

Troops 'hit the deck' in front of Queen Mum when spooked by air force squadron's fly-past

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"When we sailed into Southampton on the QE II, the Queen Mother was on the Royal yacht Britannia to greet us, and welcome us home," said Marshall. "We were supposed to do a 'wave' to her— at the same time, all the other ships had their big plumes of water flowing in the air, celebrating the troops coming home, even though the war was not even over.

"There was all sorts of yachts in the area, and they also did a fly past to honour us- except they didn't inform any of the guys. The Queen Mother was expecting us to be all prim and proper on the upper deck, saluting and waving back to her, and the air force squadron did a fly past- and everybody hit the deck."

"We were all bibbed and tuckered with brand new clothes to meet the Queen

Mum, and everyone there thought it was great to see a fly past— but you had 500 guys who had just gone through numerous air bombing raids- we were all a bit rattled— we all literally 'hit the deck'."

Marshall told how arriving at Southampton was like walking into a sea of faces. His mother, his sister and her husband and his fiancé Jane Moore (now his wife) were waiting to meet him.

It was an emotional meeting— every troop was given a red rose to give to their mother or girlfriend, a bottle of perfume and a bottle of spirits— there were many tearful reunions.

"We were placed on open leave, usually called survivor's leave, a leave pass without a return date on it," said Marshall. "We were contacted for the Board of Inquiry, and to debrief us. I tell you, I was young, I was 22 years-old, being inter-

viewed by admirals and like, and by the time I finished talking to them, I felt like it was my fault the ship had sunk."

For about a month, the ship's company would be called in to be interviewed, to 'put together the pieces of the puzzle' aid Marshall, as well as check on the well-being of the troops.

"It was early days back then, but they were realizing the affect of post battle syndrome, and starting to look out for the troops," said Marshall, "They've come a long way in that area since then, but once a week they'd talk to us and make sure we were okay."

Marshall would return to the Falklands later that same year as he was assigned to another flight the end of August. He served in the Falkland Islands area until he returned in December of 1982. He and Jane were married a couple years later, and he continued his navy career until 1993, when he took the step to immigrate to Canada. Don arrived in 1993, and Jane and their daughter Holly followed the next year, purchasing a home in Georgetown.

Marshall worked for both the private sector and the government with his air engineering expertise, and currently holds the rank of Lieutenant with the Canadian Naval Reserve.

Next spring will mark the 25th anniversary of the Falklands conflict, and Don and Jane have plans to attend a reunion, back on the Queen Elizabeth II, the ship that brought him back home. He looks forward to that event, and considers



HMS Antelope, with the relatively innocent-looking one metre hole in the side of its hull, moved to a safer location after sustaining two bomb hits from an air attack.

Photo Courtesy Ship's Company- HMS Antelope

himself fortunate that he came through the conflict virtually unscathed.

"I didn't suffer any injuries, and the only thing I can say was that incoming aircraft thing— at one time it was thrilling— after the Falklands, it makes me flinch every time. I still do, probably will until the day I die."

"Everyone who experiences combat is that way I think, "he concludes, "I can shut out the gruesome things I saw- my mates being seriously injured or killed- all that stuff, but I know that I'll flinch every time a low flying aircraft comes in. I can't help it."

Falkland Islands losses

The Falklands conflict lasted only three months, from April 2 to June 14, 1982, but both combatants— Britain and Argentina— suffered significant losses in that relatively short time.

Human losses were more than 2 to 1 for the Argentinians

Human losses

• **British:** 255 killed, 777 wounded, 1 taken prisoner

• **Argentina:** 649 killed, 1,068 wounded, 11,313 taken prisoner

Material losses

British

- 2 destroyers: Sheffield, Coventry
- 2 frigates: Ardent, Antelope
- 2 landing craft: Sir Galahad, Sir Tristram
- 1 mixed cargo: Atlantic Conveyor
- 10 Harrier fighters
- 23 helicopters

Argentinean

- 109 aircraft (approximately 2/3 of the entire Argentinean air force)
- 1 cruiser: Belgrano
- 1 submarine
- several transport boats

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