁵ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

²²⁶ IWM DOCS 92/40/1 Private Papers of Commander N. D. Ward, DFC AFC RN, 'Sea Harrier over the Falklands: A Maverick at War' (1991), p. 4.

²²⁷ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

were sighted in rather large population gatherings.’²²⁸ The British pilots were entrusted with huge destructive capability, and were accustomed to being able to commit killing on a huge scale. While officially only flying in peacetime, fighter pilots at sea and in Germany were very much operating in the shadow of possible imminent war, and treated their operations as such. Therefore, when the Falklands crisis broke, no substantial shift was required to move from a peacetime to a wartime mentality.

Yet even though they were entrusted with delivering Britain’s nuclear deterrent should the need arise, the majority of pilots did not believe that they would ever experience combat. Nor had they joined with this specific intention. Watson, for example, did not expect that he would ever see real combat: ‘You don’t really do you? I can’t imagine that I’d have volunteered to do it if I thought I was actually going to have to go and really do it.’²²⁹ Morgan similarly gave little thought to the idea of fighting when he joined the forces: ‘There was no actual hot war going on at the time, and apparently no prospect of any either. It was very much a peacetime service that I joined.’²³⁰ Indeed, for Morgan it was the appeal of flight that motivated him to join, rather than that of combat, which is why he had initially joined as a search-and-rescue helicopter pilot: ‘I didn’t join the forces with a view to going to war I joined the forces to be able to fly.’²³¹ It was only after he had been in the service for several years, and served in Germany, that Morgan became convinced of the likelihood of imminent war, and the need to be prepared, which led to his transfer into single-seat fighters. Even then, he expected any coming conflict to be with the communist forces of the Eastern Bloc. He could not have predicted war in the South Atlantic, and as such it could not have been a motivation for him joining the service. Yet it would prove to be a major experience in his life. Fighter pilots did not join to fight, but they were trained to do so, and in 1982 they would be called to implement this training.

Helicopter pilots did not have such daunting responsibilities in the event of war as fighter pilots. However, they all maintained a high level of preparation and training in the sphere of operations they would be expected to carry out. Crucially, they were also extensively trained in the operations that they would be required to undertake in the

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr ‘Soapy’, Reel 2.

²³⁰ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

²³¹ Ibid.

Falklands. Indeed, several of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron had been on exercises that proved to be prophetic for the impending operation in the South Atlantic. John Glaze, for example, had spent the winters of 1980-1 and 1981-2 in Norway, which with hindsight he regarded as ideal preparation for Operation Corporate:

Really that's what set us up so well for the Falklands. We had literally just come back from Norway... although it was a different type of cold, we were fairly confident in our equipment, our personal equipment, we were confident in the aircraft... we couldn't have been better prepared.²³²

Indeed, Glaze recalls that 'we didn't see our role as being much different from what we'd been doing in Norway,'²³³ and that B Flight was perfectly prepared in this regard. The Air Squadron had a long standing commitment to training in Norway in the winter months, as well carrying out numerous other exercises each year. For example, in 1976, the Air Squadron took part in six exercises including two in Norway; Exercise Clockwork 76 and Exercise Teamwork 76.²³⁴ Even those aircrewmembers who had not spent the previous winter in Arctic conditions in Norway therefore practiced skills that could ultimately save their lives, and 1982 was no different. Eddy Candlish, for example, flew as an Aircrewman in Gazelle helicopters, and whilst the Scouts of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron were in Norway prior to Easter leave in early 1982, he was in Scotland, practising fighter evasion skills, which would be very important in the Falklands.²³⁵ Candlish had also served in Northern Ireland for four months in 1980. Duties with the Air Squadron had involved liaison and reconnaissance, predominately, but also insertion and aircraft support.²³⁶ As Candlish recalls, low-level operations required the pilot and crewman to 'adapt normal, conventional warfare strategies for the aircraft.'²³⁷ Such low-level operations, in a conventional war, were therefore familiar with the aircrews prior to the Falklands war, and they were therefore easily able to adopt such procedures when required to do so. Indeed, the level of training and preparedness maintained by 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron meant that when it

²³² IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 5.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ TNA ADM 202/610 Annual Historical Record of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, 1st January, 1976 – 31st December, 1976, p. 2.

²³⁵ IWM SOUND 30109 Candlish, Eddy, Reel 4.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

came to the landings at San Carlos, one engineer attached to the unit believed that, but for the Argentines using live ammunition and ordnance, it 'was just like an exercise.'²³⁸

Men had elected to become aviators for several reasons. While many of these were shared by servicemen across the branches of the British military, in addition to the more traditional reasons such as family connections, and common reasons such as travel opportunities, aviators were attracted by the various aircraft employed, which offered the chance of excitement, of glamour, and for fighter pilots in particular the chance to remain an individual. Additionally and significantly, despite the symbiotic relationship between the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm, for example, the men saw themselves as aviators, distinct from the ordinary sailors of the fleet.

*

It can be seen that men joined the varied branches of the armed services for a myriad of reasons, though several dominant factors can be identified across the distinct branches. The two leading factors, as represented by both the contemporary recruitment literature and the retrospective oral history testimony, were the provision of sport and the opportunity for foreign travel. Both are recurring factors in the testimony, regardless of the rank of the interview subject or the form of testimony itself. The idea of foreign travel, in particular, was a major appeal offered by the Royal Navy in its recruitment literature, and one the oral history has demonstrated veterans to have been extremely receptive to. Other factors for joining the armed forces included a family connection, and amongst those men who elected to join the more elite branches, the desire to challenge themselves. The recruitment literature produced by the respective armed forces, and the motivations men held for joining them, played an important part in planting the early seeds of cultural expectations as to what service would entail. Some men were abused of such expectations during operational service prior to the Falklands, but for many, and in particular the surface fleet of the Royal Navy, political circumstances meant that their careers in the Navy were exactly what they had assumed they would be; technical careers that brought the opportunity to visit exotic places. Such experience merely entrenched the cultural values of the service, so that war

²³⁸ IWM SOUND 16361 Elliot, Richard James, Reel 1.

became an unexpected issue. In contrast, the men who joined the Army and Royal Marines did so under the knowledge they would serve in Northern Ireland. Even so, the testimony, both written and oral, regardless of the rank of recorder or date of recording, has revealed a mental conformity across the armed services in that very few men actually believed that they would ever see conventional war as their historical predecessors had. The differing reactions to such a scenario becoming a reality, as compelled by the cultures of the distinct and diverse units, will be explored and analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2:

British Military Reactions to the Outbreak of War and the Voyage South

The changing emotions and reactions of British servicemen on the long voyage south to the Falkland Islands revealed several key facets of the institutional cultures of their units, as well as revealing the extent of cultural indoctrination that they had experienced during their service prior to April 1982. Thus, this chapter will analyse how the cultures of the various armed forces units, established in the previous chapter, had a direct influence on how British servicemen reacted to the escalating situation in the South Atlantic. It will draw comparisons from such reactions, including how they conducted and prepared themselves mentally for the possibility of war, and how such behaviour and forms of expression changed when the concept of war moved from being a remote possibility to one of almost certainty. Through the direct comparison of the different forces, this chapter will reveal key facets of their respective cultures, which in turn explain their behaviour.

The preparations and reactions to the news of war were a far more common subject matter for military memoirs than the reasons for joining the armed forces. As such, this chapter therefore makes use of more memoirs than Chapter 1 in order to analyse such physical, mental and cultural reactions to first the possibility, and then the certainty, of conflict. This information has been derived from a study of available published and unpublished sources, including 10 memoirs that have been published between 1986 and 2007 and one unpublished draft of a retrospective memoir held by the Imperial War Museum. Predominately, however, as in the previous chapter, such information has been uncovered and explored through the use of oral history. This chapter has used 16 oral history interviews from the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive, along with one contemporary audio diary stored there. In addition, the historical record has been further broadened with 18 independently conducted oral history interviews. with many interviews conducted independently to broaden the limited selection currently available to the public in various archives, and to allow those who experienced and endured the emotions to relate them, first hand, as they appeared to them. This will ensure that there is a clear representative view of how the impending conflict was perceived in the context of the professional British armed forces, an important contribution to the historical record. The more intimate nature of oral history has been utilised in this

chapter in order to extract details and impressions of events that are not otherwise available in static documentary sources, broadening the historical record, and allowing concepts such as the reactions to war to be fully explored.

I

Reactions to War: Land Forces

The Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands on 2nd April 1982 took the British armed forces completely by surprise. Some of the men in the Royal Marines knew of the islands, having served there as part of Naval Party 8901, such as Steve Newland. He recalls that he had ‘absolutely hated it... I wasn’t best pleased I had to go back again.’²³⁹ However, for the vast majority of members of the Task Force, the surprise that met the news of the Argentines’ actions was in part due to the fact that very few British servicemen actually knew where the Falklands were located; thus, they could not quite fathom neither why nor how Argentina might invade islands off the coast of Scotland.²⁴⁰ For some, such as Phil Russo, this geographical error meant that there was considerable confusion as to why he would be required at all: ‘I thought “well send the RAF up to Glasgow and let them defend up there” because I thought it was one of the Hebridean islands, I didn’t have a clue where it was.’²⁴¹ Tony McNally, serving in the Royal Artillery, recalls that

Some Argentinians had apparently invaded an island somewhere off the coast of Scotland, and we all got very excited about the thought of going up there and giving the cheeky bastards a good kicking. The buzz carried on even after some bright spark took the time to look at a map.²⁴²

The desire amongst the Army and Royal Marines to participate in the largest military action Britain had conducted since Korea far outweighed the confusion over where this action would take place. For the men of the assembled Task Force, when told to prepare

²³⁹ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

²⁴⁰ This mistake was very common. Amongst others, see Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 99, Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 38.

²⁴¹ Phil Russo, Interview with Author, 18/12/08.

²⁴² McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 41.

for war, 'years of routine suddenly achieved meaning and purpose.'²⁴³ For those who had joined the armed forces in the years preceding 1982,

These individuals have joined a profession in which the fundamental purpose is to apply violence (often lethal) to achieve political ends. Like all employment, the career span of a warrior is limited by age, with few exceeding more than forty years, but unlike in most other occupations, warriors may never practise their skills.²⁴⁴

Thus, any opportunity to do so, regardless of where it occurred in the world, was seen as desirable and exciting, particularly in the Army and particularly amongst the young. The prevailing view was that the opportunity had to be taken and embraced as it was unlikely that the soldier would get another. The Falklands crisis represented an opportunity to test and prove oneself both professionally and personally.

These reactions were strongly embodied and exhibited in the units that were to be sent first, the Royal Marines and attached Parachute Regiment battalions comprising 3 Commando Brigade. However, they were confronted by an immediate problem in that they needed to be drawn together and equipped for the coming operation, which was further complicated by the vague rumours of war and the considerable surprise of the Argentine attack. When 42 Commando, for example, were alerted to be on standby for the Falklands as fears of a potential Argentine invasion grew in Whitehall, they had just finished a winter training deployment in North Norway, and had to be recalled from the start of 3 weeks leave. Men had scattered across the country and internationally, but it was testament to the desire to participate that they rushed back to their barracks, including one NCO from 42 Commando who came back from the West Coast of America.²⁴⁵ Indeed, in the frantic period of preparing the unit for war, 'one of the sadder tasks was having to turn away many volunteers who yearned to come. Most were those who had just left the unit, but who still remained on our books during their last leave.'²⁴⁶ This once again enforced the idea that the chance of combat, of

²⁴³ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, p. 102.

²⁴⁴ Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War*, p. 1.

²⁴⁵ Nick Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic: 42 Commando Royal Marines in the Falklands War* (London, 1986), p. 12.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

implementing training, was seized upon by the men of this elite unit. John Geddes of 2 Para was similarly on leave in Newcastle, and received the telegram ordering him back to the depot at Aldershot a day later than everyone else. He therefore had to rush back, and nearly missed the embarkation:

If I had missed the boat trip to the Falklands I know that I would have spent the rest of my days branded a coward who'd bottled out of the battle. The men I admired most, my mates, would have shunned me. I would have become a Para Reg [Parachute Regular] leper and as far as I'm concerned that would have been the worst disease on the planet.²⁴⁷

Certainly there was a strong desire, and social pressure, not to be seen to be shirking duty when war was actually on the horizon, and to back up one's friends. Such reactions were direct reflections of the cultures of the units involved, and the conformity of view in the historical record and commonality of memory demonstrates the mental conformity that the servicemen had gone through in their training and previous operations. While the politicians expressed the need to commit the troops to combat for lofty political and patriotic reasons, the soldiers themselves were motivated by much simpler ideals, which demonstrated the collective pressure of the group environment: 'In those days the regiment and your mates were everything.'²⁴⁸ The strong level and importance of comradeship in 2 Para was also shown in the fact that, whilst on the voyage south, eight men had been discovered stowing away on *Norland*, the ship carrying 2 Para. These men had either been written off by minor injury or assigned to other units and duties, but were conflicted by the mental pressures that promoted loyalty to the unit and the importance of conflict.²⁴⁹

The shame and fear of social exclusion after the conflict for being left behind led some men to go to extraordinary lengths to ensure they would not be left out of the operation, even if their absence was due to accident, rather than deliberate malingering. Danny Marshall, for example, was in Haslar naval hospital after a knee operation when the news of the Falklands broke. Released from hospital too late to join his unit, 3

²⁴⁷ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 33.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Commando Brigade Air Squadron, Marshall arrived in Plymouth after they had left and ended up making up the Rear Party with the rest of a skeleton crew left behind. When asked in interview if he was disappointed to have missed out he replied: 'Absolutely. It was heartbreaking. It was embarrassing; I couldn't look people in the face.'²⁵⁰ The intimate, specific nature of oral history has allowed this story to come through, when it would otherwise be lost. Marshall did, however, get a reprieve. Tasked to carry a package for his CO from RAF Lyneham, Marshall boarded a plane and flew first from England to Gibraltar, then on to Senegal, and from there to Ascension Island. There he met up with his unit and hid from the Sergeant-Major until they sailed south from Ascension, and he could no longer be sent back.²⁵¹ This camaraderie was certainly not unique to the cultures of the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marine Commandos, but they benefitted from having a strong esprit de corps, in part because of their rigorous and highly selective training programmes. The remarkable element that can be abstracted from all the forms of personal reminiscence cited above is the consistency of the reaction to the coming conflict, a reaction that was uniform regardless of when and how these reminiscences were produced. This clearly identifies a sense of primacy of unit culture.

Despite the confusion over the location of the prospective theatre, and the speed with which they were pulled together, the first units to be mobilised, 40, 42 and 45 Commando of the Royal Marines, and 2 and 3 Para were filled with excitement to be going to war. Marshall believed this desire to see action was a characteristic shared by the entire marine corps, 'almost without exception... Royal Marines are Royal Marines. They are professional fighting soldiers. Although the vast majority of them are professional fighting soldiers who've never seen action, that's what they wanted to do.'²⁵² The training for war that Royal Marines had spent so much of their careers doing had bred a certain martial mentality, and Geddes noted that there was a similar mentality in the Parachute Regiment:

The only atmosphere I can remember was one of professional industry and a buzz of anticipation. We are going to war! To most people that would have

²⁵⁰ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

been a terrifying proposition but that's what we did for a living. Other people made cars. We made war.'²⁵³

The idea of fighting a conventional war was exciting for the soldiers of the British Army, and was viewed as a chance to prove themselves as professionals and put their training to the test in the ultimate environment. The cultures of these units were built around them being the best, of facing challenges and defeating them. The budding campaign in the South Atlantic was instantly recognised as the theatre in which to prove this. There was a desire to participate for professional satisfaction, even if, inevitably, some apprehension existed on a personal level.²⁵⁴ Some men had joined these units for the challenge they represented, and now an even greater challenge was presenting itself. Peter Richens, Company Sergeant-Major of B Company, reflected that when the Falklands crisis hit the news, 'I think at the back of my mind, as a professional soldier, that I was hoping the Parachute Regiment or 2 Para would be called forward for it.'²⁵⁵

Such an attitude permeated the battalion at all levels, and this far outweighed any patriotic desire to defend British citizens; rather the unit as a whole was desperate for combat so as to prove itself on a professional level. Such a reaction was interesting, as it displayed a level of mental conformity amongst the troops that transcends rank. There can be no doubt that such a reaction was due to the fact that both officers and enlisted men of the Paras and Royal Marines had undergone the exact same rigorous selection processes and taxing training exercises. Colonel Herbert 'H' Jones, 2 Para's Commanding Officer, for example, was furious when he discovered that the battalion would be sent on a pre-arranged six-month tour to Belize instead and flew home from leave to petition directly the MOD that 2 Para be sent south. They were not alone, as the desire to go to war was also strong in 1 Para. Based in Edinburgh but serving in Northern Ireland at the time of the Falklands, it too was desperate to go. Its commanding officer flew to London to plead that they should be sent instead of the Gurkhas. Soldiers in the regiment wrote directly to the Prime Minister, but to no

²⁵³ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 35.

²⁵⁴ Philip Neame, Interview with Author, 22/02/11.

²⁵⁵ IWM SOUND 16074 Richens, Peter John, Reel 1.

avail.²⁵⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Vaux, CO of 42 Commando, reflected on 'my own good fortune' that he was at least involved in the potential action, and not one of the Royal Marine units lefts behind.²⁵⁷

In contrast to the British, for the Gurkhas, despatched as part of 5th Infantry Brigade on 12th May 1982, the desire to participate was also spiritual, rooted partially in their religious beliefs of the benefits of dying in war to the reincarnation cycle.²⁵⁸ Martial prowess held an important place in Gurkha culture, revealed by their motto: *Kaphar hunu bhanda marnu ramrod*, or "it is better to die than be a coward."²⁵⁹ The desire to emulate forebears was a strong motivating factor for the Gurkha soldier. As Captain Seear noted of one of his riflemen,

His 7GR family connections were impressive with past Regimental service of his grandfather and father, the latter serving in Burma during the Second World War. So being in the Falklands now for Chandra was, without doubt, also a matter of family honour.²⁶⁰

Seear, in contrast, an English officer, was taken entirely by surprise by the news of war, a dominate sense of disbelief which clouded his reactions to the coming conflict.²⁶¹ The men of the land forces were young and enthusiastic, and their training and military experience had prepared them for a conventional conflict which political circumstances had previously deprived them of. The desire to participate was high because the Falklands crisis represented a chance to utilise the skills learned in arduous training, and indeed fulfil the very purpose of their profession.

Prior to their departure on 9th April, very few Royal Marines or Paras had given much thought to the moral or political justification of Britain's response; they were too swept up in the excitement of possibly going to war, fuelled in particular by the media and the public reaction to their sailing. Newland summed up many of the Royal Marines' thoughts on the political justification of armed response with the following analogy:

²⁵⁶ Beevor, *Inside the British Army*, p. 345.

²⁵⁷ Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic*, p. 21.

²⁵⁸ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 46.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 129.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 203.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 47.

That's for other people, that's not our level really... If you think about a football team; footballers worry about playing football. Managers worry about their footballers, all of them, but someone takes care of the manager, shareholders and whoever else. I don't think footballers care about shareholders do they? Same principle, different way of looking at it.²⁶²

Richens did not believe that there was any real belief in the justification of the cause, or the moral and political arguments for war in 2 Para. To his mind,

The idea of going to the Falklands is not that that we wanted to save one of our islands in the South Atlantic, it was just the business that some country was going to try to knock Great Britain off the pile, so it was going to down there to sort the Argentinians out, not so much to go and save the Falkland islanders.²⁶³

Indeed, the cause was almost irrelevant: 'I think 2 Para was looking for a fight. It was a situation where there was a chance of a confrontation.'²⁶⁴ Because of the unique 'cult of hardness'²⁶⁵ in the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marines, the men desired combat and action. These were highly professional men, trained in the arts of war, and constantly told that they were the best. War represented an opportunity for the men to test themselves, indeed it was the 'ultimate test,'²⁶⁶ greater than anything they had done in their arduous training regimes, and it was for this reason that they wanted to go.

The strength of feeling attached to the idea of combat, the desire to participate in it, and the extraordinary lengths some men went to ensure they were not left behind as revealed by the oral testimony is even more remarkable given that the vast majority of men thought that it was all a demonstration of force, and nothing more. This attitude existed right up the command structure. When told that the Argentines were preparing a possible invasion, and that 42 Commando was being moved to 7 hours 'Spearhead Readiness,' Vaux's 'initial reactions were of frustration and cynicism, rather than

²⁶² Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

²⁶³ IWM SOUND 16074 Richens, Peter John, Reel 1.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Hugh Bicheno, *Razor's Edge: The Unofficial History of the Falklands War* (London, 2007), p. 102.

²⁶⁶ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

conviction and enthusiasm. Even if the Argentinians did invade, would Britain really retaliate? If so, how? And with what?’²⁶⁷ The apparent spirit of decline and passivity pervading British civilian culture had also infiltrated the military, and led Vaux, as a senior officer, to doubt whether such a challenge would be met. He expected the UN to intervene and negotiate some form of settlement after a long protracted period of sabre rattling. Indeed, as Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins observed, ‘the entire history of British foreign policy since Suez suggested that, after a period of prolonged dithering, a diplomatic settlement on the Falklands would be reached.’²⁶⁸ For some older soldiers, such as George Brown, their previous military experience actually served to convince them that there would be no fighting. Brown had been at Suez and experienced Britain’s withdrawal under international pressure when on the verge of victory. This experience meant that he was convinced that there would be no fighting, and that there would be a diplomatic intervention. Indeed, it was only on 21st May, during the amphibious landings at San Carlos, that he realised that there would be war, when he heard a naval vessel fire on an Argentine position overlooking the landing beaches. For Brown, it was only

When this bloody gun went off... that was the first time I think we all thought: “we’re going in. This is going to happen.” Not until then did we think we would go all the way. None of us, because we always thought politically something would happen like it happened in Suez. We went in, the Americans didn’t support us, and we had to come straight back out again.²⁶⁹

Similarly, John Glaze, a Royal Marine who had become an aircrewman with 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, had been mobilised to go to Cyprus at short notice in 1974, and had departed in considerable haste expecting combat. But nothing happened. For him, the Falklands deployment was all in a similar vein and he remained sceptical: ‘I thought, “here we go again.” Shades of Cyprus, I suppose. We’re going to deploy. We realised it was further, but in Cyprus what had we done?’²⁷⁰ For those troops with experience in such operations, the lack of action in these previous instances prejudiced reactions to the crisis in the South Atlantic. The testimony of veterans such

²⁶⁷ Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic*, p. 11.

²⁶⁸ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, p. 104.

²⁶⁹ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

²⁷⁰ IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 5.

as these, those with prior operational experience, was provided by oral history and provides invaluable context for categorising the professional experience of British soldiers in the Falklands War.

Even if there were doubts that the mobilisation would end in combat, as events gathered momentum the soldiers became aware that some form of military action would be likely. William McAlester, for example, noticed how kit that a Royal Marine would normally never see was suddenly made instantly available, including items that he had only 'read about in books.'²⁷¹ The sheer scale of the mobilisation taking place was also an indicator that the Government was taking the issue seriously. Yet there still remained a lack of realism to proceedings. McManners noted that, 'until the first casualties, a war is uncannily similar to a large peacetime training exercise. For each individual, this unreality continues until something happens that affects him personally,'²⁷² and even as Vaux and his staff drove from 42's base in Devon to Southampton to embark on board the *Canberra* in early April, 'in the spring sunshine it seemed like a relaxed start to another exercise.'²⁷³ For troops used to peacetime exercises, the mobilisation process was little different, which is perhaps a credit to British military training. For Vaux, 'the notion that we would sail to war in a luxury liner seemed most bizarre to me. The rest of the unit were in no doubt that it was an excellent idea.'²⁷⁴ In many ways this added to the sense that there would be no fighting, and that it was just a show of force by the British government. Christopher Brown remembers that before Ascension the men were very relaxed:

I think it's fair to say that it was an exercise type mood, rather than a war type mood. I think one of the things that came out throughout my experiences in the South Atlantic were that until you actually get fired upon, it was just like another exercise. The planning went ahead as for a normal exercise, one got the kit ready for a normal exercise, practiced getting in and out of helicopters, and it wasn't until somebody started firing back that people started to appreciate that there was something different about it.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ IWM SOUND 12957 McAlester, William St John Somerville, Reel 1.

²⁷² McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 106.

²⁷³ Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic*, p. 21.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁵ IWM SOUND 10215 Brown, Christopher Charles, Reel 1.

Yet this should not be taken as a criticism of the lack of mental preparation on the part of 3 Commando Brigade. As Brown acknowledges, 'it is impossible to go straight into a war footing,'²⁷⁶ and the men of 3 Commando Brigade had no previous experience of going to war to draw upon. Careers of peacetime soldiering, and the very different preparations for the very different operation of Northern Ireland, as described in the previous chapter, meant that there was no foundation of experience to draw on. The men of 3 Para similarly expressed doubts that there would be any actual fighting:

The general feeling on board was that we would only get to Ascension Island. By then the Argies would realise that Britain was serious about the sovereignty of the Falklands and pack up and go home. We would then turn the ship around and go home ourselves. We didn't consider there was much possibility of a conflict with the Argies and saw the trip as a cruise with the chance to get a sun tan at the taxpayers' expense.²⁷⁷

Such an attitude created conflict with the culture of these units; they wanted to fight, even though they thought that it would be unlikely. This conviction remained once at Ascension, even whilst undertaking landing craft drills and amphibious landings in preparation for the assault on the Falklands:

To be perfectly honest, none of us thought we would continue on from Ascension. We believed the sea drills and beach landing practice were either a propaganda exercise for the Government back home or to create the right image for any satellite photos the enemy might be taking.²⁷⁸

Indeed,

Sailing south towards the Falkland Islands in the spring of 1982 was a period of transition, from the carnival atmosphere of the Task Force's departure from

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, pp. 103-4.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 105-6.

the UK to a sober realisation that some sort of military action was going to take place, and that men were going to be killed.²⁷⁹

The most common watershed point for this change in attitude in the historical record was when 3 Commando Brigade reached, and then passed, Ascension Island. As Steve Newland noted, 'we knew... if we left Ascension, we would go to war. If we didn't, we were going home.'²⁸⁰ From that point onwards, Newland believed that there was a universal change in mentality amongst the troops, as 'this is where it suddenly goes from playing at it to doing it for real.'²⁸¹ At Ascension, the embarked troops had been able to see just how many ships had assembled in the armada and the number of stores assembled that were hurriedly being cross-decked after their frantic packing in Britain. This sight disabused them of any idea that it was simply an exercise. The provision of live ammunition in large quantities, as compared to peacetime exercises where its expenditure was carefully controlled, also indicated the severity of the situation.²⁸² This transition in mentalities was also enforced by the wider events of the conflict. On 2nd May, the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* was sunk by the nuclear submarine HMS *Conqueror*, but two days later the British Type 42 destroyer HMS *Sheffield* was hit by an Exocet missile. Twenty sailors were killed, and these losses served to remind the men sailing south that war was very much real, and that the worsening situation increased the likelihood of their being committed to combat. For Eyles-Thomas, the sinking of the *Belgrano* meant that 'the mood on the ship changed. Britain was really serious and had informed the enemy just how serious she was!'²⁸³ Any jubilation was short lived, however:

The following night we learned that one of our ships, HMS *Sheffield*, had been sunk. The reality of being at war hit home. From that moment we knew we would be landing on the Falklands, whether diplomatic negotiations were still going on or not. Both countries had struck their blows.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 105.

²⁸⁰ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Brian Evans, Interview with Author, 26/10/09.

²⁸³ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, pp. 108-9.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 109.

It was after events such as these that personal thoughts began to emerge in conflict with unit culture. Eyles-Thomas, for example, had previously been very keen on the idea of fighting, and proud to become part of their impressive tradition of the Parachute Regiment, but after the sinking of the *Sheffield* and the *Belgrano*, 'for the very first time I considered the ultimate consequences of being a soldier.'²⁸⁵ For other soldiers despatched with the initial Task Force, such as Tony McNally in 12 Air Defence Regiment, Royal Artillery, it was these losses that made him sober up to the possibility of war. After *Sheffield* was sunk, he acknowledged that the vast majority of the men onboard his ship, the *Sir Geraint*, suddenly felt fear, and that the serious reflection on the possibility of war began. This was further aided by reminders of their own mortality, such as when 'a sergeant came round dishing out Army wills for us to fill in one afternoon.'²⁸⁶ However, like Geddes and Marshall, McNally acknowledged the strong social bonds at both the large- and small-scale levels that bound men in the British Army together and motivated them; for McNally, he knew that:

My life was in danger now and, being human, I was scared. But I was proud to be there and more than anything I didn't want to let anyone down – my mates in the Battery, my family and friends, my home town, the whole of the country.²⁸⁷

It is important to note the order in which these were ranked as being indicative of their importance, and re-emphasising the crucial nature of the primary group in combat motivation.

While 3 Commando Brigade were realising the seriousness of the situation and sailing south towards a possible armed confrontation, 5th Infantry Brigade were hastily being assembled as a potential second wave by the MOD. Yet in the days preceding this, there was no guarantee that 5th Infantry Brigade would be sent, and ambiguity existed over what their role would be. Even so, as with the Paras and the Royal Marines, in the Gurkhas there had been considerable clamour from those Regimental officers seconded

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 50.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

to other units asking to return to the Battalion and serve in the Falklands.²⁸⁸ Once on the ship, there was little doubt of the imminence of war – unlike those ships that had sailed previously, when the possibility of diplomacy had looked more likely, those that sailed on the *QE2* were aware that the situation was becoming more and more desperate. Furthermore, they sailed after the significant losses of the *Belgrano* and *Sheffield*. 5th Infantry Brigade, therefore had the advantage of being assembled with a greater certainty that they would fight, and still being able to train and prepare, both psychologically and mentally, after 3 Commando Brigade had already been committed to the action, first at South Georgia and then on East Falkland. Any news of losses from the warzone served to ‘remind us again of our mortality’ but also ‘gave our officers an extra training edge.’²⁸⁹ Training was, however, limited by the lack of space aboard their transport ship, but theoretically they were better able to psychologically prepare themselves for war as they fully knew what awaited them and their preparations could be carried out without the early uncertainty that accompanied 3 Commando’s.

However, one negative aspect of being despatched after 3 Commando Brigade was that 5th Infantry Brigade ‘was given a powerful impression that its role was seen largely as a reserve and that early combat was not expected.’²⁹⁰ Indeed, some parts of the brigade thought that they’d get there after the fighting had finished, and that they would simply act as a garrison.²⁹¹ Captain Robert Lawrence, with 2nd Scots, was concerned about the impending action only so much as he was worried that by the time the Guards arrived south, the Royal Marines would have already won the war. For Lawrence,

Our feelings on the journey down to the Falklands were mixed. We swung, at times, from being desperately scared of the realities of going to war to being just as desperately worried that we’d get down there merely to be told we were just garrisoning the islands – and that the Marines had more or less done all the work.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 74.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 105.

²⁹⁰ Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (London, 1991), p. 385.

²⁹¹ David Grimshaw, in Michael Bilton and Peter Kosminsky, *Speaking Out: Untold Stories from the Falklands War* (London, 1989), p. 168.

²⁹² John Lawrence and Robert Lawrence MC, with Carol Price, *When the Fighting is Over: A personal Story of the Battle for Tumbledown Mountain and its Aftermath* (London, 1988), p. 15.

Indeed, Lawrence was resentful of the media coverage the Paras and the Royal Marines received in comparison to the Scots Guards: 'I'm a trained killer, you know, every bit as good as these Marines and Paras. I'm sick to death of hearing about Marines and bloody Paras!'²⁹³

All the troops sailing south had to deal with the problems of a cramped ship, but on *Canberra*, the commanding officers had another problem. The rivalry between regiments in the British Army was renowned for its ferocity. The regimental system of the British Army in particular has truly bred a form of tribalism that was viciously defended, and the bringing together of the Army's shock troops, the Parachute Regiment, and the Royal Marines on *Canberra* had the potential to create problems. Both claimed to be the elite of the British military, the pinnacle of training and military professionalism. Oral history interviews with veterans conducted after an elapse of almost 30 years reveal just how strong this rivalry was. George Brown, for example, believed that friction and hostility was inevitable between the two as,

Each considers themselves to be the best, and any time anything goes wrong there's always a big problem between the Paras and the Marines. So if they're in a pub, if the Paras and the Marines are there, nine times out of ten they'll end up in a punch-up somewhere.²⁹⁴

Danny Marshall, a proud Royal Marine, thought the same. 'From day one in the Corps, Paras are the enemy... They're good soldiers but not very bright.'²⁹⁵ The two have derogatory names for each other; Paras call Royal Marines "cabbage heads," an allusion to their green berets, and the Marines in turn call Paras "pongos." However, a grudging respect and camaraderie was built up between the two on the voyage south. Brown remembers that,

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁹⁴ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

²⁹⁵ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

On the way down it was laid down pretty strongly that we had to get on, and again the soldiers realised that we were going down into a conflict together, and each would have to rely on the other, so it was important to get on.²⁹⁶

To a great extent they did, but the old biases remained, and even in interviews looking back retrospectively on the events of the Falklands, such biases still exist. Marshall, for example, respected the Paras for their bravery, but saw them as very different from Royal Marines, even to the extent that 'they are different human beings.'²⁹⁷ To his mind,

Paras are warriors. They're proper soldiers, but thick as shit. You tell a Para to take a point, he will go from A to B in a dead straight line, create as much havoc as possible, and they will destroy the enemy. And they will take a significant number of casualties, and frankly did. If you say to Royal Marines "Go take Two Sisters," they'll plan it, put a recce [reconnaissance] troop out, and they'll put a noisy attack up the front and a silent attack up the rear, and they'll destroy the enemy.²⁹⁸

Even so, he was happy enough to fight beside them, and almost pitied the Argentines they would face: 'You wouldn't want to be on the other side of the hill if Royal Marines and or *Paras* were coming to get you.'²⁹⁹ His opinion of the Guards, however, was far lower.³⁰⁰ As Marty Power, with 45 Commando, said, if the Royal Marines had to go to war with any support, they were happy for it to come from the Parachute Regiment. For all the bravado and banter, a mutual respect existed, and the seriousness of the situation meant that the soldiers and marines put the rivalry aside for the duration of the conflict.³⁰¹

Sailing south to war was a puzzling experience for many of the men of 3 Commando Brigade, particularly because of the enemy they were preparing to fight. As has been noted previously, the vast majority of British infantry training was geared to policing

²⁹⁶ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

²⁹⁷ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. The emphasis marks a pause and definitive change in tone.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Marty Power, Interview with Author, 14/09/09.

terrorism on the streets of Northern Ireland, or the fighting the forces of the Soviet Bloc in Europe. The possibility of fighting in the Falklands, however, represented both an unexpected enemy and an unexpected theatre. As Geddes questioned:

Who were they anyway, these enemies of ours? As boys, most of us in 2 Para had been brought up on tales of battles with the Germans and the Japs in World War II. As soldiers, we'd been trained to fight the war against communism and, of course, the terrorism of the IRA. But the Argentines? Who the fuck were the Argentines?³⁰²

There was an element of bravado, of course, and the assumption was that the Argentine defenders would fold as soon as the British hit them hard.³⁰³ Indeed, much of this bravado manifested itself in jingoistic and derogatory language, but that was to be expected. Soldiers needed to prepare and fortify themselves psychologically; one way of doing this was by belittling the enemy and his capabilities. At one stage in the Mess on *Canberra*, the song "Summer Holiday" was appropriated to the current situation with the words: 'We're all going on a Malvinas holiday / We're all going to kill a Spic or two.'³⁰⁴ While potentially shocking, such defamation of the enemy was essential. Some soldiers may have believed and revelled in this jingoistic language, but the vast majority shared the opinion of Newland, that it was 'all banter' without any significant, deeper meaning. On the long, monotonous sea voyage, the soldiers needed to be entertained, and they were all 'game for a laugh.'³⁰⁵ For Marshall, the idea of racial inferiority was completely insignificant, such was his confidence in victory: 'I don't think it was ever going to be close. As long as we got our boots on the ground it wasn't ever going to be close.'³⁰⁶

Another problem facing the senior officers of all the units embarked as part of the Task Force was how to achieve and maintain peak physical fitness on the long voyage down in an enclosed and limited space. Thus, a punishing programme of physical training was instigated in order to both avoid any possible decline in physical standards, as well

³⁰² Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, pp. 85-6.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁰⁴ 'The Falklands: A Very British War,' Blakeway Productions, 2002.

³⁰⁵ Steve Newland, Correspondence with Author, 03/08/09.

³⁰⁶ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

as psychologically prepare the men as best as possible. This included tough physical exercises, such as running laps of the promenade deck of *Canberra* whilst wearing full battle gear and carrying full weapons, including the heavier platoon weapons such as General Purpose Machine Guns and anti-tank rockets.³⁰⁷ There was also a considerable amount of target practice employed against rubbish thrown into the sea. That these exercises were replicated on practically all of the ships of the Task Force, even those outside of the direct chain of command and influence of commanding officers, such as George Brown and his small detachment from 3 Para on *Elk*, demonstrates the seriousness with which the coming operation was viewed and the professionalism applied.³⁰⁸ Indeed, while the troops may not have believed that they would be committed to combat until after they passed Ascension, the designated firing points on vessels had been utilised almost daily for some time. On *Norland*, for example, 2 Para had established the firing point for small arms practice on 28th April, just two days after the ship had left Portsmouth, and it was 'used daily thereafter.'³⁰⁹ This was copied by 5th Infantry Brigade as they sailed south to reinforce 3 Commando Brigade, though Seear believes that the Gurkhas practiced and trained far more seriously than the Guards.³¹⁰ Rifleman Baliprasad Rai, a member of 7GR, believed that the training ensured that 'we were all geared up mentally and physically for any action.'³¹¹

The provision and training for first aid was also recognised as essential by the commanding officers of the fighting units on the voyage to the South Atlantic, and the outbreak of hostilities saw a revival in battlefield medical care. The onset of nuclear weapons and the Cold War had not only prejudiced attitudes towards the strategy of dealing with battlefield casualties, but also towards the very concept: 'For the British military establishment, battlefield medicine had become largely an irrelevance and an anachronism, a dead speciality, killed off by doomsday weapons. Who needed it, or would ever have reason to make use of it again?'³¹² However, in a limited, conventional conflict such as that potentially developing in the South Atlantic, battlefield medicine once again regained its importance. While initially no one was certain that there would

³⁰⁷ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 102.

³⁰⁸ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

³⁰⁹ John Wingate, Correspondence with Author, 22/02/09. See Appendix D.

³¹⁰ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 96.

³¹¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³¹² John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *Medic: Saving Lives from Dunkirk to Afghanistan* (London, 2009), p. 158.

be any fighting or a need for battlefield care, the issue of rapid, efficient medical care would prove vital in saving lives, and so Medical Officers assumed the worst and planned accordingly. First aid instruction played a major role on the voyage south, and after the troops left Ascension, the lessons were attended in greater numbers and with greater seriousness.³¹³ All marines and soldiers were shown how to suppress bleeding, insert drips, and administer pain-killing drugs on themselves or their comrades,³¹⁴ to such an extent that they were almost dedicating as much time to saving lives as preparing to take them. Alan Warsap, 2nd Scots Guards' Regimental Medical Officer, was so confident about the level of battlefield first aid demonstrated on the *QE2* during the voyage south that he believed that if he and the Regimental Aid Post had been killed or put out of action, it would not have had a detrimental effect on the practise of first aid.³¹⁵ Surgeon Commander Rick Jolly, Surgeon Commander of 3 Commando Brigade, made a strong effort to also psychologically prepare the soldiers travelling south on *Canberra* for the upcoming ordeal of combat. This involved showing the soldiers somewhat graphic pictures of battlefield injuries, as Jolly believed 'if you knew what a gunshot wound looked like, from viewing a colour slide, then you were in a better position to cope with a real one than someone whose knowledge was theory-based.'³¹⁶

However, the Medical Officers were not merely involved in the instruction of medical care on the voyage south; they still had to fulfil their duties and responsibilities. There was a mass of physical training undertaken on all the ships transporting combat units, and such training in confined spaces inevitably resulted in injuries and accidents. For some, ailments such as bad backs or broken limbs meant that they had to be evacuated at Ascension. Warsap recalls that, when he was required to do this, he bore the brunt of the men's anger and disappointment, feelings expressed 'without exception,' for being 'the instrument of their leaving their comrades, and leaving the Task Force.'³¹⁷ Such sentiments reveal the strong desires to participate in the coming conflict.

³¹³ Philip Neame, Interview with Author, 22/02/11.

³¹⁴ Vaux, *March to the South Atlantic*, p. 28.

³¹⁵ IWM SOUND 6454 Warsap, Alan, Reel 1.

³¹⁶ Rick Jolly, *The Red and Green Life Machine: A Diary of the Falklands Field Hospital and Aftermath of the 1982 South Atlantic Conflict with Argentina* (Cornwall, 2007), p. 34.

³¹⁷ IWM SOUND 6454 Warsap, Alan, Reel 1.

It is clear that the reactions to the changing news of war can be seen to directly reveal aspects of the institutional cultures of the various components of the land forces. Despite their desire to participate, very few of the prospective ground forces sent south in the first wave as part of the Task Force initially believed that there would be any fighting. However, once these units left Ascension Island, and as the Royal Navy and the Argentines suffered casualties, this perspective rapidly changed. At this point, personal doubts, previously subjugated beneath the group mentality cultivated through training, began to emerge. For the men sent to reinforce the first wave, 5th Infantry Brigade, they had the advantage of being assembled with a greater certainty that they would fight and were able to train and prepare, both psychologically and mentally, after 3 Commando Brigade had already been committed to the action, first at South Georgia and then on East Falkland. The long voyage to the South Atlantic had its advantages; it provided considerable time for training and preparation for war, both mental and physical. Indeed, the long physical journey to reach the theatre of operations reflected the long mental journey each man had to make, from peacetime to wartime soldier, if they were to cope psychologically with the coming battles.

II

Reactions to War: Sea Forces

The first men of the British armed services to be sent south, however, were the Royal Navy. The reactions of the sailors of the Royal Navy to the news of war are clear indicators that theirs was a very different culture to that of the land forces component of the British military from, and one that prioritised very different skills.

As the crisis threatened to break, half the fleet based in Portsmouth was already in Gibraltar on the Spring Train exercise, an extensive training programme involving anti-submarine and anti-aircraft exercises, 'testing communications procedures and training crews in the complicated tasks of coordinating warships, helicopters and various weapons systems in different types of conflict.'³¹⁸ The Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, flew out to Gibraltar to both observe the progress of

³¹⁸ Rossiter, *Sink the Belgrano*, p. 161.

Spring Train, as well as inform the commander of the exercises, Rear Admiral 'Sandy' Woodward, of the deteriorating situation in the South Atlantic. Both men worked together to assess how to build a Task Force capable of re-taking the islands, and command was given to Woodward.

Yet there was considerable doubt about the suitability of the ships the Royal Navy could send south for the possibility of fighting a conventional war. As a mark of the dominance technology held in naval warfare, such doubts were only ever directed at the ships themselves, rather than the sailors who crewed them. Whereas in land warfare the soldier and Royal Marine remained central to success, in naval warfare it was the ships as physical entities that were the dominant weapons needed to conduct operations. Over the previous three decades, both Britain's global responsibilities and the navy's defence budget had shrunk, and with it the versatility of the fleet, so much so that, in the opinion of Hastings and Jenkins, 'the Royal Navy in 1982 was overwhelmingly an anti-submarine force designed for war in the Atlantic against the Soviet Union.'³¹⁹ Yet in the South Atlantic, defence against air attack would be essential, as the Argentines had a competent Air Force and did not possess an extensive submarine fleet. The ships would also have to be able to defend themselves, as any British Task Force would be unable to call upon a great number of defensive, carrier-launched aircraft due to the size limitations of both HMS *Invincible* and *Hermes*, the only two remaining aircraft carriers within the fleet. Thus, the Task Force would depend upon the defensive screen supplied by the air defence ships, the Type 42 destroyers, which were initially *Coventry*, *Glasgow* and *Sheffield*.³²⁰ If any aircraft penetrated their long range weapons coverage, close air defence would be provided by two Type 22 Destroyers, *Brilliant* and *Broadsword*, both equipped anti-aircraft missiles, though both had originally been designed as anti-submarine ships.³²¹ None of these ships had operated in their primary role of anti-aircraft warfare in an operational theatre. Furthermore, the combat training they had undergone, known as "fighting the ship," was geared entirely towards a confrontation with the Soviet Union. Oral history testimony has revealed some of the problems the Royal Navy would face in the coming operation. Chris Howe was the Electronic Warfare director on board *Coventry*, and immediately noticed a problem:

³¹⁹ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, p. 104.

³²⁰ HMS *Exeter*, another Type 42, was sent south after the loss of *Sheffield* on 4th May.

³²¹ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, p. 103.

Anti-ship missile defence is what I was trained to do against the Soviets. So whilst the procedures are sound, the weapons we were now expecting weren't things we trained against. We were back against iron bombs; there's no radar on those, so there's no electronic warfare detection of those.³²²

The defences of modern ships were designed to block threats launched from a distance, rather than conventional weapons employed at close range.

While the majority of the Royal Navy surface fleet had never seen action, it remained a highly trained, highly professional organisation. HMS *Coventry*, for example, had spent time with the Standing Naval Force Atlantic, a squadron of NATO ships that took part in a major exercise in the North Sea.³²³ The advantage of having been on Spring Train also ensured that those ships were at a high state of readiness, which was enhanced and intensified on the voyage south. While difficult, such extensive training and experience of operating the ship's systems allowed the sailors to compensate for the change in enemy, theatre, tactics and weaponry that they would now face, and the training and experience, in combination with the circumstances, instilled great confidence in the various ships' companies.³²⁴ However, the disparity in resources available to the British as opposed to the Argentines caused considerable disquiet amongst some senior officers in private. The Captain of *Coventry*, David Hart Dyke remembers that

For my part, I could scarcely believe that we were going to be asked to resolve this issue by force when we were so heavily outnumbered on the ground and in the air: I thought that the Argentinian Air Force alone could win the war.³²⁵

David Hart Dyke, like the majority of servicemen, did not believe war was likely. However, this was a more objective viewpoint due to Argentine numerical superiority, rather than the more nationalistic view initially expressed by the soldiers that the Argentines would crumble with a mere show of British force.

³²² Chris Howe, Interview with Author, 09/06/09.

³²³ David Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May: The Loss of HMS Coventry, a Captain's Story* (London, 2007), p. 9.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

As the naval response was formulated, it was decided to take a large proportion of those ships already on the Spring Train exercise south. Thus, half the fleet went from war games, carried out with a training mentality and the expectation of leave soon after, to a real combat situation. For many sailors, such as Sam MacFarlane aboard *Coventry*, the idea of war was so adverse to his experience of the peacetime Royal Navy, that when news of the Falklands crisis came, particularly as it was in the middle of an exercise, at first he did not fully understand the implications:

We didn't really know what or where the Falklands were, so it didn't concern us. We were in the middle of this major naval exercise, which as far as we were concerned at the time, is the sort of thing we do.³²⁶

Kevin Smith was surprised when his ship, HMS *Argonaut*, a *Leander*-class frigate, was included in the advance fleet being sent south, as she had only just come out of an extended period of maintenance and was due to start a training period. He had no idea whatsoever as to where the Falklands were, instead he and his crewmates likened the name to Falkirk and assumed that they were off the coast of Scotland, much like McNally and Russo had done.³²⁷ In interview, he believed that to some extent he was excited about going to war, but also believed that there would be a diplomatic settlement prior to any action:

It was a long way to travel. I think we all hoped realistically that anything would have been sorted out diplomatically before we got down there. A lot of these things you headed in the direction of them and then by the time you actually got there diplomacy had won the day, and it was all done and dusted, and you'd turn round and come home.³²⁸

For many of the men on the ships at Gibraltar, they had expected to complete their exercise and then return home for Easter leave. For Peter Walpole, the Signal Communications Officer on board HMS *Sheffield*, 'it looked like another diplomatic

³²⁶ IWM SOUND 16817 MacFarlane, Stewart Anthony 'Sam', Reel 1.

³²⁷ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

³²⁸ Ibid.

problem, not a war. We'd been away for five months and were convinced that we were going home in a few days, but that all changed.'³²⁹ Thus, the disappointment of another deployment, rather than leave, dominated the initial feeling, and influenced the way in which the crew thought about the coming operation:

Obviously we were all very keen to go home after five months and it was difficult to get to grips with the fact we were being sent south, especially as we'd almost got so close, yet we were so far away, from getting home.³³⁰

Similarly, Howe believed that the crew off *Coventry* were also more concerned about the loss of leave than the imminent shooting because the seriousness of the situation had yet to sink in: 'Something's happened, and we're going to go and show a few ships and sort it out.'³³¹ Here the oral history demonstrates a clear division and key cultural difference between the sea and land forces; for the navy, the news of war was greeted with scepticism, and was seen as a disappointment as it meant not going home. However, what the oral history also reveals is that, like the reactions of the land forces, there was a mental conformity of opinion amongst sailors, even of different ranks and aboard different ships, suggesting that the Royal Navy could exert just as powerful influence on the psychology of the men within that service as could the Army and Royal Marines. For the land forces, as previously discussed, it was an adventure to be embraced. The root of this difference almost certainly lies in the nature of service in these two different combat arms and their operational cultures; for the crews of the ships of the Royal Navy, leave meant a return to family and the UK from overseas deployments based aboard ships, which meant living for many months in pre-set and confined spaces. In direct contrast, however, the land forces, however, were already based in the UK and had access to weekend leave, so when it came to leaving for the South Atlantic, they did not exhibit the same levels of disappointment at missing out on leave. This meant that excitement for the deployment could shine through unabated.

Another direct comparison between the mentalities of the land and sea forces deployed to the Falklands and revealed through a study of oral testimony is that there was a

³²⁹ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 1.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Chris Howe, Interview with Author, 09/06/09.

strong belief that the situation would be resolved politically, before any shots were fired. Walpole recalls that on *Sheffield* there was

An attitude of sadness at not being able to go home, but of resolve, and also the hope that the politicians would sort the mess out in very short time, and that really it would just be a delay to our return to UK.³³²

Similar crises in the past had been averted by diplomatic means, and in April 1982 Raymond Adams, an officer aboard *Coventry*, believed that this would again be the case with the situation in the Falklands, and that there would not be any shooting: 'The whole thing seemed so inconceivable that it was almost daft to believe that there would be any shooting involved at the end of it.'³³³ On HMS *Glamorgan*, a County-class destroyer, informal doubts as to the likelihood of violence were expressed by a minority of the crew. None of them thought that the Argentines should be allowed to keep the Falklands, but some preferred a diplomatic settlement to a military intervention.³³⁴ The captains of some ships, such as *Glamorgan*'s Michael Barrow, had to try and counter-act these perceptions early for operational reasons. Personally, he believed that

Professionally one had no alternative really than to just carry out orders that we were given, and this we did to the best of our ability. Politically, I think we all had views on this. My own personal view... was that if someone's real estate, whoever it belongs to, is invaded by another power, then it is reasonably, politically and militarily, to go to the defence of that land against the invaders.³³⁵

Yet it was difficult to mentally prepare for a war that was so far away, even when the likelihood of violence steadily increased as the ships sailed closer to the prospective combat theatre. To get to the South Atlantic, the Task Force had to first sail through the tropics, and with the region's glorious weather and interesting sea life distractions were rife. Hart Dyke, for example, remembers that 'we sometimes had to remind ourselves that we were in a warship rather than a cruise liner. It was, of course, the calm before

³³² IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 1.

³³³ IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 1.

³³⁴ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 1.

³³⁵ Ibid.

the storm, and this is exactly how it felt.³³⁶ Before Ascension, Howe admits that 'it hadn't really sunk in that we were going to start firing bullets at each other.'³³⁷ Smith remembers a similar mentality aboard his ship; as the navy were despatched first, they reached Ascension before the troops were ready. Thus they spent several days anchored there, and with the crews taking the opportunity to make the most of the equatorial sun, this disbelief they shared with their colleagues in the Royal Marines and Army was magnified, and the possibility of war seemed very remote. It was only once the troop ships arrived that Smith began to see the situation as far more serious.³³⁸ Ships were self-contained, and whilst sailors on the same ship could freely converse, ordinary sailors on different ships had no real way of communicating with each other, and it is therefore interesting to note the similar feelings that arose amongst them, despite a lack of contact. Barrow recalls that on *Glamorgan* on the voyage down 'the atmosphere changed to one of excitement,' particularly amongst the younger members of the crew. For all on board,

This was, if it turned out to be, their first experience of war or anything like it, and therefore there was a certain amount of anticipation. Excitement, yes, but perhaps a bit uncertain, and I think a lot of people perhaps thought it was never going to happen and this was just another rather special exercise laid on by the Admiral and the Captain to hype them up. But as we got further and further south, we listened to the news... I think the ship's company gradually began to realise, and I was at pains to keep them informed, that this probably was going to be the real thing.³³⁹

At Ascension, the ships were secured for action, but this time for real, and for an indefinite period of time, rather than just a temporary measure whilst on exercise. Thus unwanted, and generally luxurious, items that would impede movement around the ship, or add to the risk of fire, were removed. It was a ritual that marked an irretrievable break with the peacetime past, as once gone, the items could not be recovered. They were not put into storage to be returned to their familiar places at the end of the exercise; they were thrown over the side. This preparation for imminent action,

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

³³⁷ Chris Howe, Interview with Author, 09/06/09.

³³⁸ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

³³⁹ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 1.

replicated on all the ships of the Task Force, had a sobering effect on the crew.³⁴⁰ As with 3 Commando Brigade, Ascension acted as a watershed in the changing mentalities of Royal Navy personnel. From then on, training intensified, and the men were slowly built up psychologically. This was a difficult process for senior officers to manage, as it would be dangerous for a crew to peak in operational effectiveness prior to entering the war zone, but Barrow for one believes that he and the crew of *Glamorgan* 'were just about at the peak of our psychological and operational readiness by the time we arrived on the first gun line on the first of May.'³⁴¹

In the navy, and particularly the surface fleet, men had entered a force that was believed to merely travel the world and engage in exercises. The collection and analysis of oral history testimony has revealed that war was not perceived to be the ultimate culmination of training in the Royal Navy as it was in the Army and for the Royal Marines, and the conflict brewing in the South Atlantic was therefore not seen as being desirable by the sailors in the same way as the soldiers perceived it. For example, as Walpole recalled, the *Sheffield*, was

Well-equipped and had been well trained to deal with whatever might come along, but that while we would do whatever we could if it came to military action, it was with a certain reluctance as if it really was the last option available. In that sense I don't think there was a great desire to go in and slay a thousand Argentinians for the sake of it.³⁴²

Killing did not hold the same cultural resonance for the sea forces as it did for those who fought on the land. Thus, while the professional commitment certainly existed amongst the sailors of the Royal Navy, the oral history certainly supports the assertion made by Hastings and Jenkins that 'there was much less of the exuberant eagerness for action that had infected the marines and Paras.'³⁴³ Kevin Smith remembers that while the younger men onboard his ship were excited by the possibility of war, the older men, coming to the end of their careers and contemplating retirement, were decidedly more

³⁴⁰ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 30.

³⁴¹ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 1.

³⁴² IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 1.

³⁴³ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, p. 104.

apprehensive.³⁴⁴ For Neil Polley, Captain's Steward on HMS *Exeter*, the idea of war was completely abhorrent, and in no way what he had joined the navy to do.³⁴⁵

There were several operational difficulties that also affected preparations. In terms of intelligence on capabilities and equipment, Barrow 'knew very little about the Argentinian armed forces. It had never really been of interest to find out since personally I had always thought of them as our friends and allies should the need arise.'³⁴⁶ Indeed, *Glamorgan* had been a host ship for the crew of an Argentine Type 42 destroyer, the *Hercules*, while it was taking part in a post-build operational "work-up" in Portsmouth in the early months of 1982. Barrow had become friendly with the captain and some officers of this ship and he was 'particularly glad that we never had to take on the *Hercules*. I would have found that quite difficult, with people I actually knew personally.'³⁴⁷ Such a sentiment as revealed through the intimate nature of oral history displays the impersonal nature of naval warfare that will be analysed more fully later in this thesis. Unlike in the Army, there were no great public displays of jingoism or the slandering of the capabilities of the enemy. In many ways this is because some sailors knew of the Argentines from personal experience. In 1981, the Argentine ship *Santissima Trinidad*, another Type 42, sold by Britain to the Argentine Navy, was in Portsmouth conducting trials and testing her Sea Dart missile system on British ranges. She had been moored alongside *Sheffield*, and the British had invited the visitors over for drinks and dinner as guests. This period of professional and social interaction ensured that in 1982 Walpole had a far greater perception of the Argentine enemy. He recognised them as,

People just like us, not as a group of mad, bandolerro-equipped gauchos. I mean I was well aware they were competent people, and they had taken a Type 42 destroyer, taken it to sea and conducted successful missile firings... In that sense we had a small association with some of the people involved as well. Certainly I felt that it would be most unfortunate if we were to ever come

³⁴⁴ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

³⁴⁵ Neil Polley, Interview with Author, 19/08/09.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

across the *Santissima Trinidad* in action; people we'd had in the wardroom not a year previous, sharing jokes and drinking and socialising.³⁴⁸

Unlike the Royal Navy, few of the land forces would ever have had such social contact with the enemy, and in combination with their greater desire to engage in combat, they were therefore more easily able to harden themselves emotionally and psychologically to the prospective tasks of killing.

In contrast to the surface fleet, the importance of submarines in the detente of the Cold War ensured that the sailors of the submarine branch were used to conducting themselves under operational conditions on offensive patrols. Thus, while the idea of sailing to war was surprising for the surface fleet, for submariners the order to rapidly deploy to a potential hostile zone was commonplace, and there was no need to shift from a peacetime exercise mentality. HMS *Splendid*, for example, was preparing for a specialist role in the North Atlantic when she was commanded to store for war in the South.³⁴⁹ She was to sail the day before the Argentine invasion, so for the crew there was little of note to suggest that this latest assignment would be anything out of the ordinary. While the frantic pace of preparations may have alerted the Paras and Royal Marines to the likelihood of violence, a submarine being mobilised, stored and despatched quickly was in no way novel, as the oral history reveals. As David Crothers, the Weapons Engineer Officer onboard *Splendid*, remembers,

It was just a submarine being sent off in a hurry, which is what we do, which is what happens and it happened all the time. It could be an intruder coming down the coast, it could be something to go and investigate. You are skidded off, you are expecting to go off. You are expecting to be re-tasked, and the Cold War time was quite entertaining, quite interesting.³⁵⁰

The only unusual and surprising aspect of otherwise normal procedure was that when Crothers submitted his store demands for *Splendid*, within thirty minutes he had estimated delivery times of everything. Peter Harris, the Chief Petty Officer Weapons

³⁴⁸ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 2.

³⁴⁹ David Crothers and Peter Harris, Interview with Author, 25/09/09.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

Engineering Artificer, also on *Splendid*, likewise found that having submitted a report on every conceivable defect, the personnel were rapidly provided to help fix it. Stores and replacement parts were being taken from the stores in Plymouth, and off submarines in Plymouth and Chatham dockyard, rushed to military airfields, and being flown by military aircraft to Faslane.³⁵¹ Yet Cold War incidents meant that the submariners did not associate this with anything outside of their normal experience. Harris, for example, had already been recalled from leave to meet *Splendid* for a mission in the North Atlantic in the weeks immediately prior to her order to store for war.³⁵²

Their experiences in the North Atlantic had given the submariners of the Royal Navy an extraordinary confidence in their abilities and many of them had already carried out the roles and tasks that were going to be asked of them for the coming operation for several years. This confidence was further supported by the training they had undertaken, particularly the officers. All submarine captains and executive officers had passed the renowned 'Perisher' command course. Perisher held a great aura in the submarine community. The 24 week course was widely regarded as one of the toughest command courses in the world, and was mandatory for all submarine captains and executive officers. Failure meant that the sailor would be removed from the submarine service entirely. Thus, Perisher imbibed a huge self-confidence in their own abilities for those who had passed as well as those sailors under their command. As Jonathan Powis, navigator on HMS *Conqueror*, remembers, confidence on board the submarine was high in part because 'we knew that our submarine captains... had got the absolute best attacking training possible.'³⁵³ Yet Powis recalls that April-June 1982 was an almost absurd situation to be in; to have trained in the expectation of fighting against Soviet vessels, with the ever-changing capabilities that came with their continuous technological advancements, only to actually engage in conventional war against an entirely unexpected enemy with a navy whose principle ships were a *Colossus*-class aircraft carrier, commissioned in 1945 in Britain, and a *Brooklyn*-class cruiser, built in the United States and launched in 1938.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, because of the strategic importance of the North Atlantic, there was little consideration given to operating

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Jonathan Powis, Interview with Author, 30/07/09.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

procedure in the South. While Cold War patrols had provided submariners with invaluable operational experience, continued patrols in the North Atlantic had convinced submarine crews and commanders, both aboard boats and at Northwood, that it was the only place that they would operate offensively. Thus, in April 1982 none of the submarines sent south initially had any of the data on the thermo clines of the water that would affect how sound amplified and travelled, nor communications plans, essential operational requirements for a submarine.³⁵⁵ The Islands had also never been surveyed properly, and there were few charts available suitable for submariners, which required detailed information on underwater topography in order to operate safely.³⁵⁶

Thus, regardless of their prior experience, the submariners still put themselves through extensive training in order to prepare for war while sailing south, and matched the physical provisions with mental and psychological preparations. Tim McClement, the First Lieutenant on *Conqueror*, imparted a focussed mentality into the crew whilst training them:

We didn't say, "oh well, they're Argentinians and it's Second World War equipment, therefore we don't have to worry." Our war mentality was to think of them as threatening, as they were our own forces, our own people with the same level of training, because that's the only way we would win... Funnily enough, we had to change the Cold War mindset: against the Russians it was either peace or the end of the world, but here we were now going to a local war without the Americans. It was my view, and I made this clear to everyone, that Galtieri would not change his mind; neither would Mrs Thatcher. I thought we could expect bloodshed.³⁵⁷

Conqueror, unlike *Splendid*, had deployed after the initial Argentine invasion, and so the political situation was far more serious. However, much like their colleagues in the surface fleet, not all submariners believed that their deployments would end in war; Colin Way, also aboard *Conqueror*, believed that there would be a political settlement

³⁵⁵ David Crothers and Peter Harris, Interview with Author, 25/09/09.

³⁵⁶ Jim Ring, *We Come Unseen: The Untold Story of Britain's Cold War Submariners* (London, 2001), p. 147.

³⁵⁷ Quoted in Rossiter, *Sink the Belgrano*, p. 106.

prior to any military action.³⁵⁸ Submarines had been sent to the Falklands before during disputes over sovereignty; HMS *Dreadnought* had been the last despatched to the South Atlantic from Gibraltar on Operation Journeyman in late 1977 in response to strong murmurings emanating from Argentina, but she had returned in February 1978 without anything significant to report.³⁵⁹ It was therefore perhaps logical to expect that the Government would do the same again. The captain of *Splendid* certainly thought this was the case, and assumed the deployment was a quick break in the training routine preparing for North Atlantic operations, and related such an idea to Crothers.³⁶⁰ Even so, Powis remembers that there was an ‘absolutely palpable’ excitement at the mere idea of conventional war.³⁶¹ Like their colleagues in the Army and the Royal Marines, some sailors, such as Vince O’Neill were very disappointed to miss out on the exciting development. In April 1982, his submarine, HMS *Otter*, had a Royal Australian Navy officer in command. In order to not upset the diplomatic community, the military and the Government decided that, with the exception of the Gurkhas, non-British personnel could not be involved in any military action. Thus, HMS *Onyx* was sent south instead. For O’Neill, there was great disappointment that ‘the first opportunity in our service lives to put into practise all the skills that we had honed to a high degree in that pseudo war environment had passed us by for the real event!’ Additionally, and significantly, O’Neill ‘can’t recall, nor can I say that I detected any feeling of relief amongst the crew’ that they were missing out.³⁶²

However, a mere demonstration of force was unlikely to be the Government’s response in April 1982, as the Argentines had committed an act of war by landing on the islands. McClement acknowledged this, hence his commitment to be prepared for all potential outcomes, including war.³⁶³ Submariners always prided themselves on being prepared, and it was an essential aspect of their service. Those men who had served on *Polaris* boats knew that at any time they might receive the order to unleash total destruction as part of a nuclear war. They were therefore culturally very differently orientated to the sailors of the surface fleet. While any conflict in the South Atlantic was unlikely to escalate to such an extent, none of them knew in the first days of April what exactly

³⁵⁸ Colin Way, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

³⁵⁹ Ring, *We Come Unseen*, pp. 147-8.

³⁶⁰ David Crothers and Peter Harris, Interview with Author, 25/09/09.

³⁶¹ Jonathan Powis, Interview with Author, 30/07/09.

³⁶² Vince O’Neill, Correspondence with Author, 17/07/09. See Appendix D.

³⁶³ Tim McClement, Interview with Author, 27/05/09.

they would be called upon or required to do when they reached the area of operations, but culturally and professionally there were compelled to ensure that they would be ready to do it.

III

Reactions to War: Air Forces

Like their sailor, Army and Royal Marine colleagues, when news of the Falklands broke, the first reaction for the vast majority of military aviators was one of surprise and a similar level of geographical confusion; Robin Kent's first response was one of literally "where are the Falklands?"³⁶⁴ David Morgan revealed that he was likewise struck by 'complete bewilderment that this had suddenly come out of nowhere.'³⁶⁵ During his time in West Germany whilst with the RAF, Morgan had come to believe that the Soviet invasion of Western Europe was 'pretty likely to happen.'³⁶⁶ He therefore was not completely stunned by the possibility of armed conflict, even though the Falklands represented an unexpected conflict, in an unexpected theatre, with an entirely unexpected enemy. Again, like the other men who would make up the Task Force, aviators had little idea of what the governmental response would be and more specifically what their involvement would be in any prospective retaliation. However, where aviators had an advantage was in their far smaller numbers and specialist, unique function; unlike the fleet of the Royal Navy, or the various regiments and units of the Army and Royal Marines, the British armed forces no longer had an extensive supply of fixed wing aircraft capable of launching from aircraft carriers to call upon. Thus, it was recognised that they would be required in any situation that needed a fixed wing capability, and that this would most likely have involved all of that which Britain was capable of fielding. In many ways this was a problem of Britain's own design, the result of governmental defence and strategic policy that was too heavily geared to anti-submarine operations in the Northern Hemisphere as part of NATO. The only aircraft carriers Britain possessed were *Invincible* and *Hermes*. The former was considered too small, the latter too old, and each could only carry a fraction of the aircraft of a full-size

³⁶⁴ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

³⁶⁵ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

fleet carrier. Britain's last full size fleet carrier, HMS *Ark Royal*, had been identified as being essential to the recovery of the Falklands in the event of any Argentine invasion as early as February 1976,³⁶⁷ but had nonetheless been decommissioned in February 1979 and sold for scrap in 1980. Because of this, the Task Force would sail south with, in the view of Hastings and Jenkins, 'the barest minimum of credible air support to operate in the South Atlantic.'³⁶⁸ The distance of the Falklands from a main operating base prevented the use of much of the RAF's aircraft, so the British Task Force was required to generate its own air support from what it could carry, and what could reach the Falklands from Ascension. *Hermes* and *Invincible* could only carry a maximum of 25 Sea Harriers out of the 32 operational in March 1982. Due to the Royal Navy's shortage of trained Sea Harrier pilots, new pilots who were in the advanced stage of training on the aircraft were called upon to make up the numbers, such as David Morgan. Yet at this stage Morgan, who operated from an aircraft carrier for the campaign, had never landed on a flight deck at night.³⁶⁹ Indeed, he only completed his first ever deck landing in Portsmouth harbour the day before *Hermes* sailed for the South Atlantic.³⁷⁰

That there would be few aircraft was a fact well known to the pilots preparing to go into action, and tempered reactions to the news of the crisis. Such feelings intensified when the Argentine Order of Battle was analysed, and the numbers of enemy aircraft the British pilots would face were predicted. Kent, for example, recalls the odds as being akin to 12:1 in the Argentines' favour; thus, he was not excited by the prospect of going to war as he recognised the inevitability of suffering losses. He assumed the British would be willing to take something in the region of 50% casualties before the operation would be abandoned, and with such minimal resources at British disposal, it was likely he would be among them.³⁷¹ Morgan agreed, and while he recalled the odds as being 8:1, he agreed with Kent's thoughts that the British were heavily outnumbered, and that losses were inevitable; he believed anyone who considered the odds could do nothing

³⁶⁷ TNA FCO 7/3376 'Dispute Over Falkland Islands between Argentina and UK – Parliamentary Statement' January-February 1977, Chiefs of Staff Committee DOP Note 703/76, 19 February 1976.

³⁶⁸ Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, p. 103.

³⁶⁹ IWM SOUND 23274 Morgan, David et al, BBC Radio 4 six part series entitled 'Falkland Families. Part 2: Reconciliation.' British pilot David Morgan and Argentine pilot Hector Sanchez recall their combat experiences during the Falklands War, Reel 1.

³⁷⁰ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

³⁷¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

but assume this would be the case. From the very beginning, he was 'convinced it was going to be a fairly hard fight,' and prepared accordingly, writing his final letters with instructions that they were to be opened if he did not return.³⁷² Kent and Morgan recall different levels of opposition, and this differential is a legacy of the uncertainty of the period. Without any detailed assessments provided by the MOD, aviators were forced to turn to *Jane's All the World's Fighting Aircraft* in order to compile intelligence on the number and types of aircraft employed by the Argentines. It was estimated that the Fuerza Aérea Argentina could launch sixty Pucará counter-insurgency aircraft, fifty two A-4 Skyhawks, thirty seven Daggers, seventeen Mirage IIIs and five Super Etendards, the latter capable of carrying Exocet missiles. These aircraft would constitute the main threat to the Task Force and the air defence. However, the runway at Port Stanley airport was too short for supersonic jet fighters to launch from, and thus fighters of this type had to launch from bases on the Argentine mainland. The nearest Argentine airfields to the Falklands were Rio Grande on Tierra del Fuego, 381 nautical miles from Stanley, Rio Gallegos, 420 nautical miles away, San Julian, 395 nautical miles away, and Comodoro Rivadavia, 525 nautical miles away. Further complicating the Argentine plans for air defence was the fact that, aside from the A4s, the jets lacked an in-flight refuelling capacity. They therefore operated on the very limits of their range and endurance, which left precious little time for combat once the Falklands had been reached.³⁷³ It was only the Pucarás that could be based on the Islands themselves, and while they posed little real danger to the Sea Harriers, as they were designed for an air-to-ground role and carried a wide variety of weaponry, they could pose serious difficulty to the British land forces if they succeeded in establishing a beachhead, and also any helicopters given their high manoeuvrability and tighter turning circle.

Aircraft numbers alone could, however, be misleading. The number of operational aircraft actually available to the Argentines was significantly reduced by a low serviceability rate and a lack of spare parts, meaning that many airframes were cannibalised by Argentine mechanics to provide spares for other aircraft. Indeed, as Hobson asserts,

³⁷² David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

³⁷³ Chris Hobson, with Andrew Noble, *Falklands Air War* (Hinckley, 2002), p. 19.

It seems likely that the combined total of Argentine mainland and Falklands-based Air Force and Navy combat aircraft of all types theoretically available for use over the Falklands was actually around 230 with rarely more than about 50% being available at any one time, and that this figure dropped throughout the conflict due to attrition.³⁷⁴

Furthermore,

The poor state of readiness of many of the Argentine aircraft was partly due to ageing equipment and inadequate spares holdings, but may also have been a result of the high percentage of conscripted personnel in the Argentine armed forces who did not have the same level of experience or training as permanent servicemen.³⁷⁵

The Air Force, for example, had 10,000 conscripts, or 53% of its total strength.³⁷⁶ Thus, the conscript elements of its ground crews were unable to maintain any momentum the Argentine Air Force pilots built up, or press home the advantage of any successful attacks, as they lacked the necessary improvisational skills learned through long service. The fully professional British force, however, were far superior at servicing and maintaining their aircraft, and the Sea Harrier deck crews operating on the aircraft carriers 'maintained near-perfect serviceability in often appalling conditions.'³⁷⁷

The numbers of enemy aircraft that they would face was certainly daunting for the British fighter pilots, and were one reason why several were not overly enthusiastic about the prospect of fighting, at least in private. As he had not yet completed the Sea Harrier conversion course, Morgan was initially told that he would not be going south. This was then revised to say that he would be sailing with the Task Force, but not be flying. The next day this was revised again, and he was told that he would be flying. When asked in interview if he had been disappointed when he was initially told he would not be going, Morgan recalled that he felt

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Bicheno, *Razor's Edge*, p. 139.

A bit of a dichotomy really. I didn't particularly want to go to war and have people shoot at me, was my first reaction, and I was very happy when they said I was going to stay behind and finish the course. However, once I was told I was going, I was very happy about it. I'd always said that if I had to go to war then I wanted to be in a Harrier, so from that point of view I was happy.³⁷⁸

Morgan's testimony from his interview reveals a more complex emotional mix than his retrospective memoir, which did not discuss these more personal feelings and did not give such an insight into his state of mind, demonstrating the value of oral history and its ability to connect with subjects on intimate topics. It also revealed the level of disparity between private feeling and what was expressed in public to family, friends and colleagues that was a hallmark of the fighter pilot, and an accepted, perhaps even a required, part of the mentality. Indeed, Morgan's idea of the expectations of what the fighter pilot mentality required meant that, when discussing the number of Argentine aircraft, rather than be over-awed by the task, he publically joked that it was a 'target rich environment,' a detail again revealed in interview rather than his memoir.³⁷⁹

Kent was also very apprehensive about the possibility of war. However, as the Senior Pilot of 801 Naval Air Squadron, he was responsible for pilot morale and related issues, so this compelled him to suppress such fears of what might happen in public interaction. Thus, there were both professional and cultural expectations that influenced his behaviour. For Kent, when it came to personal doubts,

You've got to try and not show it... I had to maintain to all outward appearances a willingness to be involved in whatever it took, and I was conscious of that... That's one way of coping with it; you just have to do it, that's your responsibility.³⁸⁰

Kent recalled his experience in the Fleet Air Arm had helped prepare him for this; as he recalled, the experience of landing an aircraft on a pitching flight deck at night was also a very frightening prospect, but pilots never showed that fear either: 'You've done quite

³⁷⁸ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

a lot of being frightened when you're flying.'³⁸¹ It was an accepted and indeed expected part of the fighter pilot mentality that such feelings would be internalised for the sake of group morale. Practical tasks also soon mounted that helped override any feelings of doubt or fear. The need to complete various tasks, and the sheer mechanics of flying an aircraft, diverted the attention away from all emotions and required complete focus of the mind. Unlike sailors or soldiers, aviators could focus entirely on their role, without distraction, and indeed had to. To not do so risked an accident that could cost them their life. Such an attitude, and an approach to the issue, reveals the all-encompassing culture of being a fighter pilot, and that it was far more than a simple job. Furthermore, this approach was universally adopted, perhaps as a consequence of all the pilots being of a similar rank.

Another way of masking fear and apprehension was through the liberal use of black humour and bravado. This was expressed in a similar way to the Army and Royal Marines; both of the Naval Air Squadrons initially embarked with the Task Force, 800 on *Hermes* and 801 on *Invincible*, adapted various songs to suit the current situation with topical lyrics.³⁸² They were perhaps not as crude as "Malvinas Holiday," but they expressed the same sentiment. On *Invincible*, 820 Squadron, the Sea King Helicopter squadron, wrote a new song for the campaign, set to the tune of "Don't Cry for me, Argentina", which was sung enthusiastically in the wardroom:

You don't frighten me Argentina,
The truth is we will defeat you;
We'll sink your carrier with our Sea Harrier,
And with our Sea Kings subs'll be sinking.

On your bike Argentina,
The front line are getting airborne;
You've gone too far now, we've left the bar now
And soon the Falklands will be in our hands.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² 809 Naval Air Squadron followed them south later on *Atlantic Conveyor* with replacement aircraft and parts.

Four and a half thousand booties
Will soon take back Port Stanley!
You might try and hold out but we will throw you out
To Buenos Aries, you bloody fairies!³⁸³

The song was in fact composed prior to *Invincible*'s departure from Portsmouth, and caused much amusement, with one pilot saying of the jingle, 'it's a giggle isn't it?'³⁸⁴ The pilots on *Hermes* likewise invented their own songs. They also had the variation of "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina", with "Galtieri" inserted at the relevant point, but there was also one set to the tune of 'What Shall we do With a Drunken Sailor?':

What shall we do with an Argie Mirage?
What shall we do with an Argie Mirage?
What shall we do with an Argie Mirage?
Early in the morning

Smash him in the face with an AIM9-L, [a missile carried by the Sea Harriers]
Smash him in the face with an AIM9-L,
Smash him in the face with an AIM9-L,
Early in the morning

Chorus:

Nuke, nuke, nuke the bastards,
Nuke, nuke, nuke the bastards,
Nuke, nuke, nuke the bastards,
Early in the morning

What shall we do with an A4 Skyhawk?
What shall we do with an A4 Skyhawk?
What shall we do with an A4 Skyhawk?
Early in the morning

³⁸³ IWM SOUND 12821 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Audio diary recorded aboard HMS *Invincible* April – May 1982, Reel 1.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

Shoot him up the arse with an Aden cannon,
Shoot him up the arse with an Aden cannon,
Shoot him up the arse with an Aden cannon,
Early in the morning

*Chorus*³⁸⁵

The songs served a multitude of purposes. They helped maintain morale, they helped pass the time on an otherwise monotonous sea voyage, and they helped fortify the pilots psychologically, to ward off any feelings of fear. All of these were essential for men preparing to risk their lives. Furthermore, to have confidence in one's ability was essential in order to best prepare for combat. As Nigel 'Sharkey' Ward, the commanding officer of 801 Naval Air Squadron, stated:

Maybe I was kidding myself and not looking at the opposition rationally, but there was no point going into a fight thinking you might lose. So it was time to start believing in all the hype that goes along with the fighter pilot level.³⁸⁶

Additionally, the songs should not be taken to mean that there was an excessive cavalier attitude amongst the naval aviators. Certainly this did exist, but underneath the jovial exterior was a serious commitment to the task at hand. As Ward recalled on 5th April, 1982:

There really has to be no nonsense in the next few weeks about getting down to it, and getting the killer instinct going, and getting used to making not a single mistake of any description at all in the air, so that we can shoot down the enemy, support the Royal Marines ashore by hitting tanks or armoured personnel carriers and indeed evading enemy fire control systems.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, pp. 85-6.

³⁸⁶ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 80.

³⁸⁷ IWM SOUND 12821 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Reel 1.

For Commander Ralph Wykes-Sneyd, the Commanding Officer of 820 Squadron, the initial jovial mood was 'certainly going to sober up in the days and weeks to come,' and that the public expressions of jingoism merely masked an underlying seriousness that was only privately communicated.³⁸⁸

Yet despite personal misgivings regarding impending combat, in interviews and retrospective memoirs many aviators often recall that alongside such apprehension there was also an undeniable excitement in the possibility of going into action and implementing their training. This was particularly the case amongst fighter pilots, who would be the ones who actually engaged the enemy in direct combat. Such a dichotomy between personal feelings of self-preservation and those of personal satisfaction resulted in many aviators reacting positively to the news of war. Even Morgan acknowledged that there was an element of 'professional satisfaction' in potentially going to war and utilising his skills, 'having spent God-knows how many years' training.³⁸⁹ Having grown up in years of peace and stability, a chance of action appeared to finally be presenting itself. Ward reacted positively to the news of potential conflict, commenting that 'for some, going to war was a shock; for others it was a dream come true. The latter was the case as far as I was concerned.'³⁹⁰ Indeed, he believed that the war represented 'a chance not to be missed.'³⁹¹ Ward served in the Fleet Air Arm, but a similar attitude to the coming conflict could be found amongst the RAF pilots of No. 1 Fighter Squadron, who were informed that they would be travelling south as air-attrition replacements on 15th April. While the news was initially sobering, as they would be directly stepping into the gap left by men who had been killed, it also represented an opportunity to implement their training which overrode any negative feelings, as Jerry Pook revealed: 'air defence, air combat; we liked the sound of that very much indeed.'³⁹²

Ward, like many of the peacetime warriors noted previously, longed for an opportunity to put his training to the test in a real combat situation. Unlike the Army and the Royal Marines, who utilised their training in Northern Ireland, aviators had no real

³⁸⁸ IWM SOUND 17596 Wykes-Sneyd, Ralph John Stewart, Reel 1.

³⁸⁹ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

³⁹⁰ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 4.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁹² IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 7.

opportunity to test themselves. As professionals, men wanted to use the skills they had worked so hard to learn. It was this, rather than any bloodlust or hatred, which drove Ward's desire to be a part of Operation Corporate:

In my heart of hearts, I wanted a fight. Peacetime flying had been fun; more than that, it had been terrific. But it wasn't the real McCoy and only the real thing was going to show us all if our training and tactics were good enough.³⁹³

Indeed, that this sentiment was expressed in a variety of forms, in both his oral testimony and his retrospective memoir of his flying career, demonstrates the sincerity with which it was expressed. In 1982 Ward was approaching the stage in his professional career whereby promotion would shortly take him out of frontline duties, in an organisation where 'commanders don't fly aeroplanes, they fly desks.'³⁹⁴ Indeed, his oral testimony reinforces this idea and reveals the strength of the emotion expressed in his memoir, as Ward reveals that:

I wanted to go and fight. I'd been thinking about that for a long time... Actually earlier in that year I'd thought, "My Goodness, I'm coming to the end of my flying time, wouldn't it be nice if we had something where we could actually prove what we'd been trained with?"³⁹⁵

Yet even he expressed some doubts regarding how he would react when in combat:

The biggest thing, of course, was to prove yourself. It's all very well being well respected in peacetime exercises, even on very closely instrumented ranges, but none of us knew how we were going to perform for real once we came under fire, and everybody was slightly nervous about that, of course.³⁹⁶

This uncertainty itself could, however, have been the cause of apprehension. Timothy Gedge, who commanded 809 Naval Air Squadron in the campaign, reiterated Ward's

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 80.

³⁹⁴ IWM DOCS 92/40/1 Private Papers of Commander N. D. Ward DFC AFC RN, 'Sea Harrier over the Falklands: A Maverick at War' (1991), p. 6.

³⁹⁵ IWM SOUND 12820 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Reel 1.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

comments and acknowledged that when it came to war, 'you just have no idea what is going to happen, and more particularly perhaps, you have no idea how you yourself are going to react, and that's probably the biggest unknown for most people.'³⁹⁷ Like the Army and Royal Marines, aviators saw combat as the ultimate test against which one could measure oneself. However, in a culture accustomed to excellence and the highest standards, there was also an underlying fear that they would perhaps fail such a test and have been found wanting when it mattered the most.

The climate of the Falklands and the logistical requirements of a substantial naval fleet also necessitated large numbers of helicopters and their crews to be on station to facilitate troop and supply movement. In addition to those supplied by the Fleet Air Arm pilots stationed aboard the ships, 3 Commando Brigade also took their own Air Squadron south, with attached units of the Army Air Squadron, equipped with Westland Scouts and Gazelles. Because the Air Squadron was part of the Royal Marines, the men attached to this unit, despite being involved with another combat arm, shared a mental conformity with other men in the Corps. For example, John Glaze, a Royal Marine serving as an Air Gunner in B Flight, 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, was similarly uncertain where the Falklands was, and expressed doubts as to whether the coming operation would end in violence.³⁹⁸ Yet while Glaze may have been sceptical about the upcoming mission, his training had ensured that he had an excellent default level of operational expertise, having spent the winters of 1980-1 and 1981-2 in Norway with 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron.³⁹⁹ This high level of expertise was reflected in the fact that right up to going ashore at San Carlos on 21st May, 'our preparations really were no different to going on exercise in Norway, other than we had live ammunition.'⁴⁰⁰

Despite their high level of preparation, all the disparate groups of aviators acknowledged that they would need to carry out intensive training on the voyage south in order to adequately prepare themselves for combat. Such training regimes were devised by the commanding officers of the various squadrons and flights. For Wykes-Sneyd, the long voyage ahead of the Task Force to get to the prospective war zone

³⁹⁷ IWM SOUND 16782 Gedge, Timothy John Henry, Reel 1.

³⁹⁸ IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 5.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

represented a real challenge, as 'there was a temptation to go immediately to battle stations... but of course the threat was a very long way away.'⁴⁰¹ Like senior naval officers in the surface fleet, he realised that it was necessary to build the men up slowly, and not to peak too early in terms of mental and physical preparedness and proficiency, after which point they would only begin to deteriorate. Wykes-Sneyd also acknowledges that he and his men had to progress, alter, and adapt their skills to a new potential enemy, with new capabilities, rather than the Cold War power struggle for which they had trained. 820 flew the Mark V Sea King, designed for anti-submarine warfare, specifically the detection of nuclear submarines through passive means. However, despite having completed an extensive exercise onboard *Invincible* immediately prior to the Falklands crisis, South Atlantic anti-submarine warfare 'against a wholly conventional threat was rather different to what we'd in the main been practicing in the previous year.'⁴⁰² In the South Atlantic, 820 Squadron was forced to use Active Sonar as their primary means of detection, as the Argentine's German-built 109 submarines were too small and quiet to be detected by the passive sonar buoys the British helicopters used to hunt Soviet nuclear submarines in the North Atlantic. The problem was exacerbated by the abundance of marine life in the South Atlantic, leading to several spurious contacts. They were also facing threats from weapons systems such as the Exocet 'which were very different from the sorts of weapons systems that we'd been used to thinking about in opposition in the old East-West conflict.'⁴⁰³ Another was the need to consider evasion tactics in case the helicopters were engaged by hostile fighter aircraft, which had never previously been considered as the pilots and aircrew were used to operating against enemy submarines at sea, far away from any prospective coastal aircraft. It took considerable time and effort for the pilots and aircrews to adapt themselves to these new tactics, and as such the long voyage south represented an opportunity and an advantage.

Like Wykes-Sneyd, Ward also realised the importance of training on the voyage south. Indeed, in the audio diary he kept throughout the campaign, Ward stated his aim that the training regime on the voyage south that he had derived was going to consist of 'combat, combat, and more combat' in order that the pilots reached their personal

⁴⁰¹ IWM SOUND 17596 Wykes-Sneyd, Ralph John Stewart, Reel 1.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

peaks, with extensive weapons and combat training in both air-to-air and air-to-sea tactical manoeuvres.⁴⁰⁴ Ward's desire to implement such an aggressive training regime can be seen as an extension of his desire to fight, and also his appreciation of the seriousness of the threat posed by the numerically superior Argentines. Such training would also instil confidence in the numerically inferior British. Aerial combat was fast and frenetic, unlike any other form the British conducted in the South Atlantic. There was minimal room for error, especially given that the British had only a very limited supply of aircraft and pilots to fly them. Thus, the training was as much about preserving the aircraft and the aerial defensive capabilities of the Task Force as keeping the pilots alive. Yet Ward was also faced with the difficult proposition that several of his pilots had not yet fully completed the training course on the Sea Harrier, and had been assigned to him in order to bulk out the number of pilots going south. Several of them had no night flying qualification, and therefore Ward was forced to factor basic routines into the flying schedule in order to bring these pilots up to speed.⁴⁰⁵ For the helicopter fleet, the basic versatility of the airframe meant that it was very difficult to know exactly what it would be called upon to do, and so artificers planned for all likelihoods; Richard Elliot, for example, fitted rocket launchers to the Gazelles of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron in case they were called upon to attack Argentine armoured vehicles.⁴⁰⁶ Eddy Candlish also recalled that the Squadron was ordered 'to investigate methods of fitting a GPMG machine gun to the side of the aircraft.' The aircrew designed their own mounts, and then tested it with aerial gunnery practice against rubbish bags dropped into the sea.⁴⁰⁷

It was, however, difficult to prepare psychologically for a war that very few people thought would come. Kent was indicative of many of the aviators, and the Task Force in general, as he believed that the assembly and despatching of the Task Force was a ploy by the British Government to intimidate the Argentines, who would in turn back down in the face of such force, rather than risk open war.⁴⁰⁸ In contrast, Ward very much wanted to fight. In a reinforcement of his earlier testimony, he recalled in

⁴⁰⁴ IWM SOUND 12821 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Audio diary recorded aboard HMS *Invincible* April – May 1982, Reel 1.

⁴⁰⁵ IWM DOCS 92/40/1 Private Papers of Commander N. D. Ward DFC AFC RN, 'Sea Harrier over the Falklands: A Maverick at War' (1991), p. 56, p. 112.

⁴⁰⁶ IWM SOUND 16361 Elliott, Richard James, Reel 1.

⁴⁰⁷ IWM SOUND 30109 Candlish, Eddy, Reel 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

interview that 'we were devoted and dedicated to this task of getting ready for war, and in a sense hoping that Maggie Thatcher wasn't going to be turned away from her intent.'⁴⁰⁹ Yet this statement reveals that he still believed that there would be a political settlement of the crisis, even if it was to his mind undesirable. However, like their compatriots in the other services, the aviators underwent a change of mentality in regards to the approaching conflict, regarding it with more seriousness as war became more and more likely. Just as with the other branches of the British armed forces, Ascension Island acted as a watershed in this change. As Gedge recalled, it was at Ascension that people realised 'that this was a real operation and not a show of strength.' He recalled that the mood amongst his pilots changed, and that people became increasingly serious.⁴¹⁰ Such a mental change transcended squadrons; Kent similarly noticed this and he recalled that it was only after 801 NAS left Ascension to continue south that realisation of the likelihood of impending conflict replaced any thoughts of a diplomatic settlement: 'That was the majority of thinking up to the Ascension Islands, and from the Ascension Islands there was no doubt... there was a huge firming of resolve.'⁴¹¹ Glaze, serving with the helicopters, felt exactly the same: 'We were quite happy to go there and rattle a few sabres, but as we got closer and closer and the weather changed after Ascension, and the sea got greyer, the cloud base fell, it became more ominous.'⁴¹²

Like their comrades in the Army and Royal Marines, military aviators held a strong sense of loyalty to their units, which potentially could have created considerable friction when two or more were forced to mix in the claustrophobic environment of a ship, particularly the two small aircraft carriers sent south in April 1982. Furthermore, as an indicator of the technological facet that was to mark their combat experience, there was not only friction between aviators as people, but also friction with other squadrons and ships, the machines themselves taking on personal characteristics and human flaws. Whereas the two squadrons of 'rotor-heads and jet jockeys',⁴¹³ or fighter pilots and helicopter crews, aboard *Invincible* were able to bond in the wardroom, they were not able to connect on such a social level with other squadrons embarked with the

⁴⁰⁹ IWM SOUND 12820 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Reel 1.

⁴¹⁰ IWM SOUND 16782 Gedge, Timothy John Henry, Reel 1.

⁴¹¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁴¹² IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 5.

⁴¹³ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 71.

Task Force. Therefore, a distinct “us and them” mentality developed between the carriers, and the fighter pilots aboard *Invincible* began to direct their rivalry at 800 NAS, operating from *Hermes*, the Flagship of the Task Force.

This intensified as the armada sailed south, and the home ships from which they operated were inevitably drawn in, becoming culpable and guilty by association. Ward was convinced that 801 were by far the superior squadron and to that effect he believed that 800 and *Hermes* were sabotaging joint training exercises to make 800 look better at 801's expense. This included 800 attacking from fifteen miles during one sortie, rather than a pre-agreed eighty, in order, in Ward's opinion, to prevent 801 from successfully defending the ship by giving them no time to scramble off the flight deck of *Invincible*. 800 also claimed to have shot down 801 aircraft during an air-intercept training exercise, despite the fact that 801 had gun-sight film to prove the opposite. Ward was increasingly frustrated not so much by 800's belligerent attitude, but more their inability to look at their own tactics with self-criticism in order to improve them as much as possible in the shadow of war, and as the friction built, Ward confessed 'I'm really getting more and more depressed with that bloody squadron.'⁴¹⁴ Throughout the audio diary Ward kept during Operation Corporate, *Hermes* and 800 were increasingly referred to with sarcasm, verging on disgust: 'God help us if we have to rely on them in Argentina and the Falklands.' As for *Hermes*, Ward feared that 'the nearer we get to action, the more concerned I am that we could well be led up the garden path by that ship.'⁴¹⁵ Such opinions are corroborated by Jerry Pook of the RAF. He operated from *Hermes* during the campaign in a ground attack role, something the Fleet Air Arm did not have experience in, and recalls being very angry at the way in which he was treated and judged by them, in a way that bordered on the shambolic: 'They patronised us, they treated us with contempt.'⁴¹⁶ It may well be the case that rivalry amongst military men is inevitable. But the rivalry expressed by Ward in three separate historical sources, in both written and oral form, established over a long period of time, and supported by Pook, suggests that it was more than just fleeting, and was in fact a real obstacle that needed to be dealt with, in addition to the coming strains of war.

⁴¹⁴ IWM SOUND 12821 Ward, Nigel David 'Sharkey', Reel 1.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., Reel 3.

⁴¹⁶ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 9.

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The journey south involved a great mental transition for all the men of the Task Force, regardless of which branch of the services they were in. The reactions to the war as revealed in the use of oral testimony and memoirs unveil some key cultural facets of the respective combat forces for the first time. What is remarkable is the commonality of distinct reactions as displayed by members of the individual combat services, something that endured regardless of what date or in what form the personal reminiscence was produced. Thus, reactions committed to print 10 years after the event, for example, remain the same as in oral history interviews conducted nearly 30 years later. However, the historical record shows that, regardless of the combat arm, the euphoria, bewilderment, surprise, anxiety and disbelief at the outbreak of war gave way to professional commitment as the likelihood of violence increased. The only branch of the services unique in this regard was the submarine service, whose operational experience ensured that, aside from some technological adjustments, they would not face anything in the South Atlantic that they were not be prepared for. The oral history collected from these men reveals the more pragmatic way in which they approached the coming operation as being aligned with their previous operational experience, with little surprise or bewilderment, unlike the surface fleet. It is clear therefore that there is a primacy in unit culture that helped shape and dictate preparations for battle. For those men fighting above and below the waves, or in the skies or on the ground of the Falkland Islands, very few knew what to expect, or what awaited them, and thus very few knew for certain how they would react when they came under fire for the first time. Thus they trusted in the cultures and social structures of their surroundings in order to prepare them, mentally conforming in public to the perceived “right” image, even if they did foster private doubts.

Chapter 3:

On the Islands: The How and Why of Killing on Land

Regardless of their personal motivations for enlisting, when combat was joined the men of the British Armed Forces were expected to fight and kill the enemy, thereby achieving victory. For the land forces in particular, this had been a direct focus of their training, the individual engagement of the enemy with weapons. Combat was therefore a key facet of their institutional cultures; it is what they were deployed to do. As McManners has written, 'when all the theorising and jargon is removed, land combat more than any other form of warfare, is about killing other human beings.'⁴¹⁷ However, with the advent of modern, mechanised and industrialised war, direct confrontation between soldiers of opposing armies became increasingly rare, yet increasingly brutal. Descriptions of combat are one area that is not lacking in military memoirs of Falklands veterans, and this chapter has taken advantage of this to use seven memoirs to reveal some perceptions and interpretations of combat experience. However, as in previous chapters, the historical record has been greatly diversified through the use of oral history, with nine oral history interviews conducted with veterans being utilised. The oral record has been broadened yet further with seven independent interviews involving targeted questions to help answer this thesis' specific research questions. One such interview was conducted with John Geddes, author of *Spearhead Assault*, a 2008 memoir, in order to utilise the more intimate nature of oral history to explore issues central to this thesis that were not covered in his retrospective account. The men of the Task Force who conducted their war on land were all confronted with killing and death. Their experiences and their reactions to "doing the business," and more importantly why they killed, are explored in this chapter, and analysed to reveal a specific combat culture that transcended personal beliefs and was dominant enough to produce a unified behavioural response.

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The ethologist Konrad Lorenz argues that man is an inherently violent species, and that he has been capable of violence against his own kind throughout his evolutionary

⁴¹⁷ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 155.

history: 'Peking Man, the Prometheus who learned to preserve fire, used it to roast his brothers: beside the first traces of the regular use of fire lie the mutilated and roasted bones of *Sinanthropus pekinensis* himself.'⁴¹⁸ However, man was not capable of sudden aggression resulting in the instant death of another human for thousands of years as the human body did not develop with the anatomical capabilities to be able to inflict such blows, such as sharp teeth or claws. There were thus no inherent inhibitory behavioural mechanisms preventing spontaneous manslaughter, as with other animals. However, the invention of artificial weapons with increasing destructive power 'upset the equilibrium of killing potential and social inhibitions.'⁴¹⁹ Fortunately, the concept of responsibility developed at the same rate, or else 'humanity would indeed have destroyed itself by its first inventions.'⁴²⁰ Yet the danger of self-destruction remained, and Lorenz argues that 'if moral responsibility and unwillingness to kill have indubitably increased, the ease and emotional impunity of killing have increased at the same rate.'⁴²¹ The increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of weapons, and the ranges with which they can be employed, has made it easier for humans to engage in the act of killing because responsibility has been superficially diminished. Thus, with modern weapons,

The distance at which all shooting weapons take effect screens the killer against the stimulus situation which would otherwise activate his killing inhibitions. The deep, emotional layers of our personality simply do not register the fact that the crooking of the forefinger to release a shot tears the entrails of another man.⁴²²

Indeed, with the use of electronic weapons in the modern era, where huge levels of destruction can be unleashed with the simple push of a button, the man who brings down such destruction

Is so completely screened against seeing, hearing or otherwise emotionally realising the consequences of his action, that he can commit it with impunity – even if he is burdened with the power of imagination. Only thus can it be

⁴¹⁸ Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (Translated by Marjorie Latzke, London, 1967), p. 205.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² *Ibid.*

explained that perfectly good-natured men, who would not even smack a naughty child, proved to be perfectly able to release rockets or to lay carpets of incendiary bombs on sleeping cities, thereby committing hundreds and thousands of children to a horrible death in the flames.⁴²³

Therefore, Lorenz maintains that it is easier to kill at distance, in a more detached way. This is a commonly held view amongst the analysts of combat culture and psychology; David Grossman argues that the physical distance at which killing occurs psychologically facilitates the act, as 'from a distance you don't look anything like a friend. From a distance, I can deny your humanity; and from a distance, I cannot hear your screams.'⁴²⁴ The advances made in weapons technology have certainly increased the distance at which man can fatally engage each other. Theodore Nadelson believes that this distance is both physical and emotional, as 'technology removes the soldier from personal involvement. It removes the passion from killing, and the soldier may feel less guilty responsibility. There is a concomitant reduction in the emotional consequences of violence associated with close-up and personal combat.'⁴²⁵ Engaging the "enemy" at a greater distance is easier, since he is 'usually a mass, not distinguishable as an individual. But when a soldier is close to the enemy soldier he has just killed, the psychological strategy of denying the opponent his humanity may fail.'⁴²⁶ However, a weakness with the theories of these historians and analysts in relation to the Falklands is that much of the land-based fighting in that campaign was done so at close quarter, with rifle, grenade and bayonet; it was not won with long-distance artillery or aerial bombardment alone. This fact was not lost on the soldiers themselves. Mark Eyles-Thomas, who fought with 3 Para on Mount Longdon, recalls that 'it seemed ironic that, despite all our modern technology and sophisticated weaponry, in the end it all came down to men fighting each other, face to face, hand to hand, yard by yard.'⁴²⁷ Therefore, there must be other reasons why the soldiers of the ground forces killed, as they were not physically or psychologically shielded by distance, something which both Nadelson and Grossman maintain are common facilitators in killing in modern warfare.

⁴²³ Ibid., pp. 208-9.

⁴²⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York, 1996), p. 102.

⁴²⁵ Theodore Nadelson, *Trained to Kill: Soldiers at War* (Baltimore, 2005), p. 45.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴²⁷ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 156.

S.L.A. Marshall's conclusions from his work with infantry from the United States in the Second World War suggest that men still held vestiges of their civilian morality, even in combat, and remained unwilling to break the social taboos that had governed their previous existence. Marshall's study, however, was conducted amongst mainly civilian-soldiers, men who had either volunteered or been conscripted into service. In contrast, the British Army of 1982 was made up of professional soldiers, men who had chosen the military as a vocation, and therefore taken on the morality of the military. Their reasons for choosing the military were varied, but they had all entered a rigorous and highly professional regime that taught them the mechanics of war. Central to this training was that they were expected to be able to kill in order to achieve their objectives. Training facilitated this, drilling in to the soldiers both the concept of killing, and the ability to do it. For example, when it came to small arms training, something all soldiers participated in regularly, a pamphlet produced and circulated by the Director of Army Training in 1973 stated that 'the title of this pamphlet *Shoot to Kill* may seem somewhat dramatic, but these three words sum up exactly the purpose of Small Arms training.'⁴²⁸ Additionally, firing ranges had been adapted to include more realistic Figure 11 targets that looked more like human beings, and dropped away when hit. Throughout the training period, 'the soldier has rehearsed the process so many times that when he does kill in combat he is able to, at one level, deny to himself that he is actually killing another human being.'⁴²⁹ Indeed, the training was so effective that one veteran recalls that when he got into combat in the Falklands and fired his weapon at the Argentines, it was just like shooting at Figure 11 targets on the range, with no greater emotional significance.⁴³⁰

Therefore, men killed in the Falklands because they had been trained to do so. The extended level and quality of training the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marines received also ensured that, in a combat situation, they were highly effective killers. When in combat they did not pause to consider the moral justification of their act, nor did they spare a thought for the enemy as their fellow man; they were instead concerned with securing the objective they had been assigned, thereby winning the battle. In many

⁴²⁸ Director of Army Training, *Shoot to Kill: Pamphlet on Small Arms Training Produced by the Director of Army Training, March 1973* (London, 1973).

⁴²⁹ Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 255.

⁴³⁰ Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (London, 2004), p. 371.

ways the training elite units such as the Paras and the Royal Marines undergo train their men to kill in as efficient a way as possible, and by breaking down the normal social taboos surrounding killing hold it up as the zenith of military capability. The message was that when soldiers killed, their training, their *raison d'être*, their very existence, was vindicated, and thus the normal moral reflexes that guard against the act of killing in the civilian sphere were certainly altered.

The training the men had received, in conjunction with the inevitable fear and adrenalin of combat, had simply over-ridden any humanity, and the men considered military factors above all else. Captain Tim Spicer of the Scots Guards recalls that after Mount Tumbledown had been secured,

We walked round the companies seeing that the boys were okay, then joined in the slaughter of the withdrawing Argentinians. It was like a turkey shoot, unbelievable. The BC [Battery Commander] and FOOs [Forward Observation Officers] were calling down artillery fire, and our machine guns were blasting away. I couldn't believe it was happening. My small scrap of remaining humanity said we ought to stop it, but my brain said we had to kill as many as possible. The more we killed, the less we would have to FIBUA [Fight In Built Up Areas] out of Stanley.⁴³¹

Sergeant French, who assaulted Mount Longdon with 3 Para, said:

You cannot possibly imagine the depths to which you descend in war. I shot a man at close quarters on Longdon and in the split second before I pulled the trigger, I wondered if the round would go through him, ricochet and come back to hit me or someone else? And would my comrades recognise the gunflash as me firing, or think it was an enemy gunflash? I even had time to decide that the SLR was too powerful to use – among the rocks. In all this, there was absolutely no question at all about the morals of anything, of taking this bloke

⁴³¹ Quoted McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 245.

out...The Argentinian wasn't even a human being, he was an enemy, It was only afterwards that I thought of him as human.⁴³²

As Ken Lukowiak wrote in his retrospective memoir, 'to say, "Please listen, the Argentine soldier who I had killed on Wireless Ridge was a pop up target to me, no more, no less," seemed callous – cruel even. But it was true.'⁴³³ Similarly, Steve Newland, of 42 Commando, killed several Argentine defenders during an assault on a position because that was precisely what he had been trained to do, and when in combat he simply utilised all of his training: 'This is my job. This is what I do. Right or wrong, this is what I do for a living.'⁴³⁴ He did not in the immediate aftermath, or at any point since, feel any remorse for his actions.⁴³⁵ The level of professionalism amongst the troops, the result of their training and the cultures of the units they served in that prized such skills, were the direct causes of such a mentality, and the action of killing was a consequence. Soldiers ultimately killed because it was their job to do so, something they had been trained to do.

Indeed, because it was their vocation, many soldiers found it easy to reconcile themselves with killing as they felt that their professional standards compelled them to remain aggressive.⁴³⁶ All commentators acknowledge that there are undoubtedly some men who enjoy killing, and are not repulsed by it.⁴³⁷ Some go as far to suggest that there are in fact a large number who enjoy the opportunity to unleash such a destructive power that war provides, free from any of the repercussions that would follow a similar action in the civilian sphere.⁴³⁸ As Bourke says, 'people could take an immense delight in breaking the highest moral law.'⁴³⁹ Even for those men who took no pleasure from the act of killing, there remained something exciting about it. Much of this excitement stemmed from their knowledge that 'combat is the ultimate zero-sum game. All soldiers know that they can be overwhelmed and killed. Even while they are gripped by fear, they are enthralled and excited by the possibility of winning.'⁴⁴⁰ Lieutenant Robert

⁴³² Ibid., p. 175.

⁴³³ Lukowiak, *A Soldier's Song*, p. xxx.

⁴³⁴ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Holmes, *Acts of War*, p. 370.

⁴³⁷ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 55.

⁴³⁸ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 14, 32.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁴⁰ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 79.

Lawrence assaulted Mount Tumbledown with the 2nd Scots Guards, and recalls that he actually had greater physical, rather than moral difficulties, in killing a man, contrary to what he had previously expected, as the moment simply compelled a certain pattern of behaviour.⁴⁴¹ During the advance up the slopes, Lawrence used his bayonet to kill a man, stabbing him repeatedly. When he took cover with another officer shortly after,

I said to him, “Isn’t this fun?” because that’s where my heart was at, we were doing our job, at that point we were clearly winning. It was fun, and it would be a lie for me to say it wasn’t fun, because that’s how you feel, that’s how you keep yourself going.’⁴⁴²

The source of this satisfaction, which to civilians seems perverse, is undoubtedly because the soldier has asserted his dominance and subjugated the enemy, and there was a realisation that the situation could easily have been reversed. In such a way, the idea of “it was either him or me,” and that the killing was an act of self-preservation, meant that men did not feel any residual guilt about experiencing such elation whilst in combat, and were able to justify their actions to themselves and others. It was also what they had trained to do, and were now in fact doing for real, rather than simply pretending. For those soldiers who would not necessarily be in a position where they might kill, this caused some frustration. John Geddes of 2 Para, for example, was in the Patrols Platoon, and had laid the start lines for the rifle companies’ advance into battle at Goose Green:

As we watched I had to fight off the urge to go and join in. This was what it was all about. B Company was doing the bizz. Fuck, they looked cool and professional, moving with assurance through the absolute mayhem all around them like well-trained tour guides in the mouth of an erupting volcano.⁴⁴³

The majority of soldiers had experience in Northern Ireland, but in operations there the men had been under very restrictive rules of engagement, to the extent that very few fired their weapons. The Falklands, however, represented an opportunity to utilise the

⁴⁴¹ Robert Lawrence, ‘Fighting Passions,’ Blakeway Productions, 2009.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 187.

full offensive and destructive capabilities of their weapons. Geddes also remembers that when he heard the sounds of bayonets, weapons that were never used in an offensive manner in Northern Ireland, being fixed to rifles, as a soldier he found that exciting: 'I was electrified by that sound because I'm a soldier, and the thought of the fight to come and the idea of my mates out there preparing to do battle gave me a warrior's rush.'⁴⁴⁴

Such a mentality, however, sometimes required encouragement by senior officer amongst those less inherently aggressive men. Major Pat Butler, OC of D Patrol Company, 3 Para, believed that for the modern soldier, bayonet fitting was 'a very useful symbol as well because it sort of lodges in the soldier's mind the intent: "I am going to close, and I am going to be killing"... It's a very useful psychological tool.'⁴⁴⁵ The order to fix bayonets, issued by an officer, also provided an air of legitimacy to the act; the sanction to commit violence was issued by a figure of authority. As killing was a high likelihood in the task of taking and securing enemy positions, subconsciously the ordinary soldiers therefore held a diminished level of responsibility for the consequences of the actions authorised by the officer. The officer in turn held a reduced level of responsibility as while he directed the killing, only very rarely did he actually participate in it. Officers were 'buffered from the guilt of killing by the simple fact that they order it, and others carry it out... The key difference is that he doesn't have to do it personally.'⁴⁴⁶ Philip Neame, OC of D Company, 2 Para, for example, recalled that he fired very few rounds during the Battle of Goose Green because his soldiers were the ones 'knocking off' the enemy.⁴⁴⁷

Historically, officers in the British Army have always had to motivate their men to acts of aggression that may be contrary to their nature. Field Marshal Montgomery, for example, urged his men into battle at El Alamein with the message that 'all that is necessary is that each of us, every officer and man, should enter this battle with the determination to see it through – to fight and to kill – and finally, to win.'⁴⁴⁸ Similarly, on the eve of the invasion of Sicily, Montgomery addressed the Eighth Army with the words:

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 179.

⁴⁴⁵ IWM SOUND 28300 Butler, Pat, Reel 2.

⁴⁴⁶ Grossman, *On Killing*, pp. 64-5.

⁴⁴⁷ Philip Neame, Interview with Author, 22/02/11.

⁴⁴⁸ Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery* (London, 1958), p. 128.

Someone said to me a few days ago that the Italians are really decent people and that if we treat them properly they will come over to us. I disagree with him. Our job is to kill them. That is what you have to do. Once we have killed them we can see if they are good fellows or not. But they must be killed first.⁴⁴⁹

Indeed, one commanding officer maintained to his men that Italians were 'lousy, dirty people and not even fit to live... killing is all that is fit for the scum.'⁴⁵⁰ Yet these officers were addressing men who were, for the most part, civilians in uniform; in the Falklands, however, the soldiers and Marines were professionals, and as the testimony has revealed, required less exhortation to engage in acts of violence aside from the issuing of orders.⁴⁵¹

Because it was their vocation, and because they had been ordered to, soldiers therefore embarked upon the task of killing. The simple reality of the situation was that the Argentines needed to be defeated. Since they would not surrender, they would need to be engaged in infantry attacks and ejected from their defensive positions. Killing would therefore be inevitable if this was to be accomplished. War in other theatres, in the air and on or under the sea, required a high level of technology that reduced the human element. While the land forces also utilised the latest in military weapons technology, it was still the most primitive and basic of weapons, the rifle, bayonet and grenade, that would be needed to take and hold the ground on the advance to victory. Yet this would not be easy. Much has been written of the Argentine capabilities, but as Bicheno argues, 'it demeans both sides to portray the Argentine troops as sheep to the slaughter: they fought well enough when they were properly led, and sometimes when they were not.'⁴⁵² Indeed, the oral history testimony supports this view; as Newland said,

You get a Girl Guide with a bow and arrow, that's pretty dangerous, especially if you're at the pointy end. Anyone who can squeeze the trigger is dangerous,

⁴⁴⁹ Neil McCullum, *Journey With A Pistol: A Diary of War* (London, 1959), p. 145.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴⁵¹ For example, Philip Neame, Interview with Author, 22/02/11.

⁴⁵² Bicheno, *Razor's Edge*, p. 32.

so you can't think, "Yeah, alright they're conscripts"... They weren't a walkover.⁴⁵³

The Argentines had put their weeks of occupation of East Falkland to good use and built extensive defences. On Mount Longdon, for example, they had built or fashioned excellent sangars from the surrounding rock, able to withstand all but a direct hit from an artillery shell. They were also well laid out defensively, with overlapping arcs of fire. As Captain Adrian Freer, the second-in-command of A Company, 3 Para, said with retrospective appreciation, 'they took some getting out.'⁴⁵⁴ At Goose Green, even though the defences were manned by conscripts, they could still operate their weapons, and therefore they could still inflict casualties, something the attacking 2 Para soldiers appreciated.⁴⁵⁵ As the Argentines would not surrender, they would therefore have to be attacked; killing became an inevitable consequence.

The language soldiers used to describe their actions certainly reduced the resonance of the act of killing another human being, which served to facilitate the act. The enemy were not killed, rather they were 'topped,' 'neutralised,' 'taken out' or 'slotted.'⁴⁵⁶ The emotional significance of their actions was thus reduced, and the soldiers' moral compass, the product of their upbringing in a civilian culture that disapproved of killing, was less offended. Graham Carter, for example, was taking fire from a sniper at Goose Green, but he recalls that he located him and 'laid down some fire in his direction and finally took him out.'⁴⁵⁷ In the recording from his oral history interview he speaks in a detached manner, describing the process in professional terms, which does little to convey how highly emotive the act of killing is. Similarly, Newland described how the Argentine who shot him in the legs received 'a lead overload after that. That was basically the end of him.'⁴⁵⁸ It is far simpler, and less offensive to the listener, perhaps, to say 'he received a lead overload' rather than 'I killed him by firing a large number of bullets into him from close range.' In some ways, the use of selective language and slang is a consequence of inherent, subconscious guilt, or fear of being judged. The use of slang and euphemisms to disguise the act help shield both the

⁴⁵³ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁴⁵⁴ IWM SOUND 20255 Freer, Adrian Robert, Reel 3.

⁴⁵⁵ Chris Jackson, Interview with Author, 21/02/09.

⁴⁵⁶ Andy Stone, Interview with Author, 14/04/09.

⁴⁵⁷ IWM SOUND 13004 Carter, Graham, Reel 1.

⁴⁵⁸ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

speaker and the listener; the speaker may be afraid of either offending the listener, particularly if they have never seen combat, or instead fear that the listener may judge them critically. As Grossman has written,

Killing is what war is all about, and killing in combat, by its very nature, causes deep wounds of pain and guilt. The language of war helps us to deny what war is really about, and in doing so it makes war more palatable.⁴⁵⁹

Reductive language was not only applied to the enemy, however; it was also self-applicable by British troops. For example, they were not shelled by the Argentines, but “brassed up,” “banjoed” or “malleted.”⁴⁶⁰ This reduced a highly emotive and dangerous event to something trivial that could easily be laughed off, ensuring that psychologically it became easier to endure. As soldiers of all ranks indulged in this activity, as for example seen in the Neame quote earlier in this chapter, it is clear that the concepts of rank and differing social class that came with it was not a differentiating factor in the experience of war.

As much as the language of killing could be used to lessen the act, for some so to could the context in which it took place on East Falkland. Much of the fighting took place at night, and for some soldiers the weapons used certainly mediated how they responded to killing. Freer did not actually see the enemy during the assault on Mount Longdon: ‘I was firing and directing fire at machine gun flashes... Occasionally with artillery going off you got shaft of light and you would have seen somebody.’⁴⁶¹ There were those who had killed at close range, but Freer’s role had been to direct machine gun fire from a distance. He could not personally see the effect of that fire. This certainly affected Vincent Bramley, also of 3 Para, and after the night assault he wondered:

Had we killed? We must have. I felt nothing afterwards – just relaxed. I hadn’t seen our target: they had been hidden in darkness. We hadn’t killed at the end of a bayonet, or through a rifle sight. We had killed with a spray of machine-

⁴⁵⁹ Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 93.

⁴⁶⁰ Holmes, *Acts of War*, p. 364.

⁴⁶¹ IWM SOUND 20255 Freer, Adrian Robert, Reel 3.

gun bullets. It didn't seem personal. It was as if the enemy hadn't existed at all.⁴⁶²

Even those armed with rifles, rather than providing supporting fire from a distance, recall that they were firing at 'likely enemy positions,' rather than people.⁴⁶³ However, while the darkness undoubtedly added to the confusion of combat, there were ways to circumnavigate this. During the attack on Tumbledown, for example, Lawrence used a night sight to find and kill an Argentine defender: 'This was something I was watching through a small, green, television-type screen in a night sight, and therefore it was very much a detachment. I thought "Yeah, I got him."'⁴⁶⁴ A great deal of the killing, however, was still done at close quarters. While darkness certainly shielded some of the sights, the men engaged in the clearing of positions with grenades and bayonets, or 'gutting fighting' as Freer called it,⁴⁶⁵ knew full well what they were engaged in, and the consequences of their actions. That they were able to do it is testament to their training.

There was very little remorse for killing enemy soldiers when engaged in combat, as the majority of British soldiers believed that they were simply doing their job, of which killing was a necessary part. They certainly did not view their actions, or those of their colleagues, as murder, unless they broke the rules of engagement.⁴⁶⁶ However, in the history of warfare there have been instances where these rules were violated, both deliberately and out of necessity. Such "unlawful" killing is often disguised in battlefield statistics; results where lists detailed how many of the enemy were killed, and how many were taken prisoner. There is never an allusion in official sources as to whether the former may previously have been part of the latter group before the statisticians arrived, though it is highly likely.⁴⁶⁷ Indeed, allegations of war crimes made against 3 Para during their assault on Mount Longdon were investigated by the

⁴⁶² Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 115.

⁴⁶³ Andy Stone, Interview with Author, 14/04/09, and Chris Jackson, Correspondence with Author, 24/03/10. See Appendix D.

⁴⁶⁴ Robert Lawrence 'Fighting Passions,' Blakeway Productions.

⁴⁶⁵ IWM SOUND 20255 Freer, Adrian Robert, Reel 3.

⁴⁶⁶ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 41.

⁴⁶⁷ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London, 2004), p. 52.

International and Organised Crime Squad for the Director of Public Prosecutions, charges that Colbeck, a veteran of the battle, categorically refuted.⁴⁶⁸

It is difficult to train soldiers with a combative zeal and 'offensive toughness' as well as the ability to exercise deliberate restraint in combat. Ultimately, decisions were made in the heat of the moment in conjunction with military necessity; as McManners has written, 'during the battle, attitudes towards shooting and killing the enemy were of necessity heartless and pragmatic,'⁴⁶⁹ and there were certainly times during pitched battles on East Falkland when prisoners could simply not be taken. Taking and marshalling prisoners resulted in a loss of time and men, both of which were otherwise essential in maintaining the momentum of an advance through enemy positions. Platoon and company commanders knew that if their men paused and took cover during an advance, their will to continue, and the adrenalin that had been carrying them until that point, quickly waned. Once gone, it was very difficult to re-awaken, as Major Charles Farrar-Hockley, the Officer Commanding A Company, 2 Para, observed amongst his men during the attack on Goose Green. After Darwin Hill had been captured and secured, Farrar-Hockley noticed that his men began to fade. But the battle was still raging, and there was more that needed to be done. Consequently he had to 'recreate the will of the soldiers... and just rekindle that energy, which had flagged for a period, very reasonably, because we're all human beings' in order to continue the attack.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, it was hard enough to maintain a successful advance without the added complication prisoners brought.⁴⁷¹

Another reason that more prisoners were not taken was due to the very nature of the battlefield. The majority of British soldiers had never been in close combat before, and yet in the Falklands were faced with the very real threat of mortal injury. This created a sense of hyper-alertness in them, whereby they perceived everything in terms of its potential threat to their personal safety, and that of their companions and friends. This attitude was a product of the battlefield, but was also instilled in the men by their

⁴⁶⁸ Colbeck, *With 3 Para to the Falklands*, p. 17.

⁴⁶⁹ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 175.

⁴⁷⁰ IWM SOUND 15612 Farrar-Hockley, Charles Dair, Reel 2.

⁴⁷¹ James F. Dunnigan, *How to Make War: A Comprehensive Guide to Modern Warfare for the Post-Cold War Era* (3rd Edition, New York, 1993), p. 37.

commanders, for whom prisoners were always secondary to the safety of the men under their command. Major Harry Crosland, Officer Commanding B Company, 2 Para, says:

It was impossible to know whether the Argentinians were willing to fight or not, and I would suggest very strongly that you are not in the game of tapping on the door and saying, "Are you prepared to fight or not?" You toss a grenade in and move on to the next trench.⁴⁷²

It must also be understood that the majority of fighting in the Falklands took place at night, and as a consequence the vision of the attacker was impaired. Any Argentine emerging from trenches the British soldier was trying to take could easily have held a hostile purpose. It was simple pragmatism that a "shoot first" policy existed in order to ensure personal survival, and as such, the ordinary soldiers adopted it. As one veteran of the 2 Para attack on Goose Green recalled,

We didn't take any prisoners, you can't at that stage, they're just a liability. You'd take prisoners later – if there's any still alive. [During the assault] you just have to shoot them... You're too busy in combat, in an attack.⁴⁷³

This attitude was essential. The battlefield was a savage place, and benevolence or acts of humanity could result in tragedy. This required no better illustration than an incident that occurred during the fighting for Goose Green. Lieutenant Jim Barry, platoon commander of 12 Platoon, D Company, 2 Para, was killed while attempting to take the surrender of a group of Argentines showing a white flag. There is still considerable uncertainty as to the circumstances of Barry's death. It seems Barry advanced on a group of Argentines, believing they wished to surrender, and as a result of attempting to extend benevolence in the middle of a hostile situation was lured into a trap that resulted in his death and that of several members of his platoon. Captain Paul Farrar believed that his death was an unfortunate case of confusion and error. Farrar believes that Barry, in an attempt to negotiate the surrender of a group of Argentine defenders at the School House, gestured to them that he wanted them to place down their weapons on the ground, 'and in fact made that motion himself, which in itself is an ambiguous

⁴⁷² IWM SOUND 15742 Crosland, John Harry, Reel 3.

⁴⁷³ Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 174.

thing to do.’⁴⁷⁴ Thus, it is more than likely the Argentines believed that Barry was attempting to surrender to *them*. As Barry put his weapon down, a machine gun elsewhere on the battlefield opened up on another target, and ‘that amount of ammunition passing very close to you, quite naturally, will spook anybody.’⁴⁷⁵ The Argentines, either those attempting to surrender or those close by, perhaps thought that they had been tricked into exposing themselves and were going to be cut down, and so ‘opened fire immediately. There was an almost instantaneous exchange of fire’⁴⁷⁶ in which many of the exposed men, British and Argentine, were hit and killed. Inevitably, there is another explanation; Farrar-Hockley believes that other defenders, who had no intention of surrendering, opened fire on Barry after he exposed himself to take the surrender of one position to his front.⁴⁷⁷ The variety of responses as revealed by the oral history demonstrates the confusion that reigns on a battlefield, and as such it is easy to understand why men acted in such ways so as to avoid events such as this.

Regardless of the confusion surrounding the circumstances of Barry’s death, the consequences were clear. Geddes moved on to secure the Schoolhouse objective, and took no chances, moving in the highly professional, ruthless manner he had been taught to: ‘We took no prisoners at the schoolhouse. We didn’t shoot anyone with their hands up or under white flags. They just didn’t have time to get their hands up.’⁴⁷⁸ Yet the story of Barry’s shooting also circulated through the other units fighting on East Falkland. Bramley asserts that he and the other men of 3 Para were advised of what had happened to Barry by their Intelligence Officer, and told by a superior that,

“The Argentines demonstrated at Goose Green their total lack of regard for human life, in the gunning down of 2 Para while accepting their surrender. They cannot be trusted, so, as far as our objective is concerned, it may be in your interests not to think about chatting to these fellas until later. Get my drift?”⁴⁷⁹

This recommendation was greeted with silence:

⁴⁷⁴ IWM SOUND 13008 Farrar, Paul, Reel 1.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, Reel 2.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ IWM SOUND 15612 Farrar-Hockley, Charles Dair, Reel 2.

⁴⁷⁸ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 284.

⁴⁷⁹ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 78.

No one said anything, it was more than obvious that the enemy were in for the kill too. We had talked between ourselves about the white flag issue long before these orders. No one was keen to accept the enemy's word anymore.⁴⁸⁰

Another Para said: 'When we heard about that young officer being taken out by some surrendering Argentinians, that pissed us all off. We thought, "Sod it, we're not going to take any prisoners."'”⁴⁸¹ Thus, a perceived mistrust of the enemy, combined with a real life example where good intentions were met with tragic results, almost certainly resulted in the idea that prisoners could not, and should not, be taken. Yet this belief was not the product of hate, rather formulated out of necessity. No-one had actually taken prisoners in a real war before, so it was difficult to know what to do. Men were scared, and men were being killed. These factors combined to produce the shoot-first policy.

Once battle was joined, it was not easy to stop the killing. Thus, the concept of surrendering before the battle was definitively over, of merely laying down one's weapons and ceasing hostilities, as very dangerous. Any man advancing into the open in the middle of a fire fight in order to surrender risked being killed, as his intention could not be known. This was a reality of the battlefield, and it is 'why defeated defenders attempt to hide or sneak away rather than test the questionable mercies of surrender.'⁴⁸² A man could not fire on an advancing party as they closed with him, and then, when defeat seems obvious, stand and expect quarter from those whose friends have died at his hands. In such an example, the self-restraint was unlikely to exist in the attackers at such a point, when both victory and death were equally imminent but not necessarily mutually exclusive. But nor could the defender simply lie low, as the "mopping-up" of enemy trenches with grenades would also probably result in his death.⁴⁸³ The experience of "Fabián," an Argentine soldier who served with B Company of the Seventh Infantry Regiment, defending Mount Longdon, is illuminating in this case. When his weapon jammed, Fabián retreated back to his trench with his two colleagues. He knew that he could not flee due to the volume of fire, nor could he

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁸¹ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 129.

⁴⁸² Dunnigan, *How to Make War*, p. 37.

⁴⁸³ Grossman, *On Killing*, pp. 200-1.

surrender, as he thought that any movement on his part, however well intentioned, would result in his being killed: 'If they'd seen us in the middle of the night, I think they'd have shot us first and asked questions later.'⁴⁸⁴ Fabián was almost certainly saved by the fact his trench was not discovered. Once an assault began, it was almost impossible to stop, even in the face of a surrendering enemy. As Sergeant McCulloch of 2 Para said,

You had to disregard the white flags, because some were surrendering while others continued firing... When it came to actually clearing the trenches you had to disregard the white flags... However, after the white flag, they were usually away and running back, so you didn't have to shoot somebody who was trying to surrender. They solved the problem by running away.⁴⁸⁵

Furthermore, battles were not routinely scheduled events; there was no prefixed finishing time, as there had been in exercises. The attacking British soldiers could never be sure when the battle was over, and when men were technically "prisoners." Even then, their adrenalin was so aroused that it would be impossible to merely switch off. In this way, the soldiers who served in the Falklands were no different from their predecessors; during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, for example, a young subaltern witnessed one of his men kill a German in the act of surrendering. Rather than punish the soldier, he empathised with him, and said: 'He must have been half mad when he got into the trench. I don't suppose he even thought what he was doing. If you start a man killing, you can't turn him off again like an engine.'⁴⁸⁶ The idea that killing was a tap, that could be turned on and off as required, was simply not true, and the reasoning expressed above was as true in 1982 as it was in 1916. It was a reality of war that transcended even those timeframes. While it is certainly easy to sit and judge the actions of men that were, by the British Army's "rules of war," illegal, when analysing the behaviour of men in battle, a moral relativism needs to be adopted, as the safety provided by time and space was not available in 1982, when British troops faced an armed enemy that could not be defeated by rational, patient argument, but had to be subdued by force. Bicheno, for example, argues that 'if the standards of normal

⁴⁸⁴ Daniel Kon, *Los Chicos de la Guerra* (Sevenoaks, 1983).

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 176.

⁴⁸⁶ Quoted in Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p. 50.

jurisprudence are applied to the behaviour of men in battle, then the circumstances of close quarter combat are such as to justify unconditional acquittal on grounds of temporary insanity.⁴⁸⁷ Bramley of 3 Para similarly argues that 'the rights and wrongs of war can never be argued from the armchair. Decisions are made on the spot, questions asked afterwards.'⁴⁸⁸ This is not to condone any actions, but rather to explain them. In the heat of battle, "right" and "wrong" no longer existed as moral and ethical entities, compelling the moral relativism that is required in the study of combat. Like all combat killing, the incidents may well have occurred out of the soldier's desire to protect his comrades. By killing anyone who posed a potential threat, a soldier would reduce the possibility of himself or his comrades being killed. As Nadelson has written, 'a soldier's determination to kill or subordinate enemy men and to protect his "brothers" is the centre of combat morality.'⁴⁸⁹ This study does not aim to judge, only explain and analyse the behaviour of men in highly traumatic situations, where civilian morality and behaviour had no place.

Yet the fighting in the Falklands did not share the ferocity of other conflicts. Omer Bartov's research into the German Army fighting on the Eastern Front in the Second World War has revealed the institutional barbarity with which it conducted itself. Bartov asserts that one contributing factor to the barbarisation of German troops serving on the Eastern Front was that, due to heavy casualties, they were often deprived of rest and sleep, and that as a result of supply problems food was also in short supply. The soldiers were also subjected to 'extremely miserable' living conditions and a lack of winter clothes.⁴⁹⁰ For Bartov,

The long years of bitter fighting in the East, the tremendous casualties, physical hardship and mental strain experienced by the troops, all played a central part in the brutalising the individual soldier and blunting his sensitivity to moral and ethical issues.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁷ Bicheno, *Razor's Edge*, p. 110.

⁴⁸⁸ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 119.

⁴⁸⁹ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 161.

⁴⁹⁰ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941 – 1945: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (2nd Edition, Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 22-4.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

Such issues included the shooting of enemy prisoners. However, one would be hard pressed to describe the fighting that took place on the Falklands in any such comparable terms. While the British soldiers were certainly subjected to similar circumstances and privations, particularly miserable living conditions in part caused by climatic conditions and a lack of winter clothing, the campaign, though intense, had a much shorter duration. The British also did not proportionally incur anything like the casualties suffered by the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front during the far longer Second World War. The British were also acting offensively, rather than being forced into prolonged defensive warfare, as the Germans had been. Thus, the fear of reprisals that would come should they, the British soldier, fall into the hands of an attacking enemy was virtually non-existent. In contrast, such a fear of the 'Bolsheviks' characterised German combat mentality in the East, and almost certainly led to stronger, more determined resistance on their part, with no thought of surrender, for fear of what might happen to them.⁴⁹²

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Killing was inevitable on the battlefield, a consequence of war, and the above has dealt with how British soldiers killed in the Falklands. Their motivations for doing so will now be explored.

It has often been argued that hate facilitates killing, and the Roman historian Tacitus wrote that 'it is human nature to hate the man you have hurt.' In previous wars, the racial element in particular has often been emphasised as being paramount in allowing such hatred to grow. The experience of the Pacific theatre in the Second World War is particularly illustrative of this. As John Dower has written, 'the dehumanisation of the Other contributed immeasurably to the psychological distancing that facilitates killing.'⁴⁹³ This psychological distance ensured that the lack of physical distance between belligerent was no obstruction to the killing. Contemporary research certainly seemed to corroborate this theory. While an example of American soldiers, research carried out by Samuel Stouffer into Second World War combat soldiers showed that 44% of those questioned would "really like to kill a Japanese soldier," while another

⁴⁹² Ibid., pp. 37, 98.

⁴⁹³ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (London, 1986), p. 11.

32% felt that killing “was just part of the job, without liking it or disliking it.” When it came to the more recognisable, racially similar, German enemy, however, these statistics were 6% and 52% respectively.⁴⁹⁴ In March 1945, *Time* magazine recorded that 25% of American combatants surveyed stated that their primary purpose was to kill as many Japanese as possible, rather than more specifically bring the war to an end by ensuring Japan’s surrender.⁴⁹⁵ The British soldier of the same period was also certainly capable of hating his enemy. In the Second World War, the British, like the Americans, never regarded the Japanese as fully human. The loathing against them was based on their treatment of the wounded and prisoners, but also their military methods. The bravery, skill and spirit of self-sacrifice, praised in the Germans, were in the Japanese viewed as a dangerous form of insanity.⁴⁹⁶ They were completely alien, in culture and appearance, and this allowed the British soldier to build up hatred against them. Major John Winstanley, who fought in Burma, believed that the Japanese, due to their torture and execution of wounded, prisoners and non-combatants, ‘had renounced any right to be regarded as human, and we thought of them to be vermin to be exterminated.’⁴⁹⁷ There were simply no equivalent levels of hatred for the Germans amongst British soldiers, despite the Nazis presenting the greatest threat to domestic Britain. Indeed, ‘commentator after commentator in the Anglo-American camp stated flatly that the Japanese were more despised than the Germans, and usually they agreed that there was a good and simple reason for this: the Japanese were uncommonly treacherous and savage.’⁴⁹⁸

However, my research has led me to believe that hate played no significant role in motivating or facilitating the killing in the Falklands. While Kellet argues that modern warfare, with its increasing distance between protagonists, actually makes sustained hatred more difficult, as the enemy remains predominately invisible,⁴⁹⁹ in the Falklands the soldiers killed at close range, close enough to see the enemy. Thus hatred potentially could have existed, and should have done so according to the historiography. However, despite the fact they killed the enemy, for the British it was simply a matter of doing their job, of fulfilling their vocation and completing the task in

⁴⁹⁴ Quoted in Holmes, *Acts of War*, p. 366.

⁴⁹⁵ Cited in Dower, *War Without Mercy*, p. 53.

⁴⁹⁶ Ellis, *The Sharp End of War*, p. 319.

⁴⁹⁷ IWM SOUND 17955 Winstanley, John, Reel 4.

⁴⁹⁸ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, p. 33.

⁴⁹⁹ Anthony Kellet, *Combat Motivation: The Behaviour of Soldiers in Battle* (Boston, 1982), p. 193.

hand, rather than an act of hate. Unlike the First and Second World Wars, those soldiers preparing to fight in the Falklands were professionals, not civilians who had been plucked from peacetime and hastily thrust into war and requiring rapid indoctrination into a military world. They therefore required less mental pressure to take up arms and fight, as they already viewed it as their function and role. They did fulfil this role utilising the feelings of anger and aggression, but these were fundamentally necessary for men in combat to ensure their own survival and were primordial survival instincts; they were not the same as the far deeper, more irrational consuming emotion of hate. It could perhaps have been expected that the more elite and ruthless units of the Task Force, the Paras and Royal Marines, would have hated the enemy, but there is very little to suggest that this is the case. Indeed, the oral history refutes this idea entirely, and hate was simply not part of the cultural makeup of the Army or Royal Marines: Newland claimed that even though he killed, 'there was no malice, or hatred, or anything like that.'⁵⁰⁰ Danny Marshall claimed that hatred of the Argentines was never a motivating factor throughout his time in theatre:

It meant nothing to me. It wouldn't matter if they were Chinese, Argentinian, French. It really doesn't matter. To this day, why would I dislike them? They were just, in fact they were rather pitiful soldiers, but they were just soldiers.⁵⁰¹

Freer believed that 'whilst we were fighting there was no quarter given, but once it was over, it was over,' and that 'I don't recall there being any real hatred.'⁵⁰² That there is the same reaction from a variety of historical sources documented at different times, and from men of different ranks, is remarkable and demonstrates a clear commonality of experience, the product of cultural values that did not encourage hatred of the enemy.

This perspective is somewhat counter to the historiographical view that sees the dehumanisation of the enemy and racism as being essential in facilitating acts of violence against him.⁵⁰³ Holmes has written that,

⁵⁰⁰ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁵⁰¹ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

⁵⁰² IWM SOUND 20255 Freer, Adrian Robert, Reel 3.

⁵⁰³ Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (New York, 1991), p. 12.

The soldier goes to war with an abstract image of the enemy in his mind's eye, an image sometimes sullied by officially-inspired propaganda and almost always spattered by the mud thrown by the popular press... Without the creation of abstract images of the enemy, and without the depersonalisation of the enemy during training, battle would be impossible to sustain.⁵⁰⁴

John Combs, an American veteran of the Vietnam war, believed that when it came to teaching men to kill,

Hate and/or the feeling that another person or group is inferior to oneself, taught in boot camp and reinforced in all subsequent training schools, is the single most important lesson the military must impart to its ground troops to overcome conscientious objections.⁵⁰⁵

Yet such sentiments cannot accurately be applied to the British experience of war in the Falklands, demonstrating a significant cultural difference between them and American soldiers, and proving the necessity of specifically studying professional British servicemen. For example, the soldiers of the British armed forces were deployed to the South Atlantic in a matter of days after the Argentine invasion; they had no time to properly absorb any of the vitriolic, jingoistic comments of the papers, which were themselves affected and hampered by the speed of events. Once ensconced aboard their transport ships, the soldiers' contact with the outside world was limited, and therefore they were mostly free to form their own opinions of the Argentine enemy. Furthermore, the Falklands War was also fought against an entirely unexpected enemy; it was not fought against the Communist hordes of the Red Army or the terrorists in Northern Ireland, for which the British armed forces had trained, and who had always taken on the role of the "Enemy" in exercises. There was no specific programme of hate training in the British armed forces in 1982, though a historical precedent did exist; it had been adopted by the British Army in the First World War, and was introduced in the Second for a limited period before public and professional criticism caused its abandonment. Lord Charles Moran, himself a veteran of the First World War, believed that 'the

⁵⁰⁴ Holmes, *Acts of War*, pp. 360-1.

⁵⁰⁵ John Combs, *Mercy Warriors: Saving Lives Under Fire* (Florida, 2003), p. 3.

English are not good haters,'⁵⁰⁶ and that culturally they did not need hatred in order to motivate them to fight. Instead, 'unity depends on a different kind of bond, and our morale does not rest upon the narrow intensities of aggressive rage.'⁵⁰⁷ Furthermore, even if hate training had been a factor in British military training prior to the Falklands, it would presumably have been directed at the enemies that force was most likely to face, namely the Soviet Bloc, and to a lesser extent the terrorists that operated in Northern Ireland. Fighting the Argentines in the Falklands could not have been foreseen, particularly by the majority of soldiers who were unsure of the Falklands' location, and even existence.

In regards to the depersonalisation of the enemy, conflicting ideologies could also play an important factor. Ideology is one factor that is often given precedence by historians in explaining why men fight, as it can be used to further characterise racial differences between belligerents. Holmes, for example, argues that 'a racial, religious or ideological element will make this abstract image of the enemy seem even more inhuman,' and therefore make him easier to kill.⁵⁰⁸ As an example, there was an active ideological indoctrination process amongst the German Wehrmacht prior to the invasion of Russia in 1941:

In June-July 1941, just before and after the first shot was fired on the Eastern Front, German troops were literally bombarded with the National Socialist explanation for going to war against the Soviet Union... Nazi ideology dominated the official publications.⁵⁰⁹

As Bartov has argued, this ideological indoctrination continued once battle had been joined, and contributed to the barbarity of that conflict. German soldiers had easy and regular access to newspapers, all of which were controlled by either the Ministry of Propaganda or the Wehrmacht command:

⁵⁰⁶ Lord Charles Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London, 2007), p. 56.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Holmes, *Acts of War*, p. 368.

⁵⁰⁹ Jürgen Förster, 'Motivation and Indoctrination in the Wehrmacht, 1933-45', in Paul Addison and Angus Calder (eds.), *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939 - 1945* (London, 1997), p. 270.

Here we can clearly see the gradual infiltration of Nazi concepts into the military language and the increasing use made by the army of racial arguments as a justification for the war and its rapid deterioration into a barbarous life-or-death struggle.⁵¹⁰

The soldiers were encouraged to believe that the men of the Red Army were entirely alien to those of the Wehrmacht, a breed of *untermenschen*. This propaganda combined with a long standing and traditional sense of superiority over the Slavs in the German psyche, and created a climate whereby,

The Russians and Jews were not to be treated according to any accepted rules of military conduct, as they had lost their right to such a treatment both by their racial and cultural inferiority and by the historical role they had played against Germany.⁵¹¹

In the context of the Second World War Eastern Front, such ideological and racial differences contributed to the violence, where 'German soldiers were encouraged to think of their opponents as sub-human, and a good measure of the misery experienced by Russian prisoners stemmed from the simple neglect and casual brutality which this policy helped bring about.'⁵¹²

However, as can be seen in the example represented by the unexpected enemy faced in the Falklands, any thoughts of aggression, racism or depersonalisation that had been formulated by the British soldiers throughout their training were rendered inapplicable at the outbreak of hostilities with Argentina. Furthermore, any that had been built up were mostly non-transferable from those against which they had been originally conceived. Ideologically, the Argentines had nothing in common with the soldiers of the Red Army. Indeed, they probably had more in common with the British. While there remained some racial differences between the two sides these were still minute in comparison to the American experience in Vietnam, for example, and there was no real overt cultural distinctions upon which the British could seize had they wanted to.

⁵¹⁰ Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, p. 80.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵¹² Holmes, *Acts of War*, p. 389.

Therefore, these minor differences, in conjunction with the small fraction of time the British had from the outbreak of hostilities to their commitment to battle, meant that the British soldiers had little or no opportunity, or indeed inclination, to formulate any thoughts of de-specialisation in regards to their new Argentine enemy. Also, British infantry troops in the Falklands did not have regular access to newspapers comparable to the ideologically driven propaganda the German Wehrmacht had received on the Eastern Front, nor regular contact with home in the form of mail, so existed predominately in an environment where they formulated their own opinions on the enemy and motivations for fighting. Indeed, the writings and oral history testimony of the soldiers who participated in the South Atlantic campaign both demonstrate that there was no deep-set hatred of the Argentines for any racial or ideological reasons, and the high levels of care that was given over to Argentine POWs again enforces this sense of a lack of brutality.

Furthermore, I believe that historians would be hard pressed to identify any particular ideology that inspired the British troops to fight in the Falklands. In comparison, historians have assumed that the Argentines fought with a greater ideological zeal. This contrast is due to the fact that, unlike the British, who were unsure as to the exact location of the Falkland Islands, the Argentinian conscript soldiers had been taught from school that Las Islas Malvinas were a territory of Argentina that needed to be reclaimed in order to unify the country so that she could fulfil her manifest destiny, a point Antonius Robben has made.⁵¹³ The mass, spontaneous celebrations in Buenos Aires on 2nd April in support of the repressive military junta when General Galtieri announced the “liberation” of the Islands would seem to support this. However, the reality was that once in combat, political ideology was often quickly forgotten, and replaced by a simple desire to survive. Indeed, one Argentine conscript soldier recalled that though he had himself participated in some of the enthusiasm in the Plaza de Mayo, these thoughts had quickly mellowed as he recognised the difference between himself, a conscript, and the civilians celebrating: ‘When it’s your head on the block, it’s another matter... Besides, I knew in my heart that I would have to go to war, and all wars for me are ugly. Killing human beings is always ugly.’⁵¹⁴ Ideology may certainly

⁵¹³ Antonius C.G.M. Robben, ‘Combat Motivation, Fear and Terror in Twentieth Century Argentinean Warfare,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April, 2006), p. 368.

⁵¹⁴ Kon, *Los Chicos de la Guerra*, p. 14.

galvanise and motivate a political will amongst a civilian population, and if correctly cultivated and maintained could motivate a military force, but it held little value or meaning for those men fighting in the Falklands, on either side.

In regards to ideological or racial motivations, the goal of British military training was to teach those men engaged in close fighting that soldiers killed best when they did so dispassionately. Any hate training, or an excessive stimulation of emotion, and soldiers risked losing the discipline, and with it the cohesion, which any successful operation required. Hate or blood-lust in particular were recognised by the troops engaged in the close-quarter fighting as being detrimental to military efficiency.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, not succumbing to crazed bloodlust and heedlessly charging the enemy headlong was crucial in battle, and a powerfully excessive emotion such as hate would have been detrimental to military effectiveness. This is not to say that soldiers did not feel emotion. Indeed, combat was a highly-charged. Fear was certainly present, and it was often suppressed by falling back on training. Anger was the other obvious emotion, and Geddes, for example, recalls that during the attack on the School House as part of the assault on Goose Green, 'I was seething. We were all seething... Trenches in a playground! Automatic rifle fire from a school! Bastards.'⁵¹⁶ Yet the anger often masked another emotion, that of fear. There are two responses a combat soldier could take to fear; he could either succumb to it, or conquer it. In order to conquer it, he needed to channel it onto the external enemy, to the mortal threat: 'Combat focuses the terrors of helplessness onto the real mortal enemy and effective action erases those terrors.'⁵¹⁷ Effectively, killing was therefore one release from an otherwise crippling fear and is why 'the soldier who kills an enemy feels at that instant the inordinate satisfaction of destroying his potential destroyer.'⁵¹⁸

Even so, some soldiers still labelled the mix of emotions they felt as hate. Tony McNally served in 12 Air Defence Regiment, Royal Artillery, a unit armed with the Rapier anti-aircraft missile system. Rapiers were defensive weapons, and were dispersed around battlefields in order to guard military units and features of strategic importance. In the Falklands, they were used initially to protect the anchorage at San

⁵¹⁵ John Geddes, Interview with Author, 23/04/10.

⁵¹⁶ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 279.

⁵¹⁷ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 47.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Carlos Water, in which the ships of the Royal Navy suffered heavy losses. That he was assigned to air defence, and was failing in his primary role, greatly angered McNally, and he directed this hate onto the Argentine pilots inflicting the damage. Even so, McNally still respected their skill as warriors: 'A number of pilots lost their own lives, flying with almost reckless bravery that you had to admire – even while you hated the bastards and wanted them all dead.'⁵¹⁹ This statement must be challenged, and begs the questions as to whether it was possible to both hate and admire an enemy, and express two possibly contradicting ideas in the same sentence. Surely the recognition of positive characteristics such as bravery in an enemy, characteristics that all soldiers aim to emulate, prevented any hatred from being deep-set. McNally's retrospective memoir is filled with descriptions of his hate for the Argentines, but his thoughts regarding combat are at odds with these. For example, McNally's battery shot down two fighters during the conflict, but despite all his previous bravado and masochistic hopes of killing Argentines on the voyage south, as he records this action in his narrative, McNally writes: 'I hope the pilots got out alive – I don't want to have killed anyone – but I don't know whether they did.'⁵²⁰ He certainly drew no pleasure from killing those he claimed to have hated, whereas only moments previously he had been berating the "bastards" who had been pounding the Royal Navy.⁵²¹ Combat was evidently a great mediator on soldiers' emotions and feelings, regardless of which branch of the military they are in, and it is possible that McNally felt that he ought to have acted overtly aggressive manner in front of his peers in order to fulfil the necessary stereotype of soldiers at war. However, the difference between public and private thoughts, as highlighted above, is certainly remarkable. It would also seem to suggest that what McNally identified as hate was more likely a mixture of fear and anger, without doubt a potent mix, but lacking the deep-set rationality of hate.

The lack of hate can also be seen in how the British soldiers interacted with their Argentine enemy once the fighting was over. Any artificial construct of who the enemy were and what they were like melted as soon as the first social contact was made, outside of a direct engagement. Once wounded, and despite not feeling any remorse for killing Argentines, Newland, for example, believed that 'once I became a non-

⁵¹⁹ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 3.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

combatant and out of it, they were just like regular people to me.’⁵²² As soon as he stopped being a combatant, he was ‘back to reality. They’re not the enemy, anymore. Well, they were, supposedly, but not to me anymore, because I’m not in it.’⁵²³ In many ways this attitude reflected the professionalism of the British soldier; aggression was meted out in a controlled manner, and reigned in when necessary. Indeed, despite the considerable hardships the soldiers were enduring on the Falklands, they still attempted to make the Argentine prisoners’ lives easier. The sharing of cigarettes was the most common, and frequent, example of this. Even McNally ultimately showed considerable kindness to some prisoners under his charge while they were being repatriated once the war was over. He admits that he struggled initially, but it is interesting how the focus of his hatred changed: ‘Some of our lads struck up a friendship with one or two of them but it was too early for me. I still felt a lot of hatred, though not so much for the ordinary squaddies like us but for their Officers.’⁵²⁴ Once social contact has been made, the recognition of a commonality – the way they are “squaddies like us” – ensures that any residual hate is merely transferred to another target, one with whom the soldier shares no such common traits. For McNally, the target thus became the Argentine officers, which is not surprising, as McNally claimed early in his retrospective memoir that he does not like his own officers: ‘Like most squaddies, I didn’t have a lot of time for Ruperts. [Army slang for officers]’⁵²⁵ Thus, he was able to claim to hate the Argentine officers for their abuse of his fellow ordinary soldiers in the Argentine military. He and his comrades played several practical jokes on the Argentine officers and tried to make their voyage home uncomfortable. In contrast, they never played any pranks on the ‘buckshee Argie squaddies.’⁵²⁶

McNally was not alone in undergoing a transformation of feelings. That his transition of emotions took place only after the war’s conclusion, as opposed to Newland’s more instantaneous reappraisal above, can almost certainly be explained by the branch of the military in which he served. Unlike Newland, who served in a rifle company at the front of the military advance, McNally served in the artillery, where contact between belligerents was far rarer, conforming to the idea of distance facilitating violence as

⁵²² Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 141.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

expressed above. This lack of contact also allowed his more violent emotions and thoughts to persist. In the rifle companies, there was a fairly regular contact between the opposing sides. Shortly after he left Teal Inlet with 3 Para, Bramley saw his first Argentine, a prisoner caught by one of the companies: 'I looked at him with interest; he was my first sight of the enemy. He was like any of us – only his uniform was different.'⁵²⁷ There were also small reminders that, although inferior as soldiers, there was very little to distinguish the British from their enemy. Bramley looked through the wallet of a dead Argentine defender on Longdon and 'found a picture of his family and two letters. I glanced at them. My wallet contained shots of my family too.'⁵²⁸ The oral history testimony similarly enforces this; George Brown had similarly taken rolls of film from captured prisoners, and went as far as to have the photographs developed when he returned home; he now stores them alongside his own shots of the campaign as a companion piece and an important part of his Falklands memories.⁵²⁹ Photographs in particular represented 'a crack in the veil of denial that makes war possible.'⁵³⁰ They were irrefutable symbols of humanity in an enemy, and therefore an instantaneous point of recognition. In the aftermath of the assault on Longdon, Bramley stumbled across two Argentine soldiers, one of whom was wounded, who had not been captured. Bramley considered killing them, and raised his rifle to do so, but decided he could not:

The wounded guy started to cry. It was then that I felt sad, sad that I had thought of killing them and that we were all in this mess together. We had different views and different homes, but there we were all together. I still hated the enemy, but just then, when that guy started to cry, I felt different.⁵³¹

As in all previous wars, in the cold light of day the British looked upon the Argentines not with any real feelings of hate, but instead recognised that they, the defeated enemy, knew and understood what fighting in the Falklands really meant, far more so than any civilians 8,000 miles away in Britain. This was particularly apparent for David Cooper, the 2 Para Padre, who said that 'we all felt, in a curious way, closer to the Argentines who'd been fighting than we did the people back here, because they were the only ones

⁵²⁷ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 62.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵²⁹ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

⁵³⁰ Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 158.

⁵³¹ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 130.

who really knew what it was like.⁵³² As McManners has written, 'close combat gives a human face to an enemy, and makes men realise that he suffers too.'⁵³³

Because of this, the captured enemy were often treated with considerable kindness. Even though Bramley had claimed to hate them, for example, he had no qualms about letting the prisoner work parties he stood guard over relax instead of carrying out their assigned labour, or creep into sheds and houses to listen to the World Cup on the radio, as well as sharing and making them cups of tea from his own rations.⁵³⁴ Despite having been attempting to kill each other previously under a state of war, when it was over, the 'crazy reality of war' was that, after the 'bedlam of battle,' 'friendship could have been possible between us.'⁵³⁵ However, despite this idea that there was a sphere of shared experience, the professionalism of the British forces, which had been so vital to their success, ensured that they did not offer the Argentines the professional respect that had been afforded the German enemy in the two World Wars, for example. This was mostly due to the state in which the British found the captured Argentine positions, and the evidence of poor hygiene and discipline exercised by them. The way in which the Argentines had purposefully defecated all over the possessions and homes of Goose Green residents, was so abhorrent to first the Paras, and then the Gurkhas who moved in to guard the prisoners, that they both pitied and resented them.⁵³⁶ Michael Seear, serving with 7th Gurkha Rifles, believed that 'these men did not compare to our Gurkhas' professionalism, and would have benefitted from adopting Gurkha methods of behaviour and standards.'⁵³⁷ Stanley had been similarly fouled by the garrison, which had also appalled the British troops.⁵³⁸

Therefore, it is clear that hate was not a prompting factor in motivating the killing in the Falklands, so others must have existed. Indeed, one of the prime motivator factors was not a deep well of "negative" emotion, such as hate, but instead "positive" emotions, such as love. As Nadelson wrote, 'love is apart from and yet a part of war.'⁵³⁹ It was

⁵³² IWM SOUND 13419 Cooper, David, Reel 6

⁵³³ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 308.

⁵³⁴ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, pp. 186, 188.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁵³⁶ IWM SOUND 16074 Richens, Peter John, Reel 2.

⁵³⁷ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 164.

⁵³⁸ George Brown, Interview with Author, 12/02/09.

⁵³⁹ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 27.

love that caused men to risk or sacrifice themselves for their comrades, and in some ways it was love that motivated men to commit acts of violence, as they tried to protect their comrades. Indeed, as Bourke has written, 'it was precisely the individual's ability to transcend hatred and to be transported by emotions of love and empathy which facilitated extremes of violence.'⁵⁴⁰ Soldiers found the will to kill not by hating their enemies, but by loving their comrades, and by wanting to protect them. By "love" I do not mean the romantic form, but rather the fraternal bonds that developed between men in combat. As John Ellis noted in his study of combat soldiers in the Second World War, once immersed in combat, the soldier's views and perceptions narrowed rapidly, and he,

Became increasingly bound up with his tiny fraternity of comrades who shared his suffering and they alone came to represent the real world...the soldier fought for them alone, because they were his friends and because he defined himself only in the light of their respect and needs.⁵⁴¹

When in the campaign theatre, these men not only lived together, but also fought together. Indeed, as a campaign progressed, 'the soldier loses meaning, that is, a sense of purpose, goals to strive for, principles (such as respect for life) to protect. The soldier cannot afford to give weight to anything outside of the immediate, which is to survive.'⁵⁴² Thoughts of family, of home, were repressed as they were distant, in physical and emotional terms. Instead, thoughts and affection for family was fostered onto the comrades sharing the experience, strengthening the bonds between them, and compelling soldiers to endure. Soldiers rarely fired their weapons alone, but instead as part of a collective group, in cohesion with their friends and squad mates, thus providing not only a group identity, but a group absolution.⁵⁴³ In a war fought 8,000 miles from home, with very little social contact in the form of mail, the motivation to continue fighting was provided by the other men in the unit, as they represented the only indication of a detached, peacetime world. In the British Army, the regimental system ensured that some men had spent their entire careers in the company of the same men they now went into combat with. Indeed, with all the exercises and tours of duty,

⁵⁴⁰ Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, p. 170.

⁵⁴¹ Ellis, *The Sharp End of War*, p. 315.

⁵⁴² Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 100.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

some men had spent more time with their comrades than they had their families. In that way they were far more than simple work colleagues.

Such motivational factors far out-weighed the oft-quoted idea of “Queen and Country.” Chris Jackson, for example, was adamant that men went into combat for no other reason than the sake of their friends, both in order to protect them, but also to avoid any potential ostracism from them for exhibiting that most feared characteristic; cowardice. The social bonds of military units exerted a strong pressure on men because there was also a desire not to risk social exclusion by appearing cowardly in front of their comrades.⁵⁴⁴ The fear of social exclusion fostered aggressive tendencies in soldiers when in combat that otherwise were not present, explaining the ease with which social bonds were formed with the enemy outside of the combat zone. Those same bonds that had compelled men to rush to re-join their units so that they would not miss out when the Task Force was being assembled compelled them to commit acts of violence once committed to combat. The experience of Newland is illustrative: While attempting to locate a sniper during 42 Commando’s assault on Mount Harriet, he in fact found a position manned by a two machine guns and a squad of soldiers firing onto the advancing troops below. Despite being alone, having been separated from the squad he was leading by an artillery barrage, Newland knew what he had to do: ‘Well you’ve got to do something. You can’t just leave it, can you? They’re killing my mates, so my only option was, “I’ve got to hit it.”’⁵⁴⁵ Newland destroyed the position and killed the defenders with grenades and rifle fire.

Indeed, the strength of social ties within military units compelled men to acts of violence, whether to appease or protect their peers. When a man’s comrade was killed or wounded, this often produced an instantaneous aggression fostered on the concept of achieving vengeance. After hearing of the death of his friend during 3 Para’s assault on Mount Longdon, for example, Mark Eyles-Thomas was filled with anger, and recalls that he ‘wanted to kill everything and everyone still inside the enemy’s position.’⁵⁴⁶ While assaulting the School House at Goose Green, and witnessing the death of some British soldiers, Geddes had a similar outburst:

⁵⁴⁴ Chris Jackson, Interview with Author, 21/02/09.

⁵⁴⁵ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁵⁴⁶ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 166.

Suddenly I felt an ice-cold anger sweep over me. I'd been furious at Warren Point when the IRA bombed our lads, but this was different. It was a cold clinical anger because there at Goose Green I could see exactly where the enemy were and knew exactly what I could do about it. Those shits in the schoolhouse were going to get some. And I could feel that very same anger pulsing almost tangibly from the men kneeling around me.⁵⁴⁷

The only output for this anger was the destruction of the enemy.

There were also strong coercive factors at work in ensuring men killed. Since the advent of organised warfare, armies have been founded and held together on the principles of obedience, discipline, and the obeying of superiors. For all military men, coercion through discipline was the strongest factor. In earlier wars, the threat of punishment for the dereliction of one's duty, such as killing the enemy, could be interpreted as mutiny or cowardice, crimes punishable by death, and this ensured that discipline was maintained.⁵⁴⁸ In war, there have also historically been rewards for fighting. These included material rewards, such as loot from a fallen enemy, and emotional ones, such as self-esteem, or the gratitude of close comrades, friends, family, and even the state and nation.⁵⁴⁹ However, several of these factors are more applicable to the civilian soldiers of the early twentieth century, rather than the professionals engaged on the Falklands. The only real factor that remained a constant, as elaborated above, was the emotional rewards provided by close comrades. The idea of material rewards meant little to the troops, though there was undoubtedly some looting after the Falklands battles and the collection of souvenirs.

The idea of winning medals has often been suggested as a motivating factor, but of the British troops in the Falklands it was only really the Gurkhas who fulfil this theory. As Seear noted, 'mentioning the word "medal," as I had already observed, would make the eyes of a Gurkha glint. Such a prize after a conspicuous act of heroism on the

⁵⁴⁷ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 279.

⁵⁴⁸ John Keegan, 'Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation', in Addison and Calder, *Time to Kill*, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

battlefield was for him the only concrete proof of his bravery.’⁵⁵⁰ In the unique martial culture of the Gurkhas, bravery was expected; extraordinary bravery, the type that would win gallantry awards, was therefore desired. For the British soldier, it was also a given that he would do his job. Yet the idea of winning medals did not appeal. Newland won the Military Medal for his one-man assault on the Argentine position on Mount Harriet. But before the war, the idea of medals was never important to him: ‘You don’t think about medals. It’s just not in there.’⁵⁵¹ Even after the war and the award he received, he was sceptical about medals as a motivating factor: ‘You don’t think like that. I was doing what you paid me to do. That was my job. The praise and the medals and everything else is nice, and it’s appreciated, but that’s what I do, it’s my job.’⁵⁵² Graham Carter took control of his platoon when the more senior soldiers and section leader were killed during the Battle of Goose Green. He had organised the remainder of the platoon and ensured that the Argentine positions firing upon them were destroyed. When asked if he felt as if he had done anything heroic, he strongly believed he had not, and, like Newland, believes that he had only been doing what was required of him as a soldier:

It didn’t even occur to me that I’d done something magnificent as far as I was concerned. I had looked after the section as I saw fit and done my job. And that was what I was trained to do. It wasn’t me doing anything, it was the training that was coming out to tell me what to do, and that’s the way you react under those situations. You don’t actually think about what you’re doing, you just do it because that’s how you’re trained to do it.⁵⁵³

Like Newland, Carter was awarded the Military Medal for his gallantry, at which point he felt ‘gobsmacked. You know, how would anybody feel, not knowing exactly what I’d done to deserve a gallantry medal? Everybody deserved a medal that was there. Everybody did something heroic in some way or another.’⁵⁵⁴ Carter believes that the

⁵⁵⁰ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 128.

⁵⁵¹ Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ IWM SOUND 13004 Carter, Graham, from Transcript.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

award 'wasn't for me personally, but it was for the whole platoon, because we all did a good job there.'⁵⁵⁵

Yet once this killing was complete, and the combat was finished, the soldier was often confronted with the reality of the situation; that he had killed another human being, and it was impossible for him not to recognise the similarity between them. Indeed, it was only after the battle that the Argentines became actual physical people to many soldiers, as it was only after the battle that they could switch-off from the training that had subconsciously carried them through the fear of combat, and the training that had enabled them to do whatever they had done. The soldiers' professionalism, training and the cultural values these processes had produced had motivated them to act in a certain way during combat, but at its conclusion this inevitably changed, particularly when confronted with the dead enemy. Lukowiak, for example, having previously thought of living Argentine defenders as being nothing more than simple targets thought of dead Argentine defenders as 'department store dummies' when he first saw them, discovered that when he was no longer functioning as he had been trained to do, that his brain processed what they actually were.⁵⁵⁶ While the men who had fought in the battles on East Falkland reacted in different ways following the end of the hostilities, the significant factor is that they all underwent a change in their mental approach to the enemy. For Eyles-Thomas, looking upon the Argentine dead on Longdon brought on a mix of emotions: 'My initial reaction on seeing them was of revenge. The feeling that they'd got their just desserts. This soon subsided as I wondered whether they had been friends in life as Jas, Scrivs, Grose and I had been.'⁵⁵⁷ Geddes likewise recorded his remorse and pity for the dead after hostilities had ended at Goose Green.⁵⁵⁸ Other men became more rational following a cessation of hostilities. For Sergeant McCullum, of 3 Para, the idea of vengeance killing was slightly absurd, as 'who could tell which one of them did it anyway? If someone gets blown away by a shell, you can't go looking for the bloke who fired it.'⁵⁵⁹ In this way, soldiers who fought on land at close quarters were very different from their colleagues who fought at sea or in the air, as it is contact with the dead, the consequences of their actions, which provoked this mental shift.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Lukowiak, *A Soldier's Song*, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁷ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 187.

⁵⁵⁸ Geddes, *Spearhead Assault*, p. 301.

⁵⁵⁹ Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 308.

These diverse recollections, recorded at different times, highlight the significance and importance of training in the facilitating of violence, as well as revealing key cultural facets of the forces involved.

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The British soldiers who fought in the Falklands engaged in killing in a number of ways, and for a variety of reasons. Both the written and oral testimony has composed a picture that clearly demonstrates that fighting on land was an unparalleled experience, as it was conducted without the great mediators of technology and distance, two factors that marked the experiences of those who fought in the nautical or aerial theatres. What is crucial from the study of professional British soldiers that has not been apparent in the previous historiography is the way in which killing was perceived as a fundamental part of their vocation, a cultural cornerstone of their lives in the Army and Royal Marines that existed at all levels and was not mediated by age, class or rank. This concept is crucial in understanding their reactions to combat and killing, their motivations for participating in it and their ability to do so. This also provided some essential differences in the professional experience as opposed to that of the civilian in uniform, in particular the absence of hate and ideology. Regardless of the type of source utilised or the date it was produced, these reflections and conclusions are very similar, displaying a unity of experience and mental conformity that is the product of a dominant culture of professionalism. Even though killing could be a deeply traumatic event, combat still had the potential to cause enjoyment amongst its participants, though this was not due to any hatred of those being killed. Both the oral and written testimony has shown that the proximity to killing, and the immediacy of the act, certainly defined how and why men engaged in the violence, and also how they reacted to it, as well as remember those past actions in the present.

Chapter 4:

At Sea: The How and Why of Killing in Naval Combat

The war at sea in the Falklands was the most tactically important element of Operation Corporate. While the Army and Royal Marines fought to secure victory on the Islands themselves, the ships of the Royal Navy that had brought them to, and protected them in, the South Atlantic faced both the challenge of the hostile weather and the numerically superior Argentine Air Force, along with the elements of the Argentine Navy that put to sea. The experiences of the sailors of the Royal Navy in combat, both with the Argentines and the elements, are explored in this chapter in order to analyse both how and why they fought and compare these features with those established in the previous chapter dealing with the war on land. Such comparisons reveal important cultural differences between the forces that fought in these two different theatres and that, despite their close proximity, the way in which combat and killing was perceived were worlds apart. The vast majority of the scholarship into what Keegan called ‘the face of battle’ has been exclusively directed at land-based combat. The other theatres of war, such as the sea, have escaped such rigorous analysis and exploration, yet it remains equally pertinent. John Reeve has referred to the ‘veil of invisibility’ that is drawn over the face of naval battle, and the ambiguities of modern naval warfare in the professional context are explored, illuminated and analysed in this chapter.⁵⁶⁰

Such a veil of invisibility is no doubt partly the result of naval operations occupying a far smaller share of the military memoir sector than those concerning land warfare. Such a case is very much true of the Falklands, even though far more sailors were committed to action on Operation Corporate than Army soldiers or Royal Marines, and just five memoirs have been used in this study, three of which are utilised in this chapter. Fortunately, however, Royal Navy sailors form the majority of the oral history sources in the Imperial War Museum’s Sound Archive, and fourteen oral history interviews have been used, along with a recording made aboard HMS *Glasgow* during attack by Argentine aircraft, 12th May 1982, providing a fascinating insight into how naval combat was experienced and mediated as it developed.⁵⁶¹ In order to pursue the

⁵⁶⁰ Reeve, ‘Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle’, p. 7.

⁵⁶¹ IWM SOUND 32493 Actuality recording made aboard HMS *Glasgow* during attack by Argentine aircraft, 12th May 1982

specific research questions of this thesis more fully and to explore the impact of culture on the experience of naval warfare, including that of the submarine service, nine independent interviews have also been conducted. In addition, this chapter has been able to utilise two sets of contemporary letters, one manuscript draft of a military memoir, and one anthology of experience. Despite the diverse range of sources, it will be clear that there are striking similarities in experience and memory that transcended ships and sailors of varying ranks and the form in which memory was recorded, be it contemporary letters or retrospective memoirs and oral history interviews. Such conformity points to a unifying, singular Royal Navy culture that shaped experience and responses.

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The first facet of naval warfare in the Falklands that requires analysis is the dominance of technology. While several of the vessels sent south as part of the Task Force in 1982 were comparatively old, they were still highly technical machines of war. The preceding two hundred years had seen a rapid advance in naval technology and evolution of ships, a successive progression from the age of sail to ironclads, dreadnoughts, aircraft carriers and submarines as the dominant force in naval warfare. These technological and strategic advances had outstripped those in land warfare, though in both theatres, despite the intrusion and increased dominance of technology, the human element remained central and sailors in particular remained crucial to the operation of a warship. However, the principles of naval warfare had been transformed by the transition from sail to turbine, whereas the basic principles of land warfare had remained unchanged in character. This technological change has resulted in a cultural change in the Royal Navy as an institution, both in peace and significantly in war. It is clear that the sailor's experience of war has certainly changed as they have increasingly interacted with this advancing technology, far more so than any other theatre, as Ronald Spector has argued:

Like ships and weapons, the experience of war at sea had changed dramatically over the course of the century. While an infantryman of World War I would not have found ground combat in World War II or even Korea entirely unfamiliar, sailors engaged in combat aboard submarines or against submarines, in aircraft

or against aircraft, underwent a fundamentally different experience from those who fought in battles between big-gun ships.⁵⁶²

Modern sailors were required to be far more skilled and technologically qualified than their historical predecessors, and be the masters of the various electronic systems that were vital in modern warfare, such as radar and sonar. In contrast, the vast majority of men in the British Army and Royal Marines were not required to have such a high level of specific technical mastery in 1982. Modern ships required constant, diligent work to maintain them; many tasks could not be performed mindlessly, but required skilled tradesmen to complete them safely and efficiently. This had an enormous cultural impact on the Royal Navy.

Indeed, because of the high-tech nature of naval warfare in the Falklands campaign, the naval combat experience was characterised as much by technical challenges as those of combat. Whereas those troops engaged in the land campaign were confined to defensive positions in between actions and advances for extended periods of time, on the vessels of the Royal Navy the sailors were continuously engaged in maintenance work. There were no periods of inactivity, and the sailors worked on a system of Defensive Watches, a period of either six or eight hours on duty, followed by the same number off. Vulnerable to interruption, for the vast majority of sailors this time was 'usually spent catching up on some z's or pushing food down our necks like it was going out of fashion.'⁵⁶³ Even if the ship or submarine was not engaged in action, it required extensive and prolonged maintenance just to keep it afloat. The rough South Atlantic sea was took its toll on the ships of the Task Force, and the seas were so rough that the Type 21 Frigates began to literally break apart, with cracks forming amidships on the upper deck.⁵⁶⁴ HMS *Arrow* also suffered from the attrition of the South Atlantic, developing 'a huge split right across the middle of the ship' so that she was at risk of splitting in half.⁵⁶⁵ Furthermore, on HMS *Ambuscade* a huge amount of fuel was being expended due to the high speed at which the ships were travelling first to positions to bombard the enemy at night under cover of darkness, before then returning to the safety of the fleet before daybreak. The filters on the fuel tanks quickly deteriorated and, with

⁵⁶² Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 395.

⁵⁶³ IWM DOCS 94/6/1 Private Papers of G. Canham, Letter Dated 25th April, 1982.

⁵⁶⁴ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 188.

⁵⁶⁵ IWM DOCS 94/6/1 Private Papers of G. Canham, Letter Dated 31st May, 1982.

a shortage of replacements available due to the long logistical train, the crew had to resort to scrubbing out the tanks by hand in order to remove any impurities that would reduce efficiency or cause further damage to the engines.⁵⁶⁶ The technological maintenance of systems in submarines was even more pronounced than in the surface fleet, and 'collective survival depended upon each individual performing every detail of his duty,'⁵⁶⁷ as it was literally sink or swim. Any technical fault could result in a catastrophic loss of life in an environment where technology and survival were inseparable. While the soldiers on land also had to battle the unpredictable and abrasive South Atlantic weather, at sea the Royal Navy was more exposed, and able to exert even less influence on their surroundings than those British servicemen dug in under primitive shelter on the Islands themselves.

Technology also dictated how the war at sea was fought. In the era of Nelson, ships would launch broadsides against each other aimed at disabling the opponent through overwhelming force, targeted in an anti-personnel fashion at his gun-decks and designed to destroy morale. Significant physical damage and loss of life would normally result in a surrender of the weapons platform, rather than its destruction.⁵⁶⁸ Even so, 'wooden warships of the eighteenth century were hard to sink, and when they did, they often sank very slowly, allowing time for the crew to abandon ship.'⁵⁶⁹ Indeed, capturing enemy warships was a source of both considerable social prestige and financial income, and if possible their sinking was to be avoided. Twentieth century naval warfare, however, specifically targeted the ship as a weapons platform and aimed to disable it through destruction and sinking. The increasing technological innovation in a ship's arsenal of weaponry increased the ability of that ship to cripple or sink an opposing vessel, with minimal casualties to one's own. In a new era of naval warfare, this technology 'properly applied by men qualified to exploit it, promised results of decisiveness and one-sidedness never before imagined.'⁵⁷⁰ However, despite the fact that these modern weapons were not specifically anti-personnel, 'as a consequence, while human beings were not the major target, they could become casualties in new

⁵⁶⁶ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 173.

⁵⁶⁷ Reeve, 'Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle', p. 21.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁶⁹ Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 30.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

orders of magnitude, even when we allow for more sailors manning bigger ships.’⁵⁷¹ The HMS *Hood*, for example, was sunk by the German battleship *Bismarck* in 1941, with only three men from a ship’s company of 1419 coming out of the water alive. This demonstrated the frightening magnitude and danger of modern naval warfare, whereas previously, in the early engagements between the leading nations, casualties had remained low, predominately due to inaccurate fire. The gunnery employed in First World War naval battles, for example, was very inaccurate because the ships engaged at enormously long range. In the North Sea battles, the British and German fleets recorded a success rate of between 0.33 and 4.0%. Even at the Battle of the Falklands in December 1914, in perfect visibility and out of range of their opponents, thus reducing the threat at which they operated and giving them more time to aim, the British still only scored 7% hits.⁵⁷²

Yet even though gunnery was inaccurate in this era, the ships employed had been designed so as to be able to survive a great number of hits. Thus, even if they could not continue to fight, they often at least stayed afloat. In contrast, with the decline of the battleship as the dominant force in naval warfare, ships built in the later twentieth century were constructed without the heavy armour that had characterised their predecessors. The Falklands revealed that ships constructed principally of aluminium, and filled with flammable materials, were no longer able to withstand a multitude of hits, but were far more vulnerable. HMS *Sheffield*, for example was crippled and had to be abandoned after being struck by an Exocet missile that did not even explode on 4th May. Modern ships were also vulnerable to weapons of a previous era. As has been noted in previous chapters, the Royal Navy had trained for a high-tech conflict with the Soviet Union, incorporating guided missiles. However, in the Falklands the navy engaged in actions reminiscent of those fought in the Second World War at Crete and Okinawa, where ships were predominately attacked by multiple waves of low-flying aircraft. Despite the regression in the technology employed by the attackers, modern ships were more vulnerable than they had been before, as high-tech weapons had replaced traditional close-in defences such as Bofors or Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns. Many of the ships that sailed south had no close-in defences at all except some General Purpose Machine Guns hastily mounted on the bridge wings. When the Argentine

⁵⁷¹ Reeve, ‘Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle’, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁷² Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 28.

aircraft penetrated this now ineffective defensive screen, the thin-hulled ships were left exposed to their low-tech iron bombs that caused considerable damage. HMS *Coventry*, for example, was struck by three 1,000lb bombs on 25th May, 1982, and within twenty minutes was upside down, 'her keel horizontal a few feet above the sea.'⁵⁷³

The dominance of technology in naval warfare also ensured that mortal threats to the ship and the sailors could materialise within moments, and explosive force be applied against ships the like of which could not be seen in the age of sail, or even the Second World War. The innovation that was particularly responsible for this was the development of naval aviation. The intrusion of aviation into naval warfare meant that sailors were vulnerable to direct attack that could develop faster than they were necessarily able to react. At Trafalgar, for example, it had taken five hours for the ships to engage after having first sighted one another, and at Jutland it had been 15 minutes, giving the sailors time to man their posts, as well as carry out any individual physical and mental preparations for combat. In contrast, in an air or missile attack, the reaction time afforded to sailors could be measured in seconds.⁵⁷⁴ Aviation also ensured that the duration of naval combat was extended. Prior to the Second World War, the greatest naval engagements at Tsushima in 1905 and Jutland in 1916 'had lasted only an afternoon and a night. At Jutland, the majority of British and German sailors were actually under fire for less than an hour.'⁵⁷⁵ However, as the British were to discover in the Mediterranean in the Second World War, and again in the Falklands, the improvements in aviation, particularly the ability to carry greater ordnance and improvements to endurance, meant that ships could be under fire almost continuously during daylight.

This was a defining aspect of naval warfare in the Falklands, where ships were continually put on alert to repel attacks by aircraft. This had a profound effect on the nerves of sailors, one recalling that as a result of the stress of coming under aerial attack, even men who did not usually smoke took offered cigarettes, as 'the hazards of smoking seemed to have paled into insignificance when compared with bombing and

⁵⁷³ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁴ Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 395.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

strafing.⁵⁷⁶ Aerial attack represented by far the biggest threat to the Task Force in the Falklands War, where it was particularly marked because the only respite came with darkness; unlike in the Second World War, where ships operating in the Mediterranean and other theatres could call in at comparatively safe harbours such as Alexandria, there was no safe haven available in the South Atlantic. There was always the possibility of a threat developing, and men therefore had to be constantly alert, resulting in mental as well as physical fatigue. As McManners has written, 'the naval war was constant throughout the Falklands crisis, a continuous period of high tension, broken with burst of severe anxiety and danger.'⁵⁷⁷ The experience of the *Sheffield* had served to underline that modern vessels were "one-hit" ships. Therefore no chances could be taken when it came to potential threats. Reactions had to be fast, and all possible threats treated as hostile until it was confirmed that they were not. War at sea was characterised by continual false alarms and having to react to perceived threats, moments of adrenalin and terror, but the vast majority of which were spurious contacts that were soon discounted.⁵⁷⁸ This produced a routine of continually switching back and forth between battle stations and regular ship life, with sometimes only minutes in between.⁵⁷⁹ This only served to heighten the tension and strain placed on sailors' nerves. As Ian Inskip, Navigating Officer aboard HMS *Glamorgan*, recalls, 'attacks that did not materialise were almost as stressful as attacks that were pressed home.'⁵⁸⁰ The air attacks materialised with only fifteen minutes warning at most, and were over in seconds. Thus, while the periods of action sailors were exposed to were far briefer in duration than equivalent engagements on land, such attacks and threats were far more frequent, continuous and repetitive at sea.

Yet it was the missile attacks carried out by the Argentines that were the most striking. In the Falklands, particularly with the Argentine use of Exocet missiles, threats could materialise rapidly, leaving no time for reaction. Inskip, recalled how the Exocet attack on his ship had a fairly innocuous beginning:

⁵⁷⁶ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 63.

⁵⁷⁷ McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 142.

⁵⁷⁸ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, pp. 79-81.

⁵⁷⁹ IWM SOUND 32493 Actuality recording made aboard HMS *Glasgow* during attack by Argentine aircraft, 12th May 1982, Reel 1.

⁵⁸⁰ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 100.

At 0636 on 12 June 1982, the faintest of “blips” appeared on the *Glamorgan*’s bridge radar display. A little over 30 seconds later, an Exocet missile clipped the side of the upper deck, exploded and blasted holes down through two decks. The missile body penetrated the hangar door and hit the fully fuelled and armed Wessex helicopter inside. A second later the helicopter blew up and a massive explosion, with accompanying fireball, erupted from the hangar.⁵⁸¹

When *Sheffield* was struck by an Exocet, Walpole had been on the bridge as Officer of the Watch. He made visual contact with the missile, and recalls that he could see the smoke billowing from behind it, but the missile itself did not seem to be moving anywhere. It was not traversing, making it very difficult to identify. It was only immediately prior to impact that Walpole realised what it was.⁵⁸² Steve Iacovou had similarly been on the bridge and had struggled to identify the threat:

They don’t shoot Exocets at you in training. It is something that you see from the side view on training films. I was transfixed by the missile coming at us. For a brief second nobody quite knew what was going on.⁵⁸³

The speed with which these threats materialised and struck also added to the confusion, which is clearly indicated by both the oral and written testimony, as the sailors both on the attacked ship and those spread across the fleet had to react to what had happened as accurately and quickly as they could. Many ships were able to see *Sheffield* burning, for example, but there was great uncertainty as to what had actually caused such damage, and what actions each ship should take to avoid suffering the same fate. Inskip records that fleet communications were suggesting that, rather than being struck by an Exocet, *Sheffield* had instead been torpedoed by a submarine, or attacked by an Argentine Type-42 destroyer, and thus the other ships responded to these threats.⁵⁸⁴

The Royal Navy put great trust in military technology, yet that technology was not always reliable. It was prone to failure that could leave the sailors very vulnerable

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁸² IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 3.

⁵⁸³ Steve Iacovou, in Michael Bilton and Peter Kosminsky, *Speaking Out: Untold Stories from the Falklands War* (London, 1989), pp. 56-7.

⁵⁸⁴ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 75.

indeed, rather than protecting them as it was intended to do. Some ships encountered this problem before they entered the warzone. HMS *Exeter*, for example, had been in the West Indies when hostilities began. As a brand new ship, she had an unproven and unreliable weapons system. Yet on the exercises with the US Navy, the crew were able to test the new systems and software, the results of which were very unsuccessful, and had the Admiralty not been able to rapidly develop a new software package she would not have gone to war.⁵⁸⁵ Other ships, however, only encountered such problems when actually in the combat zone and under fire. By trusting in missiles at the expense of older, more low-tech weapons, the sailors had relatively little protection to fall back on should the primary system fail. For example, on one mission, HMS *Cardiff* lost power to the front half of the ship, which shut down all the computer systems responsible for controlling the guns, the missile systems, and the radar, which left the ship entirely vulnerable, unarmed and blind for an hour as all the computers were restarted and reprogrammed.⁵⁸⁶ Similarly, when *Coventry* was sunk, she had passed across HMS *Broadsword*'s bows, breaking the latter's radar lock on the incoming Argentine aircraft with her Sea Wolf missile. *Coventry*'s Sea Dart missile system then failed, and she was left with a poor defensive armament to deal with the incoming threat.⁵⁸⁷ It was not only weapons systems that could malfunction. *Sheffield* was hit and eventually sunk because she had been using her communications network which was not compatible with the radar, and forced it to be switched off.⁵⁸⁸ Thus, *Sheffield* missed detecting the incoming Argentine aircraft when they used their radar for a single second to detect her, a signal picked up by the rest of the fleet.⁵⁸⁹ *Sheffield*, however, was oblivious to this and was therefore completely unprepared when she was struck.

The danger posed by the weapons the Argentines employed against the Task Force, and the fact that modern ships were found to be "one-hit ships" when it came to missile attack in particular, ensured that, unlike in the war on land, surrender was no longer an option to end a battle. As Spector has written, surrender had become a decreasingly common occurrence as technology and naval warfare had similarly evolved.⁵⁹⁰ A further factor hindering the remote possibility of surrender in the Falklands was that

⁵⁸⁵ IWM SOUND 14596 Balfour, Hugh Maxwell, Reel 1.

⁵⁸⁶ IWM SOUND 15434 Foster, Kevin, Reel 3.

⁵⁸⁷ IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 4.

⁵⁸⁸ IWM SOUND 30290 Coward, John, Reel 2.

⁵⁸⁹ IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 2.

⁵⁹⁰ Spector, *At War at Sea*, pp. 30-1.

naval combat was engaged primarily against aerial assets of the Argentine Air Force. The question of surrender was therefore rendered non-applicable, as it was impossible to communicate any theoretical surrender and the actions themselves, while regular occurrences particularly in the first weeks of May, were also sporadic and of a short duration. The Falklands campaign was an extended period of action, and despite taking damage, ships were required to fight on to the finish; the battle would only be ended by one side's destruction of the other. This produced a very hard attitude amongst the sailors fighting. Hart Dyke described such an attitude that was systematic across the fleet as thus:

I became very steely, totally uncompromising. You have no feeling for the enemy, there's no pity, sorrow, forgiveness at that time. You become a pretty angry, aggressive sort of individual... I discarded all peacetime thinking and inhibition. Rules and regulations became irrelevant. You were totally focussed at getting at the enemy and surviving.⁵⁹¹

Such an attitude had developed amongst British sailors before; the Kamikaze attacks in particular of the latter stages of the Second World War in the Pacific encouraged a kill-or-be-killed mentality. For the sailors, the enemy was coming to kill them, and was willing to give his own life to do so. When faced with such an irrational enemy, many sailors realised that killing him would be the only way to stop him in order to preserve their own lives.⁵⁹² The sailors in the Falklands were never faced with such extremes, though after being exposed to continuous air raids and near misses from dropped bombs, they developed a similar mentality. The only possible end to the conflict would be either they or the Argentines' destruction, and the sailors of the Royal Navy were obviously desperate to ensure it was not theirs.

The weapons that the British used to respond to these threats were also highly technical. As mentioned previously, the Royal Navy had expected to engage the forces of Soviet Bloc in a blue-water, or deep sea, conflict. This had led to a culture of technology surpassing all lessons of the past. Naval combat was no longer fought in the open air or within sight of the sky on the bridge, but from deep within the ship's superstructure.

⁵⁹¹ David Hart Dyke, 'Sea of Fire', Windfall Films Documentary.

⁵⁹² Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 308.

Within the darkened Operations Room, sonar, radar and communications systems were concentrated in order to provide a composite picture of any developing threat, and the response taken against this threat emanated from this same room. In modern naval warfare, therefore, only a tiny number of sailors actually operated weapons systems in combat. Since ships had been mostly stripped of their close-in defensive weapons, what remained were limited and often mounted with haste on the voyage south. For example, *Broadsword*, a Type-22 Frigate, was predominately armed with missiles and in terms of projectile weapons only had two Bofors guns, made in 1941 and 1943 respectively. The crew had very little training in their use, and in fact had no designated gun crews; these were selected on the voyage south, and were composed of the Royal Marine detachment that was aboard.⁵⁹³ The vast majority of sailors aboard ships worked to support and maintain the small minority that were responsible for the offensive equipment, a situation which McManners has accurately described as thus: 'War at sea is a technological team game, each individual a small cog in a large machine, with only the captain able to exercise any personal influence over events.'⁵⁹⁴

While soldiers fulfilled specialist roles such as missile operators, truck drivers or store men, they were all trained first as basic infantrymen, and so expected to have to fight personally against the enemy. In the navy, sailors were not 'individually conditioned to this idea of personal, physical combat.'⁵⁹⁵ Infantry combat was the pinnacle of personal confrontation in war, and was a foundation of training. Despite the increasing ranges with which modern weapons were effective, if the ammunition ran out, a soldier may well have been forced to resort to that archaic weapon, the bayonet, and use it on another human being. In the navy, unless sailors manned specific weapons systems, such confrontation was never truly considered, and with understandable reason. Thus there was a real cultural difference between the two groups. The navy offered a diverse range of roles to be fulfilled on warships, including those that were positively unwarlike, such as that fulfilled by the Stewards. Butlers and waiters, they were relics of a previous era, and yet they were exposed to the full dangers of modern naval warfare. Similarly, each ship had a helicopter that had to be maintained by a team of Artificers. As David Heritier, Chief Aircraft Artificer aboard HMS *Antrim*, noted, once

⁵⁹³ IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 1.

⁵⁹⁴ McManners, *Scars of War*, pp. 142-3.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

the helicopters left the ship, 'we can do nothing but wait.'⁵⁹⁶ The Artificers did not have a warlike function, aside from arming the helicopter. They were mechanics and maintenance men. Most significantly, ships needed to be able to move if they were able to fight, and there was therefore a full complement of engineers on board warships in order to service the machinery and engines. Patrick Kettle was one such engineering officer aboard *Sheffield* who during an attack was required 'basically to keep the machinery running and to wait for action damage.'⁵⁹⁷ Like the artificers and other technicians, these men were employed in roles that could be found in civilian society, and culturally their attitudes reflected this similarity. However, while they may well have served in the navy and military environment for some time, very few had seen operational service or been fired upon. That they now found themselves in a warzone, exposed to all its dangers without really being able to respond, elicited a far more different response than those men in the Army and Royal Marines in both written and oral historical sources.

In another contrast with the war on land, very few of the sailors who fought at sea even saw the enemy, let alone took up arms against him. In the pattern of watches described above, sailors had one role at their primary station when formally on watch and another at a secondary station if action stations were called during their time off it. Even the primary watch stations of some sailors were deep in the ship, where they were sequestered from daylight but not the enemy, such as the Stokers. The majority of the sailors were assigned secondary stations as damage control parties, and so during an attack they remained powerless to dictate the outcome. Kettle, for example, 'just sat there and waited' during attacks, enduring a 'terrifying long wait for something to happen.'⁵⁹⁸ Sam Bishop, a Petty Officer aboard HMS *Antelope*, believed that when at his action station in the forward engine room, 'the worst thing down below was that you couldn't see anything, you didn't know what was happening. You were hoping: Please let the gun work, please let everything on board work.'⁵⁹⁹ Sam MacFarlane related similar thoughts when recounting his memories of waiting for the impact of a suspected Exocet while lying on the deck in his mess: 'You have the impression deep in your head that this is a nasty piece of work coming towards you. There is absolutely

⁵⁹⁶ IWM SOUND 13738 Heritier, David John 'Fritz', Reel 1.

⁵⁹⁷ Peter Kettle, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 51.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Sam Bishop, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 73.

nothing you can do about it.⁶⁰⁰ That such testimony showed a strong consistency, despite the different forms by which it was recorded and times at which it was produced, is remarkable, and perfectly conveys the feeling of powerlessness sailors in the Falklands regularly endured. Only those sailors who were on the bridge or upper decks would have been able to see the enemy or missile threat, and due to the speed at which threats materialised, as described above, their presence there was often the result of chance as much as their specific function. Jake Watson, the Chaplain aboard HMS *Broadsword*, was on the bridge fulfilling his pastoral role, and ended up being the first man aboard to see the enemy when an Argentine aircraft began its attack on the ship.⁶⁰¹

Those sailors who did regularly see the enemy at terrifying proximity were those manning the deck-based weapons, yet several Captains in the Falklands also permitted members of their crews who did not have a direct combatant role, such as the Stewards and Stokers, to man small arms on the outer decks during air raids. To McManners, 'firing small arms at incoming air raids was only a token gesture – but gave invaluable psychological release and a degree of physical exercise, providing excitement and some relief to wound-up crew members.'⁶⁰² The accuracy of such an opinion can be seen in the testimony of veterans from the conflict. Lippiett, for example, recalls that the firing of deck-weapons was not always effective, but it was an important factor for morale. For example, when his ship, *Ambuscade*, came under Exocet attack,

Our close-range weapons, the Oerlikon 20mm guns, and the General Purpose Machine Guns, opened fire. This was a meaningless gesture in terms of likelihood of hitting a missile, in terms of both range and accuracy, for they were aimed by eye, but it was an excellent morale booster!⁶⁰³

Even the ship's Padre, forbidden from taking up arms against the enemy, fired Very flares, as he had decided 'that a flare was not a weapon, and therefore that it was permissible to fire them against attackers... It made no sense, but perhaps it was better to do something rather than nothing.'⁶⁰⁴ The enforced paralysis that sailors endured,

⁶⁰⁰ Sam MacFarlane, 'Sea of Fire', Windfall Films Documentary, 2007.

⁶⁰¹ IWM SOUND 14848 Watson, John Keith 'Jake', Reel 1.

⁶⁰² McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 140.

⁶⁰³ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 109.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

similar to that which soldiers experienced under sustained bombardment, could only be broken by action, as Ken Enticknab, responsible for the refrigeration, air-conditioning and domestic machinery aboard HMS *Ardent*, made clear. As head of the aft damage control party he recalled that he felt relieved that once the ship had been attacked he had something to do to break the tension and inactivity, he had been forced to endure, though this relief was only superficial and temporary.⁶⁰⁵

Naval warfare in the South Atlantic also carried an added element of threat that was not encompassed in land actions. While the landed troops in the Falklands certainly suffered at the hands of the weather, the elements did not pose the same threat as that carried by the South Atlantic to the sailors of the Task Force. The bombs and missiles of the Argentine Air Force were themselves dangerous, but the sea was also very capable of taking lives. If a ship was sunk, and its sailors forced into the water, they would have minutes before hypothermia began to set in. Wade Tidbury, a radar operator aboard HMS *Alacrity*, saw several men die in the water after *Atlantic Conveyor* was struck by an Exocet on 25th May.⁶⁰⁶ Getting into the water or life rafts was not necessarily a simple task, and if a sailor was forced to jump from the side of a ship, itself a substantial task given the height of some of them, particularly the container ship *Atlantic Conveyor*. Once over the side, he became dependent on another ship pulling him out of the water quickly, as he would deteriorate fast in the cold, particularly if he was injured.⁶⁰⁷ Abandoning a ship was no simple task; when abandoning *Coventry*, MacFarlane was faced with the pressures of inflating his lifejacket. Had he placed too much air in it, he would have sunk.⁶⁰⁸

Yet while the war at sea in the Falklands was brutal and uncompromising, with no quarter given or asked, life outside of combat remained more genteel, with a greater blurring of the lines between war and peace that were impossible to sustain on the Islands themselves. This was especially true for the sailors of the surface fleet; submariners, however, while enjoying some comforts and luxuries, lived and worked in a machine that was very much designed as a weapon of war. Their more Spartan surroundings ensured that culturally their “boats” remained very much weapons of war.

⁶⁰⁵ Ken Enticknab, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, pp. 66-7.

⁶⁰⁶ IWM SOUND 13085 Tidbury, Wade, Reel 4.

⁶⁰⁷ Phil Russo, Interview with Author, 18/12/08.

⁶⁰⁸ Sam MacFarlane, ‘Sea of Fire’, Windfall Films Documentary.

The oral history testimony, contemporary documentary sources and retrospective memoirs all highlight this facet of naval life, so it was clearly important to the sailors. While the surface ships were first and foremost instruments of war, they were also homes and small, distinct social communities. The sailors were divided into messes according to rank and ate communally, fostering strong social bonds. Food and its communal consuming not only helped maintain a sense of normality, they were also major boosts to morale, and the sailors definitely enjoyed a far greater variety and higher quality of meals than the soldiers on land. Naval officers exceeded this yet further; John Lippiett, the First Lieutenant on board HMS *Ambuscade* for example, sat down to a three course meal in the Wardroom most nights, along with a cheeseboard, and was able to enjoy the occasional half pint of beer.⁶⁰⁹ All officers across the fleet had access to alcohol in the Wardroom, but it was expected that it would only be taken in moderation, if at all, depending on the standpoint of the Captain. Such a standpoint, and the fact that ships provided shelter, allowed the men to have celebrations even during a time of war. One sailor on *Exeter* recorded how he and his mess mates had ‘a small party and a few cans’ for two of their number whose birthdays were during the campaign.⁶¹⁰ Sailors also had access to simple comforts that the soldiers dug in on the Islands craved, such as proper toilets and hot showers.⁶¹¹ Other comparative luxuries included regular access to a laundry. There were also a greater range of diversions on ships, whereas the soldiers on land were often forced into inactivity between periods of advance or battle. The sailors, for example, were able to watch films in order to pass the time that were either broadcast through the ship via the close-circuit television system, or with rolls of film and a projector. The films were passed around the fleet, and civilians back in Britain also sent out video cassettes as contributions. On the newer ships, such as HMS *Brilliant*, their more modern and advanced communications fit meant that the crew could watch the football World Cup.⁶¹² For one sailor, because the ship contained all of these social elements in addition to its primary military functions, life at sea was ‘fairly palatial, whereas the soldier’s life was in a dugout, a mud hole.’⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁹ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 159.

⁶¹⁰ IWM DOCS 91/19/1 Private Papers of K. Cattermole.

⁶¹¹ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 117.

⁶¹² IWM SOUND 30290 Coward, John, Reel 3.

⁶¹³ IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 3.

Yet conversely, because the ship played such an important part in the culture of the Royal Navy, the sinking and loss of ships in naval warfare became an action far more significant than a loss of a mere piece of military hardware in any other theatre of war. Indeed, the loss of ships remained the most emotive act of naval warfare in the Falklands. All sailors had great attachment to ships because not only did they live on them, but ultimately the ship protected them from the worst of the natural elements. Service life in the navy was of a somewhat nomadic existence; that was part of its operational culture. As MacFarlane commented on the loss of *Coventry*, 'when you leave a ship, I guess you leave a part of you with it. Love her or hate her, she's been your home... She's been good to you, she's let you down, but you still love her to bits.'⁶¹⁴ The ship itself had taken on human physical characteristics and traits, and the link between the sailors and the ship was more than merely professional, it was personal, something MacFarlane reiterated in his oral history interview.⁶¹⁵ When these ships were lost, there was therefore a commensurate emotional reaction amongst the sailors. The ship represented part of their identity, one that was lost along with the ship itself, and one that could not be reclaimed. As Peter Walpole, Signals Communications Officer aboard *Sheffield*, remembers, 'a second prior to the impact, there was a perfect, working ship, and that a second after it was irrevocably changed.'⁶¹⁶ Such an idea is further enforced by additional testimony from other sailors in regard to their respective ships. Alan West, who commanded HMS *Ardent*, described the difficulty in giving the orders that will condemn a ship to sinking and destruction:

I then had to make a decision whether to abandon ship. I thought about it because you fall in love with a ship, especially as its captain... It was very sad. As we moved away from her I know a lot of my chaps were in tears. I was in tears myself.⁶¹⁷

The testimony of naval veterans from the Falklands campaign demonstrates that the loss of ships was always a traumatic event, even for those sailors aboard other ships; it was not only *Sheffield* as the first British ship to be lost that attracted such sympathy; this sentiment remained throughout the operation. Watson, for example, had seen

⁶¹⁴ Sam MacFarlane, 'Sea of Fire', Windfall Films Documentary, 2007.

⁶¹⁵ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author, 24/06/09.

⁶¹⁶ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 3.

⁶¹⁷ Alan West, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, pp. 63-4.

Ardent burning, and days later could not go up on deck to see *Coventry* sink as 'emotionally I didn't feel up to it.'⁶¹⁸

Furthermore, due to the rotational element of the Royal Navy, the sailors had served on a variety of ships, and thus had a greater attachment to a variety of vessels. It should not be assumed that because sailors moved between ships their bond with them was any less significant; the testimony simply does not support such an argument. Instead it seems that there was a fondness held for all of the ships upon which a sailor had served. MacFarlane, for example, had only recently finished a two-year deployment with *Sheffield* before sailing to the Falklands with *Coventry*, so he knew both of the crews and the ships intimately. He was therefore very concerned as to the fate of his friends when he discovered his former ship had been hit.⁶¹⁹ In contrast, in the Army soldiers usually spent their entire careers with a single regiment, and while Royal Marines moved between units, they were still part of a highly specialised and distinct Corps. For soldiers fighting on land, the fighting remained a distinct experience divorced from their peacetime lives and far removed from their homes. Such a division was impossible in naval warfare, where the ships were homes, and their loss also resulted in the loss of personal possessions and other items of sentimental value.⁶²⁰ This additional element was something that soldiers were not exposed to. Despite the casualties and mauling some units received in the battles on the Islands, the units would live on but with different personnel. Similarly, a pilot shot down would either be dead, or simply get another aircraft. There was no real comparable sense of attachment to an aeroplane, as pilots were rotated through them anyway, nor a particular ship, as they had been assigned to them at the outbreak of hostilities. It was a case of vice versa in the Navy; the crew would be split up and scattered across the service, the ship, their home, was gone, and would never be replaced. It was like losing a friend. As Hart Dyke wrote, the men 'in *Sheffield* or *Coventry*, *Ardent* or *Antelope*, had not only lost a ship; they had lost a whole family and a home.'⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ IWM SOUND 14848 Watson, John Keith 'Jake', Reel 2.

⁶¹⁹ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author, 24/06/09.

⁶²⁰ Bishop, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 73, and IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 5.

⁶²¹ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 230.

After they had been pulled from the water, the crews of abandoned or sunk ships were thrown into a form of military limbo. While they had survived one traumatic experience, given the nature of the Falklands theatre they were likely to be subjected to further attack. Indeed, for the dispossessed sailors, in many ways their naivety of war had been shattered, and they were now fully aware of the dangers posed by modern weapons to modern ships. Indeed, while *Sheffield's* crew were aboard the RFA *Resource* before they returned to the UK, Walpole and the other survivors found the huge amount of ammunition and other munitions stored on board to be highly disconcerting. The incident of the *Hood* in the Second World War was reminder enough of the dangerous potential posed by these essential items. Soldiers on land were rarely concentrated around such potentially dangerous materials, but for ships' companies it was inescapable, though obviously undesirable, particularly when the munitions were stored in a civilian ship lacking the defensive armament to which they are accustomed. In an example of the black humour that often characterised British military operations, when seeing Walpole in a life jacket, the doctor aboard *Resource* remarked: 'My dear chap, you don't need a life jacket. If this thing goes up you will need a parachute to get you back down again.'⁶²²

Moreover, whereas before when at action stations sailors had all possessed assigned roles and positions in their own ships, once their fighting platform had been sunk they were no longer the masters of their own destiny. They were passengers, no longer in control of their own survival. The testimony bears out this sense of functional dislocation. After *Sheffield* had been abandoned, the crew were transferred to HMS *Arrow*. Yet when *Arrow* came under attack, Walpole noted that 'we were essentially in the way of the ship, of the ship's company of the *Arrow*, and that we had no job to perform.'⁶²³ Their new-found and enforced passivity contrasted strongly with the previous few weeks operating at the peak of activity and stress, living and working under continuous threat of attack. For sailors used to having their own action stations and roles, this was highly unusual and frustrating, 'and can be more alarming' as there were no longer any duties to occupy their minds, and they had time to dwell on what had happened.⁶²⁴ Such duties had been essential in occupying the mind and helping to

⁶²² IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 4.

⁶²³ Ibid., Reel 3.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

avoid panic, as Bishop reveals in his testimony after an unexploded bomb lodged itself close to his action station on *Antelope*.⁶²⁵ Yet the sailors sheltering in other ships no longer had such roles to fulfil. On the new ship, they were surplus to requirements and no longer able to carry out the specialist roles that had been part of their identity on their own ship. The sense of dislocation was so severe that Bishop recalls he felt like a 'prisoner-of-war, even though you were coming on to one of your own ships.'⁶²⁶ For Bishop, coming under fire in such a situation was in many ways the worst part of his experience of war:

The ship went to action stations but we couldn't do anything because it wasn't our ship and it was out of our control. That was really nerve racking... We were told to just stay in the mess because we didn't know the layout of the ship. We had no jobs on board, we'd only be in the way. When the attacks came in we could hear the Seacat going off, people firing rifles at planes. You thought: "Why can't I do something?" You just sat in the mess listening to it all and praying. You were helpless.⁶²⁷

Walpole recalls that when air raid warnings were announced, 'I had a keen desire to do something, I wanted to be involved.'⁶²⁸ He was given a rifle, which he acknowledged would be useless against a missile travelling at nearly Mach 1 speed, but he was still pleased as 'it made you feel better and that was more important.'⁶²⁹ That a number of different sailors, of different ranks, recorded these similar reactions in a variety of mediums and at different times since the conclusion of hostilities is remarkable, and suggests a unity of experience when encountering such issues.

The ships also received a more regular supply of mail, and while this supply was sporadic, it usually arrived in batches every three to four days.⁶³⁰ In contrast, for those soldiers advancing across East Falkland, logistical resources were already pressed to the limit on purely military activities, and therefore those troops positioned furthest forward often had to wait. While it has often been assumed that mail played an

⁶²⁵ Bishop, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 74.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 4.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ IWM DOCS 91/19/1 Private Papers of K. Cattermole.

important role in maintaining morale, for some it proved difficult. Hart Dyke expressed the dichotomy that in fact, rather than being a happy occurrence, the mail could also be a source of dread. In two separate sources he has recalled that it became hard for him to open letters from home, and as the war became more intense, and losses mounted, he began to fear getting bad news from home as well, as he would be impotent to resolve it. While the war was obviously a very real and pressing concern, and by dwelling too much on loved ones far away and any problems that they faced, he risked being 'caught at a moment of weakness, with all my defences down.'⁶³¹ In contrast, other sailors highlight the importance of not only personal mail, but also collective telegrams. Inskip, for example, recalled that *Glamorgan* received a telegram from West Glamorgan, which read: "The thoughts and prayers of the people of West Glamorgan are with you." The ships of the Royal Navy, particularly those named after conurbations, such as Hart Dyke's *Coventry* or *County*-class destroyers, such as *Glamorgan*, maintained close links with their eponymous areas. Yet this relationship was two-sided; as Inskip believed, 'it was just one line, but the very fact that West Glamorgan had taken the trouble to wish us well meant a lot.'⁶³² For Hart Dyke, however, 'letters from home, thoughts of family and friends, heartfelt messages and telegrams wishing us good luck and a safe return all added to the tension and highlighted the risks ahead.'⁶³³ The letters reminded men of what they had to lose, and those with wives and young children in particular worried about how their dependents would be cared for should they not return home.⁶³⁴ Whereas the soldiers on land, in near-complete isolation from mail at home, were able to detach war and peace, sailors were not, and mail risked enforcing a peacetime mentality in a wartime situation. Such a mindset and focus on a peaceful home setting was incompatible with the acts of violence and constant vigilance the sailors were required to maintain. As Hart Dyke wrote, in war 'you have to change your mindset and concentrate totally on fighting and surviving.'⁶³⁵ Despite the comforts of modern ships as described above, the sailors could not forget their priority task if they were to be successful, or indeed if they were to return home at all.

⁶³¹ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 113.

⁶³² Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 27.

⁶³³ David Hart Dyke, 'War and Its Effects on People', *The Naval Review* (1991, No. 2), p. 115.

⁶³⁴ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 113.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Hart Dyke's opinions regarding the value of letters seem to be at odds with a majority of the regular sailors or lower ranked officers, suggesting that such an anxiety may well be borne out of the pressures of naval command. Each captain not only held responsibility for his vessel and his mission, but also those under his command, a ship's company totalling several hundred. Despite being part of a greater fleet, the ships were closed communities in which the captain was, by tradition, the recognised leader. The well-being of his crew rested on his leadership, placing enormous pressure and strain upon him. As captain, he was responsible for practically every aspect of his sailors' lives, including in the build-up to action. As Michael Barrow, Captain of *Glamorgan* found, working his crew up to a position of operational effectiveness prior to combat, without them peaking too early and inducing a state of mental fatigue once battle was joined 'was a bit of a juggling exercise.'⁶³⁶ Hugh Balfour, Captain of *Exeter*, found himself in a similar position. When he was first informed of the Falklands crisis and that *Exeter* would be called upon should there be any Type-42 losses, the ship was in the West Indies fulfilling peacetime obligations. As Balfour noted, it was an 'unreal' situation, to be preparing for war yet still be in peacetime, visiting exotic places that were mentally and physically far removed from the prospective war zone.⁶³⁷ For Balfour, balancing preparation and relaxation was a major problem, particularly as he was not yet certain *Exeter* was going. When it became clear that she was, Balfour dedicated the week-long voyage to Ascension to training, and brushing up on the basics, without any added pressure. After they left Ascension this was built up further, when they began 'the real business of preparing for war... We really got serious about being prepared.'⁶³⁸ Balfour believed that he and the crew got this balance right, and when they arrived in theatre on 21st May, in terms of physical and mental preparation, 'we couldn't really have been better placed to join in.'⁶³⁹ Once in action, Balfour noted that the biggest decision he faced was when to call action stations, or when to trust that any slight threat would pass and therefore avoid disturbing his crew or too frequently challenging and their nerves. It was a decision fraught with danger, as he either risked exhausting his sailors with continued false-alarms, or alternatively being caught unprepared should an attack materialise.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁶ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 1.

⁶³⁷ IWM SOUND 14596 Balfour, Hugh Maxwell, Reel 1.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., Reel 2.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

Once committed to action, it was the captain who, as Spector has argued, must maintain morale amongst his sailors, and his style of leadership would dictate the mood of the men.⁶⁴¹ Walpole certainly believed this to be the case, where a successful relationship built on trust and respect between the captain, the officers and the ratings was essential, 'because you're all so close, and the captain's personality, along with other, to a slightly lesser extent, other key personnel onboard, has a great deal to play in morale and general conduct of the ship. It's very important.'⁶⁴² How each captain went about cultivating such a relationship was a matter of personal choice, there was no official policy. Hart Dyke recorded his thoughts on the subject thus:

I became acutely aware that nearly 300 people were depending on me to get them home safely. I told them that my holiday was booked from the 4th of August and so we would have to be back by then; out of this statement arose an almost mystical belief that no matter what happened, we would get back by this time – because the Captain had said so.⁶⁴³

The social and cultural importance of the Captain in the Royal Navy was completely unique in the British military, and the social interaction and identification between him and the sailors under his command much more familiar than in the war on land and the equivalent relationship between soldiers and their officers. In part this was due to the historical and traditional role of the Captain in the Royal Navy, with Nelson being a major influence on perceptions of how the role should be fulfilled. It was also due to the nature of naval warfare. The sailors were confined within their ship, and as such had a very finite view of the world that soldiers on the islands did not have, as their horizons were much broader. In the Royal Navy, the Captain was a bridge to the outside via orders from the Task Group Commander and the communications systems, the filter through which all information of the outside world, even on occasion the state of the weather, passed. The officers of the land forces, though obviously important, did not hold this central role.

⁶⁴¹ Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 182.

⁶⁴² IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 1.

⁶⁴³ Hart Dyke, 'War and Its Effects on People', p. 115.

However, as the focal point for the morale of his men, and the primary source of leadership, the captain was forced to adopt a facade for the greater benefit of his ship's company, despite the internal strain it placed on him. It was a very lonely and isolated position to be in and to conduct a war from, particularly in contrast to other sailors on the ship who could draw support from each other. This was something that Hart Dyke in particular suffered from:

These days were hard for me because I had to remain outwardly unafraid and cheerful in order to provide that much-needed strength of leadership for my ship's company. My men began to watch me more closely and listen to every word I uttered, such that any chink revealed in my armour would have considerably increased their anxiety and even, perhaps, reduced their will to fight. Their lives were in my hands and I could feel it.⁶⁴⁴

Yet, conversely, all sailors adopted this facade for the benefit of morale:

I frequently thought along these lines and I'm sure most of my sailors did, but we never admitted it openly. That would have been demoralising. Conversations were brave and cheerful, and invariably confident that we will all get home safely. We were all strengthened by such reassuring talk, however much we inwardly believed that some of us might never get back.⁶⁴⁵

Similarly, on submarines, morale was maintained by the sailors themselves, both for social and professional reasons:

There was always a laugh and a joke with somebody. You weren't allowed to be down. As a submariner if you were down you were in trouble... If you're down, it's not right. We're all a family, and everybody's got to be a happy family, or we're a dead family... If we're not happy or if we're not working efficiently then the submarine's not working efficiently, and it really is as simple as that.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁴⁶ IWM SOUND 25556 Budding. Bill, Reel 1.

However, while all sailors were subject to the maintaining of such an image, the captain's position, due to its symbolic, traditional and operational uniqueness, was a lonely one; he was responsible for the entire crew, yet without anyone to fully confide his own personal fears in. This isolation only intensified as the campaign wore on and the losses of ships and sailors mounted. As Nick Van der Bijl, a member of the Intelligence Corps observed, the captain of the ship did everything in 'solitary splendour and not being a member of the Wardroom also ate in his cabin, the food being served by his steward.'⁶⁴⁷ He could be, and frequently was, invited to the Wardroom by the ship's officers, but he was often deprived of the communal solidarity form which men at war are able to draw psychological strength.

In addition to this social isolation, once the ship was actually engaged in action the Captain experienced a form of operational isolation. As Balfour noted, when modern ships went into action, 'the role of the captain starts to diminish,' as the missile operators and electronic warfare officers took control of fighting the ship.⁶⁴⁸ John Coward, who commanded HMS *Brilliant*, noted that,

The Commanding Officer was definitely not in the charge in the Operations Room... The Captain was invited to sit in a chair and watch this lot being conducted by a perfectly good, well qualified exercise officer called the Principal Warfare Officer.⁶⁴⁹

Coward personally found this difficult given his background in submarines, where the Captain dominated proceedings. In the surface fleet, the Captain over-saw the work carried out in the Operations Room, but in reality he was little more than a spectator. This was in considerable contrast to commanding officers in the land theatre. While their distance from the combat increased with their rank, they still maintained a control over what was occurring, relating orders and having them obeyed. At sea, however, the baton of responsibility was passed to the officers responsible for the specialised technologies being employed. Many captains therefore took on the role of

⁶⁴⁷ IWM DOCS 84/17/1 Private Papers of N van der Bijl, 'Personal View of the Falkland Islands Campaign – Part 1.'

⁶⁴⁸ IWM SOUND 14596 Balfour, Hugh Maxwell, Reel 3.

⁶⁴⁹ IWM SOUND 30290 Coward, John, Reel 1.

communicator, relating what was happening to their crew from the Operations Room so as to keep them informed. Van der Bijl, for example, recorded that on 24th May, during the Argentine air attacks, 'the Captain had helped to relieve the tension by commanding from the Gun Direction platform and giving a running commentary of the raids, as though it were a county cricket match.'⁶⁵⁰ HMS *Glasgow*'s captain provided plenty of information in a recording of operations on 12th May, 1982, in regards to the ship's position, course and purpose. While the gun fired during a shore bombardment mission, he related which targets they were firing on, the fall and accuracy of the shells, and even explained why the gun has stopped firing due to a malfunction.⁶⁵¹ Similarly, as the amphibious landings were being carried out, information on their progress was related, a running commentary on the progress of the day, including how many Argentine aircraft and of which type were attacking and being destroyed.⁶⁵² Similarly, at 5pm each afternoon during operations, Bill Canning, the Captain of *Broadsword*, would go on the main broadcast throughout the ship and share all but the most classified information he had received up until that point in the day. As a result, one of his crew recounted that

The confidence that this instilled in the ship's company was tremendous... We had confidence in the man, in his ability and we knew that on the occasions where he could not give us information but said we were going to do something, and people said, "this could be dangerous," he had our confidence.⁶⁵³

Once again, it was the Captain who was responsible for holding up the morale of the sailors under his command.

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The conflicting aspects of the war at sea, fought with brutal efficiency and without mercy yet from seemingly genteel surroundings, have been analysed. Now this chapter

⁶⁵⁰ IWM DOCS 84/17/1 Private Papers of N van der Bijl, 'Personal View of the Falkland Islands Campaign – Part 1'

⁶⁵¹ IWM SOUND 32493 Actuality recording made aboard HMS *Glasgow* during attack by Argentine aircraft, 12th May 1982, Reel 1.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ IWM SOUND 14848 Watson, John Keith 'Jake', Reel 1.

will shift focus in order to analyse and explain why modern sailors are able to conduct war and commit acts of violence in such a unique way, drawing contrasts with the war on land. This will be seen to reveal differing cultural and social approaches to the way their wars were fought, a direct consequence of their contrasting fighting surroundings. The striking similarities between written and oral sources that transcend the time of production, and show a marked conformity regardless of a sailor's rank or the ship her served on, will also be clear, and point to the strong influence of a unifying culture that helped mediate the experience of war at sea.

In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that committing acts of violence in the land campaign did not require any racial hatred as a motivating factor. The same could certainly be argued for the naval campaign. There is an established theme in naval history that points to the "fellowship of the sea," a bond that transcends nations and extends to all sailors. Keegan wrote that 'there is, indeed, a profound and powerful set of values that inhibits the waging of maritime war, roughly summarised by the phrase "fellowship of the sea."' ⁶⁵⁴ This bond between sailors is usually assumed to arise from the fact that 'naval warfare is unique in having a third participant, one which is always neutral – the cruel sea, which answers to no human being.' ⁶⁵⁵ The sea certainly retains a special aura, and while by the later twentieth century it could be argued that even though it had been sufficiently tamed, it still remained a hostile environment, and one that frequently displayed its intimidating power, putting great stress on men and equipment. Accordingly, 'the enterprise of going to sea thus creates a perceptible bond between sailors.' ⁶⁵⁶ This was very much apparent to the sailors of the Task Force in 1982. For example, on hearing the news of the *Belgrano* sinking, Russell Ellis, who served on *Coventry*, recalled that:

There was no cheering. There was no people slapping each other on the back, "well done the war's started, let's get on with it," that sort of thing. There was a case of thinking of the sailors really. There's a form of world-wide camaraderie amongst sailors. Yes, you're at war. Yes, you've got to shoot each other. Yes,

⁶⁵⁴ Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty*, p. 15.

⁶⁵⁵ Reeve, 'Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle', p. 31.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

you've got to make sure that they sink and you don't, but we don't take pleasure in that.⁶⁵⁷

Even the crew of the nuclear submarine *Conqueror* expressed pity for the survivors of the *Belgrano* that were forced into the cold South Atlantic after they had attacked her. Indeed, many expressed outrage at the *Sun*'s now infamous headline of "Gotcha!" when they saw it on the voyage home.⁶⁵⁸ The sea as a combat arena was directly responsible for producing this cultural aspect of the Royal Navy, in a way like no other.

Yet despite the presence of such a bond between sailors, men remained able to engage in acts of violence with each other, and plunge them into the cruellest of elements, where survival could be measured in minutes. As the previous chapter has noted, the most significant factor that is applied to the committing of violence by historians and psychologists is that of distance. They agree that it is easier to commit acts of violence against an enemy who is separated by a physical distance as this creates a similar psychological distance between aggressor and victim. As noted above, there is a very real difference between war on land and war at sea, where an increased level of technology amplified the psychological distance between combatants, facilitating violence. Unlike in the land forces, where all front line soldiers were armed with a destructive weapon, the actual number of sailors responsible for firing weapons at incoming threats was tiny, a mere fraction of the ship's crew. In this way, war at sea in the Falklands was continuing the dominant trend of twentieth century naval warfare, where because most members of the ship's company worked below decks or encased in armour, 'it was easy to feel that war at sea was waged primarily against unseen enemy machines rather than just people.'⁶⁵⁹ As Lionel Kurn, an Artificer aboard *Antrim*, observed: 'It is surprising, I think, how much a door or a sheet of metal can actually distance you from activities.'⁶⁶⁰

This mentality existed even for the small numbers of Warfare Officers, as they were bound up in an increasingly technological world divorced from reality. They utilised

⁶⁵⁷ Russell Ellis, 'Sea of Fire', Windfall Films Documentary.

⁶⁵⁸ Colin Way, Interview with Author, 06/08/09, IWM SOUND 25556 Budding, Bill, Reel 1, and IWM SOUND 31103 Bradley, Liam, Reel 5.

⁶⁵⁹ David Stevens, 'The Faceless Foe: Perceptions of the Enemy in Modern Naval Battle', in Reeve and Stevens, *The Face of Naval Battle*, p. 270.

⁶⁶⁰ IWM SOUND 16791 Kurn, Lionel Norman, Reel 2.

missiles that were directed at aerial threats from within the superstructure of the ship, from the darkened Operations Room. They were not directed or guided by sight, but rather by yet further technology that the sailor manipulated. Thus, the intrusion of technology certainly distanced the sailor from the act of violence he was committing, an issue McManners has argued: 'Modern technology makes even the direct engagement of the enemy by the handful of weapons operators a remote and disturbingly unreal business.'⁶⁶¹ Because of such a technological intrusion, the weapons operators were not forced to confront the reality of what they were doing; there was a facade of distance that they were able to maintain. As Bob Harmes, an artillery liaison officer aboard *Ardent*, believed, shooting down aircraft 'was like an amusement arcade game, lining up the cross-wires and shooting down the space invaders.'⁶⁶² When combined with the speed at which the threats materialised, which was a mere matter of seconds, this served to depersonalise ship-to-air combat, and as such made it easier to participate in. The power that could be unleashed at the mere press of a button was also phenomenal, and the ability to reduce a dangerous threat to nothing more than scrap metal undoubtedly appealed to humans on a basic level, as Nadelson argued when he wrote that 'action at a distance is magical. Automatic weapons engage the destructive desire to unleash irresistible force.'⁶⁶³ While Nadelson was theorising about land combat, and the weapons employed within it, the greater level of technology and destructive power employed when engaging an aircraft with a missile in naval combat surely make his theories all the more accurate. It was only when the destruction is visible to the naked eye, which is itself a rarity, that sailors were forced to confront what they were doing. For Adams, such ocular proof of destruction 'perhaps was the only thing that really made me sit up and think about the whole business, the fact that there were people in there with families, and wives and children.'⁶⁶⁴

The technology involved in naval warfare that created a physical and psychological distance dictated the sailor's mentality, and he was able to act without having to overcome the social taboo of killing that afflicted the infantryman. Culturally, therefore, the issue of fighting and killing was greatly reduced. The sailor could in many ways hide behind the technology, and use it as a psychological shield. He was not

⁶⁶¹ McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 138.

⁶⁶² Quoted in McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 150.

⁶⁶³ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 46.

⁶⁶⁴ IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 3.

forced to confront the possibility that his enemy was a human being because he never saw his human face. Kevin Smith, who operated a manual machine gun on HMS *Argonaut*, believed that such combat involved engaging a 'faceless enemy,'⁶⁶⁵ a form of combat that remained depersonalised because the participants only ever interacted via their technological casings, be they ships, planes or missiles. As earlier chapters have shown, men did not join the Royal Navy to fight people, and in many ways in the Falklands War, psychologically at least, they did not. The previous chapter has demonstrated how the landed soldiers and Royal Marines were often forced to re-address their imaginary constructs of the enemy upon coming into contact with them, or being forced to recognise a common trait, such as the carrying of photographs of loved ones. However, Reeve is accurate in his analysis where he argues that 'this kind of experience is alien to modern battle at sea, where even in combat between ships and piloted aircraft there is detachment.'⁶⁶⁶ Distance and technology prohibited such realisation at the subconscious level amongst the sailors fighting in the South Atlantic, even if they proscribed human traits and characteristics to the attacking aircraft. Spector argues that aviation returned the intimacy to naval warfare, where 'men saw their opponents in an intimate, almost one-on-one manner reminiscent of the days of boarding parties.'⁶⁶⁷ However, while this was true, it was still impossible to remove the mechanical element from it. Indeed, if anything, aviation increased this aspect and distanced the human facet of naval warfare. The enemy was not a man, but rather he was an aircraft to be shot down. Adams considered this to be advantageous in the facilitating of violence: 'One advantage I think of naval warfare in retrospect is that you don't see your enemy eye-to-eye. You can shoot down aircraft, but you don't actually see people.'⁶⁶⁸

Stevens has correctly identified that because naval battle is marked by a 'detached and impersonal bias increased by continuing developments in information and weapons technology,'⁶⁶⁹ and since the average sailor was not confronted by killing in the immediacy of his experience, he did not need to guard psychologically against it

⁶⁶⁵ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

⁶⁶⁶ Reeve, 'Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle', p. 29.

⁶⁶⁷ Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 313.

⁶⁶⁸ IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 2.

⁶⁶⁹ Stevens, 'The Faceless Foe: Perceptions of the Enemy in Modern Naval Battle', pp. 263-4.

through traditional means, such as the dehumanisation of the enemy. This is important for sailors to allow them to carry out acts of violence, as Dick Lane noted:

You don't think who is behind that blip on the radar screen, it's actually a person with a mother and a father and maybe a wife and children as well. You can't think that way. It is someone who is trying to kill you. You don't want that to happen.⁶⁷⁰

Such a mentality allowed aggression to flourish, as Captain West of *Ardent* recalls:

At that stage I didn't think about the pilots who were bombing me. As far as I was concerned they were aircraft that were trying to hit my ship and it was very much a military action to try and shoot those aeroplanes down. I didn't think of it in personal terms at all. That's one of the things about being in the navy, it's not quite as personalised as jumping into a trench with someone and trying to kill him. I thought the aeroplanes were hateful things I wanted to smash up, but I didn't think about the pilots. If you saw a plane splashing or blowing up everyone thought: "Great, let's get some more."⁶⁷¹

Hart Dyke agreed:

I certainly had no such feelings or regrets whenever I knew I had been responsible for causing death among my opponents: like most people's, my own survival instinct was strong and ensured that I remained ruthlessly single-minded. When it was all over, there would be plenty of time for reflection and understanding, and to express sympathy for the losses incurred on both sides... But for now, I am sad to say, it was all about killing people and destroying aircraft and ships with the utmost vigour.⁶⁷²

Given the importance of the Captain in setting the tone of the ship, as demonstrated above, it is logical to assume that those sailors under his command would have

⁶⁷⁰ Dick Lane, 'Sea of Fire', Windfall Films Documentary, 2007.

⁶⁷¹ West, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 64.

⁶⁷² Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, pp. 93-94.

witnessed such an attitude and adopted it themselves. The shooting down of aircraft became a form of sport. One sailor's diary, for example, had an entry heading for 7th June that reads 'Exeter scores again, Exeter 3 Argies 0.'⁶⁷³ Scores were also tallied up and displayed publically in prominent parts of the ship so that the crew could keep track of how many Argentine aircraft had been lost.⁶⁷⁴ Culturally, warfare had the manifestations of a sport, something that was facilitated by the distance with which it was fought. Because so many of the sailors could not equate their experiences with war since they did not witness the destruction of Argentine aircraft firsthand, it was translated into something they would understand, such as sport.

The same mentality was apparent when bombarding enemy positions ashore. Because of the distance involved, Inskip, for example, was able to make light of bombarding the Argentines. On one occasion, when using a missile instead of regular shells to bombard positions around Stanley airfield, he piped to the crew 'Glamorgan Airways announce the departure of their one-way flight to Stanley airfield!'⁶⁷⁵ Having not been under sustained bombardment himself, or seen the effects such bombardment could have, Inskip was able to enjoy the aesthetics of the explosions without considering the physical horror in human terms that the ship was unleashing. For example, he records that 'Seaslug landed in spectacular fashion. Whereas a shell burst flashes for a split second, the Seaslug fireball, travelling at mach 2, held on for about two seconds, covering a wide area.'⁶⁷⁶ He was not alone in thinking in such terms. Inskip quotes Petty Officer Mike Wiltshire's account from his own diary, who described the action thus: 'Whoosh, Seaslug fires in its surface role, seconds later the 4.5in guns ark their wrath, thump, thump, thump – a good rate of fire! Our intention is to flatten the goddam place.'⁶⁷⁷ Others thought of naval bombardment as 'more of a fireworks display' than a destructive weapon of war.⁶⁷⁸ It was only much later that Inskip personally considered the 'indescribably horrific' effect naval bombardment would have on the Argentine defenders, perhaps as a consequence of his own ship being struck by Exocet.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷³ IWM DOCS 91/19/1 Private Papers of K. Cattermole.

⁶⁷⁴ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author 24/06/09, and Chris Howe, Interview with Author, 09/09/09.

⁶⁷⁵ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 121.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Petty Officer Mike Wiltshire, quoted in Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 122.

⁶⁷⁸ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 155.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

What was also significant is that while very few sailors engaged directly in the killing, they all claimed a responsibility in the destruction of their enemy. Naval warfare required far more than simply firing the weapons. The locating of the enemy and the manoeuvring of the ship all required dedicated and professional tradesmen, as described above. Yet even though these men did not personally directly fire the weapons that resulted in the deaths of Argentines, they all claimed responsibility. In the retrospective memoirs, contemporary accounts and oral history of both surface and submarine actions there are no cases of “they shot down/sunk” but instead “we shot down/sunk.” That so many sailors subscribed to this view, from different ranks and ships, points to a pervasive cultural value within the Royal Navy. Notably, this sense of team-work was present both when the enemy was destroyed and when less celebratory acts occurred. For example, one night during the campaign *Cardiff* fired two Sea Dart missiles at a slow moving aerial contact picked up over the Islands, one of which hit and destroyed it. While it was assumed to be an enemy aircraft, it later turned out to be a British Sea King carrying military personnel with its identification beacon switched off. *Cardiff*'s captain made a broadcast shortly after throughout the ship in which he stressed that it was not the fault of the crew. Foster recalls that ‘the lads felt really bad about it,’ and it is interesting that the crew shouldered the collective guilt for the action, despite the fact that the vast majority of them had no role at all in the action whatsoever.⁶⁸⁰ Such a collective responsibility certainly helped assuage any feelings of guilt that could occur, providing group absolution, and also provided a motivation for those who were directly responsible to keep firing, to keep killing.

Even those sailors who did directly engage the enemy with the close-in weapons defences were sometimes able to seek absolution in the uncertainty of naval warfare. In San Carlos Water in particular, the ships of the defensive screen were putting up so much defensive fire from close-in weapons that the sailors could not be entirely sure if their shots were the ones that brought down an aircraft. Kevin Smith, for example, is fairly certain he hit an attacking Argentine, but due to the weight of fire being supplied by other ships, cannot be certain his bullets struck the fatal blow. Indeed, rather than suggest that they did, he actually suggests it was not his bullets that brought the fighter

⁶⁸⁰ IWM SOUND 15434 Foster, Kevin, Reel 3.

down.⁶⁸¹ Such a frank revelation was made during an oral history interview, a more intimate setting where there was no need to boast of actions as sometimes occurs in printed memoirs in order to sell copies. In such action, there was undoubtedly an inherent absolution in such uncertainty that could allow killing to occur. In conjunction with this, like the soldiers on land, sailors modified their language to reduce the emotive impact of the acts they carried out. Aircraft that were shot down were 'splashed,' a phrase that was used across the fleet regardless of rank, again showing a culturally uniform approach to the issue of the enemy. Furthermore, it was the aircraft's destruction that was paramount, rather than the pilot. Indeed, many sailors showed remorse at the killing of the Argentine airmen. Edmonds, for example, recalled the period after *Coventry* had shot down a Puma helicopter with information supplied by his ship, *Broadsword*. He noted that even though

It was the first time we had taken direct action and someone had been killed as a result of our efforts, we consoled ourselves that the pilot would not have known a thing about it. He would have been flying along and the next minute there would have been nothing.⁶⁸²

However, it would be wrong to say that the British sailor was entirely separated from the violence of modern warfare. While in the vast majority of cases the British sailor did not see the carnage the weapons he brought to bear wrought on the human body, those who served in the surface fleet were exposed to that inflicted on his ship-mates by the Argentines. After coming under fire, sailors were forced to confront their own casualties, from which there was no escape. In the land campaign, soldiers were able to advance forwards, leaving their casualties behind to following medical personnel. Indeed, in the Falklands, this is what soldiers were encouraged to do, after providing rudimentary first aid.⁶⁸³ On a ship, however, casualties were centralised, often close to where sailors were stationed. Mess decks were rapidly converted into sick bays, and sailors were forced to confront the images of burned and wounded men in spaces that

⁶⁸¹ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

⁶⁸² IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 3.

⁶⁸³ IWM SOUND 13419 Cooper, David, Reel 1.

until recently had been given over entirely to social and peaceful functions. Burns in particular were psychologically traumatising for those who were not wounded.⁶⁸⁴

Another factor that distinguished naval warfare from that taking place on land was also the setting in which it was carried out. Soldiers carried out exercises in the field but after these, or after operational tours such as in Northern Ireland, Belize or Cyprus, returned to barracks in England. Sailors, however, conducted naval exercises in the same environment in which they conducted themselves in peace, their ship. Watson identified this contrast in his memories of the Falklands campaign:

Having worked with the marines, they have a different attitude to war. Their war can be face to face. With the navy, the environment in which you go to war is the same environment in which you operate in peacetime, therefore there is a greater sense of normality until you have actually seen action.⁶⁸⁵

As McManners has argued, there was a striking similarity between peace and war in naval operations, and one that was only broken once the ship is hit and men are killed.⁶⁸⁶ Both the written and oral record supports such an argument, regardless of the date the source was produced, pointing towards a substantial mental conformity amongst Falklands veterans. In Adams' oral testimony he recalls that to his mind, 'the whole of the Falklands, from being detached at Gibraltar to the very last moment when we were hit, gave me the feeling it had been nothing more than a large exercise.'⁶⁸⁷ The shock of coming under fire for the first time was huge, as Adams noted: 'Because it was so much like an exercise, all you had to do was take pot-shots at the ducks going across, and they couldn't fire back. And here was one that fired back.'⁶⁸⁸ On the day of the amphibious landings, despite being 100 miles away, Lippiett recorded in his printed memoir that he listened to the High Frequency Anti Air Warfare Co-Ordination net through which the ships in Falkland Sound were cooperating in their defence against the Argentine Air Force. To his mind,

⁶⁸⁴ Ian Inskip, Interview with Author, 19/02/2012.

⁶⁸⁵ IWM SOUND 14848 Watson, John Keith 'Jake', Reel 1.

⁶⁸⁶ McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 138.

⁶⁸⁷ IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 2.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Reel 3.

It sounded just like the exercises we had been engaged in over the years before: set routines or reports, efficient and abbreviated orders, descriptions of enemy attacks and missile launches. I had heard it all before in the computerised shore trainers, in NATO exercise, and in sea training at FOST [Flag Officer Sea Training]. There really seemed to be no difference. Except that you could hear the gunfire and the bombs exploding, and the whoosh of missile being launched.⁶⁸⁹

Lippiett, however, remained 'totally optimistic' about returning safe,⁶⁹⁰ an optimism that was almost certainly maintained by not coming directly under fire himself, and not shattering the facade of exercise.

The importance of coming under fire for the first time and taking casualties cannot be underestimated when it comes to the study of sailor's behaviour in combat. While naval exercises could not fully replicate the real horrors of naval warfare, something the sailors appreciated,⁶⁹¹ because so very few of the sailors had ever come under fire before, their only frame of cognitive reference was that of their experience of exercises. Thus men conducted themselves as they had done on exercise, carrying out their specific functions on the ship. For Warfare Officers, this meant locating and destroying the enemy contacts, something they were well versed in doing. Indeed, doing it in time of war was in fact rather exhilarating, particularly as some ships were able to claim to be the first to have fired a particular weapon in anger, a source of considerable pride that was inherently linked to the act of violence such usage entailed.⁶⁹²

Much like their compatriots engaged on land, the sailors of the Royal Navy killed because they had to. As described above, there was no possibility for surrender in naval warfare, and no thought given to it; once attacked it became a fight to the finish. Furthermore, to fulfil their role and protect the fleet from enemy aerial or submarine attack, the men were compelled to kill. As Edmonds said, 'our job was to go down and shoot down aeroplanes, whether they were Hercules, or Skyhawks, or Mirages, or

⁶⁸⁹ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 86.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184

⁶⁹¹ IWM SOUND 30290 Coward, John, Reel 3.

⁶⁹² Russell Ellis, 'Sea of Fire', Windfall Films Documentary, 2007.

helicopters.⁶⁹³ For the submariners in particular, killing was also part of their strategic function, part of their vocation, as Spector has argued:

Submarine operations had always been among the most elemental forms of naval warfare, concerned almost entirely with killing. Submarines did not provide “presence,” support land campaigns, escort shipping, or signal political intentions. They sought to attack suddenly and lethally and, if effectively attacked themselves, had little chance of survival.⁶⁹⁴

Historically and culturally, submarines were used to kill. Indeed, *Conqueror* was a class of submarine known as a “Hunter-Killer.” While the sailors aboard did not particularly revel in the killing of the Argentine sailors, it was still a source of considerable professional pride for the crew that they had been the first British submarine to sink an enemy ship since the Second World War, and on their return to their home port in Faslane they flew the customary Jolly Roger from the conning tower. Sailors from other submarines that served in the operation have also since revealed that they would have liked the opportunity to have achieved such a rare feat themselves, not to have killed, but for the professional distinction that came from carrying out the attack.⁶⁹⁵ Submariners were able to view attacks and their inevitable killing as a professional function, rather than an emotive act. As Jonathan Powis, the navigator aboard *Conqueror* said: ‘We sank the cruiser and then we went and had lunch.’⁶⁹⁶ Furthermore, because the crew was contained within the hull and could not see the outside world, there was no ocular proof of violence that could challenge such a perception. Yet the crew were not celebrating the killing of the Argentine sailors, but instead the destruction of one of the enemy’s principal ships, a ship that also posed a direct threat to the safety of the British Task Force and the likelihood of victory. It had been a job well done in cultural, strategic and military terms, and while the sailors took pride in this, there was no pride in having been responsible for so many deaths.⁶⁹⁷ Indeed, the crew were angered by *The Sun*’s “Gotcha!” headline both because it trivialised their actions and also violated one of their standard operating procedures as submariners and an aspect of

⁶⁹³ IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 3.

⁶⁹⁴ Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 332.

⁶⁹⁵ John Wood, Interview with Author, 14/08/09.

⁶⁹⁶ Jonathan Powis, Interview with Author, 30/07/09.

⁶⁹⁷ IWM SOUND 25556 Budding, Bill, Reel 3.

their institutional culture, that of essential secrecy, by naming them as the submarine responsible.⁶⁹⁸ There was, however, the realisation that the two nations were engaged in hostilities, which was used to legitimise and justify the attack.⁶⁹⁹ *Conqueror* also received a signal of praise from Admiral Fieldhouse, the Commander-in-Chief Fleet, which read: 'The sinking of the *Belgrano* was fundamental to the success of Operation Corporate and took the heart of the Argentinian navy. Your long patrol was conducted throughout to my complete satisfaction. Well done.'⁷⁰⁰ Thus, the killing that they had carried out received official sanction from the naval hierarchy, and therefore in many ways absolved them of any guilt. In a hierarchy conscious organisation like the military, approval from above was sought and trusted.

The issue of discipline in governing the actions of sailors is an important one. As threats could materialise and inflict severe damage and casualties almost without warning, the sailors of the Royal Navy in the Task Force were therefore probably subject to more tension and assaults on their nerves than their counterparts engaged on land. Even at night, when the air threat had diminished, the sailors had to remain vigilant in case of potential Argentine submarine action. For those engaged in shore bombardment, there was also the threat of Argentine counter-battery fire. Grossman has argued that sailors are far better able to withstand the fear of combat than soldiers, and thus withstand becoming psychological casualties. He supports this argument with the suggestion that,

The sick bay of a warship is traditionally placed in the safest and most secure heart of the ship. A sailor standing in the open, firing a deck gun at an attacking aircraft, has *much* to gain by making for the relative safety of sick bay.⁷⁰¹

The fact they do not suggests mental resilience. Reeve agrees, and believes that sailors are not subject to the same threats on their discipline as their basic human instincts are not as threatened. Soldiers required fierce discipline in order to overcome the desire for self-preservation that may otherwise have led them to flee, hide or panic, particularly when under bombardment. In contrast, when in combat sailors were confined and

⁶⁹⁸ Tim McClement, Interview with Author, 27/05/09.

⁶⁹⁹ IWM SOUND 31103 Bradley, Liam, Reel 4.

⁷⁰⁰ Quoted in IWM SOUND 25556 Budding, Bill, Reel 1.

⁷⁰¹ Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 59.

preoccupied. As there was nowhere to run to, or nowhere seemingly “safe” to take shelter, the choice was only to fight or die.⁷⁰² As a result, sailors rarely succumbed to panic or breakdown and psychological casualties amongst sailors have been historically lower than amongst those who fought on land or in the air. However, while mental fatigue and breakdowns in ships have historically been rare as naval battles are predominately short and infrequent, in prolonged engagements, as in the Second World War and the Falklands, signs of combat fatigue presented themselves.⁷⁰³

These theories can be challenged, however. A flaw in Grossman’s argument is that modern naval warfare employed weapons that targeted ships, rather than sailors specifically; the Exocet missile in particular was designed to strike an enemy ship amidships, just above the waterline. Therefore, there were no “safe” places to go during an attack, as the entire ship was a target, and as such sailors tended to feel more vulnerable. When fighting on land, a soldier could dive into a trench or shell hole in order to escape a blast, or a close-passing shell. For a sailor, any ordnance directed at the ship was also, inevitably, directed at him personally. A British sailor wrote during the Second World War, ‘on land you don’t feel that *you* are the target. At sea it’s just too bloody obvious and has its effect accordingly.’⁷⁰⁴ This statement is all too applicable to those who served in the South Atlantic. Being confined to the insides of the ship, therefore, was highly dangerous, perhaps even more so than being on the upper decks, with potential access to escape routes. Sailors certainly recognised this. When the ship was at action stations, which given the near constant danger the ships operated in was virtually all the time, the internal hatches separating the compartments were buttoned down and sealed in order to preserve the watertight integrity of the ship’s hull so as to withstand damage and remain afloat. Passage throughout the ship at such a time was difficult even when done in a calm manner, without the pressure of an emergency or imminent fire and explosion. Such movement was further complicated by the fact that each sailor carried round his waist a respirator, an immersion suit to keep the water out should the wearer have to jump over the side and abandon ship, and a life-jacket. Sailors also wore protective anti-flash clothing, hoods and gloves, designed to protect the face and hands from burns should the ship catch fire. Sealing of the hatches,

⁷⁰² Reeve, ‘Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle’, p. 30

⁷⁰³ Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 397.

⁷⁰⁴ Quoted in Spector, *At War at Sea*, p. 181.

therefore, would effectively have entombed men who worked below decks had the ship suffered extensive damage. If the ship was struck by a bomb or missile, their escape from their action stations would be far slower and more dangerous, if not impossible, due to fire, smoke and damage to structural elements of the ships such as ladders that facilitated movement between decks, or the buckling of such hatches when damaged that could prevent them being opened again. Consequently, some captains, such as *Coventry's* Hart Dyke, allowed some hatches to remain open in order to maintain the morale of his crew.⁷⁰⁵ The principle of being under artillery bombardment that could lead to panic amongst land-based troops could indeed be exacerbated in modern ships, where a tiny minority of men actually fired weapons at the enemy attacking them. A small number of sailors may have helped direct these weapons; the rest had action stations that required them to wait for something to happen, such as a fire, before they could carry out their allotted task. Thus, they remained inactive, prone on the floor, and unable to see the enemy. Some were isolated, working by themselves, and thus deprived of another human being to draw support from. As Watson said, 'the horror of most sailors is being trapped and injured down below.'⁷⁰⁶ For those sailors stationed below decks, when a ship was damaged, or appeared to be damaged, they were faced with the challenging question of just when they would break and head for the upper deck.⁷⁰⁷ It took enormous discipline to remain at their posts, and this without the presence of authority figures such as officers that were customary on the battlefields of East Falkland. It was a mixture of training, professionalism, and the culture and traditions of the Royal Navy that kept these men at their posts and functioning under prolonged fire.

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Therefore it is clear that there were several strong and unique contrasts between fighting at sea and fighting on land in the Falklands. These were the result of several factors, including the differing cultural values of the naval branch of the armed forces and the enormous impact of technology on the practicalities and concepts of combat and killing. What is also remarkable is the different culture of the surface and

⁷⁰⁵ Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 138.

⁷⁰⁶ IWM SOUND 14848 Watson, John Keith 'Jake', Reel 2.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

submarine fleets, and the ways in which they approached these issues. This was in part a result of their differing cultures, created by their differing operational experiences prior to the Falklands War, and it is clear from the testimony that those sailors of the submarine fleet were more accustomed to serving on a war footing. However, one aspect of the Royal Navy's institutional culture as a whole that was essential throughout Operation Corporate, and one that is clear through an analysis of the written and oral testimony, is the commitment to completing the task successfully and professionally. While very few envisaged war, this mentality was still carried into battle as it had been enforced through training, exercises and previous operations. That this mentality is clearly present across a variety of historical source mediums, creation dates and ranks points to the existence of a dominant Falklands memory, the product of a unified culture that predicated emotional, mental and physical responses to the issues the men encountered. Even though very few of the sailors engaged in the war at sea in the Falklands were directly responsible for firing weapons that led to the deaths of Argentine servicemen, they were all certainly involved through fulfilling their specialist roles. They were fully exposed to the dangers of this form of warfare at the cutting edge of technology, and because of this major technological influence had a very different experience of war as compared to those British servicemen in the Army and Royal Marines.

Chapter 5:

In the Air: The How and Why of Killing in Aerial Combat

The air war fought in the Falklands was far more diverse than any other theatre of battle, and was waged by three distinct units. First, there were the single-seat attack fighters; secondly, the helicopter pilots; and finally the bomber pilots engaged in the Black Buck operations. The experiences of British aviators in combat are explored in this chapter in order to analyse first how and then significantly why they fought, and will compare these characteristics with those established in the previous chapters dealing with the campaigns on land and at sea. Such comparisons will reveal a markedly different approach to the issues surrounding combat as found amongst those men who fought on the islands or at sea. As in the previous chapters, there is a remarkable consistency across the historical record that points to an enduring culture and mentality amongst the air forces, one that was shared by men of different ranks and roles in the aerial battlefield. This existed even though the experience of war in the air was diverse. The far smaller number of aviators deployed to the South Atlantic is reflected in the provision of source material, and there is far less available for the air theatre than for either sea or land. This study has made use of three retrospective memoirs from Falklands veterans, three oral history interviews collected independently and eight collected by the Imperial War Museum in the thirty years since the end of hostilities. The historical record is also supplemented by a previously unused contemporary audio diary from one participant held within the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive. Two anthologies of veterans' experiences have also contributed to this chapter. The fact that these sources, regardless of their date of creation or the form they take, show a unified way in which combat was approached and the way it was expressed point to a dominant culture that produced a behavioural uniformity amongst the air forces. Such conformity exists even though the sources have been drawn from Fleet Air Arm and RAF fight pilots and air crews, as well as Royal Navy, Army Air Corps, and Royal Marine helicopter crews. Such a culture was evidently strong and enduring, capable of producing a uniformity of memory that can be used to define the experience of war in the air in the Falklands War.

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Aerial warfare posed unique challenges. In his study of Second World War combat aviation, Mark Wells correctly addressed the idea that war in the air was distinct from that on land, for although they shared the same characteristics of danger, physical and mental exertion, uncertainty and chance, 'in the air these factors seem magnified many times' because flight itself 'can be considered to be conducted in an essentially hostile environment.'⁷⁰⁸ Furthermore, 'quite apart from the already considerable physical threats of violence, wounds or death that any combatant faces in battle, these airmen assumed the routine but serious risks of aerial flight.'⁷⁰⁹ Flying itself was an inherently dangerous vocation, regardless of the efforts of the Argentines, and this danger was also greater amplified by the operational requirement to mount sorties from the deck of an aircraft carrier, which pitched and rolled in highly variable sea conditions. Indeed, in Operation Corporate no fighter aircraft was lost in dog fighting with the Argentine Air Force and Navy; some were lost to ground fire, but the majority were lost to accidents. For example, 800 NAS lost an aircraft when it exploded shortly after takeoff and crashed into the sea on a night sortie, and another to ground fire over Goose Green, but none to enemy aircraft. Similarly, 801 NAS lost four aircraft during the campaign, but only one as a result of Argentine aggression; two Sea Harriers collided in cloud on 6th May, killing both pilots; on 29th May, one aircraft being made ready for takeoff slid off the deck when *Invincible* turned into the wind, and was lost overboard, though the pilot was recovered; and on 1st June another was shot down by Roland surface-to-air-missile south of Stanley.

While soldiers and sailors lived and worked in hostile environments, it was the airman who was exposed to more danger on a routine basis, as Wells observes: 'Airmen, more than any other wartime combatants, had to deal not only with the direct challenges of combat, but also faced the life-threatening hazards of their surroundings.'⁷¹⁰ Similarly, as noted in the previous chapter in regards to sailors, technology has an increasing role in the life of the aviator at war. Reeve argues that,

Flying, like seamanship, is itself a technical discipline on which a warfighting capability is built. War in the air, therefore, like war at sea, depends upon a

⁷⁰⁸ Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, p. 27, pp. 27-8.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

critical interface between people and technology, and aircrew are part of a weapons system which, like ships, can be targeted as a whole.⁷¹¹

However, Reeve's similarity between the two does not go far enough; it is aviation, in all its forms, that represented the zenith of military technology, and thus technology dominated the airman's experience of war like no other. From the moment a mission began, to the moment it ended, airmen were dependent on mechanical and technological support to sustain them in an environment man cannot survive in by his own means. As Wells identified during the Second World War, airmen, unlike soldiers, were sustained in their fighting environment by artificial means, as 'without aircraft to carry men aloft, without life-support equipment to keep them warm and breathing, and without relatively sophisticated weapons, no fighting could take place in the skies above the ground.'⁷¹² In the modern jet age of aviation, these changes were even more pronounced, and his comments more accurate, with aircraft able to fly higher and faster, and engage their enemies over greater distances with weapons of increasing sophistication. Such a dependence on technology also involved its own hazards as the factor for complications and difficulties was massively increased. As the aircraft became more technical, so they became more mentally demanding to keep airborne, let alone fight, requiring continuous concentration. Any loss in this concentration, or misinterpretation of the instruments, could lead to disaster, and pilots had to be continually spatially aware. For example, when conducting low level bombing raids, the Sea Harrier and Harrier pilots had to possess such awareness so as to both carry out a successful bombing raid and also prevent them from flying into the ground.⁷¹³

Another major difference between aerial warfare and that which occurred at sea or on land is that, in the modern era in particular, the aerial battlefield extended beyond the visual horizon, increasing the uncertainty that had characterised air operations in previous, less technologically advanced conflicts. This vantage point ensured that aviators certainly saw more of a battlefield than either the infantry or sailors, who had their experiences dictated by the position they were ordered to take up. They did not have the view afforded by being in a cockpit at several thousand feet, but instead fought

⁷¹¹ Reeve, 'Introduction', p. 31.

⁷¹² Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, p. 28.

⁷¹³ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

their war from the visually prohibitive environment of a trench, or a sealed compartment aboard a ship. In contrast, 'the salient feature of an air battle is its almost limitless size and scope.'⁷¹⁴ Flight also provided a panoramic that was inevitably quite at odds with the violence of war, as it was a vantage point very few people were afforded. There was certainly a special aura in observing events from the unique and privileged position of a single-seat fighter cockpit that made such sights remarkable and praiseworthy, even if acts of violence were visible. This was possible because civil aviation and military aviation were very similar, requiring similar conditions that could be appreciated in both circumstances, something which was not the case in the infantry. David Morgan, for example, was aware of such a dichotomy: 'It was a peculiarly impotent feeling to be sitting in the relatively comfortable, benign and familiar surroundings of the cockpit while the troops and helicopter pilots below us were engaged in a dreadful dance with death.'⁷¹⁵ This awareness was not confined to British perceptions, but also transcended nationalities; when Guillermo Crippa, an Argentine fighter pilot, discovered the British ships carrying out their landings at San Carlos on 21st May he noted that,

It was very strange because it was a beautiful day, very peaceful, and the Islands looked lovely. It was incredible to think there was a war going on. It all looked so bucolic that any thoughts of aggression and violence seemed out of the question. The seagulls were flying, the sea was calm, there was a light breeze and it was very sunny.⁷¹⁶

Indeed, the pleasure of occupying such a position ensured that the presence of machines of war was of almost secondary importance. This division provides a certain detachment from some of the acts of violence that are occurring elsewhere on the battlefield. Like the soldiers who went ashore, Nigel 'Sharkey' Ward could see all the ships in San Carlos Water from his cockpit, and was committed to protecting them. However, he was still very much separate from the reality of the combat the sailors were enduring. For example, at one point during the amphibious landings on 21st May, Ward called for more 'trade,' or more tasks, hopefully enemy to shoot down. He was

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁷¹⁵ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 263.

⁷¹⁶ Guillermo Owen Crippa, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 117.

instructed to wait, an order that initially angered him and he questioned. He received the following response: “Well, we’ve just had our ops room strafed with gunfire, with 30mm cannon. The man across from me has lost the top of his head and I’ve been hit in the arm and I’m just collecting myself.” I felt awful.’⁷¹⁷

Helicopter pilots could also experience this panoramic. The sense of detachment was also enforced by the requirements to keep the aircraft in the air. It was a demanding role that required the pilot’s utmost attention, so much so that it almost created a sense of isolation between the interior of the helicopter, and the external world. John Glaze, for example, an Air Gunner with 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, believed that when in action, the helicopter was like a cocoon, ‘womb-like.’⁷¹⁸ Indeed, Eddy Candlish, also with 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron as an Observer in a Gazelle helicopter, recalled that at one stage during a resupply mission, the pilot was so focused on keeping the aircraft in the hover position that he was unaware of mortar rounds landing nearby. For Candlish, ‘it’s like a different war because you can’t hear it above the noise of the aircraft.’⁷¹⁹ The similarities between both the fighter pilots and the helicopter crews, though involved in different tasks and related through different historical sources, are striking.

However, unlike the fighter aircraft, when operating over the Islands helicopters were much more vulnerable to the threats the battlefield contained due to their slower speed and low operating height. For example, two Gazelle helicopters, one of them Candlish’s, were lost to ground fire in the first hour of the landings on 21st May. Candlish witnessed the second aircraft go down, and saw it struck by,

A fusillade of shots, basically. All rifle fire, there were no machine guns involved, just rifles, but the front of the aircraft just basically disintegrated, the canopy disintegrated. It stopped, it was about seventy foot above the ground, it stopped like it had hit a brick wall.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁷ Nigel Ward, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 109.

⁷¹⁸ IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 6.

⁷¹⁹ IWM SOUND 30109 Candlish, Eddy, Reel 6.

⁷²⁰ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09, and IWM SOUND 30109 Candlish, Eddy, Reels 5 and 6.

There were also aerial threats to contend with, such as Pucará aircraft, which Bill Belcher, a co-pilot in Scout helicopters with B Flight, 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, believed were 'the biggest threat to our existence' because of their ability and their design.⁷²¹ With a twin turbo-propped engine, the aircraft could match the helicopters for speed and manoeuvrability, and were also heavily armed, whereas for the vast majority of the time, the helicopters were not. Whilst flying in support of 2 Para's assault on Goose Green on 28th May, Glaze's Scout had been attacked by two Pucará's. Both had fired on the helicopter, but missed. During the second attack, Glaze had considered jumping out of the moving helicopter as he was close enough to the ground, and moving slowly enough, that he reasoned that he would probably only break his legs, rather than be killed by the Argentine aircraft.⁷²² For the remainder of the campaign, Glaze became convinced that 'every time we flew after that, we were going to be shot down by aircraft, that's all we thought.'⁷²³ As a result of his experiences, he felt increasingly vulnerable 'and the old cocoon, womb-like existence, sense of security, false security, dissipated.'⁷²⁴ The oral history is remarkable in that it has related that, like many soldiers of the Task Force, coming under direct fire personally had transformed Glaze's view, whereas previously even surveying the wreckage of downed Argentine aircraft or hearing about the two lost Gazelles prior to this incident had not challenged his sense of vulnerability in such a way.⁷²⁵

Another major difference within the sphere of aerial warfare was that, as described above, when helicopters came under attack and were shot from the sky, there was little or no way of escaping them before they crashed. Candlish's Gazelle, for example, crashed in San Carlos Water, and had he not been so quick in escaping he would certainly have drowned. Fighter pilots, however, while exposed to weapons that could rip apart their aircraft in seconds, had the option of ejecting to safety, something which several pilots were forced to make use of in the Falklands campaign. Jerry Pook, for example, had been struck by ground fire on 30th May and began leaking fuel at a rapid rate from both fuel tanks, which would prevent him from returning to *Hermes*.⁷²⁶ His only option was to get as close to the carriers as he could before ejecting, and hoping he

⁷²¹ IWM SOUND 13187 Belcher, Bill, Reel 1.

⁷²² IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 7.

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., Reel 5.

⁷²⁶ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 12.

was picked up. The fighter pilots were dependent on the carriers for their survival, but in between the carriers and the aircraft was the cruel and inhospitable South Atlantic. Like their colleagues in the surface fleet, fighter pilots were protected from the elements by machines, yet when these failed they were plunged into a hostile environment in which survival was not guaranteed, even when wearing an immersion suit and making use of the dinghy attached to the survival equipment. As Pook recalled, 'I'm looking down at the sea, and I think "that's going to be a bit of luck to survive here" because it's very cold and it was bloody rough.'⁷²⁷ The possibility of taking on this environment and waiting to be rescued obviously filled them with considerable apprehension, particularly those RAF pilots who did not have the experience of operating at sea and whose main operational past had been operating from land bases.

Yet ejection was not a simple process and was in fact highly dangerous, as Pook described:

It's a bit like being blown up by a hand grenade really. There's this huge explosion underneath you, and you get thrown out into the airflow. Then very shortly the rocket fires and this rocket applies one and a half tons of thrust to your arse, and burns for a half a second. It's very violent, and your head, with the acceleration, your head gets snapped down between your knees; you can't avoid that.⁷²⁸

The force of the ejection was certainly capable of causing injury, which could prove fatal should the pilot come down in the water. Jeff Glover, another RAF pilot with No. 1 Squadron, suffered serious injury when he ejected from his damaged aircraft, and would certainly have drowned had an Argentine soldier not swam out and pulled him ashore.⁷²⁹ Such bravery demonstrated the level of compassion exhibited for the enemy by the Argentines. Drowning was a serious risk for those parachuting into the sea, even if they were not injured, particularly in the rough swell of the South Atlantic. When Pook came down, he was at first unable to release his harness, and therefore spent 'the first few minutes in the water being dragged, fortunately on my back, from wave top to

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ Jeff Glover, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 100.

wave top by the parachute; if I'd been on my front I would have drowned very quickly.'⁷³⁰ Furthermore, the parachute could also act like a giant anchor, and if it sank before the pilot released himself from the harness, he would be dragged down with it. Once the pilot had recovered and was in the dinghy, he was then very much at the mercy of the elements, and dependent on the vigilance of the search-and-rescue helicopter crews to come and collect him, itself no simple task. One pilot, Flight Lieutenant Ian Mortimer, was shot down close to Port Stanley. Unable to activate his homing beacon for fear of attracting the Argentines, he waited until cover of darkness. After several hours, he was rescued by a helicopter from 820 Squadron based aboard *Invincible*. Had he not been recovered, Mortimer would either have faced captivity should he be recovered by the Argentines or worse should he not be recovered at all.

Due to the complex nature of selection and training, operational aircrew tended to be much older than their counterparts in the infantry, marines and navy. For helicopter Observers and Air Gunners, this was because many of them had been soldiers that had served in a traditional infantry role before being able to transfer into the air corps. This was particularly true for the aircrewmen of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, who needed to first reach the rank of sergeant in the Royal Marines before they could apply for the Aircrewman's Selection Course. Many of them had completed operational tours of duty with the Corps; John Glaze and Eddy Candlish, for example, had both served in Northern Ireland twice and in Cyprus.⁷³¹ As senior NCOs, they had more operational experience to draw from. The fighter pilots were also much older. For example, Squadron Leader Timothy Gedge was forty one years old, while Ward was thirty eight, Pook was thirty seven and Morgan thirty five years of age. One of the pilots involved in the Black Buck operations, Squadron Leader John Reeve, had been flying Vulcans since 1969.⁷³² Dick Russell, an Air-to-Air Refuelling Instructor who flew on the missions, had his fiftieth birthday immediately prior to launching the first mission.⁷³³ In contrast, as noted previously, the average age of the Royal Marines in the Falklands campaign was just 19.⁷³⁴ Several soldiers who sailed with the Parachute Regiment

⁷³⁰ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 12.

⁷³¹ IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reels 1 and 3, IWM SOUND 30109 Candlish, Eddy, Reels 1, 2 and 3.

⁷³² Rowland White, *Vulcan 607* (London, 2006), p. 144.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁷³⁴ McGowan and Hands, *Don't Cry For Me Sergeant-Major*, p. 16.

battalions were just 17 years old,⁷³⁵ and the average age of many of the Royal Navy ships was somewhere between 20 and 25 years of age. Because they were older, aviators approached combat in a rather different way from the younger, more enthusiastic soldiers and sailors. There was certainly excitement, which combined with their sense of professional duty provided a powerful motivation, but there was also a greater deal of personal apprehension, as a greater number of them had dependents for which to worry about in combination with their own personal safety. Yet like the soldier in the Army and the Royal Marines, and the sailors in the Royal Navy, this was the first time in a generation that the aviators would be committed to conventional combat, a fact which was a great leveller on the age differential. If anything, age exacerbated it. Men who had been flying jets for many years in peacetime saw it as their opportunity to utilise their training and were determined to take it. A further difference between the fighter pilots engaged in the Falklands and the troops on the ground was not only that the fighter pilots were a much smaller unit in terms of numbers, with only forty three operating during the campaign, there was also a social difference in that they were all also commissioned officers, and their background was traditionally rooted in a higher social class. Unlike in the Second World War, where bomber crews in particular had sometimes been composed of a mixture of Flight Sergeant's and Flight Officers, all those fighter pilots engaged in combat duty in the Falklands held the rank of Flight Lieutenant or above. Consequently, all the combat was contained within the officer class of the air combat arm, whereas, as has been noted in previous chapters, in the navy and army and Royal Marines, officers were outnumbered by junior ranks and had mostly directed the combat, rather than directly participated themselves.

The fighter pilot, unlike any other branch of the military, led a solitary existence when in combat. As Lord Charles Moran noted in his ground-breaking study of courage and morale in war,

The pilot is alone in the sky with his sharp foe. In a bomber his crew share his solitude, they cannot relieve it. He is not fortified by his duty to his men which in the infantry keeps an officer on his feet; he must always rely on his skill, on

⁷³⁵ Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, p. 105.

his own resolution. He is without the support of numbers. In an impersonal war of millions he remains an individual.⁷³⁶

In the Falklands, the Vulcan bomber crews engaged in their missions from Ascension could tap into this collective spirit to sustain and motivate them, as could the helicopter crews. In order to complete their missions, a productive working relationship between the crew was essential; Lieutenant John Boughton, for example, relied heavily on his Leading Aircrewman when rescuing casualties from *Sir Galahad* after she had been bombed at Fitzroy.⁷³⁷ This, however, was something denied to single-seat fighter pilot by the nature of the war he fought. He was responsible for everything himself, and could rely on no-one else when in the air. It could be a very lonely existence indeed, particularly for naval aviators, who would sit and wait on the deck, and then launch and be directed to chase down contacts that may or may not be enemy aircraft.⁷³⁸ It took a particular type of character to want to be a fighter pilot, and the solitary nature, without the support offered by a crew, did not appeal to all recruits who had joined in the early 1960s.⁷³⁹

Thus, when it came to motivating himself to fight, the fighter pilot needed something different. The fighter pilot needed to be aggressive and competitive. Such traits were inculcated into them during their training, where they learned from an Air Warfare Instructor (AWI), and in their interaction with each other. During training, being of an average standard was not good enough, and trainees were taught to excel when they came up against the more experienced instructors in simulated combat. As Ward recalled from his time both as a trainee pilot and an AWI with 764 Squadron,

You learned from the AWI. And when you didn't get things right you got your arse kicked from breakfast-time to God knows when. This led to fierce professional competition in the air and a very healthy and aggressive atmosphere on the deck.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁶ Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, p. 104.

⁷³⁷ John Boughton, in Max Arthur, *Above All, Courage: Personal Stories from the Falklands War* (London, 2002), p. 163

⁷³⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁷³⁹ IWM SOUND 13940 Wood, John, Reel 1.

⁷⁴⁰ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 47.

Such competition bred both an aggressive and competitive atmosphere and also high standards in both the air and amongst the men on the ground in their social activities, and was a vital foundation of their institutional culture. Having passed the tough course gave the pilots high confidence, as Ward recalled: 'Although I cannot explain why, not for one minute of time during the coming weeks did I accept the possibility that I might be shot down by Argentine fighters.'⁷⁴¹ Rivalry within the squadrons could also be fierce, with some pilots not wanting to be seen as the weak link requiring extra help or needing to have more experienced pilots "babysit" them, even if it was standard procedure.⁷⁴² Such aggression also played an important part in the psychological battle the pilot waged with the enemy, as there was a 'need to make that guy know that if he's not very good he's going to die rather than you.'⁷⁴³ Also, because air combat was so individualistic, with one man responsible for and in command of the weapons platform, it rapidly became a personal battle. While the presence of a wingman provided some form of emotional support, combat remained a battle between two fighter aircraft. The fact that the majority of Argentine aircraft were also single-seat fighters ensured that this combat became a battle between two men, in a way that naval combat in particular could never emulate. It was the ultimate form of combat, where man relied only on his own skills. The pilots involved certainly recognised this:

You wanted to get to grips with the enemy in the air because it was you against the other man and you knew you could beat him. If you failed, then it was down to you and there was no one else to blame.⁷⁴⁴

Yet in the early stages of the war, this aggression was tempered by the implementation of Rules of Engagement issued by the British authorities. The original Rules of Engagement issued to the Sea Harrier squadrons stated that the pilots could only attack Argentine aircraft if fired upon first. These were obviously woefully impractical in a war situation; by allowing an enemy fighter to fire upon him first, a pilot was deprived of a chance to defend himself. The inherent aggression of the fighter pilots inevitably chafed at being shackled in such a way by political posturing, and the pilots themselves

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., p. 80.

⁷⁴² IWM SOUND 12821 Audio Diary of Nigel David 'Sharkey' Ward, Reel 1, and Robin Kent, Interview with Author.

⁷⁴³ Mortimer, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 92.

⁷⁴⁴ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 218.

also recognised the threat implementing such rules would have on their lives. As Ward argued:

Hypothetical war games in Whitehall were not quite the same as a one-on-one confrontation with a flag-waving Argentine in a fully armed fighter. We all wanted to go and beat hell out of the air opposition; what we didn't want or need were sheets of small print telling us to commit suicide by letting our opponents shoot first.⁷⁴⁵

The rules governing combat between the opposing air forces were later relaxed, but demonstrated that the pilots were under far stricter control than their comrades engaged in the land battles, for example. The soldiers of the Army and Royal Marines were never told to allow the enemy to shoot first before opening fire themselves, but because the aviators served and operated in such small numbers, and because they operated in a more expeditionary manner in the run up to the amphibious landings, it was far easier for the Government to attempt to exert some control over their actions, even if it would be detrimental.

The acquisition of rank, in conjunction with the need to remain aggressive, compelled a certain pattern of behaviour amongst fighter pilots, one that was often at odds with what they personally felt. Moran believed that 'like a racehorse the fighter pilot is a creature of moods.'⁷⁴⁶ However, amongst those pilots serving in the Falklands, it was accepted by all of them that they would not show what they believed might be weakness emotionally. As one stated, 'fighter pilots don't cry; they eat glass and bite heads off babies and die young no matter how old they live.'⁷⁴⁷ Robin Kent, for example, was sure that the British pilots would take casualties given the odds stacked against the Sea Harriers in terms of numbers, yet, for fear of lowering morale, he never shared such thoughts.⁷⁴⁸ Morgan, in a different squadron on a different ship, exhibited the exact same response, instead attempting to lift the mood by describing the situation as 'a target rich environment.'⁷⁴⁹ Such testimony is a prime example of how fighter pilots

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 187.

⁷⁴⁶ Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, p. 109.

⁷⁴⁷ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 275.

⁷⁴⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁷⁴⁹ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

would obscure personal emotions by adopting the expected aggressive public persona expected. The similarity of the two responses, revealed by oral history, is remarkable.

Such a mentality meant that the pilots did not discuss the impact of losses once battle was joined, as this might result in a lowering of morale, or even worse risk exposing weaknesses in front of their colleagues. The competitive nature of fighter pilots has been mentioned above, including how it extended to both combat operations in the air and on the ground. Fighter pilots were friends and colleagues, but they were also rivals, something bred into them throughout their training. Such a mentality for coping with loss had also grown organically as the individual pilots had gone through training and experienced the death of friends and colleagues through accidents. It was self-regulating and extended to the wakes held for killed friends aboard the aircraft carriers following losses, whether through accident or enemy action. While they began as sombre affairs, soon jokes were made and the mood lifted.⁷⁵⁰ As was customary, the dead pilot's Mess tab was kept open for one night after he had died, and all the surviving pilots drank to his memory on that.⁷⁵¹ Yet the pilots still keenly felt the loss of their comrades, even if they were not necessarily directly exposed to the horrors of war, as those men in other services were. Two pilots from 801, for example, Lieutenant Alan Curtis and Lieutenant-Commander John Eyton-Jones, were killed in a mid-air collision in heavy cloud on 6th May. There wasn't even a radio signal to suggest there had been any trouble, and all that was recovered was some aircraft debris. The pilots' bodies had sunk beneath the waves with the remnants of their aircraft; the remaining members of 801 were not confronted with their charred remains, or even the sight of a crashed aircraft. There were no visceral images of violence, as the infantry were subjected to. If a pilot did not return, it was simply assumed that he was dead, until proven otherwise. For example, No. 1 Squadron lost a pilot on the first day of their operations in-theatre.⁷⁵² In fact, the pilot, Jeff Glover, had not been killed; rather he had been shot down and wounded, and having been recovered by the Argentines was being held prisoner. Another No. 1 Squadron pilot, Bob Iveson, was shot down while carrying out air support during the Battle of Goose Green. As Pook acknowledged, when Iveson did not return to *Hermes*, lacking any confirmation that he survived the ejection it was

⁷⁵⁰ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 204.

⁷⁵¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁷⁵² IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 9.

simply assumed he was dead, and the other pilots acted accordingly.⁷⁵³ This was an important cultural aspect of the fighter pilot mentality. As noted in previous chapters, they were accustomed to death and the sudden loss of friends. Such an approach, as noted here, was a cultural construct that had been implemented since the beginning of aerial warfare, designed to help men carry on and cope psychologically.

However, in such a close-knit and contained community as a squadron aboard an aircraft carrier, the losses were still hard to take for many pilots.⁷⁵⁴ For pilots, it was not the dead body of their colleague that caused the psychological trauma, but their absence from where they were once present, which re-enforced their physical absence from the land of the living. The wakes held in the Wardroom were not attempts to forget the fallen, but instead were a process that ensured that the negative emotions were pushed aside or repressed in order to carry on.⁷⁵⁵ In many ways, then, the fighter pilot mentality was highly repressive. The clean detachment that appeared to mark fighter combat was a self-created, self-perpetuated facade. Just like actual aerial combat itself, the time spent out of the air was also very solitary, as Morgan recalled: 'We all had to maintain the outward appearance of disdain for the dangers that we faced on a daily basis. If we did not, I feared that the fabric of our tenuous existence would quickly crumble.'⁷⁵⁶ There was therefore often a distinction and conflict between outward appearances and internal feelings, with the former being heavily regulated and the latter being repressed. This is why black humour was so prevalent, as making light of the situation was in fact 'a good way of camouflaging your feelings.'⁷⁵⁷ At one stage, for example, Pook was unable fly because the aircraft assigned to him required essential maintenance. Standard procedure was to ground the aircraft until such maintenance could be carried out. Pook joked that the air mechanic should simply let him take the aircraft, as he was probably going to be shot down, and therefore he would save himself the trouble of having to fill out the necessary paperwork.⁷⁵⁸ What seemed like a joke actually masked some fairly morbid feelings, but by releasing them through humour, Pook was able to maintain the fighter pilot facade. Such a practice was also active for the helicopter aircrews living on the Islands themselves, where 'black humour had supplanted some elements of

⁷⁵³ Ibid., Reel 11.

⁷⁵⁴ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 3.

⁷⁵⁵ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 128.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 109.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

⁷⁵⁸ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 11.

grief.⁷⁵⁹ While dangerous in terms of long-term psychological health, such a mentality of suppressing and internalising negative emotions and fears was also a pragmatic approach to dealing with combat losses; as Pook acknowledged, despite the casualties, the operation needed to be maintained, and the pilots needed to keep on flying.⁷⁶⁰ The fighter pilots were there to fight; entering bouts of melancholy and depression would only have hampered operational efficiency, or resulted in a loss of concentration that could prove fatal, adding their deaths to the casualty lists. Instead, the pilots went back on their established cultural values of enduring such situations, and continued to operate in their assigned roles.

Superstition has historically helped pilots and aircrew overcome fear and continue operations. As Bill Wallrich has written, 'superstitious beliefs and actions breed best at times of great danger or of great physical and/or emotional stress.'⁷⁶¹ It was therefore inevitable that given the ample stresses of flying, including inherent physical dangers in addition to the attentions of the enemy, such superstitious tendencies would develop. While Wallrich's article refers specifically to the United States Air Force, such an assertion can be seen as applicable to all Air Forces, who all experienced the same dangers in flying, rather than being responses to nation-specific threats. For example, in the Second World War lucky charms and superstitions were culturally important to the pilots of Bomber Command, and were highly varied, ranging from traditional items such as a rabbit's foot, rosary, St Christopher medallion or letter, to the more obscure and esoteric, such as personally inscribed medallions, or gifts.⁷⁶² Patrick Bishop also suggests that the reliance on such items increased the more missions an aircrew carried out.⁷⁶³ The belief in such items grew as once the pilot or aircrews had survived a number of missions, and the odds against continued survival seemed to shorten, trust was placed in this item or ritual as being the cause of such survival.

Yet the operational circumstances of this conflict meant that aircrew were tasked to complete a set number of missions in order to complete a combat tour, after which they would be allowed time to rest or transfer to less hazardous training establishments. In

⁷⁵⁹ IWM SOUND 30108 Glaze, John, Reel 7.

⁷⁶⁰ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 9.

⁷⁶¹ T/Sgt. Bill Wallrich, 'Superstition and the Air Force', in *Western Folklore*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January, 1960), p. 11.

⁷⁶² Patrick Bishop, *Bomber Boys: Fighting Back, 194 – 1945* (London, 2008), pp. 161-2.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

the Falklands, however, there were no such discernible time limits on operations. The campaign would last as long as was necessary in order to achieve victory. Furthermore, there were no reserves, either in terms of aircraft or pilots, who could be rotated into the combat theatre to take part in operations. In the South Atlantic, the pilots flew hundreds of sorties of a far shorter duration than the bomber missions of the Second World War without ever really keeping track of their number, as it was not a finite value marking the completion of operations. Another difference between the two eras was that, during the Second World War, there was often a belief across the Allied air forces that certain planes were cursed, and to fly them would result in death or injury to one or all of the crew, as well as some being charmed so as to ensure protection to those who flew them.⁷⁶⁴ Such beliefs would never have been fostered in the Falklands fighter pilots as they rotated and shared the aircraft. No one pilot had “his” fighter that he always flew; since human pilots tired more rapidly than machines, there were more pilots than aircraft deployed to the South Atlantic in order to keep as many aircraft in the air as possible. There was, therefore, less emotional attachment to each of the aircraft and while they were viewed with affection, they were viewed as tools that facilitated the fighter pilot in fulfilling his role.

Pilots and aircrew did not exhibit the same levels of superstition as their historical forebears in the Falklands campaign, though it is perhaps logical to assume that had the campaign continued for a long duration they may well have turned to such beliefs for support. Indeed, events in the campaign could lead to increased superstition, suggesting that such a hypothesis might be true. For example, on the night of the battle of Goose Green, one Marine serving with the helicopter force was given all the sausages from the rations. He was killed the next day. Glaze recalled that at dinner later that night, when someone asked who wanted the sausages, there were no takers. Sausages had become ‘the black spot, the kiss of death.’⁷⁶⁵ While some pilots were in no way consciously superstitious in their approach to flying,⁷⁶⁶ others showed that such customs endured at least in a small way as part of fighter pilot culture in the later twentieth century by exhibiting a small and basic level of superstition. On *Hermes*, for example, none of the pilots would take the Number 13 Mae West lifejacket when suiting up. This was

⁷⁶⁴ Wallrich, ‘Superstition and the Air Force’, p. 15.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Robin Kent, Correspondence with Author, 18/05/10.

noticed by the Safety Equipment ratings and resulted in them modifying it, leaving the fighter group with two Number 3 vests. One of the pilots was also convinced that he would die if the ground crew offered him the right shoulder strap first when strapping into his fighter, so always hurriedly grabbed the left.⁷⁶⁷

There was yet another contrast in the combat experience between the air forces and those engaged on land and at sea. Reeve has highlighted a major difference between aerial and naval combat when he states that 'flights remain episodes and flying time is measured in hours, rather than days, weeks, months and, effectively, years as is the case for sailors at sea.'⁷⁶⁸ Due to limitations in the Sea Harrier design, it could not remain airborne for a great deal of time due to being unable to carry sufficient fuel. It could also only carry a limited number of weapons, and so this was a prospective constraint on duration of combat activity; unlike the soldier who could carry hundreds or thousands of rounds of ammunition, the Harriers were equipped only with a very small number of bombs and missiles, that once exhausted could only be replenished by specialist technicians back aboard the carriers. Thus, the fighter pilots engaged in rounds of aerial warfare; sharp, intense activity mingled with extended periods of boredom whilst back on the carriers or waiting for targets to appear whilst airborne. Yet the very possibility and nature of flight gave the pilots a freedom and a variety to their existence. It also offered the opportunity of escape from the strict regime of ship life built around defensive watches, which one pilot referred to as a 'mind-boggling routine,'⁷⁶⁹ but was one that sailors were fully bound up in. Furthermore, what Reeve overlooks is that naval aviation has always been bound to the surface fleet; the two are symbiotic. In that way, naval aviators shared many of the same cultural values as the sailors of the Royal Navy. They were, after all, part of the same service. Fighter pilots, like the sailors, relied on the ships to keep them safe from the hostile elements. Even though the men were by definition fighter pilots engaged in aerial warfare, they required aircraft carriers on a functional level to ensure they were able to do so. Pilots were also required to be housed in ships during any time that they were not in the air. Since they mostly conducted operations only during daylight hours, this meant they spent a high proportion of their time aboard the ships. The aircraft carriers therefore

⁷⁶⁷ David Morgan, Correspondence with Author, 17/08/10.

⁷⁶⁸ Reeve, 'Introduction', in Reeve and Stevens (eds.), *The Face of Naval Battle*, p. 32.

⁷⁶⁹ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 242.

sustained them and held an important cultural significance within the naval aviation branch. They were both functional tools and domestic residences, and the pilots very much appreciated this relationship. Indeed, the carriers were known as “Mother” as a radio call-sign.⁷⁷⁰

However, because of this relationship, pilots were equally vulnerable to the threats affecting these ships, despite having the designation of pilot, as those sailors who served in the surface fleet. The Exocet missile, for example, was greatly feared by all aboard the aircraft carriers, regardless of whether they were a fighter pilot, helicopter pilot or sailor, particularly after *Sheffield* had been hit. Kent, for example, recalls that the time he was most frightened during the campaign was not while he was in combat against Argentine aircraft, but instead when he was on the deck in his Sea Harrier during a suspected Exocet attack; he could not launch, and therefore could do nothing but wait, fastened into his cockpit, as the ship launched chaff rockets only metres from his aircraft in an effort to confuse the suspected incoming missile.⁷⁷¹ Moran wrote that ‘the moral fibre of the soldier, the sailor, and the airman is stretched by the same conditions – by loss of sleep and by fatigue,’⁷⁷² and thus it can be argued that, even though they only fought for a short time, as Reeve addressed above, the war in the air provided equal mental strain to that fought on land or at sea. This is because pilots were subjected to strain during periods when they were supposedly “off duty” due to the presence of anti-ship threats, as well as mental and physical exhaustion during operations in their specific combat arena. Also, due to the small number of pilots available, lessened still by losses, the fighter pilots were called upon more and more to fly throughout the day, severely reducing their mental and physical rest period, culminating in a lack of sleep.

Even though they remained bound to the world of the ship, the fighter pilots still pitied those men, such as sailors, who could not escape such threats. Pilots could take to air and be responsible for their own fates. Morgan, for example, recorded that ‘I had a great deal of sympathy for the ship’s company who had to spend the whole time locked in this huge sardine tin just waiting for a missile or torpedo to come through the

⁷⁷⁰ IWM SOUND 12820 Ward, Nigel David ‘Sharkey’, Reel 4.

⁷⁷¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁷⁷² Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, p. 109.

side.⁷⁷³ Because of this, fighter pilots in particular always preferred to be in the air, to be the masters of their own destinies. Many fighter pilots recorded that they would prefer to face danger and possible death head-on in the familiar surroundings of a cockpit rather than participate in any action whilst still aboard. Fighter pilots had the advantage of a more obvious and discernible target that was often lacking in ground combat. There was also solace in the fact that a pilot would know who had killed him should he not succeed, rather than his death being a random event due to an anonymous bullet on the battlefield, a fact of which Morgan was very conscious:

At least the war seemed cleaner in the air, more chivalrous, more gentlemanly... And if death came, it would be swift, not a scorching scream of tangled metal and blistering bulkheads but an instant snuffing out of life, with hardly time to know what had happened – a far better end, a warrior's end.⁷⁷⁴

With such an attitude to aerial combat, Morgan was not only typical of the fighter pilots of his generation, but also represented an almost direct continuity with his historical predecessors. Cecil Lewis, who served in the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War, for example, described air combat in 1936 in such terms:

To be alone, to have your life in your own hands, to use your own skill, single-handed, against the enemy. It was like the lists of the Middle Ages, the only sphere in modern warfare where a man saw his adversary and faced him in mortal combat, the only sphere where there was still chivalry and honour.⁷⁷⁵

For Lewis, the advantage of military aviation was that,

You did not sit in a muddy trench while someone who had no personal enmity against you loosed off a gun, five miles away, and blew you to smithereens – and did not know that he had done it! That was not fighting; it was murder. Senseless, brutal, ignoble.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷³ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 118.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁷⁷⁵ Cecil Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising* (Edinburgh, 1936), p. 45.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Richard Hillary, a Spitfire pilot who published his own memoirs in 1942, wrote that,

In a fighter plane, I believe we have found a way to return to war as it ought to be, war which is individual combat between two people, in which one either kills or is killed. It's exciting, it's individual, and it's disinterested.⁷⁷⁷

Indeed, Hillary virtually repeated Lewis' mantra on aerial combat, writing that, '...in a Spitfire we're back to war as it ought to be. Back to individual combat, to self-reliance, total responsibility for one's own fate. One either kills or is killed, and it's damned exciting.'⁷⁷⁸ The similarities between these pilots and Morgan, despite the latter's more naval background, are obvious yet striking all the same. When it comes to aerial combat, there was therefore a clear historical continuity of experience as well as consistency of expression between the two eras that is truly remarkable given the enormous technological advances that separated them.

There were of course benefits to being based on ships. In direct contrast to the infantry, Ward, as a naval officer, had a comfortable cabin to return to after each bout of flying. While being on a ship in the South Atlantic was hardly smooth and plain sailing, literally or metaphorically, this at least sheltered him from the elements. On East Falkland, the infantry lacked any such shelter from the harsh climate. Aviators also shared access to regular mail from home with sailors, which they viewed as an important facet in maintaining morale.⁷⁷⁹ Furthermore, as all the pilots were officers, they enjoyed a relatively high standard of living, with access to continuous clean sheets, hot water, regular hot food and, most importantly, the Wardroom bar. The presence of the bar, as demonstrated above, provided solace in times of mourning, but also opportunities for amusement when morale was higher. After missions, the pilots could return to the comfort of the bar to celebrate both the success of the mission and their own survival. For example, after the final strafing run on Goose Green, Pook and two colleagues 'retired to the bar and congratulated each other on a bloody good effort, and became even more obnoxious after a few drinks.'⁷⁸⁰ Moran wrote of the dichotomy for the Second World War bomber crews where aircrew rested in 'soft security' in England

⁷⁷⁷ Richard Hillary, *The Last Enemy* (London, 1942), p. 16.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷⁷⁹ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

⁷⁸⁰ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 11.

one night and faced extreme danger over Germany the next. He believed that 'the sharp contrast adds to his [the aircrewman's] troubles by keeping alive the idea of another way of life – the chronic danger of an alternative in war.'⁷⁸¹ This risked provoking mental breakdown and strain on the nerves. The Wardroom was far removed, emotionally at least, from the idea of battle, and while it could be used in support of Moran's argument regarding the differential of violence and peace, in the Falklands War it was an essential place for the pilots to release tension and socialise with their peers. As seen above, it also had an essential cultural and functional role to play in the socialising between pilots. It did not harm morale, but rather maintained and encouraged it; it was always a place of amusement, and as a specific place a refuge from the aggression and carnage of war. Morgan, for example, was able to joke of the bar on *Hermes*: 'We discovered to our absolute horror that the beer was running low. The lack of women we could tolerate as part of the price of war but a threat to our beer supply was unthinkable!'⁷⁸² It is unlikely morale would have remained so high had the pilots operated from a temporary air strip on the Islands themselves and been forced to live in tents, suffering from the elements and Argentine air attack, as the helicopter air crews were. The officers of the surface fleet also shared the benefit of a Wardroom, and even the junior ratings had their own communal messes. Soldiers, however, in addition to being exposed to the elements, had no such communal areas, but were instead dispersed across a variety of perimeter trenches that prevented even platoons from congregating together.

It would be remiss to discuss the experiences of those men who fought the aerial battle in the Falklands without also analysing the experiences of those who sustained them. Given the highly technical nature of both fighter aircraft and helicopters, both types of aircraft required extensive teams of men to arm and maintain them in the combat zone. While only one man actually flew a Sea Harrier, it took the considerable effort of many to be able to put him in such a position. For example, the aircraft's complex electronic systems needed to be maintained and improved, which required specialist training and knowledge, and the aircraft need to be armed and fuelled. The RAF GR3 Harriers also required several immediate modifications just to ensure they could participate in the operation, such as the replacement of metal alloys with those that could withstand the

⁷⁸¹ Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, p. 108.

⁷⁸² Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 109.

corrosion of the sea water.⁷⁸³ These men also had a serious responsibility, as their role was to keep the aircraft flying. While the machines needed to be kept airworthy to secure the success of the mission, the survival of the pilot and aircrew was also the responsibility of the maintenance crews. This obviously became harder as aircraft were lost but the demands on the force remained at the same level. Since the Harrier force was so significantly outnumbered, it was vital to keep them flying, and it is a testament to the endurance of the maintenance crew and pilots that the Sea Harriers were able to fly 2,197 sorties during the war, which totalled 2,514 flying hours.⁷⁸⁴ Indeed, there were five times as many British fighter sorties over the Falklands as Argentine, despite the significant numerical advantage held by the latter.⁷⁸⁵

Those maintenance crews working on the Harriers, based aboard the aircraft carriers, had a unique perspective on the war. While they were exposed to all the threats being aimed at the most valuable assets of the British Task Force, the maintenance crews did not directly take up arms against the enemy, nor did they even see him. As McManners has written, aircraft fitters 'live busy and sometimes nerve-racking lives, particularly when waiting for aircraft to return from missions, but unless their airfields are attacked, they remain remote from the fighting.'⁷⁸⁶ Morgan, too, was aware of this distinction:

We were the only ones who actually knew what the enemy looked like, the only ones who had actually seen the islands and experienced the gunfire. All those who supported our efforts on the ship had only our word that anything was happening out there above the clouds beyond the hazy horizon... these men had to rely on our tales and the looks on our weary faces to build a picture of this conflict.⁷⁸⁷

It was not until after the war when the aircraft carriers moved closer to the Islands that these men could even see what they had fought for, and only when they saw the captured Argentines being ferried around Stanley harbour that they had their first sight

⁷⁸³ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 7.

⁷⁸⁴ Hobson, *Falklands Air War*, p. 203.

⁷⁸⁵ David C. Isby, *Fighter Combat in the Jet Age* (London, 1997), p. 141.

⁷⁸⁶ McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 188.

⁷⁸⁷ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 118.

of the enemy. These men fought the war by proxy, contributing in their own vital way, yet without firing a shot.

In contrast, those crews responsible for the helicopters were based ashore and in the beachhead. They were therefore very much exposed to all the violence of war, without any of the comforts, and forced to work in freezing temperatures to keep the helicopters flying, which were in short supply after the loss of *Atlantic Conveyor*. But similarly they too did not take up arms directly against the enemy, save for a few shots loosed off against low flying Argentine jets.⁷⁸⁸ In this way, the fast jet technicians in particular were just like their comrades who served in the surface and submarine fleets of the Royal Navy; they were essential to facilitating of killing, creating the circumstances through which this could occur, though they did not directly participate in the violence their work underpinned.

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Given the aggressive nature of fighter pilots, killing was inevitable in the air war for the Falklands. The above section has documented and analysed the idiosyncrasies of the air war in comparison to that which took place on land and at sea. The following section will continue the theme of comparison and analyse the motivations and explanations as to why aviators were able to engage in combat and kill.

Like naval warfare, it has often been assumed that the distance involved in aerial warfare acted as a psychological barrier to prevent the participants from fully understanding what the implications of their actions. This distance is believed to not be so much physical, but emotional. In the minds of many fighter pilots, there remained a real distinction between the destruction of an aircraft, and the destruction of the human being piloting it. This led to the fundamental difference in perception of combat between armies, navies and air forces; the nature of the combat they participate in. Bidwell has argued that soldiers 'have a more personal relationship with their opponents than the operators of more elaborate weapons-systems, who seldom – if ever

⁷⁸⁸ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

– have a confrontation with the enemy.’⁷⁸⁹ Unlike the war on land, pilots appreciated that the air war,

Is very long-range, and you’re very much fighting the old electronic war. You’re pressing buttons as opposed to whipping the odd bayonet out of the scabbard and that sort of thing. So it didn’t really matter, in the back of my mind, it didn’t really matter that it was a bad guy or a good guy in front of me, all I was going to do was press a button. And if a missile actually went off and blew the aeroplane to bits that was just one of those things.⁷⁹⁰

Similarly,

In air to air combat, one of the things you don’t see is the actual person, quite unlike any ground armed combat, hand to hand combat, and so there is an element of detachment, and you tend to think of yourself as fighting the other aircraft. It’s a Sea Harrier against a Mirage as opposed to myself against whoever it that’s inside the Mirage, and I think most people can keep an element of detachment in that.⁷⁹¹

This oral testimony therefore demonstrates where Bidwell is incorrect; the operators of such elaborate weapons systems such as naval warships or fighter aircraft did have a direct confrontation with the enemy, but it was wrapped up within the same technology that supported them. Culturally, this has an impact. Where they differed, however, is that the soldier could see his enemy, and more significantly see the effects of both his weapons on them, and their weapons on him, whereas the fighter pilot could not. In addition, sailors may well only have been confronted by the effects of industrial violence when and if their ships were attacked and they saw their friends and colleagues maimed and burned, the worst of all forms of casualty, but they never saw the enemy casualties. Hate could therefore develop, as sailors were never forced to confront the reality of violence, that the enemy was just as vulnerable to modern weaponry as they were. Thus they were unable to relate to his humanity, to the way in

⁷⁸⁹ Bidwell, *Modern Warfare*, p. 14.

⁷⁹⁰ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr ‘Soapy’, Reel 2.

⁷⁹¹ IWM SOUND 16782 Gedge, Timothy John Henry, Reel 3.

which both sides were composed of men vulnerable to the same weapons. Because they lacked this explicit reminder of the similarities that transcended nationalities, they were much more able to maintain the artificial constructs of the enemy.

It was significant that those aviators who were most exposed to the horrors of industrial violence were not in a position to inflict violence upon the enemy. Helicopter pilots and aircrew were responsible for casualty evacuation from the battlefields, and Jeff Niblett, commanding B Flight of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, recalled that when fulfilling his role, 'the back of the cab was filled with some very gory sights. Despite being able to see – and smell – the worst aspects of combat injury, you had to remain detached and calm – and fly them home.'⁷⁹² Lieutenant Philip Sheldon agreed; he was visibly shocked by the horrific sights that confronted him and his crew as he collected casualties from the *Galahad*, and was fully immersed in all the horror of that disaster for several hours until all the casualties had been brought off, after which 'all that was left in the aircraft was the dreadful stench of burnt flesh.'⁷⁹³ Sheldon was a transport pilot, his helicopter had no weapons; he never would have been in a position to inflict such damage upon the Argentines. Yet while fighter pilots did not see the charred remains of human beings inside the aircraft they shot down, it did not take much imagination to think of the effects guided missiles would have on the human body. With the introduction of such missiles into combat aviation, aircraft, and contained within them, pilots, were now far more vulnerable and unable to withstand more than one hit.

However, none of the pilots had ever engaged in air-to-air combat outside of an exercise, and culturally they were still taken by surprise when combat was finally joined: 'I listened on my radio to one dog fight as it developed and that was the first time I actually realised we were going to try and kill people and I didn't enjoy one minute of it.'⁷⁹⁴ Other pilots did not fully realise the destruction they were able to command until after they had used it. For example, Flight Lieutenant Bertie Penfold recorded the first kill of the campaign for *Hermes*, but when asked by Morgan as to

⁷⁹² Quoted in McManners, *Scars of War*, p. 280.

⁷⁹³ Philip Sheldon, in Arthur, *Above All, Courage*, p. 174.

⁷⁹⁴ Mortimer, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 91.

what it was like, confessed: 'Actually, Mog, I didn't enjoy it very much.'⁷⁹⁵ Another 800 pilot, Dave Smith, also confided 'that he was saddened and horrified to witness the savage death of a fast jet hit by a sidewinder.'⁷⁹⁶ While they may previously have held the idea of some form of distinction between the pilot and the aircraft, and that killing one was not necessarily the same as killing the other, experiencing combat rapidly disabused them of such a notion when they saw aircraft disappearing in sheets of flame as missiles hit.⁷⁹⁷ Thus, such frank testimony would seem to suggest that the idea that pilots were somehow not aware of what they were doing is fundamentally flawed. They were in fact fully aware that they are killing, but they choose to participate in it for a variety of reasons.

One such reason fighter pilots killed was because it was their function to do so. Such a role had been drilled into them throughout their careers, as Ward indicated: 'The way you train is that the other guy is the bad guy, and you're going to shoot him down.'⁷⁹⁸ Culturally, fighter pilots have always been concerned with controlling the skies by defeating the enemy in combat; there is no other alternative to this, it was expected that they would shoot the enemy down. Like submarines, fighter aircraft could only exert tactical dominance through being victorious in combat. The nature of combat aviation meant that once combat is joined, surrender was impossible, and the engagement was only ended by one party's destruction. To not do so, to not act in an aggressive manner, would have violated every reflex they had learned throughout training, every cultural value that they had absorbed, and also would have left the operation in jeopardy. No thought was given to the moral aspects of what they were doing. Instead, like their colleagues fighting on East Falkland, fighter pilots killed because it was their vocation and function on the battlefield to do so:

It really doesn't matter whether the guy's bad or good. You're going to do what you've been trained to do, which is get in a firing position, lock a Sidewinder onto him and press a button. And after that the missile does it itself. Or the

⁷⁹⁵ Quoted in Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 79.

⁷⁹⁶ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 207.

⁷⁹⁷ IWM SOUND 12821 Audio Diary of Nigel David 'Sharkey' Ward, Reel 4.

⁷⁹⁸ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 2.

guns; you get in a gun tracking position, start pulling the trigger and wait for him to fly into your bullets. That's what you do. That is the job.⁷⁹⁹

Indeed, Pook believed that air combat was perhaps even more brutal than that fought on land:

It's a very unsporting and cowardly form of warfare, air combat. The ideal way to shoot people down, and the way probably 80% of people were shot down in World War II, is to sneak up behind someone who hasn't seen you and shoot him in the back before he even sees you, and that's how most people were shot down in World War II. Very few people were shot down where they had a chance to fight back and saw the other guy.⁸⁰⁰

Regardless of this, fighter pilots were very proud of their elite status and very disappointed when circumstances conspired to prevent them from participating fully. Glover, for example, was shot down on his first sortie and was very frustrated to be out of the war so early, reflecting the central cultural values of competitiveness and aggression. He felt as if he had let the squadron down, and 'looking back on it all, I felt cheated at missing out on the war, not staying with the rest of the squadron on *Hermes* and continuing the operations, and at having to sit it out in Argentina. It was very disappointing.'⁸⁰¹

Fighter pilots also killed because they wanted to. Historically, a man's prowess as a fighter pilot has been measured by how many aircraft he shot down. The shooting down of an enemy fighter to gain a 'kill' was the goal of most fighter pilots as it was the culmination of all their training, the role they had dedicated their lives to, and one that the vast majority of British pilots since Korea had been denied. To have achieved such a goal in the jet age would also be proof of their technical mastery, the ability to manoeuvre and utilise a highly technological weapon of war and fulfil its specialist function. In a highly aggressive and competitive environment such an accolade would

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 7.

⁸⁰¹ Glover, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 103.

set them apart from their peers like no other badge of distinction. Indeed, the Fleet Air Arm as a whole had only recorded one air-to-air jet kill in Korea, a solitary MiG-15.⁸⁰²

The Falklands therefore presented a chance for that generation of pilots to prove themselves. The enduring desire to achieve this professional kudos amongst the pilots who served in the Falklands War is obvious from both the oral and written testimony, regardless of when it was produced, and can be traced directly back to their aggressive nature, as recorded above. The first sight of an enemy aircraft spurred all the pilots into action, as Morgan recalled: 'I detected a definite change in attitude. The enemy was no longer a vague intangible concept; we had seen him and had been in a position to shoot him down.'⁸⁰³ In direct contrast to the infantry, seeing the enemy merely encouraged warlike tendencies. This was because the aviators still could not see the man behind the 'enemy' machine. In contrast, this connection with humanity was experienced in the infantry and reflected in their memories and impressions of the conflict. After a few days of flying Combat Air Patrols, Ward, for example, noted that 'I was very disappointed the squadron had still not registered its first kill...a real sense of frustration set in. The enemy was avoiding a fight and we could do little about it.'⁸⁰⁴ Indeed, in the audio diary he kept during the campaign, Ward recorded on 2nd May that he was 'getting quite frustrated that we hadn't shot anybody down.'⁸⁰⁵ That such an attitude is discernible in both retrospective accounts from different pilots, serving in different squadrons, and a contemporary audio diary, demonstrates its significance and importance to the fighter pilot culture. For Morgan, once in his Sea Harrier, he was filled by 'a single imperative, to be as efficient a killing machine as was humanly possible.'⁸⁰⁶ Like Ward, he wanted to shoot an aircraft down, and was frustrated as other pilots were able to score kills, which caused great jubilation, while he was still on the ship due to the rotation of pilots through aircraft.⁸⁰⁷

The competitive spirit of fight pilots certainly drove them to commit acts of violence. Pilots who returned after having achieved kills were welcomed like heroes and cheered

⁸⁰² Isby, *Fighter Combat*, p. 142.

⁸⁰³ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 54.

⁸⁰⁴ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 197.

⁸⁰⁵ IWM SOUND 12821 Audio Diary of Nigel David 'Sharkey' Ward, Reel 4.

⁸⁰⁶ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 188.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

by their colleagues.⁸⁰⁸ Morgan, for example, records with a tone of jealousy how other pilots were 'grinning like a Cheshire cat' or being 'like a puppy with two tails'⁸⁰⁹ upon returning to the ship having shot down Argentine aircraft. The pilots certainly wanted such accolades for themselves. Pook also recalled that one Sea Harrier pilot on *Hermes* had shot down an Argentine with cannon fire after his Sidewinder failed to fire, and that this left him 'feeling quite jealous of that... I was green with envy.'⁸¹⁰ That these sentiments of jealousy are continuously repeated throughout his oral history interview, even after combat had been joined and casualties had been taken, demonstrate just how strong such a feeling was. An important factor that encouraged the aviators to engage in killing was the environment they found themselves in. The culture of combat aviators, which they had been indoctrinated in throughout training and their previous operational experience, had a powerful impact upon the British fighter pilots; ultimately, just like their comrades in the land forces, they fought and killed

Because they belong to a group that fights... They fight because they have been trained to fight and because failure to do so endangers not just their own lives, but also those of the people immediately around them with whom they have formed powerful social bonds.⁸¹¹

The shooting down of enemy aircraft also attracted official sanction and kudos from the command hierarchy of the Task Force, not just the pilot's peers. When David Morgan and his wingman, David Smith, each recorded a kill, they were highly praised by the flying controller, the captain of *Hermes*, and even Admiral Woodward, in command of the Fleet, who was 'fulsome in his praise.'⁸¹² Similarly, '

The plane captains of the two aircraft were over the moon as their aircraft had achieved kills. There was great rivalry between crews and it was made very clear to all of us that pilots only borrowed the aircraft for the duration of the mission before returning them to their rightful owners!⁸¹³

⁸⁰⁸ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 201.

⁸⁰⁹ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 174, p. 166.

⁸¹⁰ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 9.

⁸¹¹ Simon Wessely, 'Twentieth Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April, 2006), p. 276.

⁸¹² Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 273.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

As noted above, the maintenance crews were unable to directly take up arms against the enemy, and thus the pilots needed to ensure that they succeeded in order for this success to pass on to the support staff.

The small group of fighter pilots flying in the Falklands campaign were very aggressive in their behaviour, and were actively seeking to shoot down an enemy, to fulfil their role and contribute to the success of the operation. Ward recorded his first two kills on 21st May; he had pursued the fighters with tenacity, continually firing upon them until they crashed, unrelenting in his assault until they had been destroyed. This attitude endured past his first kills and he adopted the same approach when shooting down an unarmed Hercules later in the campaign. While he had missed with his first missile as he was too far away, Ward closed to within a mile and fired a second missile, striking the Hercules on its starboard wing and setting it on fire. He then continued to use 240 rounds of high explosive 30mm cannon ammunition on the stricken aircraft, 'shooting up his backend, at which point he lost control of his aircraft and it went into the sea in a steep dive. There could have been no survivors.' He was 'terribly delighted' with his work, particularly as he assumed that the Hercules was carrying ammunition to Stanley.⁸¹⁴ The thoroughness with which he destroyed the aircraft, and the way in which he was not content to leave it damaged, reveal just how focussed he was on the enemy's destruction. Morgan was similarly very aggressive as he attempted to shoot down an enemy. Having witnessed a group of A4 Skyhawks destroy a British landing craft, an 'all-consuming anger welled in my throat and I determined in that instant that this pilot was going to die!'⁸¹⁵ Indeed, Morgan disputes the idea that aerial combat is a calm, collected sphere of warfare. Like in the war on land, anger was needed to be able to overcome the inherent social taboo against killing, to unleash weapons that would lead to the enemy's destruction:

I had heard it said many times by armchair warriors that war in the air was a cold, sterile, almost esoteric form of combat, where you fought against machines without feelings or personal involvement. How wrong they were! This was not a computer game; I was not destroying machines; I was

⁸¹⁴ IWM SOUND 12821 Audio Diary of Nigel David 'Sharkey' Ward, Reel 6.

⁸¹⁵ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 265.

determined to kill these pilots. They had dared to attack my colleagues *on my watch!* Those same pilots that I would probably have been very happy to share a drink with in different circumstances now had to die.⁸¹⁶

After having shot down one jet, 'there was no time for elation'⁸¹⁷ as Morgan engaged the remainder of the group. His choice of expression reveals that such elation and joy would have otherwise been his first reaction had circumstances not compelled him to keep fighting. Indeed, after his second kill of the engagement he felt 'a terrific surge of elation at the demise of the second A4.'⁸¹⁸

In the Second World War, the mentality of the fighter pilot had similarly been an important factor in whether he shot down an enemy. Wells identifies that some pilots were actively aggressive in their attacking of the enemy, whereas others were content merely to fly and not engage in combat. In the American Eighth Air Force, for example, only 261 out of approximately 5,000 pilots ranked as aces with five victories, or 5.2% of the total number of pilots. Yet this tiny minority was responsible for 40% of the 5,284 German aircraft that the American Air Force claimed it had destroyed. Another 1,031 American pilots were given credit for between one-half and one kill, and almost 3,700 did not record a victory of any kind.⁸¹⁹ While Wells' figures relate to American forces, it can still be seen that the British pilots of the Falklands War were consistently far more aggressive in their behaviour than their historical predecessors, and the number of kills was spread across a much higher proportion of pilots. Yet 'it would be wrong, however, to assume that pilots who failed to score an aerial victory were ineffective. In fact, scoring a victory had as much to do with opportunity, timing and luck as with anything else.'⁸²⁰ This was certainly true in the Falklands for the British pilots, and that some pilots did not record a kill is due more to the fact that several were never in a position to shoot an Argentine down, rather than any reluctance to do so.⁸²¹ Indeed, there are plenty of instances where the mere presence of Sea Harriers caused the Argentine pilots to turn and run, rather than engage in attacks on British shipping, which many pilots found frustrating: 'It was already clear that the

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., p. 267. His emphasis.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., p. 266.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., p. 268.

⁸¹⁹ Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, p. 49.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

⁸²¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

Argentine pilots were not going to mix it with us; knocking them down had become a question of being in the right place at the right time.⁸²² However, the fact that British pilots referred to having 'bad luck' which prevented them from being able to engage the enemy shows both a jealousy of those who did and their own combat aspirations. While fighter pilots showed no hesitation in killing if they got the opportunity, such opportunity was far more limited than on the battlefields of East Falkland.

It is interesting that Second World War bomber crews, however, measured success in the most basic of terms; survival. Bomber crews were expected to complete thirty missions before they could move on to a training establishment or other less hazardous role. In a campaign with a terrible casualty rate, each completed mission brought them closer to the predetermined number that would potentially end their war: 'For many, even if their bombs had fallen well wide of any target, just coming home was reward enough.'⁸²³ Indeed, 'for many, the only tangible reward was survival; yet the all-too-apparent statistics frequently showed this to be mathematically unlikely.'⁸²⁴ Such a mentality existed in the bombers that attacked Port Stanley in the Vulcan. The strike was just one aspect of the mission; once that had been completed, there was still a substantial risk that the aircraft would not have been able to find the Victor tankers to refuel on the return leg, and that the Vulcan would not have been able to make it back to Ascension. Even after they located the tankers, there was the very complex task of completing a successful fuel transfer to negotiate. These were very different kinds of threat than that which had been present during the attack, but they were just as serious. They meant that, to the crew, the attack would not be considered successful until they were back on the ground.⁸²⁵ Fighter pilots obviously cared for their own survival, but measured successes in numerical terms in regards to the number of enemy aircraft they shot down, whereas bomber crews historically measured it in much more basic terms. They were more concerned with their own preservation, rather than the level or quantity of destruction they caused, and they did not conduct themselves with the same levels of aggression as the single-seat fighter pilots did because they did not have to.

⁸²² Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 268.

⁸²³ Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, p. 50.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁸²⁵ White, *Vulcan 607*, p. 458.

However, it should not be assumed that the British pilots were driven by feelings of hate and a desire to destroy the Argentines. Even in the midst of the combat described above, Morgan, for example, was pleased to see that the pilot of one of his kills had ejected, and not been killed when his missile had struck. To his mind, seeing a parachute meant that these feelings of 'anger and elation instantly changed to relief and empathy as I realised that a fellow pilot had survived.'⁸²⁶ That such a change in emotion was possible demonstrates that any anger he had felt was superficial, and not systematic of a deep-set hatred. In this, the fighter pilots were very much like their colleagues in the Army and Royal Marines. It is also interesting that seeing enemy parachutes was a shocking reminder of the human element involved. A Second World War Battle of Britain pilot, Frank Carey, described the air war as one,

Between machines with the human factor very much submerged in a "tin box." Once in a while, for a few fleeting seconds when someone bales out, one can suddenly be aware that humans are actually involved but, as the parachute descends, machines quickly regain the centre of the stage once more.⁸²⁷

In comparison with Morgan's switching between emotions, this can be seen to be an equally accurate representation of aerial warfare at the time of the Falklands. There was also considerable respect afforded to the Argentine aircrew by the British for their conduct during the war. Ward, for example, recalled that he felt 'nothing but the highest respect' for one of the pilots he shot down, as the man had stayed with his craft under fire until it was no longer capable of flight.⁸²⁸ Mortimer likewise admired the enemy, believing that they were 'incredibly brave. They took a lot of hits, they had a lot of losses. We really did make quite a mess of them and they kept coming back.'⁸²⁹ Kent remains particularly critical of the way in which the tabloid press trivialised air combat during the campaign with competitions such as "Adopt a Bomb", which seemingly trivialised combat aviation and reduced it to the level of a game.⁸³⁰

⁸²⁶ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 268.

⁸²⁷ Quoted in Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Second World War* (London, 2004), p. 88.

⁸²⁸ Ward, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 110.

⁸²⁹ Mortimer, in Bilton and Kosminsky, *Speaking Out*, p. 93.

⁸³⁰ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

However, the fighter pilots themselves certainly sought to reduce the psychological impact of what they were doing, even if they resented civilian attempts to trivialise it. They did this through language. Like that of naval and land warfare, the language of aerial warfare was full of jargon designed to reduce the emotional impact of the act of violence. For example, shooting aircraft down was known as 'hacking',⁸³¹ and the use of a sporting idiom reduced combat to these terms. Furthermore, when seeking vectors on to targets from an air controller or searching for enemy aircraft, pilots would ask for and receive directions to any 'trade approaching',⁸³² meaning enemy fighters. Such depersonalisation certainly reduces the levels of identification with enemy fighters and also helps reveal the psyche of pilots; aerial combat remained a job, a 'trade' to be done, a vocation to carry out. As such, some men sought to excel at such a vocation, rather than merely just complete it.

Yet even though they believed this, the British were still able to fly on and destroy the Argentines. This was because as thoroughly trained professionals they were able to rationalise the combat they were engaged in. They saw their actions as a necessary function in the plan to achieve aerial superiority so as to successfully recover the islands. For example, when Ward recorded that in terms of combat 'the score was slowly starting to add up, and we were most delighted',⁸³³ he was not delighted at having specifically killed Argentine pilots. Instead, he was pleased that the British Sea Harrier force was achieving its mission of protecting British shipping by removing the principal Argentine threat. For all Morgan's talk of empathy with the enemy, the only time he ever felt feelings of unpleasantness during operations, however, was when he was informed that a British pilot POW, Jeff Glover, may well have been on board one of the helicopters he destroyed:

The atmosphere of excitement and celebration evaporated instantly as everyone took in the awful implications. To lose a friend to enemy action was bad enough but to be directly and personally responsible for his death was something I was going to find very difficult to come to terms with.⁸³⁴

⁸³¹ IWM SOUND 9066 Watson, Mr 'Soapy', Reel 2.

⁸³² Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 198.

⁸³³ IWM SOUND 12821 Audio Diary of Nigel David 'Sharkey' Ward, Reel 4.

⁸³⁴ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 198.

Fortunately for Morgan, intelligence reports soon revealed that Glover had not been on the helicopter when Morgan shot it down, greatly easing his conscience. Indeed, Morgan actually collected and mounted pieces of the aircraft he had shot down as mementoes and trophies on a subsequent return trip to the Falklands. Such behaviour clearly demonstrates that he was able to view the destruction of an aircraft with pride, and that it was not a grisly item associated with death, but rather a symbol of martial prowess, almost a type of hunting trophy.⁸³⁵ By acting in such a way, Morgan was buying in to the cultural values concordant with being fighter pilot, as previously outlined. Such an important detail was not included in Morgan's retrospective memoir, but instead only revealed through an oral history interview.

There were also other factors that encouraged the pilots to endure continuing combat and losses, and that also encouraged them to kill. The highly skilled and demanding training regimes all the pilots had carried out had prepared them for combat. Thus, when they were finally committed to action, there was little to distinguish the real thing from their training. This was particularly true for the low-level bombing runs the Sea Harriers carried out against Port Stanley airport on 1st May. Morgan believed the operations were, for the most part, simple and just like training, the only difference being that when the pilot pushed the bomb release button, they did actually drop a bomb.⁸³⁶ While seemingly remote, bombing was very dangerous; the airport was heavily defended, and the Sea Harriers, and later GR3s, were required to fly very low in order to avoid these defences. For the Vulcan missions, one of the pilots, Martin Withers, was more apprehensive about the risks involved in taking the ageing jet up against modern defences, rather than the actual killing that he would be doing.⁸³⁷ In order to try and preserve the jet rather than tackle anti-aircraft defences that were far more capable and effective than those the Vulcan had been designed to avoid, the mission was designed so that the jet would release its bombs two miles from the target, and that the forward momentum generated by a ground speed of close to 400 miles per hour would carry the bombs the rest of the way. Thus, unlike in the Harrier force operations and in Second World War strategic bombing operations, there was no visual identification; it was instead merely a set of co-ordinates worked out by a computer

⁸³⁵ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

⁸³⁷ White, *Vulcan 607*, p. 186.

system that identified the best time to release the ordnance.⁸³⁸ The pilots themselves noted that the releasing of the bombs themselves was an event without any real significance or drama, and had been very similar to training.⁸³⁹ The advantage of bombing ground targets in the Falklands was that there was no moral quandary surrounding the operations. With population density on the Islands so low, and in clearly marked areas, pilots were able to bomb strictly military targets, and thus avoid any moral issues that may have caused conflict with their social inhibitions.

Despite these factors, there was also an official moral coercive factor at play in the waging of the air war in the Falklands that was used to encourage killing. In the Second World War, the RAF had attempted to maintain discipline and prevent malingerers evading their duty by initiating the disciplinary process of Lack of Moral Fibre, or LMF. An official response to rising psychiatric casualties generated within the RAF High Command, LMF was first suggested in March 1940 and formally introduced the following month, and was designed to deter aircrew from reporting sick without cause or simply refusing to fly.⁸⁴⁰ There was a conscious effort to avoid couching the term in psychological terms, as there was a fear that this would lead aircrews to “expect” nervous symptoms and thus provide an excuse to potential malingerers.⁸⁴¹ Instead of being a respected means of withdrawal from combat duties, it was deliberately designed to be shameful, hence the removal of flying badges from uniforms, a policy not followed in the United States Air Force.⁸⁴² Those suspected of LMF were sent to assessment centres, and if found to be guilty, were shamed both by the removal of their rank and their presence within the service, without being given an opportunity to redeem themselves or recover.⁸⁴³ The use of LMF was greeted with mixed messages during the Second World War, some operational chiefs believing it was necessary to act as a deterrent, with others arguing that it yet greater increased mental pressure without being either necessary or effective.⁸⁴⁴ LMF was applied ruthlessly, and a pre-breakdown history of the air crewman in question was not taken into account; for

⁸³⁸ Ibid., p. 423.

⁸³⁹ Ibid., p. 423.

⁸⁴⁰ Edgar Jones, “‘LMF’: The Use of Psychiatric Stigma in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War”, in *The Journal Of Military History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (April, 2006), pp. 439-42.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., p. 443.

⁸⁴² Ibid, p. 448.

⁸⁴³ Ibid, p. 440.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 440-1.

example, one man who had flown forty missions and been decorated for bravery was treated the same as one who had refused to fly during training.⁸⁴⁵

The social stigma carried by LMF endured until the time of Operation Corporate, and was still at the forefront of the minds of the RAF pilots involved. For example, on the first of the Black Buck operations, launched from Ascension Island, Withers flew the first mission after Reeve's aircraft went unserviceable shortly after getting airborne due to mechanical failure. When Reeve's crew returned, they were all bitterly disappointed and embarrassed not to have fulfilled their role, and one of them was genuinely concerned that they may be at risk of LMF accusations.⁸⁴⁶ The first Sea Harrier pilot to have shot down an Argentine aircraft in the campaign, Flight Lieutenant Bertie Penfold, was actually an RAF pilot attached to 800 Naval Air Squadron. However, Penfold reacted negatively to this event; he did not fly again during the campaign and was soon sent home as a psychological casualty. On *Hermes*, the carrier on which Penfold had operated from, there were rumours that he was going to be charged with LMF, which percolated to the other carrier, *Invincible*. Ward, aboard the latter, reacted to the news with scorn, claiming that 'he shot the opposition down and should get a pat on the back... That just wouldn't be right to call the man a coward. If he does nothing more, he has earned his keep.'⁸⁴⁷ In the Second World War Fleet Air Arm, there was no equivalent term of LMF, and the absence of a formal procedure allowed those pilots suffering from the strain to be managed more effectively by their superiors. Some were transferred to base jobs but significantly were still able to wear their flying badges.⁸⁴⁸ Thus, as there was no cultural legacy of LMF the reactions to any such suggestion were greeted with horror and scorn by the Fleet Air Arm pilots in the Falklands, in contrast to those of the RAF. Even though it may only have been a rumour and was not confirmed until after the campaign's conclusion,⁸⁴⁹ in times of war rumours gain more credence and the rumour itself may have been enough to coerce other members of the squadrons to carry on fighting, particularly because the aviators were so few in number, so such an issue would resonate more. Also, this issue, when combined with both the idea of an expected pattern of behaviour for officers, as described above, would also

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 446.

⁸⁴⁶ White, *Vulcan 607*, p. 359.

⁸⁴⁷ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, p. 207.

⁸⁴⁸ Jones, "'LMF': The Use of Psychiatric Stigma in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War", pp. 453-4.

⁸⁴⁹ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

serve to further enforce the idea of internalising feelings and remaining outwardly positive.

Despite Ward's protestations over the charges laid against Penfold, he was also a pragmatic commanding officer. For example, one of the pilots under his command had been forced to eject into the sea following an accident when his jet had slipped off the deck in rough seas. Having endured this traumatic process, the pilot had subsequently lost his confidence, so essential in maintaining aggression and being effective as a fighter pilot, and was unsure when he would resume flying. Thus, while the causes of his difficulties were different, the results were the same as those of Penfold. Ward had a pilot who could not fly an aircraft, which thus put greater strain on those other operational pilots to cover his missions, so he sent him home.⁸⁵⁰ Unlike in the ground war, where a man would have been sent to the rear to recover from battle shock, or mental fatigue, and then returned to the front after rest, Ward had no alternative option in dealing with what was effectively a psychological casualty. Indeed, his pragmatic action was carried out with the support of the squadron's Senior Pilot, Robin Kent.⁸⁵¹ Here, the oral history has confirmed the motivations of the pre-existing written testimony, demonstrating the depth of Ward's pragmatism and suggesting his actions were in line with what was expected from the fighter pilots as a group. This was also not a case of hypocrisy on Ward's part in relation to the Penfold decision, as the method used was quite different. What the RAF sought to employ against Penfold was retrospective punishment, something Ward never considered applying against the pilot from his squadron. He was also perhaps aided by the fact that his pilot had suffered a physical injury during the ejection; such an injury, visible and treatable, meant that his leaving the combat theatre could be justified. Penfold had no such injury. Indeed, he had been victorious in the engagement. There was nothing personal in Ward's action, rather it was a decision based on military expediency as to what to do with a fighter pilot who will not, or cannot, fly. Timothy Gedge, the commanding officer of 809 NAS had also attempted to maintain an active role in managing the morale of the men under his command. He was concerned as to how they would behave when they actually came under fire, as 809 had previously been the Sea Harrier training squadron but had been formed at Yeovilton specifically to act as replacements for attrition losses and had been

⁸⁵⁰ Ward, *Sea Harrier Over the Falklands*, pp. 292-3.

⁸⁵¹ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

rushed up to operational standard using all the aircraft that could be mustered, including several straight out of the factory.⁸⁵² However, given Ward's actions, it is remarkable that Gedge recalled that he was not surprised by the behaviour of any of the pilots across the Naval Air Squadrons, in that 'we did not have a problem with either morale or people suffering from high stress.'⁸⁵³ 809, the squadron Gedge would have observed closest, did, however, serve for less time than the two original Naval Air Squadrons, 800 and 801, which may account for his observations.

There was also a private moral coercive factor in force for fighter pilots, independent of that exerted by the higher command. While fighting in the air was a solitary experience, as noted above, this did not mean that fighter pilots were entirely solitary creatures, caring nothing for the welfare of those around them. Indeed, quite the contrary. The importance of the Wardroom, for example, in fostering an esprit de corps cannot be underestimated. Like soldiers and sailors, many aviators stated that their reason for carrying on, for enduring, despite the increasing strain upon them was so as not to let their comrades in the squadron down.⁸⁵⁴ The nature of operations in the Falklands also compelled them to carry on, to fulfil their role and play their part so as not to be a burden on others. In the land battle, a man could potentially take shelter in a shell hole or trench and not carry on advancing. As Bidwell has written,

The soldier is taught and encouraged to take cover, a situation in which he may discard his leader, and, if skilful, avoid taking part in the battle at all. It is easy to escape from the danger zone; between danger and safety the combat soldier has virtually a free choice.⁸⁵⁵

For pilots launching off a carrier deck, however, once ordered to launch, they had no other option. Already heavily outnumbered, no man would willingly and, perhaps more significantly, publicly shirk his duty in such a way by refusing to enter the danger zone, particularly if his wingman had already launched. Indeed, considering what the pilots thought about the danger of being aboard the carriers, and their preference for the air as described above, to launch was actually a more welcome option than remaining on the

⁸⁵² IWM SOUND 16782 Gedge, Timothy John Henry, Reels 3 and 1.

⁸⁵³ Ibid., Reel 3.

⁸⁵⁴ Author Interviews: Robin Kent, 18/05/10 and David Morgan, 17/08/10.

⁸⁵⁵ Bidwell, *Modern Warfare*, pp. 126-7.

ship anyway. Furthermore, once in the air, pilots were vectored to a certain position by ship-based controllers. To violate this in order to avoid confrontation with the enemy would both be very obvious, particularly if it were a pair of aircraft, and also risk them infringing on the radars of other ships and it being assumed that they were enemy, resulting in them being attacked and potentially destroyed by their own side. As a precious and limited resource in the Falklands, fighter pilots, despite the more solitary nature of their combat, were actually under more direct control than soldiers were when in combat.

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Aviators, like sailors and soldiers, therefore engaged in combat and participated in killing in a number of ways, and for a variety of reasons in their operations over and around the Falkland Islands. These operations were very different to those on land and sea, and required different skills, but were in no way easier, particularly in the necessary command of highly specialised technology inherent in aviation. The aerial aspect of war in the Falklands, like that of the naval, was made up of diverse experiences where direct confrontation of the enemy was centralised in a small band of men who were from a similar social background, and held similar ranks. Culturally, therefore, their responses to combat reflected their different social status to other members of the Task Force, along with their older ages, and there was an identifiable sense of mental conformity. Indeed, even those RAF pilots and aircrew that flew the Black Buck missions retained much of the same ideas about aerial operations as those engaging Argentine aircraft over the Falklands.

While they operated at the zenith of military technology, it is remarkable that historically the cultural approach of fighter pilots to issues such as killing and death remained consistent with those of their forebears. Such consistency endured despite the participants being divided between different organisations such as the Royal Flying Corps, the RAF and the Fleet Air Arm and different historical eras ranging from the First World War to the Falklands in 1982. Furthermore, such a culture also transcended nations, and the British fighter pilots shared much with their Argentine enemy whom they faced in the air. The oral history and written testimony have both dovetailed to suggest that aviators approached their role as aviators with a professionalism and

enthusiasm, and both historical sources demonstrate a remarkable consistency. Like soldiers, they too could take enjoyment and pride from the act of killing, though again this was done without hatred or malice. Without this psychological facilitator, aviators instead relied on their sense of professional pride and duty, their training, and their comrades to endure and survive combat operations in the South Atlantic.

Chapter 6:

When the Fighting is Over: The Short- and Long-Term Impacts of the Falklands War

This chapter will analyse the experience of British veterans in the period after the end of the Falklands conflict, both in the short and the long term. The transition from peace to war has been analysed in previous chapters, and it is therefore pertinent to analyse the transition back into such a state and the impact of the cultures of the military units on that process. However, as the men who fought in the South Atlantic were to discover, reverting back to their pre-war mental states was just as difficult as preparing for war. The cultural values of some units that had been so important in carrying them through conflict would now become a burden. This chapter will analyse issues of legacy, and the long-term impact of professional military service on subjects such as identity and memory.

This study is advantageous in that, being conducted thirty years after the Falklands War, the true impact of military service and immersion in military culture on the individual can be far more accurately assessed in the longer time frame than that used by previous authors, such as Nora Kinzer Stuart.⁸⁵⁶ Thus, many of the short-term observations made in contemporary diaries or early memoirs and oral history interviews have been supplemented by new, independent oral history research. Given that psychological problems among servicemen have tended to develop over an extensive period of time, believed to be around fourteen years after the event, working with such an extended time frame is essential if both the disorders and the impact that they have on the veteran are to be accurately assessed. In addition, in the exploration of psychological issues of war, it is a great advantage to make use of those memoirs that have been written for cathartic purposes, as part of the individual's narrative therapy as they seek to overcome their difficulties. Such memoirs were not available in the immediate aftermath of the war, or indeed the first decade since the conclusion of hostilities. By working with an increased timeframe of thirty years since the Falklands conflict, the intimate nature of oral history interviews conducted with some of those who published such memoirs, such as David Morgan and Ian Inskip, has allowed a

⁸⁵⁶ Nora Kinzer Stewart, *Mates & Muchachos*.

deeper exploration of the concepts of military identity post conflict, and the idea of a Falklands memory in order to contribute to this study.

I

The Immediate Aftermath of War

While many British servicemen regarded killing as a necessary element of their vocation, war was not simply a job from which one could switch off. When the war ended with the Argentine surrender on 14th June, the British servicemen could not simply return home. Indeed, for the more culturally aggressive units such as the Paras and the Royal Marines, their primary function was negated. The war had been won, there were no more battles to fight, yet the troops were forced to remain on the Islands in order to help clean up the detritus of occupation and carry out other menial roles. They were transformed from an aggressive fighting force, advancing on the enemy, into a more passive garrison that was simply waiting, either for an Argentine response or to return home. For those units used to action, who had been at the forefront of the drive across the island, this new role required a significant adjustment. Yet being in Stanley had some benefits; it represented the opportunity to collect souvenirs, and as Tony McNally noted, 'all squaddies are really big kids, with a love of mischief and a fascination for things that go bang.'⁸⁵⁷ The Argentines had cast much of their weapons and equipment into the street in a haphazard manner, and so there was a considerable amount to interest the British. Such 'souvenirs' were quickly claimed by the soldiers and marines, particularly pistols which could be easily concealed.⁸⁵⁸ That all the soldiers, regardless of unit, related this story in one form of historical source or another between 1982 and the present day, demonstrates that there was a unified desire to claim such souvenirs, proof that the owner had been in the Falklands and on operations, as well as symbols of victory over the defeated enemy. Stanley also offered them the possibility of shelter, and potentially the capability to alter their diet from monotonous Army rations. Adrian Freer, for example, went into town to 'borrow' a jeep, and found

⁸⁵⁷ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 130.

⁸⁵⁸ Author Interviews: Ray Mead, 17/08/09 and Steve Newland, 03/08/09.

a cold storage container full of fresh meat that was 'open for business, if I can put it that euphemistically.'⁸⁵⁹

Even so, despite the opportunities and benefits of being in Stanley, there were still dangers. 2 Para had learned at Goose Green that homes and buildings could well have been vandalised and rendered uninhabitable, booby-trapped, or indeed both. At Goose Green there had been a great number of Argentine munitions simply heaped everywhere, including canisters of napalm for the Pucaras.⁸⁶⁰ While seemingly inert, many of these piles of munitions had the potential to cause serious incidents; one such pile was close to where the Argentine POWs were being kept. They requested that it be moved and volunteered to carry out the task, as 2 Para lacked the manpower. It was booby-trapped, and went off, causing a fire. Two prisoners were killed outright by the explosion, and a third, trapped in the flames, was shot as an act of mercy. Another later died from his wounds. For Cooper and the rest of 2 Para, the event demonstrated that 'you couldn't lower your guard, and there wasn't such thing as a totally safe area.'⁸⁶¹ Such an attitude was magnified at the end of hostilities, especially as many of the problems 2 Para faced at Goose Green were repeated but on a larger scale in Stanley, which Major John Crosland of 2 Para described as being 'an area of chaos.'⁸⁶² The incident at Goose Green had served as a warning not to be unnecessarily careless around Argentine munitions, even if they were interesting. Men had not come through the campaign to be killed when supposedly "at peace."

Thus, it was very difficult for the soldiers to unwind or relax, despite the ceasefire. The units that prided themselves on being aggressive and always ready for any situation, such as the Paras, therefore persisted in their aggressive states, not relaxing for fear of what might happen. This would continue to place enormous strain on soldiers. Graham Tolson recalled that after the surrender the soldiers' adrenalin levels remained high, and it took some time for them to unwind. The tension remained taught, and arguments broke out over even the

⁸⁵⁹ IWM SOUND 20255 Freer, Adrian Robert, Reel 3.

⁸⁶⁰ IWM SOUND 13419 Cooper, David, Reel 4.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² IWM SOUND 15742 Crosland, John Harry, Reel 5.

Little things that would normally not even bother anyone. Little things turned into mountains, you know, there were big arguments going on, who should do this, who should do that, even coming to blows at times. It was certainly out of character from situations you would get in peacetime.⁸⁶³

Senior officers needed to manage and ease this tension, and one form this took were the attempts to establish a sense of normality based around familiarity and the maintaining discipline; having the soldiers clean their kit and weapons, as well as the local area, for example. While some of the troops were resentful of such peacetime regulations, with their characteristic pettiness or ‘bullshit,’⁸⁶⁴ it was undoubtedly important in helping re-establish routine. The war was, after all, over. Yet without the Argentines, there was a risk that the enduring tension could be unleashed on another target. As Tolson revealed, it emerged and was evident between comrades who had just come through combat together, but there was also a risk it could be directed against the Falklands’ civilian population for any perceived slight. Cooper, for example, recalls that when some of the Islanders expressed some bitterness at the two civilian deaths caused by Royal Navy shelling during the campaign, he reacted without sympathy and with irritation:

I’d buried too many of my soldiers to feel that two ladies who elected to stay in what was quite clearly a dangerous bit of the town were going to get a great deal of sympathy from me at that time.⁸⁶⁵

As CSM Peter Richens of 2 Para noted, the Islanders were ‘very pleased with what we’d done for them, but it got to the stage “well, we’re really thankful for what you’ve done, but when will you be going?”’⁸⁶⁶ While Richens understood why the isolated community, suddenly surrounded by thousands of soldiers and turned into a garrison town, expressed such an attitude, but the potential still existed for such an attitude to cause offence.

Additionally, while the end of the war brought relief for the majority of 3 Commando and 5 Infantry Brigades, it brought disappointment for others. Since they had landed, 7

⁸⁶³ IWM SOUND 20697 Tolson, Graham, Reel 4.

⁸⁶⁴ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 194.

⁸⁶⁵ IWM SOUND 13419 Cooper, David, Reel 6.

⁸⁶⁶ IWM SOUND 16074 Richens, Peter John, Reel 3.

Gurkha Rifles had spent a frustrating period hoping to engage the enemy, but to no avail. Even in their attack on Mount William in the final battles for Stanley, they did not directly engage the Argentine defenders, instead being held at a distance by defensive artillery fire; at the war's conclusion, all Captain Seear and his company had seen of the Argentines were abandoned positions or prisoners. Thus the end of the war was marked by a sense of frustration and regret, rather than euphoria or elation. For all the Battalion, the inability to have fought the enemy at close quarters was extremely disappointing, especially given the importance of demonstrable martial prowess within Gurkha culture:

To emulate the deeds of their fathers they and the remainder of the Battalion had trained zealously for the fight of their lives. They had suffered on the final leg of a long sea voyage, had withstood the Argentine shelling at Whetther Ground for forty-eight hours, and then had been attacked by the latter's last shell reserves during that tab to Mount William. Displaying courage while on the receiving end had been too abstract for them. They were more concerned with losing an opportunity to achieve *bahaduri* i.e. killing the *dush* and being awarded a gallantry medal. There could be no substitute for this, the only reason why the Gurkhas had participated in the "Foklands" War.⁸⁶⁷

Their British officers shared this sense of disappointment, demonstrating how all men subscribed to the dominant culture of the regiment; one of the officers attached to 7GR, having previously served in the SAS, commented that: 'I've had a bad war, and I'll never be able to face up to the lads at the Regiment in Hereford. Jesus, fancy not having fought in a battle!'⁸⁶⁸ This sentiment extended all the way up the chain of command, even to the commanding officer. When the surrender was announced, Seear recalls that his face showed 'acute disappointment' as 'the dream of Gurkha glory had gone with the wind.'⁸⁶⁹ Thus rank was no mediator on such emotions. This fighting force, without any tangible victory to seize upon, now became an occupying force in an inhospitable climate, waiting to go home.

⁸⁶⁷ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 278.

⁸⁶⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁸⁶⁹ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 277.

Yet while the soldiers on the Islands tired of their surroundings quickly, very few of the sailors had actually even seen what they had been fighting for. For example, it was only on 3rd July that the sailors aboard *Hermes* got their first view of the Islands. David Morgan observed the reaction: 'It all seemed a bit anticlimactic – a very odd place for a war to be fought and so many young men to lose their lives.'⁸⁷⁰ Even so, there was a real desire to see them, as Lippiett, aboard *Ambuscade*, expressed in a letter to his wife.⁸⁷¹ Thus sailors took the opportunity if they were offered it. Cattermole, for example, from *Exeter* went ashore on 2nd July at San Carlos and walked around, noticing the large amount of wreckage on the shore from the destroyed British ships.⁸⁷² His Commanding Officer, Hugh Balfour, believed that it was 'salutary' to visit the Islands they were fighting for when they steamed into San Carlos, and the places where so many ships had been sunk, given that *Exeter*'s role had mostly involved off-shore picket duty. As he remarked in interview, 'there's nothing like seeing it for yourself.'⁸⁷³ *Exeter* also went on to put in at Stanley just prior to sailing home on 7th July, where Foster went looking for, and acquired, some Argentine weapons to take home as souvenirs, much like his compatriots in the land forces did.⁸⁷⁴ Before *Glamorgan* sailed home, the ship's company took a tour of the Falklands, as they had been on station for two months, yet had only seen the islands once, on May 1st, when the ship was bombed. As Barrow commented, 'we did a tour. We all took our pictures of the penguins.'⁸⁷⁵ That so many sailors expressed an interest in seeing the Islands, and that this interest transcended the usually isolated communities of ships' companies to pervade across the Task Force as a whole, as shown by both contemporary and retrospective documentary and oral history testimony from sailors on different ships, clearly demonstrates how important such an issue was. It was also bound up in the fact that men had joined the Royal Navy to see the world, and thus there was an inherent interest built-in to the operational culture of the service to explore new places, of which the Falkland Islands certainly was one, with the added significance of having been the location of recent casualties.

⁸⁷⁰ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, pp. 296-7.

⁸⁷¹ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 196.

⁸⁷² IWM DOCS 91/19/1 Private Papers of K. Cattermole.

⁸⁷³ IWM SOUND 14596 Balfour, Hugh Maxwell, Reel 3.

⁸⁷⁴ IWM SOUND 15434 Foster, Kevin, Reel 3.

⁸⁷⁵ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 3.

It is important to note that only those sailors still on station could take advantage of such opportunities. Those who had been aboard ships that had been sunk, *Antelope*, *Sheffield*, and *Coventry* for example, had been sent home long before they had the opportunity to go ashore and fully explore the Islands, rather than simply see them in the distance, or on radar. Walpole, for example, returned home shortly after the sinking of *Sheffield*, having been transported first by ship to Ascension, and then flown to RAF Brize Norton. It was not until the following year that he returned to the 'very barren and bleak' Islands, and was able to see how they conformed to his mental picture of them.⁸⁷⁶

In a similar vein to the soldiers on East Falkland, the sailors of the British Task Force continued to live as if at war for a considerable period of time following the Argentine surrender in Stanley. Aboard *Ambuscade*, for example, the news of the surrender was greeted with calm. As Lippiett noted, 'certainly there were no fireworks or champagne,' and ship routine 'continued as though nothing had happened.'⁸⁷⁷ As it was only the Argentines on East Falkland who had surrendered, there was no guarantee that the Argentine Air Force would cease its attacks on British shipping; indeed, it was possible that in response to the air attacks, the only form of military success the Argentines had enjoyed, would in fact increase. The uncertainty of what would happen next, and whether it was only a temporary reprieve, prevented any mass outbreak of celebrations. Too many sailors had already been killed when caught unawares by Argentine air attack, and the surviving sailors were conscious that they had to remain alert so as to deal with any potential threat should it develop. This was especially true for the aviators, since any Argentine attack was likely to be airborne. As Robin Kent recalls, 'you couldn't just assume that because you'd gotten a surrender it was all over,'⁸⁷⁸ and so they lived, in the words of Ward, 'in a strange sort of limbo.'⁸⁷⁹ Again, the unity of expression as revealed in the diverse range of sources, and dates of collection, suggests that such a mentality was pervasive throughout the Task Force. Yet the men had to unwind; the previous weeks had been one of ever-increasing tension, and the levels of mental strain could not be maintained. As Pook noted,

⁸⁷⁶ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 5.

⁸⁷⁷ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 196.

⁸⁷⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁸⁷⁹ Ward, *Sea Harrier over the Falklands*, p. 329.

During the war we had been taken risks every day, everything we did had been risky, and with that kind of attitude, your risk thermostat is set so high, you don't worry about minor risks, you just get stuck in and do it. Peacetime you can't operate like that, because you don't last, you'll die in an accident after a few months. You've got to set your risk thermostat lower, take less chances.⁸⁸⁰

Inevitably, therefore, the boredom set in for many sailors after the surrender as their ships spent days simply sailing at slow speed around the Islands, which, 'after the adrenalin-fired weeks of warfare this continued phase of operations without any perceived threat was very hard to bear.'⁸⁸¹ While the ships continued to operate in a state of war, the lack of action resulted in many sailors asking when exactly they would sail for home. It was the realisation that peace meant that the crews could go home that had inspired any feelings of elation at the end of the war, rather than necessarily the concept of "victory."⁸⁸² The war was, after all, over, and there was no longer a definitive date to look forward to. Also, due the long-distance nature of the Falklands, a naval presence would have to be maintained in the region to deter any Argentine counter-attack; the British could not simply deprive the recently liberated islands of their defence. The air and sea around the islands needed to be patrolled. Thus, while the soldiers ashore were hoping to go home within a matter of weeks, in contrast some sailors were facing the prospect of a deployment stretching on for several months, which lessened the impact of any news of peace. In particular, one aircraft carrier would have to remain on station, and by the time *Invincible* returned to Britain, she, and the sailors and aviators aboard her, had been away for nearly 7 months.⁸⁸³ *Ambuscade* did not begin to sail north for Britain until 8th July, having first sailed to South Georgia with a company of Scots Guards. *Exeter* arrived back in Britain on 27th July, but soon after returned to the Falklands for a four month deployment.⁸⁸⁴ While culturally the sailors were accustomed to such long deployments, it was still a huge disappointment following the war. Having been damaged was also no guarantee of an early exit from

⁸⁸⁰ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 15.

⁸⁸¹ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 209.

⁸⁸² IWM SOUND 30290 Coward, John, Reel 3.

⁸⁸³ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁸⁸⁴ IWM SOUND 15434 Foster, Kevin, Reel 3.

the warzone; despite having been struck by Exocet on 11th June, for example, *Glamorgan*, did not leave the Total Exclusion Zone until 24th.⁸⁸⁵

II

The Return to the UK: Re-Adjusting Post-Conflict

When the men finally returned from the conflict and arrived back in the UK, they were dispersed on leave immediately. For the men who had served in the South Atlantic, they had been taken from the peacetime military, plunged into a sharp, intense war, and then quickly been returned back again. Such a rapid transition, unlike anything seen before, had a substantial effect on the men involved, as is clear from an analysis of printed memoirs and oral history testimony.

On their return to the UK, many men were able to say that they had found the campaign an enjoyable experience, despite its obvious hardships. This was not only the aggressive elites of the British military, the Paras and the Royal Marines, but also the other units who had participated. This was mostly because the Falklands was a short, sharp conflict, many men had still found it enjoyable. As John Kiszley of the Scots Guards wrote of his time in the Falklands, ‘compared to the experience of those Second World War veterans who fought through a war that lasted years, the Falklands was just a skirmish, and Tumbledown a one-night stand.’⁸⁸⁶ The war had not dragged on, and thousands had not been killed, and thus it was possible to find enjoyable aspects of it. Even so, in this way, the veterans of the Falklands were very much like their counterparts of previous wars, sharing in a sentiment that transcends national boundaries. Ward is one such example, believing that ‘for me the end of the conflict had spelt the end to the most satisfying and rewarding phase of my naval career.’⁸⁸⁷ Hynes argues that there are some men who love war, and what it represents:

What is it, exactly, that war lovers love? Not the killing and the violence, I think, but the excitement, the drama, and the fatal game... Some men never lose

⁸⁸⁵ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 3.

⁸⁸⁶ John Kiszley, in Iain Dale (ed.), *Memories of the Falklands* (London, 2002), p. 136.

⁸⁸⁷ Ward, *Sea Harrier over the Falklands*, p. 330.

their taste, or their need, for that excitement but go on being war lovers all their lives.⁸⁸⁸

In comparison to the Second World War or Korea, the brief nature of the Falklands conflict meant that, despite its ferocity, the men would not be fighting a prolonged campaign, but engaging in short battles before going back to a very familiar routine. Consequently, many men found it difficult to go back into the peacetime military, particularly the Army, with all its rules and regulations, having put their training to the test. Spicer, for example, recalls that there was initially some friction with returning from war and re-entering a peacetime army, and there was little patience for the inevitable routine that comes with it: 'I was an absolute believer in the benefits of hard, realistic training, but when you have just been to war, what do you do next?'⁸⁸⁹ For Spicer, subsequently 'the training did not seem to relate to the war we had just experienced.'⁸⁹⁰ McNally also recalled the difficulty of adopting a peacetime regime again, the problem of 'all the rules and pointless discipline and the yes sir, no sir bullshit.'⁸⁹¹ For those who had wanted to go to war in order to test themselves and their training in the ultimate environment, having done so and returned they were then faced with the inevitable question of 'what next?'

When they returned to duty, they attempted to resume their lives as they had been before the Falklands crisis. Yet the war had undoubtedly changed the men who had fought it, making such re-adjustment difficult. Charles Farrar-Hockley, an officer with 2 Para, recalled that 'we'd been through an experience, which if you haven't been through, alters your perspective on life.'⁸⁹² As Nadelson has noted,

Those who have lived through combat describe an exultation never to be felt afterward. Combat has all the aspects of the "optimal experience," the most intense high, a moment-by-moment sharply focused involvement. If there is

⁸⁸⁸ Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London, 1998), p. 28.

⁸⁸⁹ Spicer, *An Unorthodox Soldier*, p. 103.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 161.

⁸⁹² IWM SOUND 15612 Farrar-Hockley, Charles Dair, Reel 3.

nothing to replace the experience and nothing like it to be found in peace, some former combatants are imbued with a sense of deep and perpetual loss.⁸⁹³

From his work with Vietnam veterans, Nadelson discovered that for many, 'peacetime life pales against war, making it impossible to follow ordinary rules,'⁸⁹⁴ and the same could certainly be said of British veterans of the Falklands. Men who had experienced a short, intense conflict were not back in the familiar surroundings of peace, but having recognised that they had undergone a change. Bramley, for example, recalls that after he returned to Britain he immediately became frustrated with the normality of civilians, as compared to life on East Falkland, and once back in his quarters 'I started to fight a completely different war, against boredom.'⁸⁹⁵ Similarly, John Geddes found life in the Paras too dull after the Falklands, and so opted instead to join the SAS in search of greater excitement.⁸⁹⁶ The cultural values that he had experienced in action in the Falklands, those of action and aggression, were no longer suited to his current situation, so were motivating him to move on and seek further challenges. It was not only the Paras who believed this to be the case; Spicer later wrote that:

I know I am not alone in thinking this; many veterans of the Falklands, and any other war, will say the same thing. The fighting had been terrible, the discomfort considerable, but life afterwards seemed, for a while at least, flat and dull and lacking in colour and excitement. I suppose the adrenaline that had kept us buoyed up on Tumbledown was now gone, and without it we all felt deflated.⁸⁹⁷

Regardless, and despite the hardship of the campaign, servicemen from each branch of the armed forces looked back on their experience with pride. Their central cultural values, of professionalism and being the best at what they do, had been vindicated. As terrible as war had been, it remained a defining moment in many veterans' lives; they were unwilling to forget it completely, even if it resulted in disability or psychological problems, because to have survived, to have "passed the test," was a great achievement.

⁸⁹³ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 79.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁸⁹⁵ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 208.

⁸⁹⁶ John Geddes, Interview with Author, 23/04/10.

⁸⁹⁷ Tim Spicer, *An Unorthodox Soldier: Peace and War and the Sandline Affair* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 101.

Kent, when questioned in interview regarding his feelings towards having served in the campaign, stated:

I feel satisfied, hopefully not self-satisfied but certainly satisfied, that I was asked to do a job for my country – and I do see it as my country – and I didn't let it down and I wasn't found wanting, and I'm glad to be able to say I did it.⁸⁹⁸

Whereas at the beginning of the campaign there was a dichotomy between personal apprehension and professional commitment, in the aftermath of war the two were linked together. Adrian Freer, who fought with 3 Para, described the campaign thus:

It had been a grand adventure. Yes there had been some bloody times during it, and we had lost some very close friends... but it was an experience that you would not have missed, quite frankly... I feel immensely privileged to have been part of it.⁸⁹⁹

In terms of professional satisfaction, his attitude to soldiering was that 'there's no substitute for having had the opportunity to doing it for real.'⁹⁰⁰ Another 3 Para officer, Pat Butler, considered the Falklands personally as being 'a fulfilment of one ambition.'⁹⁰¹ It also brought great professional pride: 'In the same way as a doctor has to practise and everybody else, this was *the* war... Infantry warfare in the traditional sense.'⁹⁰² As Graham Colbeck subsequently wrote of his time in the Falklands with 3 Para, 'I had played the ultimate game and won.'⁹⁰³ It was not only the elite land forces units that expressed such sentiment; in the Navy, for example, Lieutenant-Commander Tim Fletcher, who served on *Coventry*, wrote: 'I would have felt cheated if, after eighteen years in the Royal Navy, I had not been able to play an active role in the most demanding challenge the Navy had to met during my service.'⁹⁰⁴ Kevin Smith shared similar sentiments: 'It's an experience that I'm glad I had, but it's not something I'd

⁸⁹⁸ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁸⁹⁹ IWM SOUND 20255 Freer, Adrian Robert, Reel 3.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁰¹ IWM SOUND 28300 Butler, Pat, Reel 2.

⁹⁰² Ibid.

⁹⁰³ Colbeck, *With 3 Para to the Falklands*, p. 207.

⁹⁰⁴ Quoted in Hart Dyke, *Four Weeks in May*, p. 215.

ever want to do again, or wish on anybody else.’⁹⁰⁵ It is remarkable that there is a unity in expression as revealed by a variety of source mediums that were recorded at different times, from men of different ranks and from across the services, and a such suggests that the concept of professionalism was a dominant cultural construct. Unlike their civilian historical forebears, who rushed to the colours in a time of overt national threat, the men who fought in the Falklands had not felt compelled by any great patriotic desire to serve there. They had done so because they had been ordered too. This is an important distinction for the future historiography; as professionals, their feelings of pride were based on a far more personal sense of accomplishment, rather than any great sense of altruism, or of having “saved” the country, for example.

Some veterans did, however, encounter problems in integrating back into the peacetime armed forces on a professional level. Sam MacFarlane still looks back with bitterness on the way in which the Navy re-asserted the bureaucracy and promptly billed him for a replacement uniform, despite the fact that he had lost the vast majority of his possessions in the line of duty when *Coventry* had sunk on 25th May.⁹⁰⁶ Some sailors also had issues at a mental level when it came to resuming their duties. As a result of his combat experiences, the serviceman lived in a continuing state of high alert in peacetime. Routine civilian sounds were heard with a military ear; a car backfiring or a plane flying overhead will produce the same reaction as in combat, namely instinctively diving to ground and taking cover. Kevin Smith and Raymond Adams, for example, reported behaving in a very similar fashion on their return from the Falklands, reacting to the noise of a low-flying plane, or a heavy goods train going past the house at night, by immediately seeking cover.⁹⁰⁷ The enduring nature of these reactions, and the effect they had on the individual, can be seen in the way in which they were features noted in both oral history interviews, despite the fact that Adams’ was recorded in 1990 and Smith’s in 2009. Adams, who had been on *Coventry*, also experienced considerable anxiety when carrying out drills that, prior to the Falklands campaign, had been routine and innocuous. For example, three months after he returned to sea, when on his new ship sailing into Portland he took part in an exercise fighting off a low-level aircraft

⁹⁰⁵ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

⁹⁰⁶ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author, 24/06/09.

⁹⁰⁷ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09, and IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 4.

attack, 'and that did get me very worried.'⁹⁰⁸ The first time he had returned to sea after the *Coventry*, at one point the ship heeled over sharply, which had again caused him anxiety, as it similarly invoked memories of the sinking on 25th May.⁹⁰⁹ While his anxiety aboard ships gradually subsided, Adams believed that, after his Falklands experience and having seen combat, he was now more aware and anxious about the uncertainty of the world and global politics, which made him feel more vulnerable when he moved to various trouble spots around the globe: 'I'm not so much worried these days about being in a ship, but I am more worried about where the ship's going, and you realise the uncertainty of it all.'⁹¹⁰ Additionally, when Smith returned to the Falklands on a new ship shortly after the conflict as part of an emergency draft on patrol, he found the anti-aircraft drills to be slightly disturbing, even though he knew they were only an exercise: 'it's just that jet noise when they shoot over and that was quite unnerving, and I struggled with that for quite some time, quite a few years. That noise, the link was just horrendous.'⁹¹¹

In the highly competitive world of military aviation, there were also potential issues of professional reintegration. The competitive instinct of fighter pilots, a product of their institutional culture, had carried them through the war but also had the potential to cause conflict in a time of peace. Those pilots who fought in the South Atlantic would certainly have distinguished themselves for the future, and so there was an element of jealousy amongst those who had not gone. This was even more apparent amongst the new pilots coming through, who had just missed out. Kent, who went on to train these new pilots, acknowledged that the Falklands experience certainly 'did separate the men from the boys.'⁹¹² Such a sense transcended squadrons, and even services; whereas Kent observed such differences in the Fleet Air Arm, in No. 1 RAF, Pook recalls that the Squadron divided amongst those who had been involved and those who had not. While it was recognised that this had been through no fault of their own, he remembers that there was still a sense that one half had 'done all the dirty work' while the other had remained in the UK.⁹¹³ This is even more remarkable given that Pook suffered nightmares and sleep disturbances most nights following the conflict, hearing the alert

⁹⁰⁸ IWM SOUND 11307 Adams, Raymond John, Reel 4.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹¹ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

⁹¹² Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁹¹³ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 15.

klaxon on *Hermes*: 'I remember that for years and years afterwards, I couldn't get it out of my mind,' and imagining the Harrier engines starting up so he would leap out of bed ready to scramble.⁹¹⁴ Yet even though the experience had been personally detrimental, it had been professionally satisfying, and his competitive instincts had been satisfied by being in the active half of the squadron. Similarly, Kent recalls that he felt as if he had been changed by his experience of the war, which affected how he interacted with his fellow pilots after the conflict:

You just take a slightly different view on things. I think I'm slightly more humane than I was. I took the fighter pilot stuff fairly earnestly when I went through training and certainly before the Falklands. We had reputations to keep up and we had to look fairly macho.⁹¹⁵

Yet once they had walked the walk, as well as talked the talk, the ostentatious, aggressive competitive nature of the fighter pilot no longer appealed as much to him: 'I don't feel a need to do that if you've already proved it. I don't have anything to prove, really.'⁹¹⁶ Even so, Kent believed that, having been at war, professionally it gave him far more authority when it came to training new pilots.⁹¹⁷ There was a similar sentiment amongst some sailors in the Navy regarding how their attitudes and outlook had changed; a lot of sailors Smith had served with left in the years after the Falklands because they felt as if, having experienced combat, there was nothing further left to achieve in the service: 'We'd all changed... You've been there, you've travelled round the world, you've fought a war, what else is there?'⁹¹⁸

As Smith noted, 'not all sailors and not all soldiers get sent to war, that's just the way it goes.'⁹¹⁹ However, whereas the Falklands conflict had involved the vast majority of Britain's Sea Harrier pilots, in contrast a great number of Royal Marines and other Army personnel had been left behind when the Task Force had sailed. Yet those veterans of the Falklands had to re-integrate with these men when they returned, particularly if they moved on to new postings. Mead recalls that he felt sorry for those

⁹¹⁴ Ibid.

⁹¹⁵ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

⁹¹⁸ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid.

who had been left behind as part of the Rear Party. They had not chosen to stay, but been ordered to, and as such there was little they could have done, and, showing the inclusivity of the green beret, he did not believe that they should not be ostracised for it, as they were certainly well trained enough to have been successful had they gone south. A lot of the men involved in the training of future marines had stayed behind, and while Mead acknowledged that while perhaps they lacked the credence to teach having not experienced the conflict, these men had been to Northern Ireland numerous times and completed other operations, so were more than qualified.⁹²⁰

Soldiers realised that many men had not chosen to stay behind, but rather been ordered too, so there was no animosity between those who had gone, and those who had not, at least from the perspective of the veterans. Given the strong desire to participate, as analysed earlier, those who had not gone were logically disappointed to have missed out. The need to prove this led to some problems for the units in the years following the conflicts. For example, many veterans were angered when those who had not gone south said things like “I wish I was there,” usually in order to not be intimidated by the experienced veterans. This provoked ire amongst some veterans, as Carter noted. He believed that such men were foolish to desire such a thing: ‘It’s not what they think it is. It’s not a situation to be in more than once, or even once as far as I’m concerned.’⁹²¹ It was not only British soldiers who had missed out on the Falklands that exhibited such sentiments. Whilst in Malaysia as part of his 1983/4 tour one of Seear’s Gurkhas drowned after jumping into in a jungle pond in full combat kit, pack and rifle included. When he asked the platoon commander and men why he had done it, Seear was told:

The man had not been to the Foklands [sic], sahib, because he was on Nepal leave at the time... We think he had been trying to show the others that he was just as good as them by trying to swim to the other side of the pond.⁹²²

Both written and oral sources therefore clearly show the cultural importance and significance of having seen conflict, of having proven oneself, as being held across the armed forces.

⁹²⁰ Ray Mead, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

⁹²¹ IWM SOUND 13004 Carter, Graham, From Transcript of Interview.

⁹²² Quoted in Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 322.

III

Moving On: Leaving the Services

The servicemen's experience of life in the military was finite. All men needed leave the military at some point and attempt to re-integrate into civilian life, which could be extremely difficult even if they had not seen combat. By utilising military memoirs that incorporate such details, but also more significantly actively collecting oral history to explore the post-conflict period, the legacies of military service, and the impact of combat cultures, can be fully explored here by utilising a more extended time frame than used in previous analyses.

For the Navy, in particular, the adjustment to civilian life could be difficult on a cultural, as well as professional level. The Royal Navy, through its culture, effectively established itself as an alternative to the civilian world. Sailors and aviators within the Navy may well have inhabited the same temporal spaces as civilians, but culturally and linguistically they were poles apart. As Robin Kent said, the navy 'is a way of life, it is very much a way of life,'⁹²³ and the naval slang 'is a way of communicating as well as a way of life.'⁹²⁴ Just as these linguistic bonds were inclusive for those inside the naval circle, they were exclusive for those outside it. Having been inducted into this system, this culture and this way of living, it has in many cases proven difficult for veterans to adjust to an unfamiliar civilian environment where there was not this shared frame of reference or pattern of behaviour. Furthermore, as the Royal Navy provided everything for its members, from a regular income, employment, accommodation, food and social events, its institutional culture 'is not only all pervasive but also generates a high level of dependency among its personnel.'⁹²⁵

Similarly, the regimental system employed by the Army engendered a similar bond. Steven Hughes commented that, for the Parachute Regiment, the 'tremendous regimental history imbues a great spirit of brotherhood, as does the physical selection

⁹²³ Robin Kent, Interview with Author, 18/05/10.

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

⁹²⁵ Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War*, p. 7.

process and the parachuting process.’⁹²⁶ Anthony Beevor, amongst others, has identified these strong bonds as being essential in battle:

Unless he is a fanatic, a man facing death in battle needs more than an abstract cause to defend. His own family is far away, so the regiment takes on its emotional focus. And a soldier’s fear of shaming himself in its eyes can balance his fear of the enemy.⁹²⁷

Yet Beevor, like other historians, does not consider the consequences of combat upon these pre-existing bonds, how they could be strengthened beyond imagination due to the shared experience of war. Indeed, the strength of the social bonds and shared culture binding these men together in the Parachute Regiment could often endure beyond military service and into death. Steven Hughes, for example, noted that it was not uncommon for several soldiers to regularly go out for a drink in Aldershot whilst barracked there and then climb the fence of the cemetery to have a beer at the grave of a friend killed in the Falklands.⁹²⁸

Units like the Parachute Regiment attracted a certain kind of men, and by confronting them with physical challenges forced them together to form strong bonds. Such bonds often replaced or acted as substitutes for men from complicated family backgrounds. For many soldiers, the regiment they served with therefore became a surrogate family, which made them an extremely effective fighting force in the short-term, but had potential long-term problems when it came to the time for the soldier to leave: ‘The great difficulty when soldiers leave is that they’ve been part of a family, and for many soldiers in the Parachute Regiment the regiment is their only family... The regiment has become their home and their whole life.’⁹²⁹ David French commented that such sentiments were because, historically, soldiers have often followed their fathers into specific regiments, creating dynasties, and compounding the idea that regiments are like families.⁹³⁰ When men left this highly supportive and familiar environment, and entered one that was for the most part unknown and unfamiliar to them, it could result in a

⁹²⁶ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 1.

⁹²⁷ Beevor, *Inside the British Army*, p. 299.

⁹²⁸ Ibid, and Steven Hughes, Interview with Author, 18/12/09.

⁹²⁹ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 1.

⁹³⁰ David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, The British Army, and the British People, c. 1870 – 2000* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 40-1.

severe sense of social dislocation that sometimes led to great difficulties in their personal and professional lives. The resulting mental strain could manifest itself in a variety of antisocial behaviours, such as alcohol or drug abuse, or even more serious crimes; with tempers shortened by such mental pressure, violent explosions of anger could, and sometimes did, result in assault charges being laid against the veteran by the police.

The Royal Marines similarly encouraged such a strong bond between men so that separation could likewise be difficult. However, in the Royal Marines, unlike the Army, men moved between units regularly; therefore their social base was far greater and not tied so explicitly to one small group. It was therefore easier and less emotionally challenging for them to move on, as they already had experience of leaving units and colleagues, which members of the Army did not. Yet they remained part of a specialised corps, so men still formed a strong attachment to the service, and it was still difficult to leave it completely. Ray Mead, for example, left the Corps after 11 years, and recalls that it was an extremely difficult decision, as it was job that he loved doing. Furthermore, he believes that during his period of service, he was, to a great extent, institutionalised in the Marine way of life. Thus, leaving was extremely hard and traumatic: 'If I could have cried on the day then I probably would have done... I had never felt such a feeling of dejection, and I don't think I've ever felt that since... I was really morose.'⁹³¹ Such testimony is remarkable for the strength of feeling it conveys. Nearly twenty years after Mead left the Corps, such emotions were still prevalent, and demonstrate the enduring nature of military service on the individual. Indeed, such was Mead's bond to the Corps that he thought about re-joining 'plenty of times, and I tried,' particularly when the First Gulf War flared up, which was only shortly after he had left.⁹³² That Mead's body had been so physically punished by his service that he was near disability is further testament to the strength of such feelings. Serving in the Royal Marines was undoubtedly tough on the body, and when Brian Evans left after a career of 22 years and 11 months, his body was 'pretty much broken.'⁹³³ Evans was both sad

⁹³¹ Ray Mead, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ Brian Evans, Interview with Author, 26/10/09.

to leave the Royal Marines, but also knew that aged 40, he still had the opportunity of another career, and so to his mind 'it was time to go.'⁹³⁴ As Evans noted,

The truth is the day you leave you're out-of-date. There'll be new characters, there'll be new stories, there'll be new jokes, there'll be new things that you're not part of, and I think it's a mistake to carry on pretending that you are.⁹³⁵

As mentioned above, a serviceman's life in the military was finite, and when he moved on, he was replaced. Accepting that could sometimes be a very difficult process for the veteran and a failure to do so created the potential for future problems.

The enduring impact of military service can be seen in the way that, when men left the services and ended that aspect of their life, many still tried to retain some elements of uniformed order. For example, when Graham Colbeck retired from the Regular Army and the Parachute Regiment in 1992 after 23 years of service, he immediately joined the Territorial Army, and continued parachuting.⁹³⁶ Mead joined the police force, which was common for many men leaving the services.⁹³⁷ Kevin Smith similarly joined the Prison Service. Initially he had worked as a physical trainer, a role he had wanted to fulfil in the Navy but had been prevented from doing so, but found that working on the outside was less fulfilling and considered rejoining the Navy. It was only the fact he got married that meant he did not. He did, however, join the Royal Marines Reserves for several years.⁹³⁸ Sam MacFarlane, who left the Navy after 22 years, took a position working with cadets.⁹³⁹ That such a diverse range of former servicemen recorded such post-career activities, in a variety of sources, demonstrates the fact that order was a major cultural legacy of their service lives, and one they could not simply abandon by removing a uniform.

Such an attitude also extended to officers, and so crossed social class. Rick Jolly left the Royal Navy in 1996, due in equal parts to MOD cutbacks in the provision of medical services to the armed forces and to having reached a glass ceiling in terms of promotion

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Colbeck, *With 3 Para to the Falklands*, p. 213.

⁹³⁷ Ray Mead, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

⁹³⁸ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

⁹³⁹ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author, 24/06/09.

prospects. However, because the MOD released too many people too quickly, there was a lack of specialist knowledge. Thus, Jolly was employed for a further year on a consultancy basis as well as helping out with the care of recruits at a nearby Navy training centre. He feels this was important as it 'enabled me to minimise the shock of disconnection from the Royal Navy.'⁹⁴⁰ Peter Joseph, who left the RAF in 1988 rather than accept a promotion and move his family to Germany still craved some aspects of the military lifestyle, so he joined the Auxiliaries and became a weekend soldier. His commitment to this grew until it became, in all but name, a full-time job until the unit was disbanded in 1999, and he was no longer required.⁹⁴¹ Many men also continued to be members of a variety of formal and informal organisations based around the military, be they old comrades or old ships' associations. There was also the option of joining the specific South Atlantic Medal Association (1982). Formed on 2nd April 1997 and open to all veterans of Operation Corporate, the organisation specialised in providing support for those with psychological difficulties as a consequence of their service.

Like the diverse backgrounds of the men who joined the armed forces, what they went on to do after they left the military also varied. Some were able to use the qualifications they had gained to good effect while others found themselves drifting through a variety of jobs before settling on something.⁹⁴² Those who fulfilled more specialist roles within the military could often move easily into an equivalent role in the civilian sphere; Medical Officers, for example, were qualified doctors. Thus there was an easy transition, in professional terms. Additionally, the technical branches of the Royal Navy and Fleet Air Arm provided a good springboard for men when they left the service and re-entered civilian society, much as the recruitment literature analysed in the first chapter had promised. The war these men had fought was far more technical, and as such their skills were highly valued in the civilian world, meaning that finding employment was not difficult.⁹⁴³ Indeed, the technical skills that many men possessed as a result of their military service were valued far higher than in the military as they were accompanied by other attractive skills such as leadership, and flight engineers in

⁹⁴⁰ Jolly, *The Red and Green Life Machine*, p. 229.

⁹⁴¹ IWM SOUND 26838 Joseph, Peter et al, Reel 1. A BBC Radio 4 programme entitled 'Civvy Street. Programme 3: The Hermit' about Peter Joseph, a veteran of the Falklands who had left the service.

⁹⁴² Ibid.

⁹⁴³ Phil Russo, Interview with Author, 18/12/08.

particular could make a comfortable living with the trade skills they had learned. Similarly, former fighter pilots were obviously able to become pilots for the commercial airlines, as David Morgan did.⁹⁴⁴ This certainly facilitated the transition from military to civilian life. Something that has also ensured that this transition has been easier for contemporary servicemen is the growth of the communications industry, particularly online social media. This has made keeping in contact, or re-establishing contact, with old comrades extremely easy, and has been something that many veterans have involved themselves in. It also allows the serviceman to engage as much as he wishes in the process; Smith, for example, prefers informal ways of keeping in contact with close friends, including those now living abroad, to attending the formal and regular reunions.⁹⁴⁵ As Hughes commented in interview, such organisations are an ‘ongoing mechanism of support,’⁹⁴⁶ something which those men suffering from psychological disorders increasingly rely on.

Combat lives long in the minds of those who have experienced it, and commemoration has often been able to play an important part in alleviating psychological stress. What has been noticeable from this study is that those who have fought in the land forces have retained a far greater affinity with the physical environment in which they fought, and a far greater sense of place. This is almost certainly because the sites where they fought have remained “walkable,” and for many years will still carry the marks of war. Old positions can still be found, and detritus of war collected, helping fuel evocative memories. In contrast, the landscape of memory is very different for the Royal Navy in comparison to the Army or Royal Marines. Such differences are entirely a legacy of the nature of the war as it was fought and the differences between combat arenas. Whereas veterans of the land battles of Operation Corporate were able to visit the battlefields, retrace their footsteps and occasionally find traces and remains of positions they may have personally occupied, the Royal Navy have been unable to do so. For naval veterans, the sites of their actions are not “walkable,” but rather either visible from an adjacent piece of land or mere coordinates on a map of the ocean far from the Falkland Islands themselves.

⁹⁴⁴ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

⁹⁴⁵ Brian Smith, Interview with Author, 26/10/09.

⁹⁴⁶ Steven Hughes, Interview with Author, 18/12/09.

In terms of memorials, for those who fought at sea there are also no graves to visit, no specific sites of remembrance. Those men who served on land have been able to visit large-scale cemeteries created by the Imperial War Graves commission, smaller ones such as the military cemetery at Aldershot, or even local parish graveyards, in order to visit their fallen comrades. As naval casualties were buried at sea, or many remain entombed in the ships that sank, this has deprived not only the families of a site of mourning, but also the sailor's former comrades, a site that would otherwise prove important in achieving closure on wartime experience. Any naval memorials, such as that erected on nearby Pebble Island after the loss of HMS *Coventry* on 25th May, were obviously by their very nature removed from the actual site where the ship went down; ships that were sunk disappeared beneath the waves, lost to sight and, to all but their crew, lost to mind. When it came to immediate commemoration, the best that could be done for ships sunk during the fighting was a wreath was dropped via helicopter over the spot at which she had sunk, as *Ambuscade* did for *Ardent*.⁹⁴⁷ Significantly, such a distinction in commemoration persisted after the war concluded. For the land forces, such as the Paras and Royal Marines, those units that served in the Falklands will always have a physical place on the islands where they fought to complement the mental space occupied by memories of the campaign. In contrast, for those sailors who served in the South Atlantic, they were dispersed and removed from their ships as the Navy's policy of personnel rotation continued, so lost their physical connection to the Falklands War. As for the ships themselves, they were either scrapped or sold on to the navies of other nations, irrevocably removing the physical link to the past.

In regards to returning to the Falklands in a non-operational sense, it has remained an entirely individual choice, dependent on the feelings of the veteran. Factors that have influenced it, however, were certainly the experience of combat in the South Atlantic; for those who survived land battles, there has been a common desire to return and see the land they fought across.⁹⁴⁸ Similarly, for those sailors who lost their ships, in the historical record there is a noticeably greater desire to return to the Islands than those who came through unscathed.⁹⁴⁹ Submariners, by the nature of their war, hold far less affinity to the South Atlantic, not because they were not proud of what they achieved,

⁹⁴⁷ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 231.

⁹⁴⁸ Chris Jackson, Interview with Author, 21/02/09.

⁹⁴⁹ Sam MacFarlane, Interview with Author, 24/06/09.

but instead because they did not and could not see the Islands or the surrounding waters. Thus, the South Atlantic remains simply one of several places they were deployed, with no greater sentimental attraction.⁹⁵⁰ Yet for many the area represents a highly evocative place, both in a physical and psychological sense. In 2002, Rick Jolly helped organise the SAMA 82 Pilgrimage back to the Falkland Islands to coincide with Remembrance Sunday that year. He considers it to have made a substantial difference to those men suffering from all forms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as they were able to put to rest negative thoughts they had previously held. Further benefits came from witnessing the happiness and gratitude of the Falkland Islanders themselves, and the improved state of Stanley compared to how it had been in the aftermath of the Argentinian occupation. In a brief questionnaire distributed on the way home, 76% of forms were returned, and of those 80% of respondents confirmed that they felt their mental state had improved.⁹⁵¹

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Like their civilian forebears who had fought in the two world wars, some of the professional servicemen of the British Task Force who served in the South Atlantic found it difficult to readjust to life after the conflict ended. While the vast the majority went on to be a success, many struggled with the return to life within the peacetime military. That they had utilised the skills for which they had extensively trained, but never expected to use, and been through an intense experience, had a substantial effect on this. The professionalism with which they had approached conflict now needed to be re-applied during peacetime, an entirely different context, which proved to be a great challenge for some.

The remarkable unity of the historical record, regardless of the type of source or date it was produced, has informed opinion on the enduring nature of military identity, which points to a pervasive, distinct culture which existed within the military. Working with a 30 year timeframe between the event and the present has enabled conclusions to be made on the strength of such culture, alongside the enduring legacy of military life, to become apparent. Life within the services was not just a temporary phase, but a

⁹⁵⁰ Tim McClement, Interview with Author, 27/05/09.

⁹⁵¹ Jolly, *The Red and Green Life Machine*, pp. 252-254.

defining feature and central component of the veteran's life, long after he left the military. The cultural customs in which he had been immersed clearly exerted a strong emotional pull, and continued to exert some influence even after he had left the military environment. The military remained an important, defining feature of the veteran's identity long after such a break from the military regime. All those who had served in the South Atlantic were physically required to move on from the Falklands conflict and their military lives, though for some doing so mentally proved to be extraordinarily difficult. The following chapter will analyse their experiences, the long-term casualties of military operations and service.

Chapter 7:

Long-Term Casualties: Psychological Problems and Military Service

Major Bob Leitch, himself a Falklands veteran, wrote that ‘everyone is affected to some extent by what happens to them in wars; and those who claim otherwise are either kidding themselves, or suffering from some unnatural and possibly psychotic lack of human emotion.’⁹⁵² In the previous chapter, both written and oral testimony has shown a remarkable symmetry in suggesting that this is true, that all the men who served in the South Atlantic were in some way affected by what they had experienced to varying extents. For many, such experiences did not hamper their lives moving forward, and the vast majority of men were able to continue their lives undisturbed. However, in the aftermath of the wars of the twentieth century, it has become increasingly obvious that some men are liable to suffer some form of mental trauma in relation to what they experienced. While a minority, it would be remiss to not analyse how and why these men have been affected by combat and their military service, and the impact it has had and continues to have on their lives as a result of their prolonged and extensive immersion in military culture.

While the memoirs of the veterans of the First and Second World Wars aimed to relate predominately what the authors had experienced within the time frame of war, in recent years there has been a shift in the narratives of military memoirs to analyse the impact of service upon the individual. The Falklands War represents an excellent example of this. In contrast to those memoirs published within the first decade since the conflict, those published more recently are not merely tools for relating experience, but many were in fact written for cathartic purposes. Their writing and publication was part of a narrative therapy that would enable the veteran to come to terms with what he had experienced in the wake of psychological problems as part of an overall cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programme. Both David Morgan’s *Hostile Skies* and Tony McNally’s *Watching Men Burn* were written for this purpose, and both published 25 years after the war in 2007. That men of different ranks and from different branches of the armed forces would both engage in such activities demonstrated that such distinctions were no mediator on the issue of psychological damage. However, since

⁹⁵² Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 256.

many men have chosen not to commit such memories to paper, or this form of therapy, such a historical record has been supplemented with twelve oral history interviews from the Sound Archive of the Imperial War Museum and seven conducted independently between 2008 and 2012. Working in conjunction with the printed sources, such interviews provide a vital insight into how veterans have been affected in the long-term aftermath of war. The charity Combat Stress currently estimates that it takes on average fourteen years for psychological problems to reach a point where the veteran will seek help.⁹⁵³ Thus it is vital that work be carried out analysing such experiences within an extended timeframe after the event, so that such problems, and their solutions, can be incorporated into a study such as this and not overlooked.

I

Combat and Psychological Casualties

Nigel Hunt has summarised the prevalent mood in the modern historiography when he argues that:

Casualties are not just those who are killed or wounded, or civilians who are caught up in the fighting or just happened to get in the way of marching troops; they are ordinary people who cannot bear their memories of what has happened – the traumatised. We cannot accurately estimate the number of victims of war who are psychologically damaged by their experiences.⁹⁵⁴

Regardless, military officials have attempted such estimations in their planning. McManners states that in the Falklands, psychiatric casualties were officially estimated at between 5 and 10% of the number of physically wounded.⁹⁵⁵ In fact, the rate of immediately recognised psychological casualties was only 2%, and the estimated total rate 7%, of all wounded.⁹⁵⁶ In post-World War II conflicts, such as Vietnam or the Arab-Israeli conflicts, however, the official estimated rate for psychological casualties

⁹⁵³ Combat Stress, *Annual Review 2012* (2012), p. 18.

http://combatstress.org.uk/media/56674/combat_stress_annual_review_2011-12.pdf

⁹⁵⁴ Nigel C. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 2.

⁹⁵⁵ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 377.

⁹⁵⁶ L.S. O'Brien and S. J. Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict,' *British Journal of Psychiatry* (Vol. 159, July 1991), p. 139.

was 30%.⁹⁵⁷ The discrepancy between the figures is assumed to be attributable to a number of factors, including; the short duration of the conflict, both in overall terms and in terms of engagement time; the offensive rather than defensive nature of the combat, the comparatively small number of casualties, with 237 killed and 777 wounded; and the high quality nature of the troops employed by the British.⁹⁵⁸ John Roberts, who commanded 16th Field Ambulance, RAMC, believed that the psychological casualties were fewer perhaps because substantial psychological casualties are more the product of mass tank battles, as featured in Arab-Israeli conflicts. In his experience of the Falklands, some men were temporarily shocked by events such as the *Galahad*, but quickly recovered given time. Only a few 'were not fit for service anymore on that day.'⁹⁵⁹

Psychological breakdown is something that has been associated more with ground forces than any other, those who engaged their enemy at close quarters. Thus, it would seem that a particular aspect of this combat experience and culture was a contributing factor in the development of social and psychological problems. In contrast, Walpole believes that British sailors 'are almost irrepressible in their cheerfulness and ability to bounce back, and to get on with the job in hand, which is thoroughly heartening,'⁹⁶⁰ and that culturally they were thus more resilient to becoming psychological casualties. However, while mental breakdown was rare in the Navy, it still occurred in the Falklands campaign. *Glamorgan* had one such potential casualty, a Senior Rating and experienced sailor who began showing possible symptoms shortly after the Task Force began sailing, well before combat was joined. The ship's doctor wanted to put a man ashore at Ascension, but Barrow refused, as he thought that if the man was sent ashore, others would follow.⁹⁶¹ The sailor in question worked in the Sea Slug missile magazine, often alone. That he did in fact recover and play a leading part in later events perhaps suggests that his symptoms were the product of fear and anxiety, rather than necessarily being induced by combat stress. From this it could be inferred that isolation could lead to more melancholy feelings which, unchecked, resulted in psychological breakdown. Such instances took place on other ships of the Task Force; aboard *Ambuscade*, Lippiett

⁹⁵⁷ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 377.

⁹⁵⁸ O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 136 and McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 377.

⁹⁵⁹ IWM SOUND 6447 Roberts, John, Reel 4.

⁹⁶⁰ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 5.

⁹⁶¹ IWM SOUND 13135 Barrow, Michael Ernest, Reel 4.

expressed little pity for a man clearly suffering from stress who was evacuated, having taken 'the whole war badly and got increasingly depressed and pessimistic.'⁹⁶² Even though the sailor was a senior officer Lippiett wrote that 'overall I'm not too worried, for I found him a drag on my attempts to keep things buoyant – and on the morale of the Wardroom.'⁹⁶³ Indeed, Lippiett believes that were several people aboard who were 'gloomy and indeed pessimistic about the situation and our chances of survival. Left unchecked, those people could have undue influence, so they needed to be contained in subtle ways.'⁹⁶⁴ It is clear that there were social pressures to maintain a facade of, if not nonchalance, then at least coping with the pressures of war rather than affect the social balance of the group. This required a mixture of careful man-management on the part of the senior officers, as well as self-policing on the part of the individual, as revealed by both oral and written testimony.

One thing that is now inextricably linked with war in the popular psyche due to the widespread circulation of military memoirs, particularly from contemporary conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, is the issue of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. PTSD formally entered medical practice in 1980, when the initial diagnostic criteria for the condition were first published in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition (DSM-III), by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The APA has since revised these criteria several times; DSM-III-R (1987), DSM-IV (1994), and DSM-IV-TR (2000). The key criteria, apart from the event itself, now include intrusive re-experiencing, avoidance, emotional numbing and hyper-arousal. In order to be classed as PTSD these symptoms must also have a significant impact on social, occupational or family functioning.⁹⁶⁵ PTSD is defined within the traditional medical model of a number of symptoms regularly clustering together and forming a coherent syndrome. However, 'there is no clearly definable group of symptoms that leads to a definite syndrome of PTSD.'⁹⁶⁶ Such a suggestion demonstrates a belief that PTSD has an environmental cause, which is too simplistic given the complex nature of the psychological disorder. Indeed, rates of PTSD can still continually be questioned, and there are no definitive statistics available to assess how much it afflicts British

⁹⁶² Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 175.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁹⁶⁵ Hunt, *Memory. War and Trauma*, p. 9.

⁹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

servicemen. As such, no conclusions can be made as to what characteristics mean that a person is more likely to suffer from the condition, currently making any attempts at prevention of pre-combat psychological screening impossible.

As the theories behind the causes and symptoms of PTSD have become better known in recent decades, a myth has emerged that soldiers, sailors and airmen are liable to suffer it whilst fighting. This is incorrect. Hunt, for example, argues for a distinction between war trauma and PTSD, even though the two do share symptoms, such as intrusive thoughts, aggression and emotional numbing, amongst others.⁹⁶⁷ While combatants may well develop PTSD based on their combat experiences, this is a long-term psychological disorder; any adverse psychological reaction to combat is best described as Combat Stress Reaction (CSR), the latest in the line of labels for what originated as shell shock. Indeed, PTSD develops out of CSR, and is the most common consequence, as the work of Zahava Solomon has ably shown: 'Whereas CSR is an acute reaction that occurs on the battlefield, PTSD is a complex of distressing emotional reactions that can follow the experiencing of any kind of traumatic event.'⁹⁶⁸ According to diagnostic criteria, PTSD is 'the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event that is generally outside the range of normal human experience.'⁹⁶⁹ It is a consequence of when

The person has been exposed to a traumatic event... in which the person experienced or witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others, responded to with intense fear, helplessness or horror.⁹⁷⁰

Thus, it can ensue directly from a breakdown, such as CSR, or can develop independently and manifest itself long after the event has come to an end and the individual is no longer in danger. Those who have suffered from PTSD have remained trapped in the traumatic event. Solomon's research, focussing on the Israeli Defence

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁹⁶⁸ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, p. 55.

⁹⁶⁹ O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 135.

⁹⁷⁰ Quoted in Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 90.

Force, has discovered that approximately half of Israeli soldiers who participated in the 1982 Lebanon war and were CSR casualties were suffering from PTSD three years after their participation in battle. For those who had not been CSR casualties, the figure of PTSD was approximately 15%.⁹⁷¹ These figures 'point to the detrimental impact of war on men who weathered the immediate stress of combat without a visible breakdown and resumed their lives without ever applying to a mental health agency.'⁹⁷² There are comparative statistics for British soldiers engaged in the Falklands, produced by O'Brien and Hughes in 1987, who discovered that when a sample of sixty four Falklands War veterans who had served on East Falkland and were still serving in the British Army were studied and compared with a group of matched controls, half the veterans reported some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and 22% were rated as having the complete PTSD syndrome.⁹⁷³ Such results demonstrate that while many soldiers of various nations may have been able to carry on and absorb the stress of combat, and were impelled to do so by the institutional cultures of the units with which they served, in the long-term their psychological health was certainly damaged, damage that only manifested itself a considerable time after the event.

The triggers that have caused such damage to emerge are an issue of considerable debate. Psychologists and commentators agree that civilian support for a war is essential in the managing of psychological trauma of those who fight in it, and in instances of high civilian support, mental trauma amongst servicemen is reduced. Such a hypothesis extends as a result of the focus of the literature on the subject of modern psychological trauma and PTSD predominately involving studies of the Vietnam War, which was extremely unpopular in the United States. However, it is important to highlight an important contrast between the American experience in Vietnam and the British in the Falklands. For Vietnam veterans, the 'unpopular and controversial nature of this drawn-out war and the consequences thereof increased the likelihood of problems.'⁹⁷⁴ Jonathan Shay's work on the American combat experience in Vietnam confirms this theory and allows the conclusion to be extrapolated from his results: 'Support on the home front for the soldier, *regardless of ethical and political*

⁹⁷¹ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, pp. 57-8.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁹⁷³ O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 135.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

disagreements over the war itself, is essential.⁹⁷⁵ Solomon's research into the Israeli experience of post-combat trauma is particularly illustrative on such an issue; in contrast to American soldiers following Vietnam, depression was comparatively low amongst returning Israeli veterans due to the warm and supportive atmosphere they returned to following the war. This cultural norm was due to the fact that in Israeli military history, the military and home fronts were close in physical and emotional proximity, and culturally there was a sense of appreciation given to returning soldiers.⁹⁷⁶

Conversely, in regards to the British experience the Falklands veterans 'were welcomed home as heroes on a tide of media-stimulated patriotism.'⁹⁷⁷ Mead, who as a marine sailed into Southampton aboard *Canberra*, believes that the reaction of the civilian populace was 'absolutely incredible, unbelievable,' and that it was hard to comprehend that so many people outside of the families had come out as the marines simply believed that 'we'd just done a job.'⁹⁷⁸ However, despite the overwhelming positive support for the war that was demonstrated so visibly, such public support did not assuage mental trauma, but in fact, contrary to the stated historiographical viewpoint risked, exacerbating it, as O'Brien and Hughes identified: 'Most veterans complained that they were treated as more heroic than they felt on their return, and that those who had not been there could not understand them.'⁹⁷⁹ Vincent Bramley, for example, 'didn't feel we had done anything out of the ordinary. After all, war is what we were trained for.'⁹⁸⁰ Similarly, Kevin Smith was greeted at home with several parties and treated like a minor celebrity in his home town, but he felt that 'I didn't really want it, I felt quite strange... What was I celebrating? Celebrating that I lived? Celebrated that we'd won the war? I never really understood what we were celebrating.'⁹⁸¹ As O'Brien and Hughes noted, for veterans there was 'a disparity between their own and the

⁹⁷⁵ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 197.

⁹⁷⁶ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, p. 98.

⁹⁷⁷ O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 136.

⁹⁷⁸ Ray Mead, Interview with Author, 17/08/09.

⁹⁷⁹ O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 138.

⁹⁸⁰ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 208.

⁹⁸¹ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

general population's perception of their experiences.'⁹⁸² Both oral history and written testimony have confirmed this, and from men who served in different branches of the armed forces, suggesting that the problem was widespread and not merely confined to one unit or combat role. Such a disparity of experience and a lack of a common bond increased the veteran's mental isolation, which will be seen to have been a major trigger in the fermenting of problems.

The 8,000 miles that separated Britain and the Falklands also had an impact upon its cultural resonance and contributed to this sense of isolation. Such distance was felt at both a physical and mental level. Without real-time video footage or particularly accurate press reports, both suppressed by the Government, very few civilians had been able to establish an accurate understanding of what the war had been like. Furthermore, unlike the Second World War, or even the Korean War that involved large numbers of those on National Service, the Falklands conflict had not been one of mass participation. The numbers of men involved had been very small, men who were professionals and therefore were for the most part divorced from the civilian environment. Civilians had not seen members of their family conscripted into the armed services to fight, and therefore were not as emotionally invested in the outcome of war. Furthermore, domestic participation had been negligible; British cities had not been bombed by hostile aircraft, for example. The duration of the conflict was also a factor in creating this; its short length contributed to the public impression that the war had been simple, and created a false impression of ease. Such emotions were not felt by the veterans.

Such differences meant that, despite the similarity of a supportive atmosphere on return, as in Solomon's Israeli example, the Falklands War was in fact quite unique. In all, the average British civilian of 1982 knew nothing about war, yet this knowledge was very fresh in the mind of those returning home. Indeed, even those who had not been directly involved in combat were aware of the distinction that had arisen between the two groups, civilians and servicemen, as a consequence of war. Such distinctions built on those that had already existed, with the two having very different cultures that

⁹⁸² O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 139.

were also apparent, and entrenched this sense of separation yet further. Cooper, for example, believes the war made him,

Much more remote from those back at home. I think one phenomena I noticed was how most soldiers I spoke to felt that they could never explain what it was like to those who had not been in war, so it was almost that they felt themselves to be forever divorced from the population that had sent them to war and that however much that population might congratulate them and cheer them, they would never understand what conflict was like.⁹⁸³

Indeed, Cooper recalls in his oral history interview that he did, and still does, feel like 'a member of a club and the membership fee is only understood by those who've been in combat.'⁹⁸⁴ Such a sense of mental isolation was perceived by the vast majority of men, regardless of the arena of combat that they had served in, and expressed across the historical record; Ian Inskip, who fought at sea, commented in his retrospective memoir that 'outside the naval ports and army towns, life went on as normal. The Falklands War was just twenty minutes extra on the news. We were in a different world.'⁹⁸⁵ Such a sense of detachment, separation, and isolation was therefore pervasive across the services as a whole, and was a central part of the Falklands experience.

In addition to civilians not understanding what the conflict had been like, isolating the veteran, it was also difficult for the servicemen to adjust to life at home. As Steven Hughes recalled,

I think if going to war is difficult, coming home is by far more difficult. Once you've acclimatised to the horrors of man's inhumanity to man, it becomes difficult to drop back into the civilian pace of people being supposedly polite to each other again.⁹⁸⁶

Yet it was decided by the MOD that the best policy for those men coming back to the UK was to have them sent on leave soon immediately on their return. While this was

⁹⁸³ IWM SOUND 13419 Cooper, David, Reel 6.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁵ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 106.

⁹⁸⁶ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 1.

done with the best intentions, being back amongst civilian society was a very complicated experience for many servicemen, given their recent experiences. McManners has written that 'there is a terrible disparity between the idealised view of war (and heroism) expressed back home, and the reality of degradation and unspeakable suffering war veterans have witnessed, experienced and caused.'⁹⁸⁷ Such a chasm of understanding was noticeable to many returning veterans, and is a common theme in both the written and oral history, regardless of which branch of the services they had fought with. Hughes, for example, recalled that:

One of the things we found the most shocking was having seen friends die, friends injured, and all had losses personally as a result of the conflict, we came home to a country that was behaving as if it won the World Cup... I think we all had experiences whereby, not just on one occasion, we would have been in company, often with friends or family, and suddenly felt totally alone, and completely unable to cope with what was going on around us.⁹⁸⁸

On top of the mental isolation that was already building, the veterans now also found themselves physically isolated from the small group who had shared their experiences.

Such isolation made adjustment extremely difficult, leading to outbursts of anger at simple, routine tasks. All servicemen, regardless of the rank they held or the branch they had served in, went through such emotions. Morgan, for example, felt as though 'it seemed as if I had become so used to making life-or-death decisions that I had lost the knack of dealing with the mundane.'⁹⁸⁹ As an aviator, his war had been fought at high speed, yet civilian life was far more sedate, and the dichotomy between the two bothered him and the release of tension was hard to manage:

⁹⁸⁷ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 256.

⁹⁸⁸ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 2.

⁹⁸⁹ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 309.

I found it very annoying being expected to make trivial decisions like what do you want for tea. I can remember being very, very upset because I had to decide what I wanted for tea. Why the hell should I, for Christ's sake?⁹⁹⁰

For naval personnel, it was the same, if not worse. Indeed, for those sailors who had endured the sinking of the ship, the dispersal on leave meant the breaking up of the social group upon which they relied for support and had shared a commonality of experience in the South Atlantic. Unlike the soldiers, marines and aviators, they would not come back together at the end of their period of leave, but instead be posted to different assignments on different ships. For example, despite the positive welcome the sailors of *Sheffield* received when they landed at RAF Brize Norton, Walpole recalls that 'it was almost more frightening to go out and meet these people because here was the break-up of the crew.'⁹⁹¹ It suddenly became very real. As David Hart Dyke later wrote, enduring this was very challenging:

The bond between people who have been through a crisis together is very strong. After all, we had depended on each other for our lives: and only we would ever know and understand what it was really like. As long as we were together we could more easily face the world and it seemed, too, that the ship itself was still alive.⁹⁹²

But apart, the veterans were isolated, alone, and individuals, something they were not used to being as members of military units that always moved as one collective. As the Captain of a lost ship, Hart Dyke in particular felt such a loss keenly, and the return to civilian life was a significant culture shock: 'When it is suddenly all over, then it is very difficult to adjust to an environment where there is no war and no requirement for decisions or leadership.'⁹⁹³ Both the written and oral testimony, recorded at different times and from sailors of different ships, confirms such beliefs, suggesting that such emotions and the recurring theme of isolation were an important aspect of the Falklands experience. It is important to note the impact of such isolation on the families of those

⁹⁹⁰ IWM SOUND 23274 Morgan, David et al, Reel 2. BBC Radio 4 six part series entitled 'Falkland Families. Part 2: Reconciliation.' Morgan and Argentine pilot Hector Sanchez recall their combat experiences during the Falklands War.

⁹⁹¹ IWM SOUND 11369 Walpole, Peter, Reel 4.

⁹⁹² Hart Dyke, 'War and Its Effects on People', p. 118.

⁹⁹³ Ibid.

veterans. They had received no warning of what to expect, and as such it was also extremely difficult for them to adjust to having the veteran home, with an inability to predict their reaction to what seemed like the mundane of day-to-day life. This created huge social problems within family units, and such personal troubles undermined the psychological health of veterans yet further.

While it was assumed that an extended period of leave was an ample reward for the men, it instead catapulted the veterans from a supportive environment amongst a collective of shared experience, in which they could relate and categorise their own, to an effectively alien environment in rapid time. This sudden change contributed to their growing sense of isolation. Indeed, Hughes believes that such feelings were so widespread and extensive, and affecting the men of 2 Para so badly, that many members of the battalion actively sought to meet up during their leave period, an unprecedented action, just to be close to and in the company of the only people who understood them.⁹⁹⁴ For those who could not, however, such mental loneliness could well have led to the formation of psychological problems:

In the absence of others around them who had shared the experience, this lack of fit between their own perceptions and the perceptions of others, with expressions of celebration and heroism which they found inappropriate, is likely to have interfered with the process of assimilation of the experiences into self.⁹⁹⁵

Rather than being desirable or pleasurable, going on leave was for many destructive and detrimental to their long-term psychological health. The sense of isolation and the feelings of melancholy were often treated in the ways in which servicemen had become accustomed to responding, through the administration of alcohol.⁹⁹⁶ Alcohol had always been an important part of service culture, linked to ideas such as masculinity and an important tool in social bonding. For those who remained in the services, it was also cheaply available, with subsidised prices facilitating access. Yet under such

⁹⁹⁴ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 2.

⁹⁹⁵ O'Brien and Hughes, 'Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Falklands Veterans Five Years After the Conflict', p. 140.

⁹⁹⁶ Such reactions litter the testimony, but see for example Eyles-Thomas, *Sod That For A Game Of Soldiers*, pp. 212-3.

circumstances, when it was used to repress negative emotions, it only created the potential for more severe problems in the long-term.

While it had taken several weeks for the Task Force to sail to the islands at the outset of hostilities, a decision was made that on the return journey some of the troops should be flown home from Ascension to quicken the process. Thus, the two battalions of Paras were flown into RAF Brize Norton well ahead of those elements sailing home. This was again decided with the best intentions by the MOD, but while the soldiers received a substantial welcome from their families, it paled in comparison to that given to the Royal Marines when they returned on *Canberra*. The Paras did not receive the psychological benefit of the big public display of affection upon their return home, but most significantly they switched from hostile environment to safe domesticity in rapid time, far quicker than anyone else. They went from an environment where their units' cultural values of aggression and military prowess were prized and necessary to one where they were not. Indeed, they moved into a world where they were decidedly unhelpful characteristics that attracted scorn rather than praise. Thus, there was little time for them to unwind and decompress psychologically before they were thrust back into the civilian environment, which required a very different pattern of behaviour to the one they had become accustomed to in the South Atlantic. The method and speed by which the men returned home certainly therefore contributed to increased potential for psychological difficulty in later life, something that was not recognised in 1982 but which is now very much appreciated in the modern era.⁹⁹⁷

In regards to 2 Para, Hughes recalls that some of the tension remaining from battle dissipated itself during the voyage, and particularly on Airborne Forces Day. A traditional celebration in the Parachute Regiment, in 1982 the day fell whilst the two battalions were still at sea aboard the same ship. What began as a substantial party on *Norland* with a sports day and several other small competitions, after several hours of drinking it ultimately descended into a full scale fight between 2 and 3 Para, with running battles throughout the ship.⁹⁹⁸ The central cultural components of the two units, combined with their recent experiences, produced a strong sense of aggression that

⁹⁹⁷ British troops returning from Afghanistan, for example, are given a period of rest in Cyprus before being returned to Britain so as to fully unwind with the comrades they have shared the combat experience with but still remaining in a structured military environment.

⁹⁹⁸ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reels 1 and 2.

could not be contained. Even so, such an explosion of violence had a positive effect. Bramley saw this as 'a massive release of the tension caused by our personal experiences during the war.'⁹⁹⁹ Peter Richens describes the journey home as being a 'really good shot in the arm for us that we could relax and think of what had happened in the previous weeks,'¹⁰⁰⁰ but the benefits would undoubtedly have been greater had it been longer, as can be seen when analysing the experience of the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade. They returned by a far slower route, and while inconvenient for men who wanted to return home, it had greater psychological benefits, as Rick Jolly noted:

In slow time, the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade were decompressing steadily after their short but intense experiences of war. This gradual release of tension and pressure was all a happy accident, because it really was the very best way of staving off development of a corrosive set of symptoms called *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* or "PTSD." The benefit of sharing memories and recalling emotions honestly, in the company of those who had been through the same experiences as you, brought with it an understanding that your reactions were entirely *normal*.¹⁰⁰¹

While not a deliberate plan, the marked difference in experience between the Commandos and the Paras demonstrated the advantages of taking longer to decompress.

Indeed, such advantages can be seen further by looking at other units, and it is clear that the length of time before the troops were returned home played an important role in the offsetting of mental trauma. In contrast to the Paras and marines, after the conclusion of hostilities, the Scots Guards were posted to Port Howard on West Falkland. They acted as a garrison on the islands and were eventually among the last to be returned back to the UK. While this initially caused some resentment, and the climate was inhospitable, in pure psychological terms it served the soldiers well. They had all the advantages of being retained as a primary group for an extended period of time, and in fact such

⁹⁹⁹ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 203.

¹⁰⁰⁰ IWM SOUND 16074 Richens, Peter John, Reel 3.

¹⁰⁰¹ Jolly, *The Red and Green Life Machine*, p. 211.

bonds were enforced by the geographical isolation of the posting. As Major John Kiszley noted,

In the event, it wasn't too bad. We unwound, and most nights we all met for a few beers, had a sing-song, talked about those who hadn't made it, that sort of thing. By the time we eventually got back to Britain – needless to say, by sea, not air – we had got a lot of it out of the system. People who flew straight home after the war and dispersed on leave didn't have that advantage. And it just didn't seem relevant to talk about it to outsiders.¹⁰⁰²

The battalion's Medical Officer, Alan Warsap, also noted the benefits of remaining in close proximity following the campaign's conclusion, highlighting

The great importance attached to the psychotherapeutic benefit gained by everyone in the Battalion from the opportunity to "wind-down" collectively after the battle as the unit rested up in the sheep sheds at Fitzroy. Here, all ranks were jammed together out of the wind for about three days. We then spent long weeks, less closely confined, but still very much together in sub-units on a ship, and then on garrison duty on West Falkland at Port Howard.¹⁰⁰³

Indeed, the support structure amongst the trusted equals was so important that, for Tim Spicer, when the battalion was given six weeks leave after they finally returned, such an extended period of time was viewed as being unwelcome:

We simply did not want to break up the group and have to account for ourselves to our families and friends. We did not want to talk in any detail about the war and what it was like to people who had no idea of what we had been through.¹⁰⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰² John Kiszley, in Dale, *Memories of the Falklands*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰³ Alan Warsap, '2nd Battalion, Scots Guards – The Tumbledown Legacy' in Diego F. García Quiroga and Mike Seear (eds.), *Hors de Combat: The Falklands – Malvinas Conflict Twenty-Five Years On* (Nottingham, 2007), p. 37.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Spicer, *An Unorthodox Soldier*, p. 102.

By confining these men together, rather than isolating them, they were able to heal and decompress at their own pace, rather than being thrust into an unfamiliar and seemingly unsupportive environment. Both the retrospective oral history and written testimonies highlight the importance of such an issue.

For the sailors aboard the warships, the length of the journey from the South Atlantic to Britain was similarly a good wind-down period, allowing people to discuss what had happened amongst trusted friends and colleagues. Aboard *Broadsword*, for example, the crew were also able to get their photographs developed before they returned home, and so could reflect amongst trusted colleagues. The crew also produced their own commemorative booklet of the deployment, and in writing this the crew had carried out their own emotional and psychological debrief. It also meant that they could take away something tangible from the experience. In Edmonds' opinion this meant that they 'were much better placed when we returned home than perhaps some other people.'¹⁰⁰⁵ The crew of *Antelope* had carried out a similar task on their voyage home after their ship had been sunk for the same reasons, and with the same perceived results.¹⁰⁰⁶ Such similar actions from sailors on different ships, with differing experiences of war, points to an overarching culture amongst naval personnel, and one that compelled a certain emotional and behavioural response. Edmonds believes it was significant that the ship's company came back in their own ship, and that while they had suffered casualties, none had been fatal.¹⁰⁰⁷ They even stopped in at Gibraltar and had a "run ashore," or night out on the town, which Edmonds thought in particular gave them an opportunity to 'wind down and return to normality before we came home.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Crucially, the sailors came home in the company of those who they had fought with, and so there was a commonality of experience and a resultant trust amongst them. There was no official directive given for the process of decompressing, but one that was engaged in spontaneously by the sailors and instigated by the senior officers in a way that they saw best. That this was so similar was due to the strength of the common culture of the Royal Navy that bound all these men together, regardless of ship or rank.

¹⁰⁰⁵ IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 4.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Robert Guy, Interview with Author, 16/03/10.

¹⁰⁰⁷ IWM SOUND 14154 Edmonds, Graham John Leslie, Reel 4.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid., Reel 5.

The aviators were also brought home slowly, though predominately for operational reasons rather than any coherent plan for improving long-term psychological health. Despite the ending of hostilities, the fighter pilot mentality outlined in the previous chapter remained prevalent. For example, on the journey home David Morgan suffered from spontaneous bouts of melancholy, 'which came on with little warning and with no obvious trigger. They were normally dispelled quite easily by the application of copious amounts of alcohol and the air group certainly had some excellent parties.'¹⁰⁰⁹ It is remarkable that Morgan adopted the same approach to his problems, as revealed in the written and oral testimony by soldiers and sailors who had fought in other branches. This suggests a singular cultural response to issues such as difficult emotions, and a primary cure being sought in alcohol before anything else. Aviators competed in everything, including social drinking in the bar. Being an aviator involved buying into the equivalent mentality that was cultivated through training. This, and the undoubted success of the aviators on operations over the Falklands, meant that there were many parties, where they 'noisily celebrated our own survival and silently mourned our losses.'¹⁰¹⁰ It is the latter part of this statement that is the most significant, as under the enforced cheerfulness and "Devil-may-care" attitude Morgan was clearly suffering:

I knew that the last few months had changed us all. No one could come through such a maelstrom of emotions without being affected; only time would tell how much. Some would recover quickly and get on with their lives, others would never come to terms with what they had seen and done. Most of us would survive well enough with only a few nightmares but all of us had changed.¹⁰¹¹

Indeed not soon after the war, 'I also began to realise that part of my mind was still in the South Atlantic.'¹⁰¹² Pook similarly suffered, which significantly only became fully apparent once he returned home: 'I realise now looking back I was actually in a pretty bad way. My nerves were absolutely shattered.'¹⁰¹³ Despite being on leave he received multiple phone calls a day from the station asking him to complete various tasks, and 'eventually I couldn't bear to hear the telephone ring, it used to throw me into a panic. I

¹⁰⁰⁹ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 298.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁰¹¹ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 308.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁰¹³ IWM SOUND 30119 Pook, Jeremy John, Reel 15.

think I was suffering from quite severe stress. I tried to put aside, ignore it.’¹⁰¹⁴ The conflict was not merely forgotten, and still dominated the thoughts of those who had fought it. For some, the suppression of such emotions, in line with the fighter pilot image, and the self-medication of alcohol, did not resolve such problems. Instead, it entrenched and worsened them.

II

The Importance of Guilt in the Development of Psychological Problems

The cause of many of these blossoming psychological problems, whilst not immediately apparent, would soon become clear as being due to guilt. Guilt over wartime conduct is recognised as being a major contributing factor to PTSD and other mental disorders; this concept originated as a consequence of Vietnam, where guerrilla warfare ensured that the lines between combatants and non-combatants were blurred, which led to a build up of tension and aggression. This could overspill into the killing, accidental and deliberate, of non-combatants, of women, children and the elderly. One study found that one third of those veterans interviewed had profound feelings of guilt over actions such as rape, mutilating enemy dead, or killing enemy prisoners.¹⁰¹⁵

Yet it is again important to highlight the contrasts between the American experience in Vietnam and the British in the Falklands. For the British, there were none of the murky distinctions between combatants and non-combatants that contributed to atrocities in Vietnam, most famously at My Lai in 1968. The civilians on East Falkland were British, and therefore respected by and favourable to the British troops, and additionally they were few in number and predominately concentrated into clearly demarcated areas on maps. The lines between the opposing hostile forces were also clear; thus there was little of the fear and paranoia that so many Vietnam veterans confess to feeling during their tours. Because of this, atrocities were committed against the civilian populace in Vietnam but were seldom reported, and the perpetrators rarely punished. Indeed, many veterans of that conflict recall, and use as justification, the idea that full participation was required in such atrocities to preclude social exclusion from the safety of the

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁵ Hendlin and Pollinger-Haas, quoted in Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, p. 83.

communal group.¹⁰¹⁶ Because the British were never subjected to such doubts, they were able to view killing as a vocational act, and in many ways this protected them psychologically; the killing in battle was not a traumatic act, as there had been no moral quandary to overcome. Guilt over any such actions was therefore greatly reduced.

However, guilt could still affect the British soldier in the aftermath of war, and it was often the result of the bonds and the culture that made the British military such an effective fighting force. Because the esprit de corps was so high in all British military units, be they Army Regiments, Commandos, ships or fighter squadrons, once the fighting was over survivors felt a keen sense of loss, which could also manifest itself as guilt that they survived and others did not. It is significant, therefore, to return to the central premise of previous chapters, that the British professional servicemen were able to view killing as a vocation, with little emotional significance, and that it was a central aspect of their military culture. Yet these cultural values, that prized excellence, professionalism and above all supporting their comrades, also contributed to the psychological difficulties of veterans when such values were challenged by the emotions experienced during combat. Peter Hammond, for example, was severely afflicted by guilt for feeling thankful that he had not been killed when his brother-in-law had during the fighting in San Carlos. Such emotions, while entirely normal responses to a combat situation, resulted in him feeling both a sense of guilt and intense shame, which later resulted in him developing PTSD.¹⁰¹⁷

Those men who were afflicted by guilt were those who questioned their conduct and believed that somehow they failed. Conversely, those who did not have doubts or regrets about their actions, or feel any remorse, were actually those who were psychologically stronger in the long term.¹⁰¹⁸ In units that prided themselves on martial prowess and strength, it was certainly retrospective doubts about one's performance in combat that could cause such afflictions. Graham Tolson, for example, who served with 3 Para, suffered from CSR and later developed PTSD and recalls that:

¹⁰¹⁶ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill: Soldiers at War*, p. 69.

¹⁰¹⁷ Peter Hammond, Interview with Author, 23/02/10.

¹⁰¹⁸ In particular, the contrast between Peter Hammond and Steve Newland is illustrative. Peter Hammond, Interview with Author, 23/02/10 and Steve Newland, Interview with Author, 03/08/09.

Over the years I've felt guilty about a lot of situations that we were put under, that I felt that yes, I could have done a lot more to help the situation. For instance that time when I broke down, it wasn't me really. I don't know why I acted like that, at the time I didn't know why, I know now, but at the time I didn't know why I acted like that and there was a lot of guilt felt by that, and that guilt sort of got worse and worse and worse as the years went on.¹⁰¹⁹

It was only when Tolson sought professional help, many years after the conflict, that he was able to bury such feelings of guilt:

I see it in a totally different light. Now I don't feel that there was ever a time that I was a coward. I feel that I was wrong in not thinking that I was a hero when I came back. I really do think now that, under the circumstances, I was extremely brave, and so was everyone else that was there... There were a few harsh decisions being made at the time, but don't they when you're under pressure and for those people can be forgiven. And I can be forgiven... That feeling of being a coward is not how I feel anymore.¹⁰²⁰

Yet while such feelings were often entirely irrational, they were extremely powerful, and such perceived failures caused acute guilt that resulted in severe psychological difficulties. For example, Tony McNally was part of the Rapier battery defence force that provided anti-aircraft cover for the ships in San Carlos Water. The system had not travelled well in the South Atlantic weather, and was suffering a plethora of faults, none of which were the fault of its human crew. Nonetheless these faults prevented the battery from fulfilling its role of protecting the ships. Thus, for McNally, 'our boys were dying out there, and every plane that got past us was like a knife in our ribs.'¹⁰²¹ A sense of failure was exacerbated greatly by the disaster involving the *Sir Galahad* at Fitzroy, where McNally's Rapier again failed and the Argentines were able to inflict so many casualties. The guilt of being involved specifically in *Air Defence*, but not being able to defend the men on the *Sir Galahad* played a major part in the development of his later psychological disorder. Indeed, that was one major cause of his nightmares,

¹⁰¹⁹ IWM SOUND 20697 Tolson, Graham, Reel 1.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., Reel 2.

¹⁰²¹ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 89.

and something he could not forgive himself for: 'I fantasise about... walking down Dalton Road on a busy shopping day, pouring a jerry can of petrol over myself and striking a match, so that I die like those Welsh Guardsmen I was supposed to be protecting.'¹⁰²² McNally's central identity and role had been challenged, and as he believed that he had been found wanting and that he had not passed the test of combat, he was wracked by feelings of guilt. Similarly, another veteran involved in the Fitzroy incident from the Royal Artillery believed that as he had killed 50 people through his failure, he therefore had to do 50 years self-penance.¹⁰²³ Such guilt heavily impacted upon the self-esteem of veterans, something that had never been questioned during their peacetime service. In this capacity, their identities had been framed around fulfilling their roles. But in the aftermath of the Falklands, while those who had passed the test were jubilant, those who had not, or more significantly believed that they had not, were crushed.

It was not only soldiers conducting such retrospective analysis of their actions, but all members of the Task Force of differing ranks, demonstrating the pervasive nature of the central components of British professional military culture. Professionalism was vital, regardless of what rank or position the veteran held. Inskip, for example, who served aboard *Glamorgan*, remembers that after the Exocet attack, 'damage control teams had a dilemma – should they attend to casualties who were their shipmates, colleagues and friends, or should they attend to the ship. Human or steel – what was the priority?'¹⁰²⁴ In purely military terms, the correct choice was undoubtedly the ship, particularly in *Glamorgan*'s case as she was taking on water and at risk of sinking. However, this choice created the potential for severe psychological trauma based around survivor's guilt. Indeed, as Inskip recalls on the voyage home, when the sailors dwelt on what had happened, for him there were,

Questions, questions, questions – If I had done this, if I had done that, what would the outcome have been? Now that there was time to think everyone was

¹⁰²² Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁰²³ David Walters, 'Escaping the Pain', in David Walters (ed.), *After the Falklands: Finally Ending the Nightmare of PTSD* (Cornwall, 2007), p. 65.

¹⁰²⁴ Inskip, *Ordeal by Exocet*, p. 169.

soul searching; for many, this manifested itself as post traumatic stress. We would be re-fighting this war for decades.¹⁰²⁵

To enforce this point, which appeared in his retrospective memoir, when asked in an oral history interview about the impact of that day, he replied 'every day is the 12th June,' the day that *Glamorgan* had been hit.¹⁰²⁶ Such testimony, taking place after the publication of the memoir, and nearly 30 years after the event, emphasises the strength and enduring nature of such feelings. Aviators also experienced such self-inflicted recriminations. Morgan, who also developed and suffered from PTSD in the years after the war, was able to trace his trauma to an incident whereby he was scheduled to conduct a night operation, but having only recently completed the training course he was not qualified to do so and prohibited from carrying it out. His friend was assigned the mission instead, but was killed by a mechanical error shortly after take-off. Morgan blamed himself, and the guilt, and the repression of the negative emotions, was to lead to the development of PTSD.¹⁰²⁷ It is remarkable that none of these events as related from land, sea and air, and from a variety of ranks and historical mediums, were related to the killing of the enemy. Instead they related to supposed violations of military cultures, and possibly the greatest sin of all; that of failure.

It was not only guilt over specifically combat performance, but the actions of the ground troops during the rest of the campaign that could also be retrospectively questioned. Exposed as they were to the enemy in a way that the sailors and aviators were not, such actions were unique to the ground forces. Bramley wrote that 'If you don't play, joke, laugh in times of war you'll go nuts,'¹⁰²⁸ and while black humour was no doubt a great motivator for helping troops endure, it was, and can remain, extremely perverse to those who do not understand it. Yet such humour was very much a product of the war itself. Nadelson argues that 'in its momentum toward absolute force, war can engage some of its participants in savage amusement – which defines the perverse – including using other people as entertainment in situations that demonstrate the greatest disparity in power and control.'¹⁰²⁹ In such a situation, if something was funny, it would

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁰²⁶ Ian Inskip, Interview with Author, 19/02/2012.

¹⁰²⁷ David Morgan, Interview with Author, 17/08/10.

¹⁰²⁸ Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 132.

¹⁰²⁹ Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, p. 70.

not be kept private, but would be shared with the group. As the possibility existed that the joker might be killed the next instance, there was no reason not to share it: 'Combat bent and broke the boundaries of the ordinary and expected.'¹⁰³⁰ Combat was an extreme situation, and thus provoked extreme responses. The disparity between life and death figured strongly in such responses and jokes, and with senses numbed and shocked by horrific sights, the concept of taste lost all meaning. The most common such jokes would be to place cigarettes in the mouths of dead Argentines, or propping corpses up arm in arm with a live soldier as if he was a friend.¹⁰³¹ While the soldier playing the "joke" and his friends, perhaps while posing for a photograph, would find this immensely amusing, Hughes has correctly identified that 'he wouldn't contemplate doing anything like that to one of his dead friends. There was a tremendous amount of respect for what was left of their friends who'd been injured.'¹⁰³² Indeed, Hughes recalls that one of his soldiers threatened to shoot a news team who wanted to film the bodies of 2 Para's dead lined up at the Regimental Aid Post in the aftermath of Goose Green.¹⁰³³ Even in death, the social and cultural bonds that held men together within their units remained strong.

In contrast the Argentine dead remained fascinating objects, and ones that could be used to pass the time as the troops idled away after the surrender. This is true particularly of the land war, where the dead enemy could be observed unlike in the other combat arenas: 'In war every kind of monstrosity is possible. And the witness sees it more with fascination than with disgust, arrested by its strangeness. It's a simple but true proposition: in war, death is grotesque and astonishing.'¹⁰³⁴ After the ceasefire, McNally and his battery, for example, came across a dead Argentine who had been dismembered by explosives. Having fought in the artillery, and not seen too many corpses at close hand, such sights 'held a macabre fascination for us.'¹⁰³⁵ In times of conflict and war, death could also be humorous. Hynes has noted that 'in war, even humour is different, because it is full of death.'¹⁰³⁶ Thus men took photos of the dead enemy, with their twisted positions, and laughed at the unusual forms corpses could

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁰³¹ IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 1.

¹⁰³² Ibid.

¹⁰³³ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁴ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, p. 20.

¹⁰³⁵ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 140.

¹⁰³⁶ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, p. 11.

take due to the nature of modern warfare. Men engaged in such practises so that the concept of death was reduced to an object of humour in an effort to trivialise it, and reduce the level of fear that normally came with it. However, having engaged in such acts in the pursuit of humour left the potential for retrospective recriminations and consequently psychological difficulties. The group McNally was with ended up dismembering the Argentine corpse further with a grenade, originally as a joke. However, McNally was afflicted by serious guilt for such an action, again because it was not a professional thing to do, but childish:

This act was to haunt me to this day. It was a shameful thing to do, impossible to justify or even to explain, and I have asked the dead soldier for forgiveness for being part of it. Although I wasn't physically involved, I should have intervened. In our defence, all I can say is that we weren't ourselves that day. We hadn't been ourselves for a while. The war had dehumanised us.¹⁰³⁷

Again, such feelings arise out of a sense of guilt for not acting in a suitably professional or moral way, something McNally expected of himself as a soldier.

Yet it was not only combat troops who were liable to suffering from combat stress brought on by feelings of guilt and failure. As Solomon has addressed, 'medics, ambulance drivers and corpse bearers who are in close and constant contact with the dead (often burnt or mutilated dead) are, in fact, especially prone to combat stress reaction.'¹⁰³⁸ Whilst those soldiers who did see close combat were confronted with the aftermath of their actions once the battle was over, the medical officers embedded in each combat unit were confronted with the shocking effects modern weapons could have on the human body while the wounded man was still alive and in some cases in obvious distress. McManners has argued that Regimental Medical Officers (RMOs) and their orderlies perhaps see more of the horror of battle than even the soldiers: 'Unlike the soldiers, RMOs see the full carnage of the battle, all its horror funnelling through the Regimental Aid Post in a way that doctors and their assistants cannot possibly avoid.'¹⁰³⁹ Nichol and Rennell are in agreement:

¹⁰³⁷ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 140.

¹⁰³⁸ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, p. 93.

¹⁰³⁹ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 284.

Medics are steeped in the horrors of war in a way that no one else can ever be. All the carnage comes funnelling through them. They cannot look the other way or go charging ahead and relieve their aggression and frustration in the next fire fight with the enemy. Other soldiers may see a few mates wounded or be injured themselves. But only the medics see the whole picture, the non-stop pain and misery of war.¹⁰⁴⁰

Furthermore, if Kellet is to be believed, 'casualties are frequently the most visible and forceful manifestations of danger.'¹⁰⁴¹ Thus, it can be argued that medics were perhaps the most likely to suffer from CSR and as a consequence PTSD. This is certainly something John Coombs discovered with his research into Vietnam medics. He found that 45% of the 146 combat medics who responded to his research surveys were suffering from service-connected PTSD, including himself.¹⁰⁴²

Therefore, by being constantly surrounded by casualties and working virtually continuously throughout a battle, as well as long after it had finished, it can be concluded that medics were working under extremes of emotional, psychological, and time pressures. They were required to deal with numerous casualties, all of whom needed attention, but all of whom the medical officer knew personally, all the while being permanently reminded of their own vulnerability and mortality. It was their job to confront this horror fully, their responsibility to save as many lives as they could. Consequently, they were forced to fulfil their roles while carrying more emotional baggage than the combat soldier. Soldiers may have seen friends wounded, but by firing upon the enemy, seeking to hurt them in a way that they had hurt their friends, they were able to find release for the pent up frustration and aggression, and perhaps fear, they felt. RMOs, however, did not inflict damage to the human body, but instead were required to repair it. They had no such outlet, yet were constantly confronted by the inhumanity of war. Despite their obviously vital role on the battlefield, everything the combat medic represented was counter to the traditional function of combat: 'The

¹⁰⁴⁰ Nichol and Rennell, *Medic*, p. 199.

¹⁰⁴¹ Kellet, *Combat Motivation*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁴² Combs, *Mercy Warriors*, p. 144.

first paradox of the battlefield is that in a fight to the death, the corpsman/medic is the only one fighting Death for life.’¹⁰⁴³

Thus, there could be no satisfaction in combat for the medic; unlike the previously noted satisfaction that combat soldiers experienced in doing the job for which they had trained, for the medic, there were instead casualties and death, and the sense that he had not adequately done the job he had trained to do. Training and combat were always radically different, but none more so than for the medics, who suddenly had real wounds and real dead bodies that they could not avoid. Such confrontation similarly allowed the medic to be confronted with that dreaded sense of failure, and commensurate guilt, when casualties died. Whereas a combat soldiers might have remembered the number of men they killed, the combat medic will only have recalled those he failed to save from death; it is only the negative that were counted. Having been immersed in the negative aspects of war, for the medic there was no real “victory” to revel in as combat soldiers were able to do after they had taken an objective. Everything he had done during combat was simply him fulfilling his role.¹⁰⁴⁴ Furthermore, the medic could not hide from the sights he saw; Bill Bentley, a medic working with 2 Para, carried back a fatality to the RAP during the Battle of Goose Green. The man was a good friend of his, and as he carried him, his head kept banging against Bentley’s knee, ‘giving off a hollow sound.’ Another had been struck so many times with bullets, that when Bentley tried to pick him up, ‘his arm came off.’¹⁰⁴⁵ Such horror was difficult to forget, and such direct friendship with the patients magnified feelings of responsibility, as well as feelings of recrimination if they could not be saved.

There was ‘no magical medical training that protects the sanity of doctors and their staff from the horrors they must deal with,’¹⁰⁴⁶ but the RMO had the extra psychological burden that if he could not cope, or if he failed, it would prove disastrous for the men in his care. Hughes believes that:

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Quoted in Nichol and Rennell, *Medic*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁴⁶ McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 300.

Medical training doesn't prepare you for a battle... On a battlefield, there is the constant, great danger to yourself and multiple casualties arriving in great surges. There is no back-up, nobody to call on, and everyone is looking to you all the time. You can't just pop into the next room for a breather, because there is nobody else. You have to maintain the professional façade.¹⁰⁴⁷

Such a façade was essential if medical officers were to continue to treat their patients objectively and effectively, and if they were to set the necessary example to the orderlies working for them. They were also compelled culturally to maintain such a façade, as even as Medical Officers, they were still part of the battalion, and had absorbed its cultural values of professionalism and effectiveness. Their own problems were pushed into the back of their minds, repressed, as more immediate problems took precedence. Hughes described this process of forcing his terror, anxiety, and emotional pain at the death and maiming of friends as being like forcing all these emotions into one room inside his mind and locking the door.¹⁰⁴⁸ As Nichol and Rennell have written,

For medics, suppressing their emotions is vital if they are to do their job properly. They cannot give in to anger and aggression, as fighting soldiers often do in battle. They are the calm in the middle of the storm. They cannot move on to the next firefight when someone is hit by a bullet or a bomb, as fighting soldiers do. They must stay and confront the pain and the gore. They are the ones who cradle the frightened and the dying, cursing their own inability to save them, to perform the hoped-for miracles. The horror – for that is what it is – cannot easily be absorbed.¹⁰⁴⁹

Medics needed to remain calm in the midst of chaos in order to remain effective, even when perhaps they did not feel it. For example, Hughes recalls that had to keep working, had to keep treating casualties, even though he knew that several of his friends were dead. That he knew personal details about them, such as whether they were married or had children, made the emotional impact of their deaths even greater. As he recalled, even 30 years later, the suppression of grief and the adoption of a cold,

¹⁰⁴⁷ Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, pp. 300-1.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Nichol and Rennell, *Medic*, p. 375.

objective attitude for the sake of enduring 'was the worst bit for me.'¹⁰⁵⁰ Such were the pressures he was under that Hughes admitted that, whilst he was scared of dying, he was more concerned not with losing his life, but more that had he been killed it would have left the battalion without a doctor and that he'd end up 'letting the side down' and not fulfilling his role.¹⁰⁵¹ Thus, it can be seen that his motivation for enduring combat, and for risking his own life, was exactly the same as that of combat soldiers, and his behavioural response to the pressures of combat reflected the core cultural values that he had been immersed in; the belief in the importance of the reputation and goals of the combat unit and the vital importance of the primary group. This resulted in his unquestioning commitment to fulfilling his role within that unit.

Such suppression was both common and necessary, a behavioural response based on the key cultural components of fulfilling the role of the Medical Officer. However, while it enabled men to endure and function in combat, it was almost certainly a major factor in the emergence of psychological disorders in later life, based primarily around guilt. Indeed, many medics would suffer for years due to the trauma they had witnessed, and many would struggle to come to terms with what they had seen in the Falklands.¹⁰⁵² In the aftermath, RMOs, medical assistants and surgeons have been plagued by doubt, and the idea that they could have done more to keep more men alive. This manifestation of survivor guilt resulted in medics often forgetting the people they saved, instead focusing on those they failed to, even if they were completely beyond hope of survival. For example, Sergeant Peter Naya, who was awarded the Military Medal for his devotion to duty in caring for the wounded on *Sir Galahad*, at times almost singlehanded, was still afflicted by feelings of doubt and guilt in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, rather than elation in a job well done.¹⁰⁵³ Hughes has had his own ongoing battles with PTSD because he has not, and cannot, forgive himself for not saving all the casualties, even 30 years after the conflict. He acknowledges that while it is irrational, it is a ghost he does not believe he will ever exorcise.¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁵⁰ Steven Hughes, Interview with Author, 18/12/09.

¹⁰⁵¹ Quoted in McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 326.

¹⁰⁵² Nichol and Rennell, *Medic*, p. 234.

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Steven Hughes, Interview with Author, 18/12/09.

III

The Invisible Wounded: The Long-Term Effects of Psychological Problems

Psychological injuries incurred during conflict remain a hidden wound for a considerable time, before their true extent is revealed. Because of this lag between the event and the problem, and because the wound is effectively invisible, historically there has been inherently less acceptance of them as being legitimate injuries as compared to those physical and visible wounds. As McNally wrote, 'after all, you can see the damage to a soldier who has stood on a land mine, or been badly burned; you can't see inside a man's head and see what has gone wrong in there.'¹⁰⁵⁵ Indeed, when Lippiett revealed the situation regarding the senior officer aboard his ship in a letter to his wife, as discussed earlier, he encouraged her to say only that he has left 'on medical grounds' if she speaks to any of the wives of the ship's company about his imminent return to the UK, thus revealing the extent that such social stigma and shame could otherwise be invoked.¹⁰⁵⁶ One intrinsic problem with the onset of combat trauma therefore has undoubtedly always been the sense of stigma that comes with it; as such wounds could not be seen, they could not be fully understood and were treated with scepticism. This is inherent in the definition of Solomon's theory of CSR; she argues that soldiers can be suffering from combat stress reaction if they display two main function diagnostic criteria; that the soldier ceases to function as a combatant, and that others, in particular authorised mental health personnel, recognise that he has. However, such a definition makes no distinction between soldiers who are unable to fight and those who are unwilling. Thus, casualties have been left vulnerable to accusations of weakness, cowardice, evasion of duty and desertion, all of which have detrimental implications for his treatment and recovery.¹⁰⁵⁷

Such stigma is undoubtedly a product of the cultural environment of the military, and one which has prevented many men from coming forward with their problems, especially if the culture of their units is built around both mental and physical resilience. The fear of admitting a problem was joined with a sense of shame for appearing to have failed to live up to the masculine ideals of military prowess, ideals

¹⁰⁵⁵ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 234.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Lippiett, *War and Peas*, p. 176.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, p. 30.

that were so prevalent in the cultures of elite British military units in particular.¹⁰⁵⁸ When invalidated out as psychiatric casualty, or when forced into asking for help, there was an inevitable sense of shame for the casualty. This was because he had seemingly failed to come to terms with the violence, death, destruction and injury in comparison to those around him. If the casualty was removed from the operations theatre prematurely, or under the specific circumstance of CSR, they would also inevitably feel that they had failed as they had left before the task was accomplished, leaving others to continue. Such a premature departure would result in the development of low self-esteem, shame, and fear of social rejection, all of which have been contributing factors to the prolonging of casualties' mental distress.¹⁰⁵⁹ As a result, the casualty would become physically, as well as mentally isolated by such a perceived failure. As Solomon has addressed in her research, such a chain of events was particularly apparent in Israel amongst wider society due to cultural values, and the fact that virtually the entire population had served in combat, or continued to serve in the reserves. This had created an expected pattern of behaviours that had set high standards, and failure to match these standards resulted in the development of psychological problems.

In Britain, however, such isolation was more due to the aggressive and professional cultures of the military units involved, and the sense of shame one would feel in the presence of one's comrades and peers, rather than society as a whole. Values central to the veteran's identity as a serviceman were challenged and he was, to his own mind, exposed as a failure. Furthermore, as the military was so distinct from civilian society, the opinions of his peers were viewed as being far more significant. Thus the military environment had in fact unwittingly contributed to the magnitude of the psychological collapse. Psychiatric casualties by their very nature break down during battle, and for men who spent their entire lives in the military this meant that their identities were irrevocably shattered. While serving in the British military did not have the same cultural importance as in Israel, as Solomon describes,¹⁰⁶⁰ it was still personally and professionally important to many British men, particularly in the Army, where the regimental system meant that such men may have spent their entire adult lives in the

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 166-7.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 170-1.

same company. It is from these bonds that soldiers feared that they would be emotionally and professionally severed by admitting problems.

However, it was also a self-perpetuating problem. Belief that the symptoms were weakness led many veterans to severing their own ties, rather than being forcibly removed, a behavioural response that indicated their low self-esteem and their belief that they had failed to live up to the ideals they previously held dear. This was a voluntary act, done partly out of fear of being shunned. This has led many psychiatric casualties becoming withdrawn from social activities that they engaged in pre-combat, which further created a sense of isolation and exacerbating symptoms of trauma. Hart Dyke believes that suffering in silence after a traumatic event was the worst thing that a veteran could do, and that they should be encouraged to talk about their feelings and experiences, difficult that they may be, in order to avoid any long-term psychological difficulties. Hart Dyke found that he encountered more nervous silence than understanding on his return, and so he became withdrawn. As a result it took him two years to fully come to terms with what had happened.¹⁰⁶¹ Bramley agreed, and even after he started having nightmares, and was at first disconcerted by them, he kept this to himself. It was only once a colleague mentioned that he too was having nightmares that Bramley began to feel less isolated: 'That made me sit up and see clearly that I wasn't alone, and when you're not alone you're stronger.'¹⁰⁶²

Whether they would or would not have been shunned by their peers should a serviceman reveal that they were suffering difficulties was a different matter, but historically veterans have chosen not to risk exposing themselves. Tolson, of 3 Para, again recalls that: 'I didn't want to accept that I had a problem, more out of embarrassment than anything.'¹⁰⁶³ A fundamental aspect of training for all soldiers, and the Parachute Regiment in particular, was that men learned to overcome their physical limitations through mental strength, yet the onset of psychological trauma seemingly exposed a lack of such strength or, even worse, weakness:

¹⁰⁶¹ Hart Dyke, 'War and Its Effects on People', p. 118.

¹⁰⁶² Bramley, *Excursion to Hell*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁶³ IWM SOUND 20697 Tolson, Graham, Reel 1.

It's not widely talked about in the Army, well at that time I don't think it was, something that I'd certainly not heard of, or if I had heard of it, then it was to me a weakness in somebody, so therefore I just pushed it to one side, it couldn't happen to me.¹⁰⁶⁴

Soldiers were taught to be self-reliant and responsible, it was a foundation of the cultures of their units, and they had been punished during training when they did not exhibit such values. Admitting PTSD was, for some, admitting that they were no longer entirely responsible for their own actions or self-reliant; such a relic and enduring nature of the unit's culture was therefore a negative influence that encouraged them to remain silent. These values also elicited a behavioural response. Men became afraid to confess that they were struggling, and buried the trauma, or attempted to self-medicate through continuous hard work in the peacetime military and increasing amounts of alcohol, as both Tolson and McNally did.¹⁰⁶⁵ Such habits continued after they left the military. Such a response was entirely counter-productive, as it was only by admitting their problems and seeking professional help that men could recover. Shay argues that by acknowledging psychiatric casualties, the stigma around seeking help and treatment in later life would be greatly reduced. In World War II, one third of all casualties were psychiatric. Shay believes that because the military authorities of that era acknowledged that men could be broken by battle and evacuated them, unlike in Vietnam, this reduced the rate of enduring, life-long psychological injuries from the war.¹⁰⁶⁶ Consequently, since soldiers could be more open about their problems the social compunction to repress them or keep them hidden was not as severe. Attitudes towards psychological casualties have undoubtedly evolved since the conclusion of the Falklands War 30 years ago. Such acceptance has been instrumental in encouraging men to both seek help and also talk more openly about their problems, yet it is also illustrative to compare modern values with those of the past, an invaluable contribution to a study such as this that is working over an extended time frame.

While the veteran remained within the military environment, however, he still retained a sense of identity and structure. PTSD is a long-term response to combat trauma that

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid, and McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 200.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 203.

develops cumulatively, and this and other psychological disorders such as depression could be unleashed by numerous triggers. One of these was undoubtedly when a veteran left the military environment. In such cases, the veteran moved from a highly supportive structure, where he had his own familiar and established place within the hierarchy, and instead took up a place in the anonymity of the civilian world, which held noticeably different cultural values. Even those who had not suffered psychologically appreciated the difficulties of such a transition, and Kevin Smith noted that it was difficult to move from a position of being very successful within a group to being an individual outside of it.¹⁰⁶⁷ Military men experienced this regardless of whether or not they saw combat; Peter Joseph, for example, served with the RAF for 23 years, and believed he had nothing in common with civilian society when he left the military, and felt so strongly that this was the case that he deliberately cut himself off, and would not make any friends: 'I feel like I'm a foreigner in my own country.'¹⁰⁶⁸

As has already been explored, having experienced combat was viewed as being a great distinction, and something that affected relationships between those who had seen it and those who had not. Much testimony has pointed to the manifestation of this whilst the men were on leave in the immediate aftermath of the Falklands conflict. When combat veterans were therefore irrevocably removed from the military environment and entered into the civilian sphere, such feelings were amplified and increased to proportions which became problematic. Morgan, for example, suffered from flashbacks and a host of negative emotions in the period after the conflict ended whilst back in the UK. The great physical distance between theatre of operations and home, combined with the mental distance existing between those who had gone and those who had not undoubtedly contributed to these strong feelings of isolation. However, when he was posted back to the Falklands to re-enforce 809 NAS, Morgan found that the thoughts, which had been becoming ever more intrusive, suddenly ceased as he took up a military footing again.¹⁰⁶⁹ As an inverse example, Tolson records that his trauma only fully emerged sixteen years after the Falklands. While he was still serving in the Parachute Regiment, he suffered a serious knee injury that required several operations, and was forced to stay at home to recover, unable to work. The injury itself was hard to stand,

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kevin Smith, Interview with Author, 04/08/09.

¹⁰⁶⁸ IWM SOUND 26838 Joseph, Peter et al, Reel 1. A BBC Radio 4 programme entitled 'Civvy Street. Programme 3: The Hermit' about Peter Joseph, a veteran of the Falklands who had left the service.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Morgan, *Hostile Skies*, p. 310.

but it also 'broke the hard work attitude that I had to forget. That got me a little bit depressed, to say the least, because the Falklands were foremost in my mind... I wasn't able to work to block them out.'¹⁰⁷⁰ This developing trauma was made worse by the death of his mother, and during this period his isolation and paranoia, along with his heavy drinking, worsened.¹⁰⁷¹ Fulfilling one's role in the military therefore clearly provided a purpose that could offset any psychological negativity, but the inverse was that when such purpose was removed, as inevitably it would be, all the repressed emotions broke forth unchecked.

Many veterans found it very difficult to socially adjust to life outside of the military initially, and for some this process took far longer than others. The varying levels of this also depended on a mixture of their own social backgrounds and the culture of the unit in which they had served. The strong esprit de corps of the Parachute Regiment, for example, meant that some of the men who had worn the maroon beret found it difficult in civilian life. As Hughes noted from his extensive experience with the regiment, 'the great difficulty when soldiers leave is that they've been part of a family, and for many soldiers in the Parachute Regiment the regiment is their only family... The regiment has become their home and their whole life.'¹⁰⁷² Paras, for this is how they recognised themselves, even after leaving the military, moved from being told, and fully believing, that they were an elite, to being immersed in a civilian world that did not have, nor try to hold, such high standards as they were accustomed. This change confused and angered some men, particularly as the high level they had achieved whilst serving in the military was not necessarily matched by what they went on to do in the civilian world. Crucially, they were also no longer surrounded by men who have endured the same trials and tribulations as them; deprived of such a support structure, mentally they became very much alone. Additionally, Paras did not really respect anyone who did not wear the maroon beret, and this extended directly to civilians. Such attitudes increased the potential for problems to develop, as they would not converse openly with someone they did not trust or respect about personal issues, which only further entrenched their isolation.¹⁰⁷³ Indeed, Hughes recalls how many of those he served with still contact him

¹⁰⁷⁰ IWM SOUND 20697 Tolson, Graham, Reel 2.

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷² IWM SOUND 20699 Hughes, Steven, Reel 1.

¹⁰⁷³ Steven Hughes, Interview with Author, 18/12/09.

about medical issues, rather than their local GP, even 30 years later, because he is 'the Doctor.'¹⁰⁷⁴

The social dislocation that veterans suffered has affected those from across the service, regardless of rank or branch in which they served. In the previous chapter, it was seen that many chose to retain links with the military in order to ease their transition. Other veterans, however, have encountered problems in their attempts to live as they were accustomed to, specifically still behaving as servicemen in a civilian environment. This created conflict, where their high standards and expectations, as well as responses to set-backs, were not matched or welcomed by their civilian peers.¹⁰⁷⁵ Nor were their attempts to resolve them in the manner that they were accustomed. In many cases, such difficulties built upon pre-existing social problems that existed prior to the veteran joining the military, but were masked or satisfied by the military environment. These difficulties have on occasion meant that some veterans struggled to hold down a regular job, which greatly affected their self-esteem. Such perceived failures often resulted in attempts at self-medication through alcohol or drugs, particularly to aid sleep that was otherwise afflicted by nightmares or flashbacks, or indulging in other forms of anti-social behaviour. In addition, many of those suffering were also dealing with repressed psychological trauma, which often resulted in complete mental breakdown. It was a cumulative process that built with irrepressible force over several years; it did not appear instantly.

The necessity of regular work, in particular, was important in offsetting psychological disorders, as it provided a routine and structure, much like the military, thereby easing the transition for the veteran. Regular work also had the potential to allow veterans to take pride in what they do, another strong cultural element that had been encouraged by military training. Crucially, it also provided financial stability. When this was removed, however, problems occurred, as McNally found out after the factory he worked at closed.¹⁰⁷⁶ Yet civilian work could also be highly unsatisfactory, as McNally again experienced, and he became so disenchanted with civilian life that he thought about joining the Army, or at least some form of military organisation, for a third time,

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Danny Marshall, Interview with Author, 06/08/09.

¹⁰⁷⁶ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 201.

'anywhere else but that bloody factory.'¹⁰⁷⁷ While McNally's experience as related in his memoir was highly subjective, an analysis of other veterans struggles with psychological states demonstrates that his experiences were in fact highly common. Such an analysis demonstrates that a lack of professional self-esteem was highly dangerous to psychological states; if men could no longer take pride in their life through work, they began to encounter more social problems that could lead them to question their worth. This was exacerbated by the ways in which PTSD or depression could manifest without any visible wound or discernible cause that could be related to. Resentment at a lack of help, which was not forthcoming from the military in the post-Falklands era, escalating drinking, financial difficulty and, on occasion, violence could often result in a breakdown of the family unit and homelessness.¹⁰⁷⁸

In regards to the link between crime and ex-servicemen, according to the 2011 Howard League for Penal Reform inquiry into former armed services personnel in prison, 3.5% of the prison population in the UK had served in the Forces, the majority of whom, 77%, served in the Army. Furthermore, it estimated that 51% of ex-servicemen in prison were over the age of 45 years and 29% were over the age of 55, which compared to 9% of the general prison population being aged 50 years or over. These statistics suggested that many ex-servicemen in prison offended a considerable time after their date of discharge from the military.¹⁰⁷⁹ There is considerable debate in regards to the link between military service and crime. The vast majority of servicemen who left the military have been able to make a seamless transition. Indeed, having served in the forces often brings greater opportunity in the civilian sector, based around the skills and attractive qualities they have gained. Given that PTSD diagnosis rates have been so low, it is therefore unfeasible to state that all of those men had committed crimes purely as a consequence of being psychologically disturbed through their military service. As the Howard League report states,

It needs to be remembered that the most powerful drivers of crime amongst ex-military personnel are not wholly different from those which provide the

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 204.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Those who have successfully sought help and managed to at least establish a sense of normalcy have done so either privately, or via the provision of specific charities created for this purpose.

¹⁰⁷⁹ 'Report of the Inquiry into Former Armed Service Personnel in Prison', Howard League for Penal Reform, 23rd June 2011, accessed at: <http://www.veteransinprison.org.uk/Docs/Military%20inquiry%20final%20report.pdf>

impulse to crime for the general prison population. Crime tends to be spatially concentrated in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, and is associated with, and acerbated by, low educational attainment, family deprivation, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness and poor health. Ex-servicemen in prison share many commonalities with those who have not served in the Forces in that many have biographies in which these experiences and factors feature prominently.¹⁰⁸⁰

Through his experience working with homeless veterans, Dr Hugh Milroy of the charity Veterans Aid, an advisor to the Howard League, has concluded that the majority of those servicemen who end up homeless or in prison do so not because of military service, combat related PTSD and a subsequent difficulty to adapt to civilian life, but instead because of pre-existing mental and social disorders. These were developed in childhood and manifested themselves in mental health issues or alcohol and drugs misuse in the present, all based around the issue of poverty and social exclusion.¹⁰⁸¹ Indeed, the majority of veterans helped by Veterans Aid in 2010-11 had served less than 9 years in the armed forces, some 73%.¹⁰⁸² This would suggest that those who served longer in the military were in fact less institutionalised and better able to manage the transition into civilian life. However, mental and physical isolation was often the key in the biographies of those veterans helped by Veterans Aid and other organisations; this is something the military environment prevents, either by the communal living of ships, or the highly social environments of military units. Homeless veterans tend to have suffered a traumatic event, such as the loss of a family member, which provokes a reaction or provides a trigger after they left the services. Devoid of familiar support, their lives began to unravel. Additionally, the military did, and continues to, encourage the substantial consumption of alcohol which in the civilian world is both less acceptable, and more expensive as it is not subsidised, those creating potential health and financial problems for men with increased dependencies. Isolation for the veteran, either self-enforced or as a consequence of his inability to adapt,

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸¹ Hugh Milroy, 'From Welfare to Well-being: Turning things around among homeless veterans', in J.A. Mancini and K. A. Roberto (eds.), *Pathways of Human Development: Explorations of Change* (Maryland, 2009), pp. 333, 346.

¹⁰⁸² Veterans Aid, *Annual Review, 2010-11* (2011), p. 19.

increased drinking, financial hardship and poverty are all linked in the destabilising of character, and the associated problems that have come with it.

The cumulative effect of these problems has trapped many veterans in a cycle of depression, and suicide is an option that many have either contemplated or sadly taken. Until recently, popular myth stated that more British Falklands veterans ended their own lives in the years following the conflicts conclusion than those who died in it.¹⁰⁸³ While it has been disproven, such a myth has been significant in the creation of a Falklands memory. In contrast, estimations from Argentina suggest a similar crisis has developing there, as at least 264 Argentinian veterans of the Malvinas War have committed suicide, and some claim this figure is double.¹⁰⁸⁴ For Seear, who himself suffered post-war,

Here is the mutual Falklands'/Malvinas' ground between Britain and Argentina in which not only more resources should be directed to solving a humanitarian problem that transcends the territorial dispute and squalid politics, but where also a formal Anglo-Argentine cooperation could be fruitful.¹⁰⁸⁵

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It is clear that, for a minority of those who served in the South Atlantic, the war did not end when they returned home. Indeed, for many it continues in the present and will do so into the future. The historical record, particularly that collected within recent years so as to make use of the benefit of the passage of time, makes it clear that the experience of war, and of being in the distinct cultural environment of the military, continued to shape veterans long after they had ceased to live and work in the military. Indeed, the complex nature of PTSD and associated mental disorders meant that these men were fighting the same war for years, and will potentially continue to do so for years to come. Such revelations have only become apparent by looking at those memoirs, and conducting interviews, that embrace the passage of time that occurred after the conflict ended, and all that it entailed. The lack of adequate mental health

¹⁰⁸³ McNally, *Watching Men Burn*, p. 243.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Seear, *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands*, p. 334, from *La Nacion*, 2 April 2002.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

provision for returning veterans was something that was not adequately forecast, and still remains something that has not been fully addressed at the time of writing. It is an issue that still occupies the minds of various NHS trusts, although it is one of increasing prominence given that the ongoing operations in Afghanistan have reduced the time between men ceasing operations and seeking treatment for mental health issues. In many ways this has been the result of several private charities publicising the issue and bringing it into public discourse, whilst providing the medical care these men so sorely need. Even though the majority of servicemen were able to endure and resume their lives without difficulty, there will always be a need for mental health care for servicemen and women. The experience and mistakes of the Falklands, only now being fully realised, can be used to inform and shape policy on the contemporary conflicts Britain continues to fight. The poignant and sometimes difficult experience of Falklands veterans, as revealed in oral history and cathartic memoirs, is important foundation stone in understanding the enduring and long-term effects of war for professional British servicemen.

Conclusion

I

In studying the professional armed forces of the Falklands era for the first time in a scholarly manner, a rigorous examination of oral history interviews and written testimony have revealed that there were a variety of reasons as to why men chose a military career in a time of peace, a subject that has not been covered extensively by previous historians. By conducting thirty two independent interviews, alongside an analysis of the previously neglected recruitment literature produced and distributed by the Ministry of Defence advertising the services, the reasons for British men choosing to become professional servicemen, their aspirations and impressions, and their cultural expectations of what military service would entail have been demonstrated for the first time. Such an analysis of professionalism is an important contribution to the historiography of the British at war.

The vast majority of the servicemen who fought in the Falklands did so without any formal compunction; unlike their historical forebears there was no immediate, identifiable 'enemy' threatening the UK to motivate their joining, certainly not the Argentines who became their enemy. Instead they chose the military as they would any other career, weighing up what it would offer them. For those men who enjoyed sport, the military offered this in abundance, something the military marketed itself on, as seen by both the oral history interviews and the recruitment literature. There was also a form of dynastic legacy, often whereby family connections encouraged men to join the armed forces. This is not unsurprising given that the men who fought in the Falklands were often from the first generation following the end of the Second World War, and thus had fathers and perhaps also even mothers who had served in uniform during the conflict, and perhaps even continued to do so after its conclusion.

The individual services attracted men based on the specific advantages they were perceived to offer, and by extensively utilising the recruitment literature produced by the Ministry of Defence for the first time, along with supporting oral history, these advantages have been identified. Such advantages, and central values, were to impact upon the cultures of the respective services and units. The Royal Navy, in particular,

benefited from the ability to offer extensive foreign travel in an age before mass tourism and cheap commercial air travel. This was noted both by men joining the service, and indeed the service itself, and it featured heavily in its self-publication in recruitment literature. Perhaps more than the other services, the Royal Navy offered a technical profession to a wide variety of potential recruits; as it became increasingly technical in the decades following the Second World War, so its sailors had to similarly be technically proficient in order to operate such technology. Each sailor had to learn a specialism, and for many, the form of an apprenticeship to such a technical trade, whilst being paid and enjoying the other benefits of naval life, was extremely attractive. In particular, they were able to learn many skills that would serve them well when they left naval life and attempted to gain employment in the civilian sphere. The impact of technology had an enormous impact on the institutional culture of the service, shaping behavioural and mental responses to issues such as combat and killing.

Additionally, the Navy was not engaged in any direct form of offensive warfare when the majority of men were considering enlisting. Thus, all of the obvious and positive perks of service seemed even more attractive, as there was little overt threat. In contrast, the Army and Royal Marines carried out tours and took casualties in well publicised areas, such as Northern Ireland, meaning that there was a cultural expectation of operational service, and the understanding that men would be in a situation where they would take casualties. For the Navy, however, their offensive operations were far more secretive in nature and carried out by the select and highly trained men of the submarine service. Fewer in number than the men of the surface fleet, these men had extensive operational experience in the very real environment of the Cold War, and thus were more readily able to adapt to the developing threat in April 1982. These men had volunteered to serve on submarines for such reasons, to be at the forefront of Britain's military response to threats. For the sailors of the surface fleet, however, there was a far more difficult mental transition between peace and war to overcome, complicated by the nature of naval warfare. Unlike the men who would engage in warfare on the Falkland Islands themselves, and therefore fought in a different physical place to where they lived, the sailors of the Royal Navy would fight their war in the same environment as that which they occupied during peace time. This idiosyncrasy made the transition to a mental state of war more problematic.

The oral history and written testimony, regardless of the date of collection and the social class of those recording their memories, have revealed that virtually none of the men who joined the Army and Royal Marines did so out of desire to actually kill someone. Even though this was the primary function of soldiers, and something training prepared them extensively for, when it came to choosing a career in the military it was not something that figured strongly in the mind of the prospective recruit, or the recruit literature produced by the Ministry of Defence. Instead, men were motivated to join for the sporting opportunities offered, or the physical challenge represented by the physically and mentally demanding selection processes for the more elite units, such as the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marines. Such a challenge created a culture of elitism, professionalism, and an active desire to tackle and overcome any challenge, whatever it may be. Furthermore, because of the nature of the British Army in particular and the regimental system, when a man joined these institutions he was joining a family. This subconsciously appealed to many men who came from broken homes and lacked such structure in their domestic lives. Once men had joined such institutions, the importance of killing was something that was built up in training; when it came to weapons proficiency, obviously the intention is to be capable and effective at eliminating enemy targets. This was evident in the elite units of the British armed forces, particularly the Paras, where aggression in military action was highly praised and a fundamental part of the regiment's culture. Such a culture was indoctrinated into recruits throughout training and subsequent exercises and operational tours. These cultural values existed in every regiment in one form or another and would be of immense importance when it came to motivating men to fight in a conventional war, something very few had expected to do when they joined. Thus, their reactions to it, and their reactions to killing, are of great interest. For the Paras and Royal Marines in particular, when hostilities broke out, the situation was viewed as an ideal test for all that they had trained for; such men, as products of their training, thrived on testing themselves, and war was certainly the ultimate trial.

For aviators, the idea of flight still retained much of its mysticism and its appeal. It was also inherently more glamorous than the other services, which was a major appeal in recruitment. Yet military aviators, particularly single-seat fighter pilots, were select individuals indeed, the product of long, arduous and dangerous training programmes. Having graduated from such programmes, these men were highly competitive,

conscious of the need to assert themselves and prove themselves to be the best. Those who were successful appreciated that military flying was a discipline, something requiring intensive training in order to master. However, like the vast majority of their comrades in the other combat arenas, military aviators had little operational experience. What they did have was an institutional culture built on a competitive spirit and a desire to succeed, which had been bred in training. Thus they eagerly took to the challenge of combat aviation, and, like the Paras and marines, greeted the news of war as an opportunity to be embraced in order to prove themselves and their training. There was also a second group of aviators, the helicopter pilots and crews. Much less overtly aggressive, their task was often reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare, search and rescue, or casualty evacuation. Yet these men would also be thrust into the cauldron of war, with all its savagery, without ever having the offensive tools or the opportunity to retaliate. Even so, they approached the tasks with the same professionalism and desire to succeed as was evident throughout the testimony, and these were cultural values that unified the land, sea and air troops.

This research clearly shows that men joined the British armed forces for a variety of reasons, but that very few were motivated by a direct desire to kill. By conducting independent interviews, the reasons for joining the British armed forces and becoming a professional serviceman have been identified and illuminated. Such an analysis of these motivations is often lacking in existing interviews and memoirs. That men continued to remember, many decades after they first joined, exactly why it was that they enlisted demonstrates that it was a choice prompted by important reasons, and not just on whim. Such motivations, and the way the services promoted themselves, were important early indicators of the cultural values of the respective units and services, ones that the veteran would become immersed in and in turn reflect. After training and joining their respective units, the veterans' behaviour soon conformed to these cultural values.

Even after their training, when they moved on to operational duties, the arm of the service they were in dictated whether they would ever be forced to implement their training. For the Army and Royal Marines, Northern Ireland was a proving ground of sorts, but was never viewed as being the real thing, hence the excitement and overwhelming desire to participate in operations in the South Atlantic. A similar reaction was clear amongst the fighter pilots; after such an extensive training period

before they even qualified, far longer than in any other service branch, and with no equivalent previous offensive experience with which to test them, they leapt at the chance offered by the Falklands conflict in 1982. The aggressive reactions displayed were motivated by both bravado and also the cultural expectations of the individual branch of the armed forces and the unit the men served with. The experience of war, and the confrontation of violence, would challenge many of these expectations and beliefs. This comparative approach, looking at land, sea and air, reveals key differing aspects of British professional military culture.

II

As previously stated, in his study of American infantry in the Second World War, Marshall found that only a very small number of men, just 15%, would actively engage the enemy with a view to doing him harm.¹⁰⁸⁶ Marshall's findings have often been taken as indicative of the primacy of civilian morality amongst combat soldiers, but such a conclusion can only be applicable to conflicts where the armed forces are composed of a predominately civilian manpower, such as the two World Wars. In regards to the Falklands, however, the men fighting were professionals. They had been trained extensively to kill. Thus, they were able to carry out such acts without compunction, and did not display the same level of inhibition regarding the act of violence. The cultures of the Army and Royal Marines encouraged men to be skilled in acts of war, and the foundation of this was the act of killing. For the military elites, such as the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marines, the ability to carry out such acts to a high standard was a source of professional pride. This brought great pleasure to the men carrying out such acts, but even when the idea of enjoyment could be ascribed to the Falklands War it is to be found in the utilisation and implementation of training rather than specifically killing Argentines. It is important that this level of difference is understood in order to correctly understand the contemporary military culture. The act of killing itself had little emotional significance, but was viewed as being a vindication of the soldier's vocation.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, pp. 54-9.

Consequently, even though the British engaged and inflicted casualties on the Argentines in the land battles on East Falkland, there was a notable absence of hate as a motivating factor. In this regard, the professional British soldier was noticeably different from his civilian predecessor as explored by Ellis and Fussell. The absence of hate in the Falklands War has been emphatically demonstrated in this thesis with remarkable consistency across the historical record, in both the written and oral history, regardless of when it was recorded or the rank of the recorder. Such testimony is a clear challenge to the previously held belief in the historiography by authors such as Holmes, Coombs and Bourke that hate and the dehumanisation of the enemy is essential to killing, and demonstrates the validity of this study of the professional British servicemen at war. Instead of hatred, and despite the violence, there was a common humanity that existed between British and Argentine soldiers at all points of social contact, and the recognition of a common bond. This research has demonstrated that, even in combat, a form of humanity existed; just as their historical predecessors had done, soldiers killed for their comrades, the small circle of friends who shared their experiences, and, as Keegan has argued, in order to gain their respect and esteem.¹⁰⁸⁷ The act of killing remained a primordial reflex, rather than a pleasurable act; there was a collective recognition that in war it was 'kill or be killed.'

Naval combat was far more removed in its execution than that which took place on East Falkland. This thesis has explored the historiographical trends established by Reeve, Spector and Keegan and challenged them with the unique British professional experience of the Falklands War. Technology dominated the culture of the Royal Navy, and as such had a commensurate effect on issues such as combat and killing. This was apparent even though very few of the sailors aboard the naval vessels, either on or below the South Atlantic waves, actually directly fired upon the enemy. However, all men aboard these ships and submarines had an important role to play in the maintenance, direction and performance of the weapons platform. While they did not in actuality fire a shot, the navigators, sonar and radar operators, engineers and even stewards all ensured the platform was in a position to carry out its primary function of operational warfare against the enemy. Therefore they all carried a collective responsibility for the killing, and group solidarity ensured that any feelings of guilt

¹⁰⁸⁷ Keegan, 'Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation', p. 7.

were greatly reduced. Yet in contrast with land warfare, naval warfare did not engage individual targets, but rather other weapons platforms, which in the case of the Falklands War were predominately aircraft. Similarly, the British sailors themselves were not being targeted as individuals, but rather they were incidentally at risk as operators of a fellow weapons platform. Thus, the naval war was one of machine against machine in concept, as well as execution with the implementation of highly advanced military technology, such as guided missiles.

As a result of this British sailors were fighting a war against physical objects and a perception of the enemy; they were not able to close the physical and mental distance implicated as a result of their technological war, unlike those involved in land operations. This created a psychological distance that facilitated combat and killing. The experience of naval warfare is something that has previously been overlooked by historians, but given the cultural and historical significance of the Royal Navy to Britain, analysis of such experience is certainly pertinent. What is revealed from this analysis is that, despite the plethora of ships and sailors deployed to the South Atlantic, with a myriad of character idiosyncrasies, there is an identifiable mental consistency amongst sailors in regards to combat that matches the behavioural conformity of military service in general. Such reactions are clear from the testimony, both written and oral, and there is a remarkable consistency between sailors of different ranks and those who served on different ships. Such widespread conformity, with no formal compunction, suggests a dominant naval culture that compelled certain behavioural responses.

In regards to the airborne theatre, the fighter pilots of the Fleet Air Arm and RAF deployed to the South Atlantic shared the aggressive nature of the elite units of the British land forces, which was a key component of their culture, along with a fierce sense of competitiveness. For fighter pilots, who had trained so intensively without an opportunity to implement such skills, such cultural values meant that shooting down an enemy was a goal of great importance. However, much like their comrades serving aboard ships, they were not engaging human individuals, but were instead fighting their technological extensions. A 'kill' was the downing of an enemy aircraft, a machine; there was no consideration given to the fate of the human occupant, and the consequences for him had little impact upon how the action was viewed. As a

consequence, pilots were detached from combat in such a way as to give the impression that they were involved in a war against machines rather than man. For fighter pilots, combat and killing were executed in a clean environment, in which they rarely saw the consequences of their actions. There was, therefore, a remarkable continuity of combat experience with the fighter pilots of the First and Second World War. Indeed, despite the enormous technological advances that separated this period, the issues of combat and killing were still approached and expressed in the same contexts, almost the same language. In such a way, the aviators shared a remarkable historical consistency in culture with their forebears, one that transcended time, conflict, and even the contrasts between civilians and professionals.

However, it should not be believed that their war was any less violent than that of their infantry counterparts. Indeed, fighter pilots were glorified for killing, it was a badge of honour how many aircraft, and with them men, one had downed, and fighter pilots sought to aggressively advance their tallies. This is significant as it demonstrates that, even though the environs of the battles were polar opposites, aerial combat was still governed by the basic laws of infantry war; kill or be killed. Furthermore, the culture of aviators was eliciting a similar behavioural response. Additionally, to down enemy aircraft was to gain the respect of colleagues and superior officers, providing a strong social coercion for killing to match such cultural concepts. While in retrospective interviews with serving pilots aircraft were ascribed human characteristics, combat was still not viewed as being between humans. Indeed, when this mental barrier was broken, and a human element was introduced into aerial warfare, it could prove severely detrimental to combat morale. Yet as this rarely happened, the majority of pilots were able to proceed without any such inhibitions. A further motivating factor was that, because there were so few of them deployed, the competitive nature of warfare was emphasised, as they were all competing against men they knew personally, rather than simply other collectives, such as other regiments or Commando units. Thus the competitive nature of fighter pilot culture remained prevalent throughout the conflict.

III

The fighting in the South Atlantic forced men from all the branches of the armed forces to confront their perceptions of what they had expected when they had enlisted in the military, and what they had indeed learnt through their careers prior to being engaged in action. For many, they were able to fall back upon these cultural values to carry them through. For some, they were unable to reconcile what they had expected when they joined up, and what they had experienced prior to active operations, with that which they endured in the South Atlantic, be that on land, sea, or in the air. Their peacetime military lives, with all the attached rules, regulations and training exercises with enforced realism, existed in sharp contrast with what had gone before, and became an issue that had to be overcome if they were to move forward with their lives, both professionally and personally. What is quite apparent is that war lived long in the memory of those who experienced it. But it is also significant to note that any period of military service had a significant impact upon the lives of those who had served in the armed forces. Regardless of the branch of the service with which a man served in the Falklands, both oral history and memoirs, from across the time period since the conclusion of hostilities and from men who held varying ranks, have demonstrated that impact and legacies of such service, and the difficulty that was always encountered when it became necessary to re-integrate back into civilian life.

When recruits enlisted in the British armed forces they were taken from civilian society and indoctrinated into the methods and customs of the particular services. The difference between services, units, and the civilian population was repeatedly enforced throughout their careers. This was particularly true in the Royal Navy where even land-based establishments were labelled as if ships, and to go for a night out in a town, whether based in a nearby camp or aboard a vessel, was known as a “run ashore.” As Reeve has argued,

Sailors have traditionally lived in somewhat segregated coastal communities and, beyond these, on the seas and as transients in foreign lands; in other words, they dwell on the fringes of their domestic societies. They have not always gone to war in the same massed and demonstrable way as soldiers, nor have they always re-entered society in a similar fashion. Theirs is but a

partially visible and somewhat distinct sub-community and society is conditioned to their regular absence. Unsurprisingly, their stories of war penetrate society less readily.¹⁰⁸⁸

Such feelings of attachment to a specific group are only intensified by the experience of war, and thus there can be a serious sense of social dislocation when this bond is broken, as it must inevitably be, when a man leaves the Royal Navy. Such dislocation is matched by men leaving the other services. This was particularly true in the more tight knit groups of the Army; whereas in the Royal Marines men were posted between units with some regularity, as was the case for sailors in the Royal Navy, men in the Army predominately spent their entire careers with the same group of men, in the same company of the same regiment. Once this association was removed, with it the former soldier lost a major part of his identity, one that he could not reclaim. The true impact of such a break can only be truly appreciated over a long period of time, such as thirty years, and in this way this study builds on the work of Nora Kinzer Stewart, who was limited by her work being published less than a decade after the war in 1991. Working with such an extended timeframe has revealed the strength of military cultures through the enduring legacies and importance of military identities even after the soldier, sailor or airmen moved back into civilian life.

Whilst the majority of men were able to successfully manage this transition and move from military service to becoming a civilian, for some veterans such resulting social dislocation acted as the trigger for an on-rushing of symptoms related to PTSD and other psychological injuries. While men still served in the military, many of these symptoms were repressed or ignored, but once the supportive and familiar structure of the military was removed, such problems started to emerge uncontrolled. Furthermore, as men re-entered the civilian world, and perhaps struggled in their personal or professional lives, such problems continued to grow and collate, building with irrepressible force until the man reached breaking point. Much of British military culture has been demonstrated to have been about repressing fears and anxiety and maintaining a positive public outlook. This was particularly true for fighter pilots, who were compelled by both tradition and operational reasons to exude a public persona of a

¹⁰⁸⁸ Reeve, 'Introduction: An Anatomy of the Face of Naval Battle', pp. 8-9.

cavalier disregard for danger, when in fact in reality their private emotions may well have been very different. Such suppression could and did lead to mental problems becoming deep-set, and bursting forth uncontrolled. When this happened, as was frequently the case in the years after the Falklands War, alcohol and drug abuse, the breakdown in relationships, and the committing of increasingly serious crimes or suicide have all been documented as being routes that some sufferers follow.

There is no definite known cause that leads to the onset of psychological difficulties, but this research has identified strong trends amongst the source material to help build a more complete picture for the British in a professional, rather than civilian, context. Because the British servicemen were professional, rather than the killing being a violation of their civilian morality, they saw it instead as a fundamental aspect of their job, merely part of their chosen vocation. Indeed, a consistent and strong theme across both the written and oral testimony is that it was rarely the act of killing that was traumatic. Instead, the cause of any mental trauma can often be traced to feelings of guilt, failure or helplessness, feelings that were culturally opposed to the main values of all of the military units. Such a clash led to the veteran isolating himself from his colleagues for fear of recrimination. As such problems have taken years to manifest themselves fully, it is only by looking back over an extended number of years, as is the case in this study, that the true impact, and even the very existence, of such difficulties has become apparent. In such a way, this study has been able to make use of memoirs published that incorporate such difficulties that were not previously available to authors working in a similar field, as well as conducting 32 interviews that specifically targeted issues such as re-integration into civilian life, and post-combat trauma. All those interviewed confirmed that war had changed them, though with differing severity, demonstrating the significant impact it can have even on professional soldiers.

This research has revealed that, despite their extensive and modern training, professional British soldiers are still as susceptible to psychological breakdown as their historical civilian forebears and their contemporaries from other countries. In the Falklands War, the British engaged the Argentine forces on a variety of battlefields, both physical and mental. Thus, it is no surprise that many have been left with mental scars to match physical ones.

IV

In conclusion, this thesis has provided a comparative study of professional British military culture at the time of the Falklands War, and the impact that it had on professional British servicemen engaged in combat. By identifying, highlighting, and analysing the differing reasons men chose to join the distinct services, it has revealed important aspects of these services' cultures, and the ways in which men were mentally conditioned from their very first induction into the armed forces. Through an analysis of both oral history and written sources it has explored the experience of war for each combat arena, and the ways in which these men reacted to fulfilling the roles for which they had trained.

In my introduction I stated that I wanted to address five major questions that have not been analysed in the currently available literature. In the light of the questions I have raised, this thesis has demonstrated that when it came to choosing a career in the professional British armed forces, men did so for a variety of reasons. The use of oral history from these veterans has for the first time strictly analysed and profiled these motivating factors, and also revealed that, while the men were conscious that they were joining an organisation whose function was to conduct violence, very few joined with the expectation of fighting a conventional war. The recruitment literature produced by the branches of the armed forces did little to convince men that they would; that produced by the Army focused on counter-insurgency operations in Northern Ireland, whereas that produced by the Royal Navy instead extensively promoted the foreign travel opportunities that could be enjoyed and the technical trades that could be learned during a period of service. Such factors were, as has been clearly demonstrated, major motivations in encouraging men to join the Royal Navy, on occasion at the expense of another branch of the armed forces.

The aspirations and perceptions men had when they joined up, combined with the images they were presented with, such as those in the recruitment literature, and their experiences of operational service prior to the Falklands had a significant influence on the cultural values of the respective units, and such values shaped the behavioural responses to the news of war. Indeed, they were so strong that they compelled a mental conformity amongst the service personnel and elicited similar behavioural responses.

Those with more aggressive cultures, in particular the Army, Royal Marines, and air forces, welcomed the opportunity to test their skills in the ultimate environment, as culturally this is how they had been conditioned to view war. In direct contrast, those sailors of the Royal Navy's surface fleet in particular, whilst approaching their task with the expected levels of professionalism and commitment to success that were their central values, did not welcome the idea of conflict in such a way. Alternatively, those submariners who went south, due to their previous operational experience, did not treat the news of hostilities in the South Atlantic with any great significance given that they were accustomed to operations in the North against the Soviet Union.

The varying combat arenas of the South Atlantic and the weapons utilised were reflected in the diverse experiences of the combatants when battle was finally joined. Such scholarly exploration of the contrasts and similarities between theatres for the first time reveals the ways in which the theatre and culture of the branch in which a man fought regulated and defined his combat experience. The mental and behavioural conformity has been clearly shown regardless of the date which the source was recorded or the rank held by the provider. As an example, the Royal Navy fought at a distance and men were predominately only implicitly involved in the conducting of warfare. In contrast, soldiers were required to engage the enemy at close range, and thus aggression was a fundamental and necessary part of their culture if they were to be successful tools of war, and one that was taught to recruits at an early stage in their training. The presence of colleagues often facilitated this. In contrast, fighter pilots fought as individuals in combat, and their differing culture based on experiences of training and exercises had encouraged a high-level of competition and rivalry between themselves. The familiar culture and unique battle arena combined so that combat was viewed as an extension of such values.

The strength of military culture has been clearly demonstrated through the use of retrospective oral history, highlighting the ways in which it has continued to shape memories and behaviour, well after the serviceman has left the military and re-entered civilian life. As such it has revealed the enduring nature of military identities. For some, the resulting consequences of this sometimes difficult process have resulted in complex psychological problems that have had a major impact on their lives. Whilst certain groups of combatants may well be more vulnerable to psychological damage than

others, the extent to which a man is affected depends upon highly individualistic circumstances. As Solomon has written, 'the best way to prevent combat-induced psychopathology is to stop making war.'¹⁰⁸⁹ Since this remains unlikely, the governing authorities of all nations must instead improve the level of care given so that it remains a manageable problem. As soldiers do not go to war of their own accord, 'one would therefore expect those who send men to war, endangering their lives and their physical and mental health, to appreciate their sacrifice and to take responsibility for them on their return.'¹⁰⁹⁰ The lessons and salient points of this research into British professional military culture have important repercussions for contemporary conflicts. With military operations in Afghanistan being expected to wind down in 2014, and a commensurate reduction in the size of the armed forces thereafter, there will be a far greater number of servicemen re-adjusting to civilian life. Attempting this process has been identified as difficult for many, and it is one that caused many veterans of the Falklands problems. The current and prolonged unfavourable economic conditions are only likely to further exacerbate such difficulties.

Oral history has played a major role in this thesis. As Summerfield has argued, oral history is an invaluable tool in addressing historical imbalance in the historical record,¹⁰⁹¹ and as it has been made clear in regards to the Falklands War, such imbalances exist. This thesis has redressed this through the active collection of oral history. Furthermore, by conducting new interviews with veterans, even those who had already committed their memories to sound or print in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the impact of culture on combat experience can be accurately assessed in the context of the professional British armed forces. The veterans have been given a definitive voice, a contribution to the historical source record that would otherwise be difficult to decipher. This is an important contribution to the historiography, one that was previously missing. Significantly, by looking back over three decades since the conflict ended, veterans have been able to explore in interviews the impact military service had on them, and the ways in which they reacted long-term to fulfilling the roles for which they had trained.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Solomon, *Combat Stress Reaction*, p. 256.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁰⁹¹ Summerfield, 'Oral History as a Research Method', p. 47.

This thesis has uncovered and explored important trends in the professional military experience of the British armed forces, and analysed the impact they had on the individuals and military units deployed to the South Atlantic in 1982. The entirety of the military experience has been analysed, from joining up, to combat, to returning to peace and military retirement. Being involved in a small conflict, without a major national crisis, or a war of mass participation, the men who fought in the Falklands had until now been neglected in the historiography of combat experience. This research has placed the experience of the professional British serviceman in its proper context, alongside his historical predecessor, in order to help chart how the cultural responses to combat have changed over the twentieth century for those who have experienced it in the three theatres of land, sea and air. Moreover, it has revealed in their own words the enduring nature and strength of such cultural values and the ways in which they regulated physical and mental behaviour, and have continued to shape veterans of the Falklands War well into the future. For such men, their identities remain linked to the routines, language and memories of military service, and will continue to do so whatever course their lives take.

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Appendix A: The Methodology of Oral History

Collecting the Sample

A survey of the available oral history at the beginning of my research revealed certain thematic limitations. Firstly, I wanted to expand the parameters of my research past what already existed on the Falklands War to include an exploration of motivations for joining the military prior to hostilities, and also what the subject experienced after these hostilities concluded in order to establish the significance of the “legacy” concept of military service. While some of the recorded interviews available contained this information, the majority did not, and therefore it became necessary to conduct my own interviews in order to supplement those already in existence. Secondly, those accessible oral histories in archives are obviously prejudiced by the aims and activities of the original collectors. In this particular context, I noticed a substantial bias in the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive towards those men who had served in the Royal Navy in terms of representation, along with a large number of officers from the Parachute Regiment that were donated by a television production company. I therefore wanted to redress this, so contacted officers and other ranks from the Royal Marines and other ranks of the Army. Those men who had fought in the air, either in fighter jets or helicopters, were also under-represented as well as being limited by the date with which interviews had been conducted. Actively pursuing men who had served in the land forces and air forces and conducting my own oral history interviews would go some way to address this imbalance. I therefore conducted 32 new interviews that incorporated an exploration of why men joined the military, with 14 being with veterans of the Army and Royal Marines, 15 being with sailors of the Royal Navy, and 3 subjects coming from the far smaller air group that had sailed south in 1982. These interviews were used in conjunction with 59 interviews from the Imperial War Museum’s Sound Archive, a rigorous critical analysis of their source material in line with the specific research questions of this thesis, rather than simply compiling the content into an anthology, as had been done previously.¹⁰⁹²

I aimed to collect a broad sample, mixing officer accounts with those from other ranks across the 3 combat arenas. This was done in order to identify any factors that may

¹⁰⁹² Hugh McManners (ed.), *Forgotten Voices of the Falklands*.

perhaps explain differences in interpretation, such as social class and rank. The main branches of the Armed Forces that I targeted were the Army, the Royal Marines, the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm. As this study is primarily focused on combat in the specific environs of the Falklands, a similarly deliberate targeting of RAF veterans was discounted as very few saw active service, and of those who did they served on attachment with other units – several RAF pilots flew in the Naval Air Squadrons as part of the Fleet Air Arm, for example. These men were instead targeted as part of the overall push for accounts from that branch of the armed forces. A request was made to the Royal Air Force Museum in Hendon, North London, to see if they had conducted their own oral history interviews with members of the Black Buck operations, but surprisingly they had not, and had in fact collected very little source material at all. Where required, the memories of RAF veterans that had been collected by the Imperial War Museum were used.

The timing of the interviews was also a factor taken into consideration in the methodological approach. Given the paucity of oral history testimony relating to the Falklands War stored in major archives, gathering more in the run-up to the 30th anniversary seemed like the perfect opportunity to collect more in order to broaden the historical record. Time is a major limiting factor on the strength of oral history, yet 30 years does not represent too significant a time difference to render the information useless. Instead, it allows for a greater period of reflection on the part of the interviewee, allowing them to view events with an increased perspective. Furthermore, as this project involved an exploration of the importance of the legacy of military service, this time frame was also in many ways advantageous. All of the interviewees had retired from the armed forces and moved into other careers, from which some had since retired fully. Consequently, they were in an excellent position to judge the impact of military service on their personal and professional lives, far more so than if they had still been inside the military environment. By exploring such factors, this study would therefore be different from those which had gone before, such as Nora Kinzer Stuart's *Mates and Muchachos*, which had interviewed and analysed men whilst they were still serving.

In order to collect my sample, I identified and approached veterans' organisations online using the internet with a view to having appeals published and circulated with

the aim of having interviewees to come forward and contact me with their willingness to participate. While this process does have some limitations, one being a noticeable time lag between appeals being sent and interviews actually being carried out, data protection rules would prevent any of the organisations supplying me directly with their members' contact details, and as such this approach was the best alternative available. It also meant that any research would be conducted amongst those who were actually contactable and willing to be interviewed. However, the ability to use the internet to reach out to a wider audience across the UK and, in one case, internationally, marks this project out from those previous histories written about the Falklands War, who gathered their source data around 10 or 15 years after 1982. Since then internet communications have become far more prolific, and with this people are now far more easily contactable than in previous decades. Furthermore, communication between old comrades has become far more informal and frequent, allowing appeals for information to circulate more quickly. I have been able to harness these trends in order to achieve success. The utilisation of social media in particular has been a particularly strong tool that I have been able to use, and one not available to historians and researchers engaged in a project such as this until recently.

There are many organisations, both official and unofficial, dedicated to keeping old comrades in contact and supplying political, educational, and psychological support to soldiers who served in the Falklands. The most obvious of these is SAMA82 (www.sama82.org), or the South Atlantic Medal Association. I contacted the Association and had a message detailing who I was, the nature of my project, and a request for any willing veterans to contact me included in their regional newsletters and on their internet message board. I followed a similar pattern with other websites. In order to contact former Royal Marines, I posted messages on the Royal Marines Association website, www.rovalmarinesassociation.org.uk, and also the more informal www.onceamarinealwaysamarine.co.uk. I wrote to the secretary of the Parachute Regiment Association with a similar letter, which was included in their quarterly newsletter. In order to contact veterans who served in the Fleet Air Arm, I contacted the secretary of that Association too, and a copy of my letter was printed in the April 2010 edition of their magazine. For the Navy aspect, prospective interviewees contacted me after I had my details posted on the specific forums for former ships' companies, such as those for HMS *Sheffield*, *Coventry*, *Exeter* and *Broadsword*. A message posted on

the Submariners Association website (www.submarinersassociation.co.uk) also brought positive results.

I also wrote directly to the Ministry of Defence in order to trace contacts I believed would be particularly important, such as Rear Admiral Sir Tim McClement, who had served on HMS *Conqueror*, and had letters forwarded on my behalf. This letter then elicited a response and allowed an interview to occur. A concerted effort was made to arrange interviews with every person who contacted me so as not to exclude anyone who might have had interesting insights into the research questions. I only received one rejection from someone unwilling to participate, Rick Jolly MBE, author of *The Red and Green Life Machine*, after I contacted him directly via his personal website, details of which were listed in the closing pages of his book.

Oral history has often been quoted as a form of history designed to give a voice to those otherwise under-represented in the historical record. Summerfield, for example, makes reference to the fact that oral history can play a role as 'recovery history', ensuring that histories that would otherwise remain hidden can be brought forward into discourse.¹⁰⁹³ This theory was reflected in the large response to my request for interviewees from men who had served in the lower ranks of the British armed forces in the Falklands War, who expressed a desire to tell their story. Of the 32 interviews conducted, 18 were with men of low rank, with 14 being officers. I interviewed a host of servicemen from various ranks in order to diversify the sample as much as possible, from men like Andy Stone, who had been a 17 year old Private in 1982, to Sir John Woodward, the Task Force commander. In total I carried out 15 interviews with Royal Navy sailors and 14 with Army soldiers and Royal Marines. As the air forces deployed to the South Atlantic were so small, even though I only managed 3 interviews I was still able to greatly diversify the content that was otherwise available. The aim of these interviews was to broaden the sample and explore new content in order to establish a knowledge base, and I was successful in this.

One benefit of oral history is that, if done correctly, it can lead to a rapport between interviewer and subject that can in turn create the potential to collect more data. For

¹⁰⁹³ Summerfield, 'Oral History as a Research Method', p. 47.

example, one such advantage of a positive relationship with interviewees are introductions to further colleagues who may also be able to help with research by offering themselves to be interviewed, and several interviews were conducted after such introductions. While an opportunistic way of gaining a sample, the opening up of sometimes extensive social networks and being invited “in” to the group meant that potentially the information on offer was of enormous value, as well as helping to reduce any initial suspicion or hesitancy in future interviews with these men. This can ensure that when the interviews do go ahead, they progress more smoothly and are more successful. Furthermore, since such introductions come with recommendations, a positive relationship already exists that can allow the interviewer to extract successfully information that might otherwise not be forthcoming.

After the initial contact was made by the person willing to be interviewed, which was predominately via e-mail, I responded by e-mail or telephone outlining in a little more detail exactly what I was doing, how the interview would be used for my doctoral thesis, and also seeking to establish a date for an interview as soon as possible. This prior communication worked extremely well and allowed me to show that I understood aspects of service culture, and that I was not completely oblivious to what they would be describing. A good relationship between interviewer and interviewee is important to the successful collection of oral history; while the memories of the interviewee are paramount, control of the historical discourse remains in the hands of the interviewer and historian, as they select who will be interviewed, they ask the questions, and they interpret the answers. Thus oral history is a partnership between interviewer and interviewee.¹⁰⁹⁴ Such early communication meant that when we reached the interview stage, the partnership was already developed and my empathy helped extract more interesting information. Additionally, what I stressed most during this early communication was my belief in the necessity of convenience for the interviewee, so as to ensure that our interview would be more successful as the subject would be at ease. I offered to meet interviewees at either their homes or places of work; predominately it was the former as the majority are either retired or semi-retired, though one preferred to meet in a neutral place as some of his memories remained traumatic and he did not want to discuss them in his house. This was easily arranged, and we met in a local pub

¹⁰⁹⁴ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, p. 72.

where he answered my questions in the company of his wife, who was there for moral and emotional support but also offered insights into various questions that I asked. After the resulting successful interview, this interviewee later provided both an additional contact and also constructive criticism of my work after I sent him drafts to read, both of which were extremely useful.

The Interview

For each interview I have carried out, I have utilised a pre-prepared list of questions that highlighted issues in my research that I wished to cover. I adopted a guided life-history approach which focused on the men's motivations for joining the armed forces, their experiences of both war and of being ex-servicemen. My opening question was always: "Where were you born, and where did you grow up?" While many of the other questions from this list remained the same and were used in all of the interviews, I also tailored them to suit each individual and his specific experiences of the Falklands conflict. For example, I asked veterans of the 2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment, questions about the attack on Goose Green, while veterans of the 3rd Battalion were questioned about their attack on Mount Longdon.

The questions were not intended to be used formally as a rigorously adhered to script, they were more just as a list of key topics that I wanted to cover during the interview process. In my experience interviews worked best when allowed to flow as a stream of consciousness, rather than being rigorously structured and risk stifling any responses that would not "fit" with the questions being asked. Indeed, many oral historians have found that 'reminiscence produces material that is more valuable for historical recovery than answers to structured questionnaires.'¹⁰⁹⁵ However, the questions did prove useful in encouraging the interviewee to begin talking at the very beginning of the interview, and also if they were perhaps more reticent and were expecting or needing prompts. They were also used to bring the narrative back in line with my research interests when the interview moved off-topic, something Alistair Thomson utilised in his oral history project, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*.¹⁰⁹⁶ The questions were also useful in again conveying a sense of empathy between me, in my role as interviewer, and the interviewee that allowed a rapport to build between us. The preliminary research that

¹⁰⁹⁵ Summerfield, 'Oral History as a Research Method', p. 50.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford, 1994), Appendix 1.

was carried out prior to interview also allowed a test of validity to be passed over the interviewee's evidence as it was being conducted. Anything that was mentioned that was considered to be of value was also checked against documentary sources subsequent to the interview before being committed to writing in the thesis. Where possible, the testimony of other interviewees was also used to test validity and corroborate accounts. Such tests prevented any levels of empathy or sympathy on my part overriding historical accuracy, or romanticising the past.

As I was able to utilise a digital recording device with a long continuous recording capability, I did not need to worry about issues such as timing or changing tapes, something which affected earlier oral history projects that could not make use of this technology.¹⁰⁹⁷ Thus the interviewee was free to talk at his own pace and with his own emphasis, and I did not need to worry about fitting questions in, so at no point had to cut anyone off. On one occasion I suffered a technical error with a battery failure, but this was easily replaced and the interview resumed after a minute's break.

Each interview was carried out informally, normally over coffee or another beverage, and I did not visually record them as I decided it would only risk contributing to unease. Some interviewees had taken out photographs prior to my arrival in order to illustrate and contextualise what we were discussing. The vast majority of interviews were in the form of an open conversation, but one was carried out in a lecture format, with a series of photographs used as prompts and visual markers as the veteran related to me his memories of the campaign to re-capture the Falklands. This was entirely the interviewee's choice, and as such I accepted this method.

When I left the interviewees after the interview's conclusion, it was on good terms, and always with the offer of submitting what I had at that stage written for the veteran's personal interest. Virtually every interviewee expressed interest in taking up this offer, regardless of what stage of writing up I had currently achieved, and this led to ongoing and continued communication after the interview had finished.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 226.

In regards to the reproduction of the interviews, the Italian oral historian Alessandro Portelli has identified that much of the importance of oral history lies in the meanings communicated, of the tone, volume range and rhythm, and the emphases and pauses used by the interviewees.¹⁰⁹⁸ Thus, when quoted in the thesis, there has been no attempt to modify their language or grammar, but rather try and convey their voice as recorded and their experiences as related to me. This is also why digital copies of the recordings have been included with this thesis in subsequent Appendices rather than merely being transcribed, as these unique facets would otherwise be lost.

The Ethics of Oral History

On the subject of ethics for conducting interviews, while no release forms were produced or signed by the interviewees, it was decided that such a step would not be necessary for the reproduction of testimony in the thesis in its current form. Should the thesis be turned into a book, however, then such release forms and explicit written permission would be sought from all of the interviewees, in contrast to the oral permission already granted. However, what I have endeavoured to do is ensure that all of my interviewees are fully informed about the nature of my project and how it is progressing. This means that I have offered them an opportunity to look at the skeletal questions prior to interview so that they have a better understanding of what will be discussed, and I have also made it clear that we can avoid anything they do not wish to talk about. Furthermore, after the interview I have remained in contact with my interviewees and offered them the chance to read and critique my work. As a result, they are fully aware of what I have written and where they fit within that, and I have empowered them with an opportunity to request the removal of anything they believe to be a misrepresentation or misunderstanding. None have chosen to do this and many have expressed pleasure and admiration at the scope and content of my project, and my ability to embrace the military culture.

I believe that the long-term communication I have entered into with my interviewee subjects has ensured that our relationship is one of clarity and respect, and I do not feel as though I have ever given any of the veterans who responded to my requests for assistance any reason to feel exploited. I remain extremely grateful for their willingness

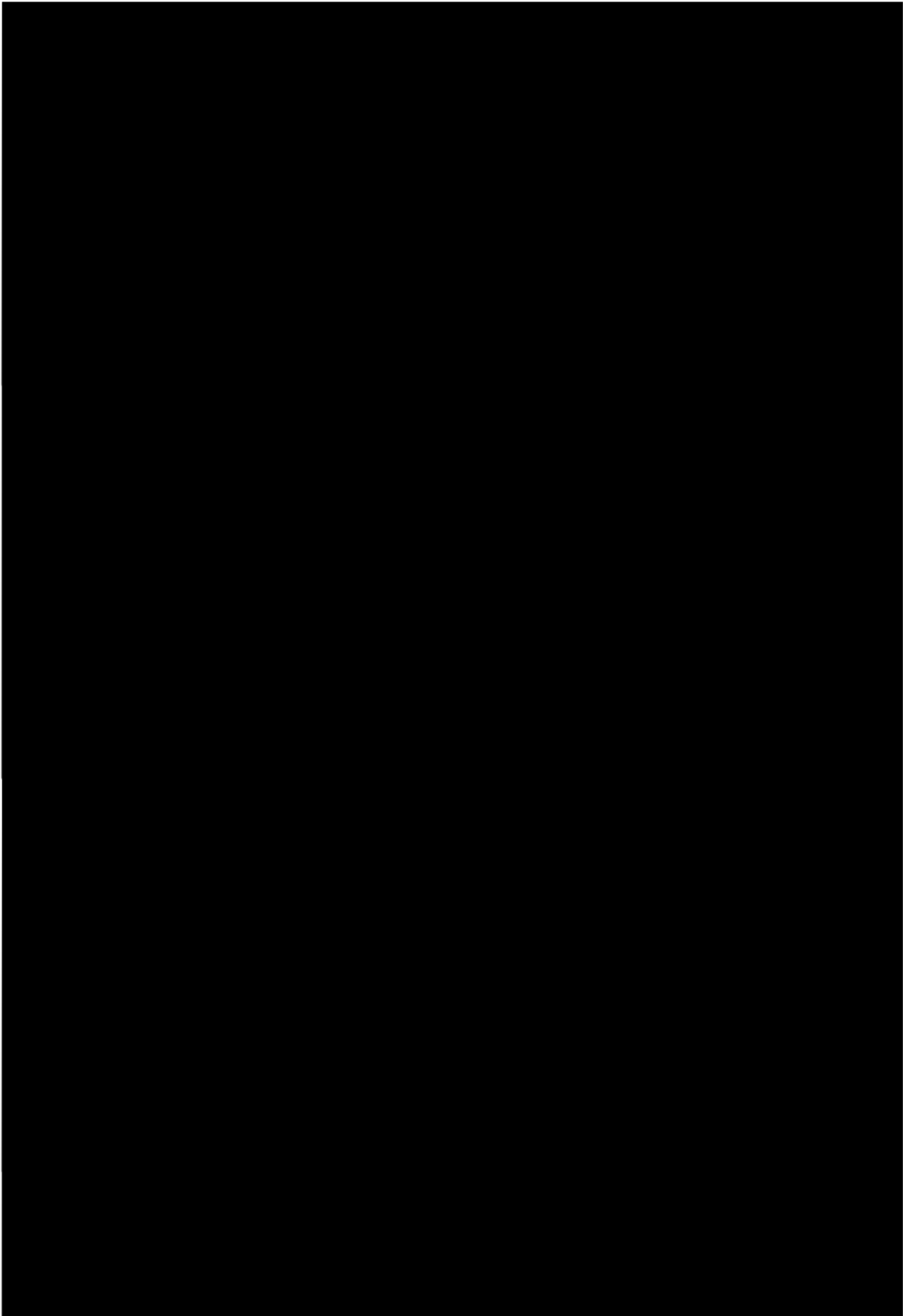
¹⁰⁹⁸ Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', pp. 63-8.

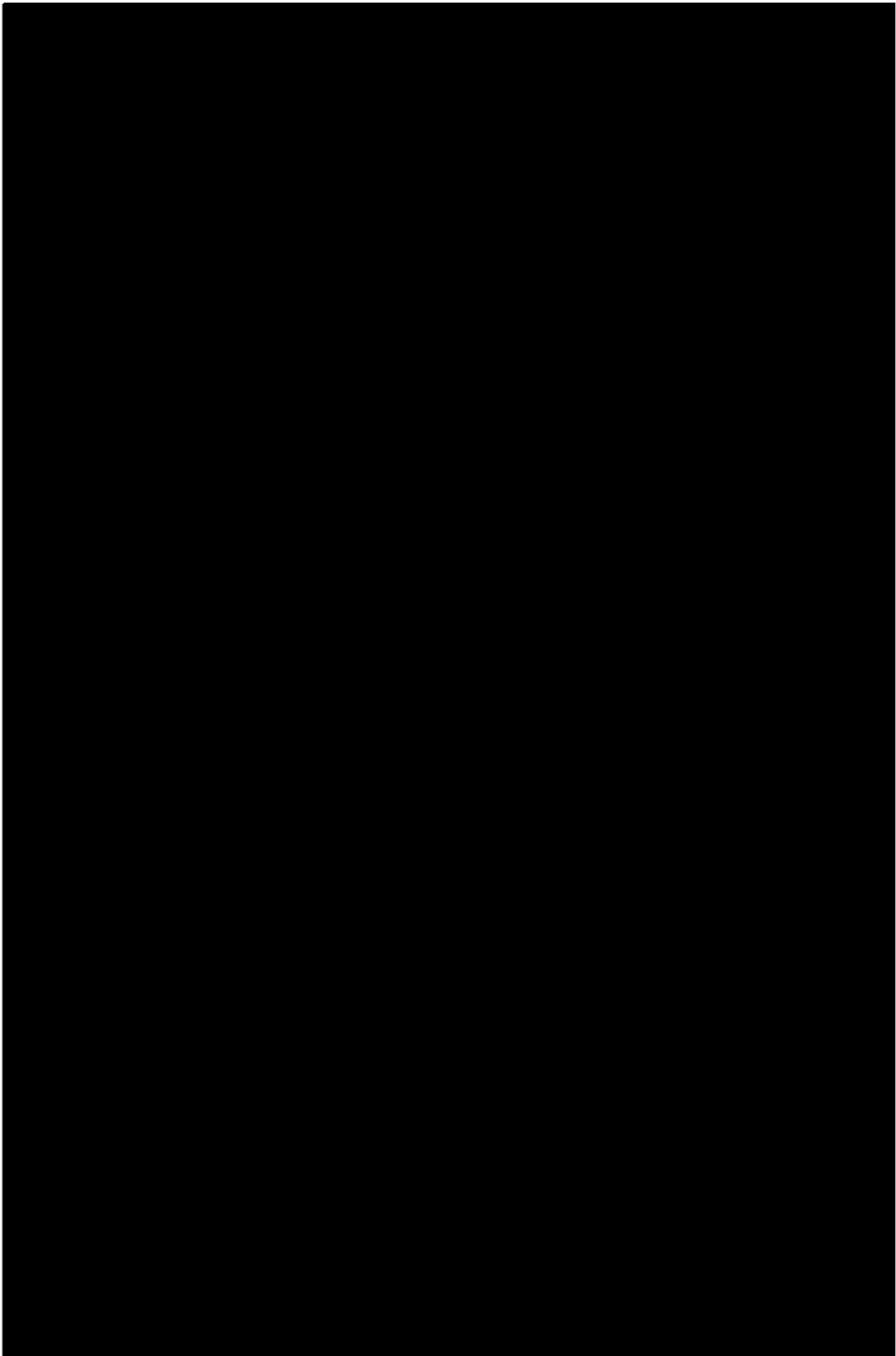
to give up their time, and their kindness and hospitality in inviting me into their homes, to discuss their memories with me.

Furthermore, it is clear that many of the interviewees felt empowered by the process of interview and by participating in my research. One, Sam MacFarlane, made repeated reference to the fact that he felt as if his ship, HMS *Coventry*, had been forgotten in the aftermath of the war as her sinking was not as high profile as that of HMS *Sheffield* or SS *Atlantic Conveyor*, and by talking about his experiences and those of the rest of the ship's company he would keep *Coventry*'s memory alive, and also bring greater awareness to what they endured and achieved. As Summerfield has noted, oral history in this form possesses a capacity 'to recover such otherwise unrecorded aspects of the past,'¹⁰⁹⁹ which was very much a goal and aim of this project.

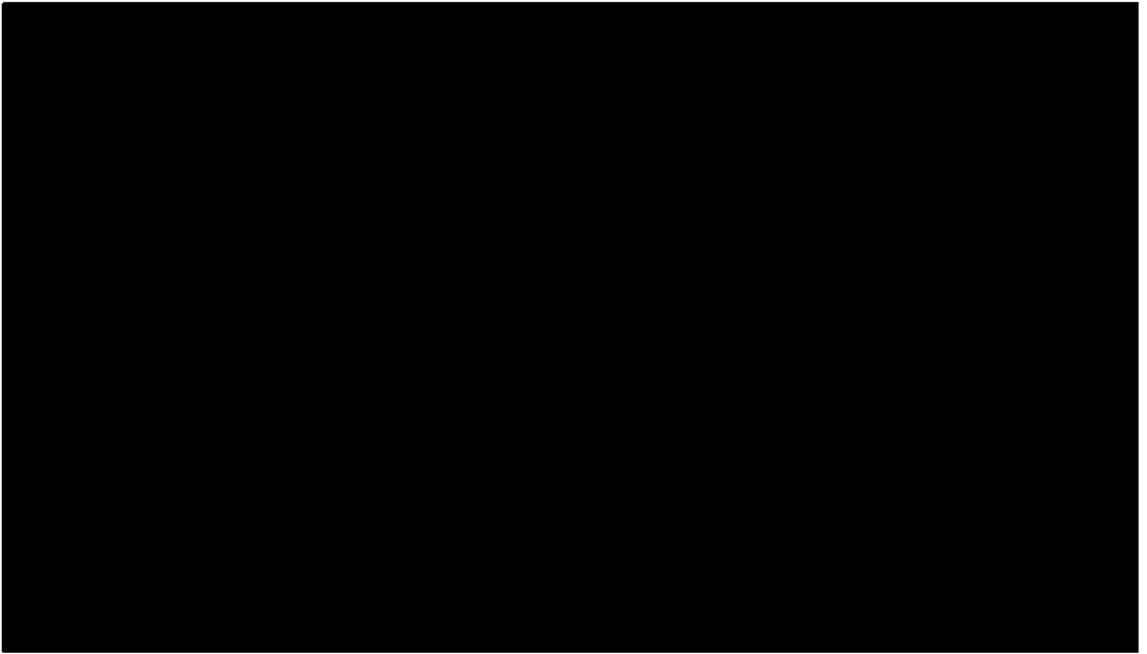
¹⁰⁹⁹ Summerfield, 'Oral History as a Research Method', p. 49.

Appendix B





Appendix D



Appendix E

