



THE FALKLANDS WAR

THE STORY OF A SHIP - A VERY LUCKY SHIP

HMS ANTRIM



HMS *Antrim* was a County class guided missile destroyer (GMD) or destroyer light guided (DLG). She was commanded by **Captain Brian Young** Royal Navy, a senior captain who had been a fixed-wing Fleet Air Arm pilot and seen action at Suez. He carried a heavy burden, initially as the commanding officer of the Flagship and subsequently in command of the retaking of South Georgia and then responsible for the Force air defence in Falkland Sound.

When the events leading to the start of the war occurred, *Antrim* was off Gibraltar wearing the flag of **Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward** who was i/c of **Exercise Springtrain** comprising 26 ships. The exercise had finished, and ships were steaming north to UK and Easter leave.

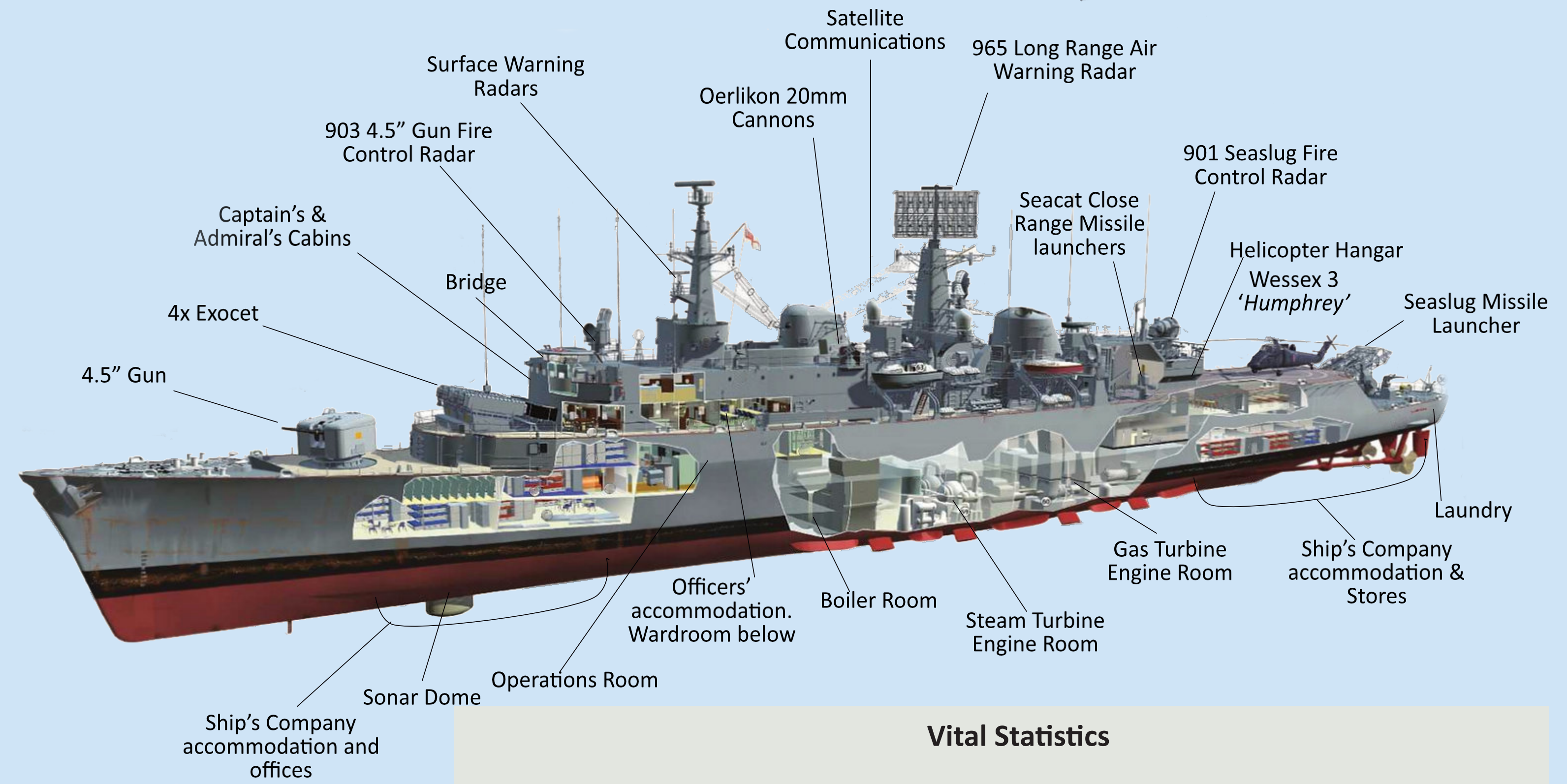
On 2 April Argentina invaded the Falklands and the Admiral received a signal from the Commander in Chief in Northwood:

Assume command of HM Ships (names given) and proceed to the Falklands.

Aim. Recover the Falklands

Short, concise, and unambiguous!

The ships swung round and headed South immediately, into the night and towards an unknown and uncertain future.



Vital Statistics

Built by Fairfield in Govan and launched in 1970 as the last of eight of her Class, all named after Counties, she displaced 6000 tons, had a length of 520ft (158m) and a draught of 20ft (6m).

Her role was to provide long range air defence of the fleet for which she was armed with the Seaslug missile on her quarter-deck. The warning was provided by the large 'double bedstead' 965 radar, this was fed into a (very basic) computer in the Operations Room which calculated which of the incoming aircraft was the greatest threat. This target was then 'acquired' by the 'drum-like' 901 fire-control radar just forward of the Flight Deck, and this controlled the missile in flight onto the target.

Her other armament consisted of:

- a twin 4.5in (115mm) gun in the bows for both air and surface targets (range 14 miles)
- four of the French Exocet anti-ship missiles (range 20 miles)
- two mountings of 4 x Seacat missiles for close air defence
- two 20mm Oerlikon guns

She carried a Wessex 3 helicopter '*Humphrey*' which was optimised for anti-submarine work. It carried a sonar which could be dunked deep into the water and torpedoes and depth charges to prosecute any submarine contact. It could also be re-roled as a troop carrier. It had both a Search and Rescue and a store-carrying capability and all these roles were employed exhaustively down south. The helicopter and its crew served with distinction; they crippled the submarine Santa Fe, landed troops on enemy-held territory in foul weather conditions; rescued men from the sea; and spent many, many hours ferrying men and materials around the Force.

Antrim was powered by both steam and gas turbines, and this gave her the ability to get underway at short notice and a top speed of over 30 knots.

To keep all the equipment running and the lights on, she had an electrical generating capacity of 5,000 kilowatts.

Her complement was about 450 of which there were 41 officers, including a doctor, dentist, and chaplain. She also carried a Royal Marine detachment of a Sgt Maj and 9 men.

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Captain B.G. Young DSO, RN
Commanding Officer HMS ANTRIM 1981-3



Exercise Springtrain ships alongside in Gibraltar March 1982

HMS ANTRIM

THE PASSAGE SOUTH

The Task Force headed south for Ascension Island. **Admiral Woodward** and his staff moved to *Glamorgan*, and *Antrim*, *Plymouth* and RFA tanker *Tidespring* detached to retake South Georgia.

The operation, codenamed *Paraquet*, was secret - no one in UK was told and the ships were 'removed' from all charts in Northwood HQ. While we speculated about whether diplomacy would succeed, our families knew nothing about our movements.

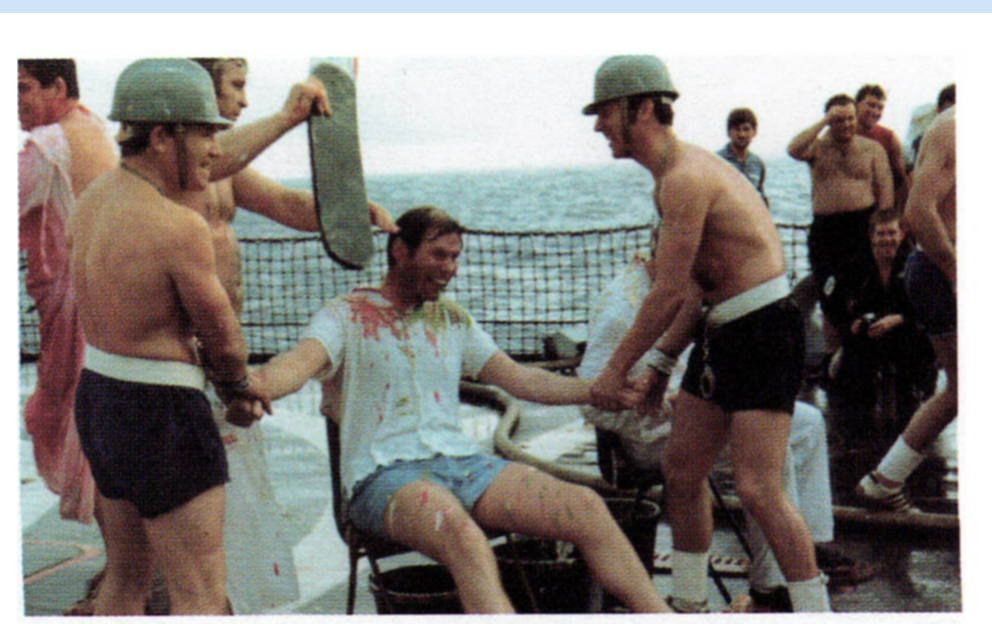
Those who hadn't crossed the Equator before were tried by King Neptune for trespassing, and punished by being 'soaped' and 'shaved', then dunked energetically by his 'bears'.

At Ascension Island we spent 2 days embarking stores from an increasingly busy Wideawake airfield.

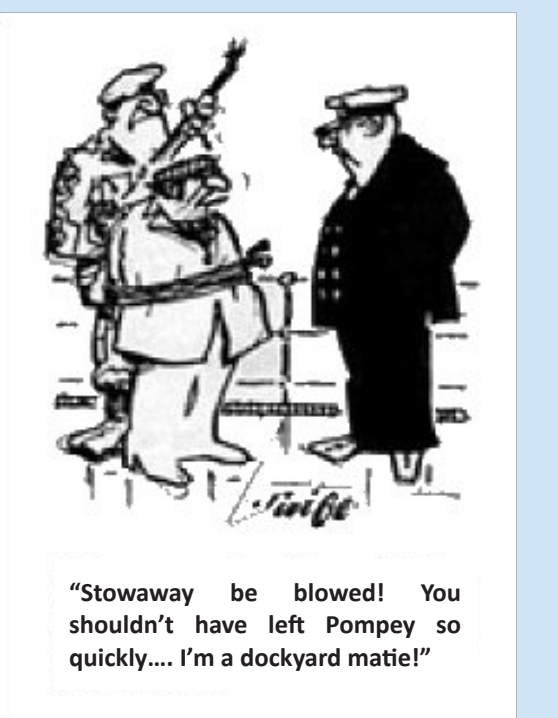
On 14 April we met the S Atlantic patrol ship HMS *Endurance* whose Royal Marines had contributed to the brave but forlorn defence of South Georgia. *Antrim* 'manned and cheered ship' as a mark of respect for her lonely spirited defence.

For 16 hours on 17 April, we replenished stores, ammunition and Special Forces from RFA *Fort Austin*. On passage they practised their boat drills.

The weather deteriorated. Gale force winds, rough seas, snow showers made it very cold for the upper deck lookouts and underway replenishment teams.



The Commander meets Neptune's helpers



"Stowaway be blowed! You shouldn't have left Pompey so quickly... I'm a dockyard mate!"



"I'm a bit worried. When I left the house the wife thought I was going for a Chinese 'takeaway'!"



At anchor off Grytviken



Off South Georgia