

By this time too, the air to air refuelled Hercules were conducting regular air drops of important supplies to ships in the Total Exclusion Zone.

There were losses. A Gazelle helicopter in transit from Darwin to Fitzroy was lost on 6 June with the 2 passengers and the 2 crew. An R.A.F. Harrier crashed into the sea on 30 May after being struck by enemy ground fire over Port Stanley. A Sea Harrier crashed into the sea on 1 June whilst returning from a combat air patrol. An accident at Port San Carlos severely damaged an R.A.F. Harrier on 8 June, bringing the total losses of ground support Harriers to 4. The direct transit of 2 pairs of replacement R.A.F. Harriers from Ascension Island to H.M.S. HERMES using in flight refuelling on 1 and 8 June was a noteworthy achievement and a most welcome reinforcement.

Further reinforcement and resupply forward was severely hampered by bad weather which precluded the use of helicopters for troop movement. It was therefore decided to move 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and some supporting units and equipment by ship to Fitzroy. This move was conducted as follows: on 6 June 2nd Battalion Scots Guards disembarked from landing craft having transferred from H.M.S. INTREPID off Lively Island by night. Due to very bad weather only half the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards landed on a similar operation on 7 June. They had sailed to Lively Island in H.M.S. FEARLESS. During the night 7/8 June the remainder of the Battalion and some other units were embarked in SIR GALAHAD and sailed directly to Fitzroy. The weather on 8 June unexpectedly and unfortunately cleared and whilst SIR GALAHAD and SIR TRISTRAM, the latter having arrived on 7 June, were unloading they were attacked by Argentinian aircraft before the Rapier battery, which had been landed as soon as possible after arrival, was fully operational. Both were hit, caught fire and abandoned. This attack led to the heaviest casualties of the campaign. Forty two Welsh Guardsmen, 3 members of 16 Field Ambulance R.A.M.C. and 5 Royal Fleet Auxiliary crewmen were killed. In a further air raid, a landing craft was bombed and sank in Choiseul Sound. 6 Royal Marines and 1 Naval Rating were killed.

Weather conditions again deteriorated. It was almost mid-winter, with frequent rain and snow storms driven horizontal by high winds, and sub-zero temperatures. The battalions who occupied the most exposed positions were suffering with cases of exposure and trench-foot. General MOORE was thus determined to launch his bid for Port Stanley with the minimum of delay.

### **The Final Battle**

The Argentinians had about 7 battalions together with supporting troops in the Port Stanley area. Approximately 3 of these battalions were forward on the important features of Mount Longdon, Two Sisters and Mount Harriet. In addition, there were about 1,000 troops on West Falkland.

General MOORE planned that the attack on Port Stanley should be conducted in 3 phases. The first phase was scheduled for the night of 11/12 June when 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines was to capture the three features of Mount Longdon, Two Sisters and Mount Harriet. The second phase, planned to take place 24 hours later, required both brigades to capture the next features to the east; these were Wireless Ridge, Tumbledown Mountain and Mount William. Finally, the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, with 2 companies of 40 Commando Royal Marines under command, were to capture Sapper Hill.

As scheduled, on 11 June a silent night attack was launched. The enemy was outfought and soon after dawn all the brigade objectives were firmly held. In the centre, after a hard fight in very difficult mountain terrain, 45 Commando Royal Marines captured Two Sisters. Further south 42 Commando Royal Marines made an indirect approach, exploiting a gap in the enemy minefields which had been established as a result of extremely detailed, skilled and aggressive patrolling, and captured Mount Harriet from behind, taking over 200 prisoners. Meanwhile in the north 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment had an extremely tough fight against one of the enemy's best battalions to capture Mount Longdon. In this action Staff Sgt. I. J. McKAY, V.C. was killed while leading an advance against a strongly defended and well sited Argentinian position. During the day of 12 June all these positions came under heavy artillery fire, and further casualties were sustained.

For this and subsequent attacks, troop movements and assaults ashore were covered by Harrier attacks, naval gunfire and the support of five field batteries who fired 15,000 rounds. 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery were in continuous action for 12 hours during the first phase, at one point giving supporting fire only 50 metres in front of the advancing infantry. In the second phase 57 missions were fired. The Royal Engineers who had completed the hazardous task of clearing routes through the minefields provided men with each of the assaulting units. In addition they carried out many tasks to improve the mobility of the land forces, including reconstruction of the bridge at Fitzroy.

On 12 June, H.M.S. GLAMORGAN, while leaving her gun support position, was struck aft by a land launched Exocet missile. Despite the resulting fires, she remained able to steam with gun armament intact. The fires were eventually brought under control, but 13 of her Ship's Company had been killed in this attack.

Also on 12 June the final Vulcan raid was made on Port Stanley airfield in an attempt to prevent any further use of the airfield by the Argentinians prior to the final assault.

To allow further time for preparation, Phase 2 was delayed by 24 hours and eventually launched on the night of 13/14 June. 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, once more under command of 3 Commando