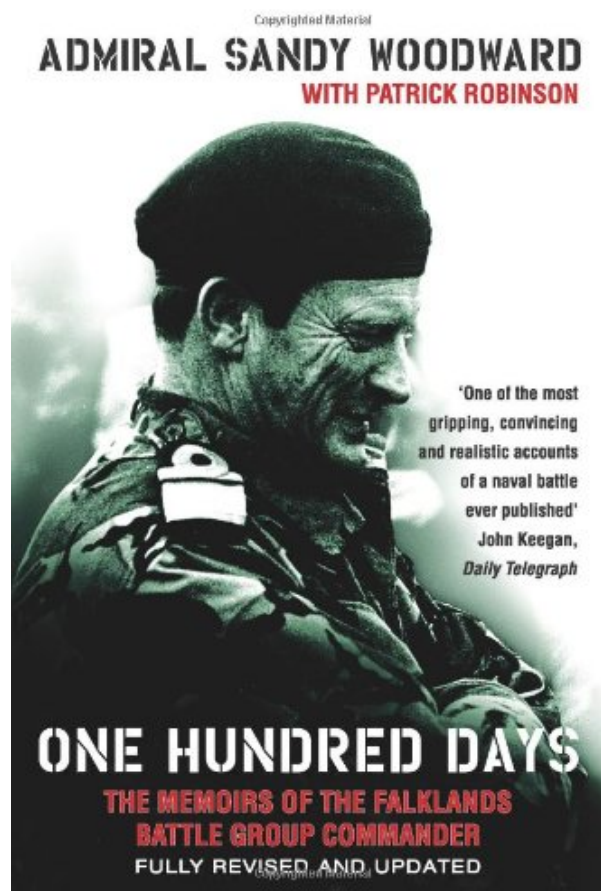


ONE HUNDRED DAYS: THE MEMOIRS OF THE FALKLANDS BATTLE GROUP COMMANDER BY SANDY WOODWARD, PATRICK ROBINSON



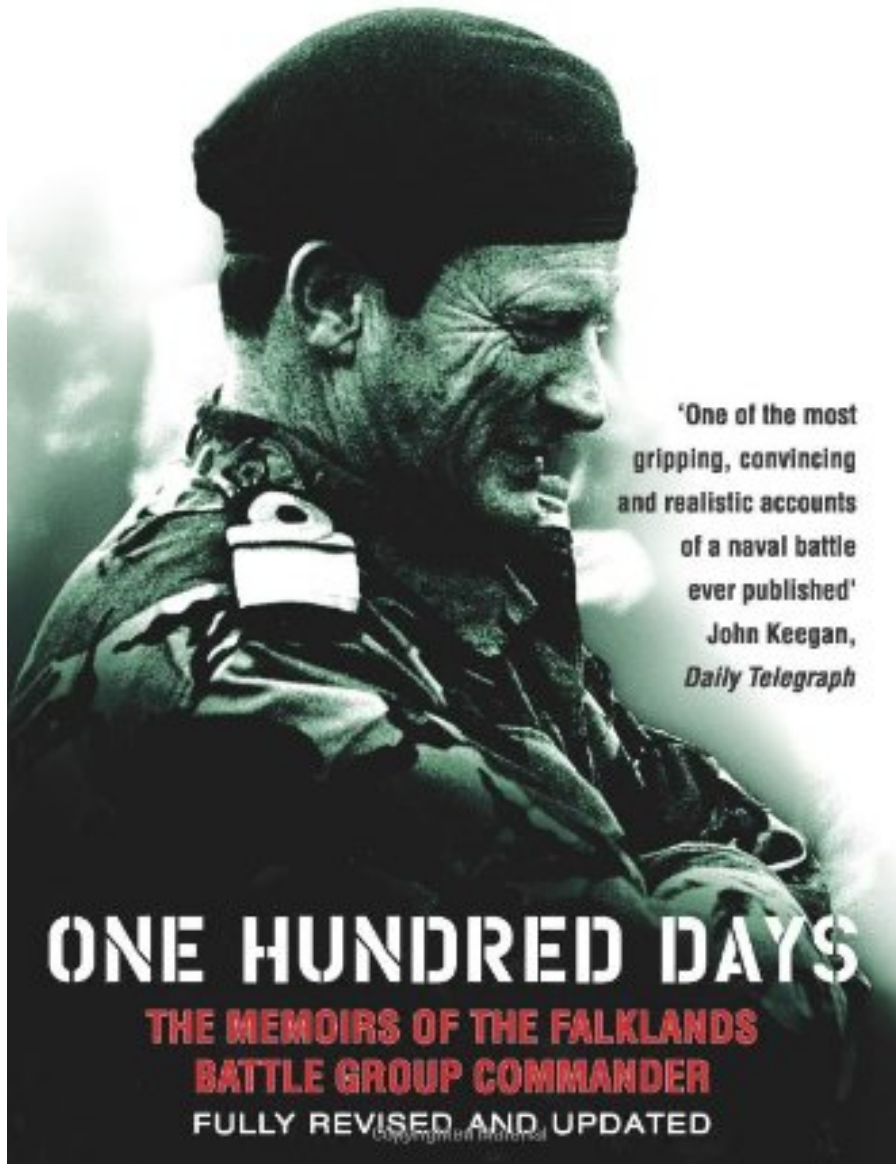
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Review

'One of the most gripping, convincing and realistic accounts of a naval battle ever published.' John Keegan, Daily Telegraph 'Perceptive, vivid, engaging.' Guardian 'One of the clearest and frankest accounts ever written of modern naval warfare.' Field Marshal Lord Carver, Sunday Telegraph

About the Author

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The bestselling, highly-acclaimed and most famous account of the Falklands War, written by the commander of the British Task Force. On 5 April 1982, three days after the invasion of the Falkland Islands, British armed forces were ordered to sail 8,000 miles to the South Atlantic unaware of what lay ahead of them or whether they would be committed to war with Argentina. In these engrossing memoirs, Admiral Sandy Woodward, Task Force commander from the aircraft carrier *Hermes*, takes us from day one to day one hundred of the conflict; from sailing through the waters of the Atlantic with hopes of a political settlement fading, and war becoming increasingly likely, to the repulse of the Argentinian navy and the daring amphibious landing at San Carlos Water. The war, which cost the lives of over 1,000 men, has left a legacy of many historical debates and controversies, from the sinking of ships such as *HMS Coventry*, *HMS Sheffield* and *Sir Galahad*, and the Argentinian cruiser, the *Belgrano*, to wider issues such as what was it like to command and fight a modern air and naval war, the biggest naval action since World War II? 'One Hundred Days' is unique as a dramatic portrayal of the world of modern naval warfare, where despite the use of sophisticated equipment and communications, the margins for human error and courage were as wide as they were in the days of Nelson.

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6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.
The story of the bloke in charge

By Stephen Midgley

Of the many books written about the Falklands war, Admiral Woodward's is surely one of the best. His account is remarkable for many reasons, one of which is the way he is able to convey the big picture of the campaign and yet at the same time bring us his own very personal viewpoint, written in a gripping and thoroughly involving manner.

There's a disarming frankness about much of his account, contrasting with some of the other written accounts by servicemen which, while excellent in many respects, can have a certain air of self-justification about them. In contrast, Sandy's self-deprecating manner and tendency to British understatement read very well. For example, he tells us some of the names he was called, both during and after the campaign, including arrogant, incompetent and cowardly - the latter mainly for taking the very obvious precaution of stationing his two aircraft carriers well to the east of the Falklands, out of range of Argentinian aircraft and missiles. He deals with some of these criticisms, in a tolerant and civilised manner, in the preface to this updated 2012 edition; and elsewhere he describes himself simply as "a bloke who found himself in charge".

Of course in reality he was much more than that. His account of his naval training and career reminded me of the excellent book "Highest Duty" by Captain Chesley Sullenberger - the pilot who landed his plane and passengers safely on the Hudson River - in the sense that, with hindsight, it becomes clear that what has gone before was a highly effective preparation for the moment when all of this knowledge and skill are to be tested to the limit, and as a result the bloke in charge is able to deliver the goods. But it's not all serious stuff here, by any means - there are moments of memorable humour, such as the night during an exercise when his Exocet-armed destroyer, with the help of a Peter Sellers impersonator, gets the better of the aircraft carrier USS Coral Sea. There are other hilarious moments in the book, including one in the Epilogue which I won't describe here so as not to spoil it for prospective readers; suffice to say, it would almost justify a spontaneous whip-round among Amazon readers! Another remarkable, but rather less amusing, incident is revealed when the Falklands task force, while on its way south, took a Brazilian airliner for an Argentinian spy plane and came within one minute of shooting it down.

The story of the war itself contains many extracts from the author's own diary of events and, as you would expect, is told mainly from the Royal Navy's point of view. It makes for an exciting read, by turns tragic and inspiring, and offers candid insights into the preoccupations of command, the painful decisions that have to be faced, and the inevitability of upsetting some people some of the time. Sandy gives us clear explanations of events, as well as a real feeling for the formidable trials undergone by men and their equipment at war. The author, and his readers, feel for the sailors in 'Sheffield', 'Coventry', the frigates and in 'Belgrano' too. He pays many generous tributes to the bravery and skill of his ships' crews and commanders; he writes moving words about the dead, the injured and the defeated. Far from glorifying the hellish business of warfare, he takes a sympathetic and humane view of those servicemen who suffered mental stress and breakdown; and he pays a remarkable tribute to David Tinker, the anti-war sailor who was killed on board HMS Glamorgan.

The Admiral does, on the other hand, have some harsh words for the pathetic British anti-aircraft missile systems that wouldn't work, and for some of the politicians too - not only the jumped-up little dictators of Galtieri's ruling junta, but the Brits' own John Nott as well, the latter coming over pretty clearly as one of the worst Defence Secretaries ever. But, unlike some other writers, the author doesn't cast public aspersions on his comrades-in-arms; in fact he goes out of his way to take responsibility when things go wrong - as they often did, and especially in the case of the worst British cock-up of the war at Bluff Cove. He did, of course, agree to the plan to take two troopships into the bay to disembark the Welsh and Scots Guards at Fitzroy; but in doing so he couldn't possibly have imagined that some fool was going to defy widely accepted practice - as well as basic common sense and Major Southby-Tailyour's orders - with the brilliant idea of keeping the soldiers cooped up for several hours in the undefended Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad, waiting for the

Argentine air force to fly in and bomb, burn and kill them. No, Admiral, that was not your fault.

Altogether this is an exciting, moving and superbly told story, and a fine job also by the Admiral's co-author Patrick Robinson. Between them, they are remarkably successful in capturing the essence of events, in bringing us an overall view tinged with sadness and an appropriate dose of philosophical reflection. Sandy's dry British humour reads well, and his informal but matter-of-fact style is never, ever condescending. He comes across as a humane and thoroughly modern commander, who understands the technology of modern warfare as well as the equally complex workings and stresses of the human mind. And, of course, he doesn't need to justify himself - he not only won a war with his task force but, to borrow his own penchant for understatement, he wrote a pretty good book about it too. So all credit to him for both of those achievements.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Admirable Admiral

By Ray J Cowling

This is an absolutely superb account of the Falklands War, written by the British Task Force Commander. As the author of `The Captain`s Story,` a novel about the Royal Navy`s youngest ever Captain`s fight to help win back the Falkland Islands, and conquer his own personal demons, I soon found myself totally engrossed in this superb book.

This honest, down to earth account regarding the naval aspect of the Conflict, is both informative from a cold, military perspective, yet reassuringly human also.

As an ex-Navy man myself, I found that this refreshingly frank and authoritative account, gives us mere mortals a peep behind the curtains into the sometimes lonely world of High Command.

All in all, a very absorbing read.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A great read

By baz

I enjoyed reading about the inside story of what a Navy Operation is about and enjoyed Sandys story and his diary inserts. Excellent read for me

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