

## Falklands March - July 1990 (Mike Traynor)

I went down south long after the invasion, so we had it pretty good, up at the Mount Pleasant. Firstly, I can't remember anyone who was pleased to be selected to go!

I certainly wasn't looking forward to it but just accepted it. 18 hours on an aircraft is a long time for anyone. It was quite pleasant at first arriving in Ascension, glorious sunshine, thinking this is OK. When we arrived in Ascension we were told that everyone in the Falklands was moaning about lack of mail from home. It was found out that all the mail from the previous two days had been off loaded to accommodate some essential equipment that was required urgently. To ensure we loaded as much mail as possible, everyone on board had to be weighed, together with any hand baggage you had. I think I was 500 letters and a couple of small packages. The ritual when you arrived at Mount Pleasant was that you were met by the person you were relieving and just about everyone had a placard stating only 122 days to do! A couple of stories I heard from a SWO from Kinloss who had been down three times. First time just after hostilities. Seemingly they were living in tents and ISO's, large metal shipping containers. Of course the SWO had the biggest and best container and being a good organiser, he had loads of home comforts. The container served as his office which was curtained off midway, behind which was his sleeping area. Well one day the CO came bouncing in full of hell, complaining that he had organised a shower and toilet for his container and it had disappeared. He wanted it found and the culprit who took it punished. The SWO took copious notes regarding the description of the items and promised he would look into it as soon as possible. As soon as the CO left he opened the curtain to his sleeping area and looked down at the new toilet and shower he had just had plumbed in and said to himself "I'm looking into it Sir". True story.

I had to investigate a fire on one of the R and R sites (rest and recuperation). I flew out on one of 'Eric's Bristow's choppers, with my slab of beers and an overnight bag. The building belonged to one of the sheep farmers and having completed the investigation, sat down and promptly drank the 24 cans of lager. It's a tough life for these people miles from anywhere with about 5000+ sheep to look after.

Being the naive person I am I said it must be difficult if the sheep have a problem and you need a vet! "A vet he said, we don't bother with vets, and if a sheep is ill we just kill it and feed it to the dogs. We kill about three sheep a week anyway! To feed the dogs and ourselves. As I said, it's a tough life! The fire I investigated started in the roof next to the chimney and had smoldered for days. They had to check the area for cracks and make good and I recommended he had the chimney swept. 'That's no problem; I will do it tomorrow'. I said "do you have the equipment"? 'Yes', he said, I will catch an upland goose, we tie a cord around its leg, put it in the fire place (no fire of course) and it tries to escape by flying the chimney. When it almost reaches the top, we pull it down again and the whole procedure is repeated until the chimney is clean. We then release the goose, a little black by this time, but OK.

The golf course was something else. A group of us would travel down to Stanley each weekend. The course was horrendous but it got you off the base for the day. The trip down, over an hour and always a nightmare. Death by pot holes. You just couldn't miss them there was so many. I had the privilege to play with Governor Rex Hunt (name dropper) and the Stanley bank manager. The thing is they had all the best gear, clothes, clubs, and trolleys. All top line stuff, but the course, as I said was full of bomb craters and over the fence was a mine field. Needless to say, no one looked for any balls out of bounds! Another story. All the locals were known as 'Bennies' like out of Crossroads on the telly around that time. They all would wear a ski type hat, 'Bennies'. Well, a new officer commanding arrived and did not like everyone calling the locals 'Bennies' So he issued

an order stating that it had to stop. Well soon after that they were known as 'Stills'. Eventually the CO found out and enquired why "Stills". 'Well Sir', was the reply, they are still Bennies.

One last story I recall. The locals would buy anything and every so often there would be an auction sale on camp to get rid of numerous items no longer of any use to the service i.e. damaged equipment, Land rovers, lorries, anything at all.

Well the story goes that this farmer bought a large metal container. They loaded it onto his lorry and off he went. Once home he opened it up and discovered a brand new Land Rover, which he refused to return stating he had bought the container and anything in it! He got to keep it.



**RAF Mount Pleasant FireSection personnel who attended at a house Fire on Lively Island in the Falklands on the 28 June 1986 Back row l-r SAC's Kiki Dee Fran Neary Gordon Smith Neil Bateman Front row l-r Flt Lt. Redfern 78 Squadron WO Steve Davey SAC Liam Rippon Sgt Roy Bastable Flt.lt.Gear 78 sqd.n Sgt. Dowell 78 sqd.**

Mike Traynor.



**RAF Mount Pleasant** also known as **Mount Pleasant Airport**, **Mount Pleasant Complex** or **MPA**)[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF\\_Mount\\_Pleasant\\_-\\_cite\\_note-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Mount_Pleasant_-_cite_note-1) is a Royal Air Force station in the British Overseas Territory of the Falkland Islands. The airbase goes by the motto of "Defend the right"<sup>[2]</sup> (while the motto of the islands is "Desire the right") and is part of the British Forces South Atlantic Islands (BFSAI). Home to between 1,000 and 2,000 British military personnel, it is located about 30 miles (48 km) southwest of Stanley—the capital of the Falklands—on the island of East Falkland. The world's longest corridor, half a mile (800 m) long, links the barracks, messes and recreational and welfare areas of the base, and was nicknamed the "Death Star Corridor" by personnel. Mount Pleasant was opened by Prince Andrew on 12 May 1985, becoming fully operational the following year. The station was constructed as part of British efforts to strengthen the defence of the Falkland Islands following the 1982 war with Argentine forces. It remains the fewest purpose-built RAF station and replaced previous RAF facilities at Port Stanley Airport.