

Commander Alan William John WEST, Royal Navy.

On 21st May 1982, HMS ARDENT, commanded by Commander West, was deployed to Grantham Sound to conduct Naval Gunfire Support during the amphibious landings in San Carlos Water; in particular to cover the withdrawal of an SAS diversionary patrol. Isolated there, HMS ARDENT was subject to heavy air attack (at one stage eleven aircraft were involved). Despite these overwhelming odds, Commander West covered the SAS withdrawal and supported 2 Para establishing themselves on Sussex Mountain. He fought his ship bravely shooting down one Pucara, and continued to bring fire to bear on enemy aircraft despite the progressive loss of the ship's propulsion, Seacat system and 4.5 inch gun. Eventually, after having been hit by no less than nine bombs and several rockets, and with no hope of saving the ship he ordered her to be abandoned. The utmost credit should go to Commander West for continuing to fight his ship in the face of extreme adversity and in particular for the well organised manner in which she was abandoned. Without his calm courage and personal direction in the face of overwhelming odds far greater loss of life might have occurred.

Lieutenant Commander Andrew Donaldson AULD, Royal Navy

Lieutenant Commander Auld is the Commanding Officer 800 Naval Air Squadron. From the beginning of operations, he led the Squadron through the Falklands air battle, which was a most intense period of operations, with gallantry and dedication.

On May 1982, he led a daring and successful strike of nine aircraft at low level in the face of heavy anti-aircraft ground fire against Port Stanley airfield. Although his wing-man was hit, all aircraft returned safely. Following this he led many other dangerous low level attacks, facing high risks with great courage.

Lieutenant Commander Auld also played a key role in the air defence battle. He flew over 50 operational missions, on occasions up to four operational sorties per day, followed by long periods at night on deck alert. These included many sorties to repel enemy air attacks. In one incident, he attacked four low flying Mirages and, after destroying two with missiles, was engaging a third with guns when it was hit by a missile from his wing-man.

Lieutenant Commander Auld demonstrated outstanding qualities of valour and leadership over a most demanding and extended period of operational flying.

Lieutenant Commander Michael Dennison BOOTH, Royal Navy

Lieutenant Commander Booth commanded 847 Naval Air Squadron during the recapture of Port Stanley. He formed the helicopter unit from scratch in the United Kingdom for the operation. On arrival in the Falkland Islands, he threw himself into creating a dynamic and effective organisation ashore which consistently produced support of the highest order for the ground forces.

The Squadron flew tirelessly for long hours, often in the face of enemy air and ground attack, invariably led in the air by Lieutenant Commander Booth. His determined and selfless effort to ensure that the maximum support was provided in the most daunting conditions was an inspiration to his men, which they readily followed.

Without the efforts of his Squadron, the support afforded to the ground forces would have been considerably affected. Lieutenant Commander Booth's distinguished and gallant action in the presence of the enemy was in the highest traditions of the Service.

Lieutenant Commander Hugh Sinclair CLARK, Royal Navy

Lieutenant Commander Clark commanded 825 Naval Air Squadron during the assault on Port Stanley. His Unit had been hastily formed from an anti-submarine training squadron and arrived in the Falkland Islands with no military operational experience and little training in the support helicopter role. Short of equipment and expertise they landed and set to work to form an effective and efficient organisation.

This Squadron was immediately used to support ground forces in the front-line and, by wise direction, Lieutenant Commander Clark ensured that they rapidly learnt the necessary skills to produce creditable results. His exemplary leadership in the air in the face of ground and air attack by the enemy was reflected in the performance of his crews.

Lieutenant Commander Clark showed total disregard for his own safety in rescuing survivors from the blazing wreck of RFA SIR GALAHAD, hovering in dense smoke amongst exploding ammunition. Responding to such example, his Unit made a major contribution to the support of the troops engaged in the presence of the enemy which was in the highest traditions of the Service.

Lieutenant Commander Hugh John LOMAS, Royal Navy.

Lieutenant Commander Lomas commanded a large detachment of 845 Naval Air Squadron aircraft, both during landings at San Carlos and during the subsequent operation to re-take Port Stanley. He established his unit ashore with the minimum equipment and produced an efficient and effective organisation by ingenuity and initiative. His determined and gallant leadership in the air, often in the face of air attack and enemy ground fire was exemplary and was reflected in the noteworthy achievement of his Detachment. He made a substantial contribution to the support of the ground forces flying long hours in the most arduous conditions, consistently producing notable results. Lieutenant Commander Lomas' conduct and leadership were of the highest order reflecting the finest traditions of the Service.

Lieutenant Commander Neil Wynell THOMAS, Royal Navy.

Lieutenant Commander Thomas was serving as Commanding Officer 899 Naval Air Squadron when it was transferred to HMS HERMES on 4th April 1982. He brought his shore-based training Squadron, with several pilots incompletely trained, to success in combat against heavy odds in less than a month.

On 1st May 1982, he took part in a daring low level attack on Port Stanley airfield in the face of heavy anti-aircraft ground fire which rendered it unfit for use and led many other dangerous ground attack sorties. Lieutenant Commander Thomas also played an important part in the air battle. On one occasion, he shot down one of a wave of four Skyhawks and in the ensuing dog-fight in cloud and, when his remaining missile indicated that it had acquired a target, he showed great coolness in holding his fire until he was able to confirm that it had in fact detected his wing-man rather than the enemy, thus preventing a tragic accident.

During this period, Lieutenant Commander Thomas flew over 50 operational missions: on occasions taking part in up to four operational sorties per day followed by long periods on deck alert at night. He showed outstanding qualities of valour and leadership over a most demanding and extended period of operational flying.

Lieutenant Commander Simon Clive THORNEWILL, Royal Navy.

Lieutenant Commander Thornewill commanded 846 Naval Air Squadron throughout the campaign to re-take the Falkland Islands. He led the Squadron, and was personally involved, in a wide variety of day and night tasks ranging from the logistic support of the front line and direct support during the offensives, including San Carlos and Port Stanley, to covert insertions and SAR and casualty evacuation.

He shouldered the considerable burden of planning and bore the accidental loss of two aircraft with equanimity, leading his Squadron from the air in an exemplary manner. On 13th June, in the Mount Kent area, a helicopter piloted by Lieutenant Commander Thornewill was closed by two pairs of A4 aircraft. The enemy aircraft attacked from astern, but Lieutenant Commander Thornewill, with the help of his aircrewmembers, was able to execute a series of manoeuvres which succeeded in evading the fighters, although one of their cannon shells went through the main blade spar.

The outstanding performance of the Squadron in its diverse roles and his own notable courage and airmanship in the face of enemy attack reflected Lieutenant Commander Thornewill's gallant leadership.

Lieutenant Alan Reginald Courtenay BENNETT, Royal Navy.

Lieutenant Bennet, 846 Naval Air Squadron, made a particularly significant contribution to the unit's successful night operations. He displayed tireless enthusiasm, humour and dedication which were a guide and inspiration for all the crews.

During flying operations he showed great skill and courage despite the particularly hazardous nature of the missions in which he was involved.

Lieutenant Nigel Arthur BRUEN, Royal Navy.

During the evening of 25 May 1982, RFA SIR GALAHAD was struck by a 1000 lb bomb which failed to explode. Lieutenant Bruen, Officer in Charge Fleet Clearance Diving Team 3 was tasked to effect its removal.

The bomb was lodged in a difficult position, surrounded by broken batteries which had splashed acid around the compartment. The decision was taken to raise the bomb to the vehicle deck and dispose of it overboard. This difficult and dangerous task was successfully completed by the team in the early hours of the following day.

During the operation, Lieutenant Bruen showed great personal courage and impeccable leadership.