WINGS OVER ICE!

Falkland Islands and Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition (FIDASE) 1955-1957

Kim Stuckey

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1944 – Operation Tabarin - Britain establishes Antarctic Bases and Post Offices to demonstrate sovereignty over Antarctic Peninsular. Argentina disputes ownership of territory
Aerial Survey Expedition:

Objective: Map Antarctic Peninsular to support claim of sovereignty

High level aerial photography

Surveying to establish trig points, flying in by helicopter from support ship

Contract given to Hunting Aerosurveys, Expedition leader Peter Mott (pictured right)
Competing Expeditions

- Trans-Antarctic Expedition (TAE) with scientific focus and large Public Relations exercise (and commemorative stamp issue)
- FIDASE to establish mapping and sovereignty (little PR)

The British Government decided to fund both expeditions, but Mott always thought FIDASE was the “poor relation”
Expedition Base

Deception Island, South Shetlands
Volcano caldera with natural harbour
British Antarctic base with Post Office
The stamps – 1954 Falkland Islands Dependencies Ships definitive set
First Season: December 1955 – April 1956

Establish base and build aircraft taxiing areas
Start aerial photography and surveying
Much less mail from 1st season. Expedition label used on mail

Second Season: December 1956 – April 1957

Majority of aerial photography (including Falkland Islands)
Visit from HRH Duke of Edinburgh
Majority of Expedition mail and collectors mail

Collectors and Expedition members mail in second season often carried Expedition cachet in black or magenta (a smaller version is also known).
2nd Season Cachet Handstamp

ex Hunting Aerosurveys office
The Aircraft

Two Catalina “Canso” flying boats from Hunting Survey Corporation in Canada

Dexion metal taxiway built to enable aircraft to leave water

Two flying teams
Pilot: Chris Gavin-Robinson

Pictured in middle with his Canso crew in a publicity photograph for Huntley & Palmer biscuits.

2/- 10gm. Air mail rate.

Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6
Postmark 31 JA 56
Pilot: Jim Greenshields (1st Season)

Pictured left with Chris Gavin-Robinson

Envelope from Jamaica, where Cansos stopped en route to Antarctica.

2/- 10gm. Air mail rate.

Cancelled Deception Island B6 Postmark 31 DE 55

1st Season Expedition label
Co-Pilot: David Banks (1st Season)

Pictured at an aircrew briefing at Deception Island

Expedition postcard sent at end of 1st season, carried by air in Canso from Deception Island, via Port Stanley to Montevideo. **First all air carriage from Falkland Islands Dependencies**

1/- Air mail rate. There was no air mail postcard rate so 1st step air mail was used

Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6 Postmark MR 24 56

1st Season Expedition label

Message “withdrawing shortly”
Expedition Ship: *Oluf Sven*

Chartered 950 ton freighter from Oluf Svendson  
First trip to Antarctic waters.  
Pictured left at Deception Island  

“m.s. OLUF SVEN” cachet in violet at bottom left

Captain Jan Ryge, cover sent to his wife in 1st season.
1st Season Helicopter
Sikorsky S51

Pictured left on Astrolabe Island

Previously G-AJOR had operated out of the South Bank heliport and also provided advertising for Persil in Germany.
2nd Season Helicopter
Bell 47D

Pictured left
Better visibility with perspex bubble and also flotation landing gear

Crash at Tower Island in white out, Greville "Bim" Jacques piloting.

Oluf Sven sailed for Montevideo to pick up replacement Bell and spares
Lead Helicopter Pilot: Greville “Bim” Jacques

After the Tower Island helicopter crash, Jacques went to Montevideo aboard *Oluf Sven* to supervise the collection of a replacement Bell helicopter.

6/- 30gm. Air mail rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6 dated 16 DE 55

1st Season Expedition label

“16th December 1955 HMS Protector arrived... All hands took the afternoon off to write home, as the ship will take mail”
Helicopter Engineer: Brian Davey (2nd Season)

Cover to parents using the scarce small 2nd season cachet (the larger cachet was nearly always used on mail) in black.

2/- 10gm. Air mail rate.

Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark DE 14 56
FALKLAND ISLANDS DEPENDENCIES AERIAL SURVEY EXPEDITION

DIARY of C.C. Brown

Surveyor: Colin Brown

Pictured and also photographs of his diary sheets
Surveyor: Colin Brown

Diary sheets posted in 1st season
Envelopes bear Expedition label
Left: 1/- 5gm. Air mail rate.
Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate
Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark MR 16 56

Right: 2/- 10gm. Air mail rate.
Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate
Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark MR 16 56
Surveyor: Colin Brown

Diary sheets posted in 1\textsuperscript{st} season

Envelopes bear Expedition label

Left: 3/- 15gm. Air mail rate.

Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark 16 DE 55

Right: 4/- 20gm. Air mail rate.

Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark 16 DE 55

First mail out after Expedition arrival
Surveyor: Colin Brown

Diary sheets posted in 2nd season. Envelope bears a four line cachet supplied to the Expedition by the Polar Postal Society of Great Britain

6/- 30gm. Air mail rate. Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark JA 26 57. Envelope indicates mail received 17th March.

Scarce commercial use of the 1954 Ships 5/- value
Photographic Processing: Arthur Arkinstall

Large magenta 2nd Season cachet on reverse

1/- 5gm. Air mail rate.

Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate.

Cancelled Deception Island B6
Postmark MR 1 57
Head Office: Frank Wills MBE (Managing Director)

Sent by Peter Mott just after the helicopter crash on Tower Island, when it was not clear if the Expedition could continue.

1/- 5gm. Air mail rate.

Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6
Postmark DE 14 56
Head Office: Paul Lamboit (Photographic Manager)

4/- 20gm. Air mail rate.

Plus 2½d requested mistakenly by Base Postmaster for surface rate

Cancelled Deception Island B6 postmark JA 3 57
En Route 2nd Season - Montevideo

Sent from Maclean y Stapledon, Expedition agents in Montevideo, after Oluf Sven arrived in port on 15th November 1956

2nd Season cachet in magenta
En Route 2nd Season - Montevideo

From helicopter engineer Brian Davey

*Oluf Sven* took on supplies at Montevideo 15th – 17th November 1956 on voyage south.

2nd Season cachet in magenta
En Route 2nd Season: Port Stanley

Lead Helicopter Pilot: Greville “Bim” Jacques
Pictured left

Cover sent from Port Stanley when *Oluf Sven* called for supplies on voyage south

2/- 10gm. Air mail rate.

Cancelled PS.3C dated 22 NO 56

2nd Season Expedition cachet in magenta
Cansos at Port Stanley

- Cansos called at Port Stanley at start and end of seasons for refuelling and maintenance
- At start of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Season, Cansos completed aerial survey of Falkland Islands. Surveying was carried out by team from Directorate of Colonial Surveys
- Maps subsequently prepared were vital during Falklands War
Cansos at Port Stanley

Expedition postcard sent at end of 1st season, from Canso crew at Port Stanley. Probably carried by Canso by air in Canso from Port Stanley to Montevideo. (although Surface rate.

2d Foreign Printed Matter rate.

Cancelled Port Stanley PS.3 Postmark MR 29 56

This postcard was carried in the specially-equipped Canso aircraft pictured, belonging to The Photographic Survey Corporation Limited of Toronto, Canada, which by its participation in the Falkland Islands Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition becomes the first commercial organization in the world to have operated from all seven continents.

Elmer Thompson
Air Transport Assn
1107 16th St NW
Washington, D.C.

Willmot
Projects Manager Mail

Envelope to Projects Manager, Hunting Aerosurveys at 3/- 15gm. Air Mail Rate plus 2½d 1oz. Surface rate mistakenly added by Base Postmaster.

Cancelled Deception Island B6 dated MR 1 57
Projects Manager Mail: Large Expedition Envelope

Scan of part of envelope (not shown 2\textsuperscript{nd} season and Oluf Sven cachets) to Projects Manager, Hunting Aerosurveys at 12/- 60gm. Air Mail Rate, plus 5d 2oz. Surface rate mistakenly added by Base Postmaster. \textbf{Scarce commercial use of 1954 Ships 10/-}}
Visit of Duke of Edinburgh – 3\textsuperscript{rd} January 1957

HRH Duke of Edinburgh visited Deception Island on Britannia and visited the FIDS Base and Expedition buildings

Duke (second left) pictured walking with Peter Mott (third left)

Cover cancelled Deception Island B6 JA 3 57, the day of the visit.

Scarce 2\textsuperscript{nd} season small version of cachet in black
Expedition Philatelic Recognition at Last

British Antarctic Territory Commemorative Issue 4th December 2005
WINGS OVER ICE!