Cow Island, the Falkland Islands. Photograph courtesy of the author.

ROBIN HEMLEY

They Have Forgotten Many Things

> *[T]he essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common; and also that they have forgotten many things.*
> —Ernest Renan

My new Argentinian friend Ezequiel and I sit near the pool table, sipping our local Longdon Pride beers when he spots the most famous guy in the Falklands. On the day of the referendum last March, this guy danced to the polls covered head to toe in a suit and shoes bedecked with Union Jacks. The Victory Bar, packed with Falkland Islanders on this Friday night, is a British pub to outdo all British pubs, bunting everywhere as well as a picture of two bulldogs with the caption, "What We've Got, We'll Hold." This is one of the most isolated communities in the world, both politically and geographically, but you wouldn't know it by the way they make a crowd in their isolation, reminding me of the hundreds of huddled penguins I saw this afternoon at their remote rookeries on the island, almost otherworldly in the way they seem oblivious to anyone else.

As far as foregone conclusions go, not even North Korea could have staged less of a nail-biter than this referendum: on whether to remain a British Overseas Territory or not. What you must understand is that there are fewer than 3,000 people in the Falklands, a group of islands off the southeast tip of South America, about the size of Connecticut. Settlers have come from the British Isles since 1833, and most Falkland Islanders can trace their British roots back generations. It is more of a village-state than a city-state, and for as long as anyone can remember, they have told the world *ad nauseum* that they are British through and through, though Britain has at times rejected them, Argentina has despised them, and the rest of the world has largely ignored them. Of the 1,516 votes cast in the referendum, 1,513 voters cast *yes* votes and three people voted *no*. That perhaps was the only surprise, that there were as many as three Falkland Islanders who didn't want to be British. The president of Argentina, Cristina Kirchner, likewise had a predictable reaction. She called the vote "a referendum of squatters." Most of the islanders I've met think of her as a "nutter," but her recent saber-rattling has made them nervous, living as they do in Argentina's shadow.

The "victory" alluded to in the bar's name is presumably the victory of England over Argentina in the seventy-four-day Falklands War in 1982, preceded by Argentina's invasion of the islands. No mere referendum could change this uncomfortable status quo, in place since the end of the war, when the territory became a military fortress, the airport itself a British base. Possession of the Falklands, known as the Malvinas to the Argentines, is enshrined in Argentina's constitution.

The Union Jack man is wearing an Adidas shirt now, but still Ezequiel wants his photo taken with him. Clearly drunk, the man obliges and seems intrigued by Ezequiel's interest in the Falklands. In that way that all travelers are transformed into symbols of their nations, Ezequiel might as well be dressed head to toe in Argentine flags, as far as this man is concerned. This is not a good look in the Victory Bar.

"What's your opinion on the Falklands?" the man asks Ezequiel. "Have you had any of your impressions changed?"

Ezequiel starts to speak, but the man barrels on. "If Argentina just accepted the Falkland Islanders, everyone could get along just fine. Am I right?"

"You're probably right," Ezequiel, who is small and thin and looking rather vulnerable, says with an uncomfortable smile.

Meanwhile, a man who is three Union Jacks to the wind, dressed in coat and tie, gravitates toward me. I have a bad feeling about him. He seems curious about Ezequiel and so I introduce myself as an American.

"Oh, I thought you were an Argie," he says. "Then I'd have to knock your head in."

"I'm American," I repeat.

"You work for a news service?" Another trick question. The only people that make Falkland Islanders more suspicious than Argentines are journalists. Earlier in the week, a largely toothless woman in her seventies approached me and by way of introduction said, "You're not paparazzi, are you? Asking a lot of silly questions and taking a lot of photographs where you're not supposed to."

"No," I said.

"Good. Then I'll talk to you." I didn't especially want to talk to her, but she seemed convinced that as a Falkland Islander, she had things to say that needed saying. She proceeded to chat about how windy it was, the blizzard of '75, her dog's monthly cycle, and how she hates forest fires. It didn't seem to matter to her that it's *always* windy here and that the Falklands are treeless. "You can replace trees," she told me, "but not the little animals."

"I'm a professor," I tell the young man who wants to knock in the head of an Argie or a journalist. "Are you a Falkland Islander?"

He nods, sways, touches his tie.

I ask him what his profession is.

"I'm in the military," he says. "I was just at a mate's funeral."

I offer my condolences, which he ignores as he proceeds to bang on about how Britain gave Argentina democracy. "If not for '82," he says, "they wouldn't have democracy. We gave it to them. Few people realize that." Perhaps I don't look suitably impressed because I'm trying to work that out in my head. Yes, a despicable military junta, wanting to take pressure off the faltering Argentine economy and distract from the crimes against thousands of its own citizens it had "disappeared," embarked on a jingoistic military adventure to invade the Malvinas, retake what Argentina sees as rightfully theirs, and thus restore the government's legitimacy—which seemed to work until the British, under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, sent an expeditionary force and recaptured the islands. Not long after that, the junta collapsed. But to see this as the Falkland Islanders *giving* democracy to the Argentinians seemed a stretch. There didn't seem to be much altruism in either direction.

Apparently, this man doesn't much care for Americans either, and he says something slurred that I can't make out, except for "CIA."

"Your people put them in power in the first place, fucked everything up."

My people? Now, here I am, clearly dressed head to toe in Old Glory, at least in his eyes. I don't know what to say to him. I antagonize him simply by existing.

"I live in Singapore," I say. It's not much. But it's all I've got left to avoid a head-knocking.

"You a Yank?" he says.

"Yes, I'm American."

"I'm a Brit," he says. "No matter where I am in the world, I'll always be British."

I think it's best at this point to try to get Ezequiel and myself away from this guy as soon as possible. I give Ezequiel a nod, and he says good-bye to the famous Falklander. As we leave, my belligerent friend, bedecked with Union Jacks invisible to the naked eye, approaches the other guy and starts asking him about Ezequiel. But we leave before the man gains any valuable intelligence. Under the circumstances, it feels like an escape. Truly, while I'm an outsider in many places in the world, I've never felt more displaced than in the Falklands.

Safely back at my B&B that evening, I wonder what exactly the drunk soldier meant by "British." I doubt he knows, but *I*, though American, have given it some thought, and Ezequiel, though Argentine, has probably given Britishness more thought than anyone else in the Falklands. Ezequiel and I met by chance during the week, he researching his PhD dissertation titled "EMPIRE REDUX: The Falklands and the End of Greater Britain," me on a fool's errand.

I'm visiting these fabled and controversial Brits of the South Atlantic, often described as "more British than the British," to see how they celebrate Guy Fawkes Day, that most British of holidays. To my American mind, raised on Fourth-of-July spectacles of patriotism and fireworks, Guy Fawkes is an odd national holiday, celebrating not a declaration of independence (from whom might the Brits declare independence but themselves?), but a failed attempt to burn down Parliament by a Frenchman whose mustachioed visage has been adopted by those most mischievous of anarchists, "Anonymous."

Unfortunately, upon my arrival in the Falkland's capital of Stanley, I learned that Guy Fawkes is perhaps the only vestige of Britishness that no one in the Falklands cares a fig about. Anything else with a shred of Britishness is clung to like a life vest in stormy seas—from the cottage pie my landlady fixes for supper to the six o'clock news from London (which is on a three-hour delay so that it comes on at six in the Falklands, nearly 8,000 miles away) to those red phone booths, virtually extinct in England but brought to Stanley in 1988 and standing sentinel ever since on its streets. Until fairly recently, a London cab was the official car of the governor. So it wasn't completely daft of me to expect joyous islanders lighting bonfires and shooting fireworks into the sky of the Southern Hemisphere to further convince anyone who'll listen that they're loyal Brits.

Fireworks ended Guy Fawkes Day in the Falklands. The British military in recent years has forbidden the shipment of fireworks to the Falklands on Ministry of Defense flights, and fireworks scare the old people, reminding them of that awful night during the war in '82, when an errant British shell landed on a house and killed three women seeking shelter there. Guy Fawkes has lost its relevance, but not Halloween, widely celebrated in American fashion a week earlier.

Nearly a hundred years to the day before the outbreak of the Falklands War, French philosopher Ernest Renan, in his essay "What is a Nation?," wrote that a nation's "unity is always effected through brutality" and

that "the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common; and also that they have forgotten many things."

Since 1982, the Falkland Islanders have been in the process of forgetting the cultural mélange that formed them. "Camp," a hybrid culture born of Britain and Patagonia, a child turned away from the weaker parent by the bitter divorce, derives from the Spanish *campo* for "countryside," redolent with the history of Patagonia. In the minds of Falkland Islanders, camp looms large, separated by a cultural chasm from Stanley. Camp used to be even more distinct from Stanley, with its own time zone, one hour behind the small town of Land Rovers and brightly colored tin and steel roofs. When the countryside dominated their lives, there was interdependence and tolerance. "People who arrive now feel that they've come to another suburb," says John Fowler, an émigré from England who's lived in the Falklands since 1971 and was once editor of the local paper, the *Penguin News*. "Because of the threat from Argentina, we have tended to reject those aspects of our history that have less to do with being British."

Before they were enemies, Falkland Islanders and Argentines shared a common history, particularly in Patagonia. Before the war, the Falklands were simply known in Patagonia as "the islands" without any clarification needed. And in the Falklands, Patagonia was referred to as "the coast" or "the mainland" with no differentiation between parts that belonged to Chile or Argentina. Until the 1880s, the only European settlements of any size south of Buenos Aires were Carmen de Patagones in the north, Punta Arenas in the south, the Falklands to the east, and a colony in the middle settled by hundreds of Welsh eager to escape Britishness and preserve their own language and traditions. Sheep were the links between these settlements. Between 1885 and 1886, 40,000 sheep were transported between the Falklands and Santa Cruz Province in Argentina. The route between these lands could be traced, the story goes, by the sheep carcasses floating in the sea.

The people of the Falklands and Patagonia crisscrossed these territories, too, the gaucho culture of Patagonia present in the islands and the islanders settling quite regularly on the mainland. The populations were small, only a couple of thousand in either place, but ten percent of the Falkland Islands' population moved in the 1880s to Patagonia. Many of the farms the Falklanders founded in Patagonia in the nineteenth century are still owned by their descendants, and Falkland Island surnames still exist in Patagonia. The regional roots of these families go deeper than those of most current Patagonians.

The Falkland Islanders and the Argentines of today might choose to forget these links or simply ignore them in favor of the murkiness of territorial claims.

In his 1870s Conquest of the Desert, General Julio Argentino Roca led a campaign against the indigenous peoples of Patagonia with a 6,000-man army, killing 1,500 and capturing 15,000 and forcing them off their lands, forcing them into servitude, and preventing them from reproducing.

Roca, formerly a hero, more recently branded a genocidal murderer, had his name removed from streets and public buildings under Cristina Kirchner's reign, his likeness removed from the hundred-peso bill and replaced with Evita Peron's.

What neither the Falkland Islanders nor the Argentines will ever forget is a murky and endlessly debatable episode from 1833 when the islands were merely the islands and the coast was merely the coast and all claims were contingent. To an outsider like myself, it's all rather tedious, in the way that children's arguments about who hit whom first are tedious. But it's clearly all the fault of an equally murky character named Louis Vernet, a merchant from Buenos Aires, a Huguenot originally from Hamburg, who was more of an opportunist than a representative of anyone's interest but his own, seeking approval from both the British and Buenos Aires for a colony at Port Louis in the Falklands. Whether he and his business partners had any standing to officially represent Argentina is up for grabs. Vernet seemed to think he had the authority to capture three American fishing vessels for illegally sealing, though the Americans disagreed and sent their naval ship *Lexington* to raid the place. The Americans spiked Vernet's guns, arresting him and six other senior members of the colony for piracy, led them away in chains, and took the rest of the settlement, except for some gauchos, on board. Mostly Germans from Buenos Aires, the would-be colonists seemed thrilled by their capture, wrote Captain Silas Duncan, and "appeared greatly rejoiced at the opportunity thus presented of removing with their families from a desolate region where the climate is always cold and cheerless and the soil extremely unproductive."

Buenos Aires complained to the Americans that Vernet was their governor and that he had a right to seize ships. The Americans eventually let the lot go, after which the Argentines sent a garrison to the islands. The soldiers hated the place, too, and quickly mutinied and murdered their commanding officer. Shortly after the mutiny was put down, the British arrived and expelled the garrison and found a group of unhappy gauchos who complained that Vernet was paying them in worthless

paper, redeemable only at his stores, and that they were deeply in debt to him.

The colony was reestablished only to have disaster strike again, when the gauchos, aided by some escaped convicts, murdered Matthew Brisbane, an associate of Vernet's, and other senior members of the colony. When twenty-four-year-old Charles Darwin sailed into port on the *Beagle* some months later, he had this assessment:

> After the possession of these miserable islands had been contested by France, Spain, and England, they were left uninhabited. The government of Buenos Aires then sold them to a private individual, but likewise used them, as old Spain had done before, for a penal settlement. England claimed her right and seized them. The Englishman who was left in charge of the flag was consequently murdered. A British officer was next sent, unsupported by any power: and when we arrived, we found him in charge of a population, of which rather more than half were runaway rebels and murderers.

These "miserable islands" claim Darwin, too, having named a small settlement for him, despite his disdain, where he reputedly spent a night and which later became the haunt of gauchos and saw heavy fighting during the Falklands War. Argentine soldiers who gave up their lives for their nation's version of the events of 1833 now permanently reside there under rows of white crosses.

"I often tell myself," Renan wrote, "that an individual who had those faults which in nations are taken for good qualities, who fed off vainglory, who was to that degree jealous, egotistical, and quarrelsome, and who would draw his sword on the smallest pretext, would be the most intolerable of men."

If countries were people, most of us would pretend not to be home when they came calling. Some would register on the scale as psychopathic. While the famous Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges likened Argentina and the UK to two bald men fighting over a comb, I would clarify that by the outbreak of the hostilities between the two old men, they'd been fighting for that comb, off and on, since they'd had full heads of hair.

In 1933, the UK issued a stamp commemorating the Falkland Islands' centenary as a British colony. When mail with the stamp affixed arrived

in Argentina, it was treated the same as a letter arriving without any stamp at all: postage due, the stamp itself obliterated with cancellation markings. In 1936, Argentina retaliated with a Malvinas stamp of its own. Given the ability of the smallest symbols to stir nationalistic pride, these postage-stamp wars might have erupted into full-scale conflict, given the right conditions. The UK and the United States once nearly went to war over an American pig that was shot by a British subject in the once-disputed San Juan Islands for crossing a border and eating the Irishman's vegetables.

But it wasn't until the 1960s that the Falklands conflict truly heated up, with Argentina bringing the issue to the United Nations. Not that the Brits were all that eager to hold on to their colonies anymore. After the devastation and expense of World War II, it was fire-sale time for the British Empire, whose slogan might as well have been, "What We've Got, We'll Hold . . . for a Modest Down Payment." One of the principles applied to this downsizing was the right of self-determination. White Brits—largely the demographic of the time—were just out of luck when it came to Rhodesia and self-determination. They were a decided minority within a largely black country, and the British were more embarrassed than proud of the overseas colonials. The colonies, for Britain, were no longer a source of pride as they had been in 1898, when an overzealous postmaster general in Canada issued a stamp with the slogan, "We hold a Vaster Empire than has Been," showing the Falklands among the possessions, but also a few territories that had never been British, including Borneo, parts of German Africa and Portuguese Africa, and assorted bits of other countries.

The loyal Falkland Islanders presented a unique problem for Britain in that the Kelpers, as they called themselves, had replaced no indigenous population, and so the matter of self-determination was not as clear-cut a moral decision as it was in Rhodesia and other colonies. The Kelpers resisted every attempt to brush them aside. In promoting their Britishness to the Brits, the Falkland Islanders from the late 1940s onward touted their "one-hundred-percent" whiteness, which culminated in 1979 when the islands refused to accept a group of Vietnamese refugees to their community so as not to dilute their perceived Britishness. To its credit, the *Penguin News* wrote an editorial denouncing this move: "[B]y maintaining our population of British origin we are making a grave mistake and are developing a sense of bigoted racial superiority in our people. We have much to gain and (as long as racism is excluded) nothing to lose from admitting settlers of *any* race. We desperately need people."

In order to convince the stubborn population that sooner or later the Argentine flag would fly above the islands, the British government, from the '60s onward, sent a series of representatives to the Falklands. Three possible solutions were explored: condominium, in which Argentina and the UK would exercise joint sovereignty over the islands (an idea that both Argentina and the Kelpers rejected outright); leaseback, in which the Kelpers would lease the islands from Argentina for a set number of years, much as in the case of Hong Kong; or "euthanasia by generous compensation," in which the Kelpers would be bribed away from the islands.

When Nicholas Ridley, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, arrived in the Falklands in November of 1980, he tried to sell the Kelpers on leaseback, and if gentle persuasion wouldn't work, then he didn't mind threatening them. If the Falkland Islanders didn't come to some accommodation, then they would have to "take the consequences," he told them—a statement, among many other veiled threats, that infuriated them, and they saw him off with boos and placards, Union Jacks waving and car horns blaring. Ridley was not the only government official exasperated by the Falkland Islanders. The British Ambassador to Colombia wrote, "Surely the time has come for HMG [Her Majesty's Government] to let the inhabitants of the Islands know that they are a nuisance and make it clear that if they want a better life they ought to seek it elsewhere rather than look to HMG to make the Islands pleasanter for them." To make matters worse, Ridley had struck a secret deal with Argentina in New York *before* consulting with the islanders, and their noisy send-off of Ridley was nothing compared to the reception he received when he returned to London. The islanders had their supporters in Parliament. In December of 1980, Ridley was laid into by eighteen MPs who thought it shameful that HMG would want to abandon a people who were "wholly British in blood and sentiment." Back in the Falklands, one of the island's councillors argued in a New Year's message that leaseback "might suit the people of Hong Kong—they were never consulted in the first place, and they are Chinese anyway." But not the Kelpers.

Yes, those pesky Hong Kong Chinese were certainly making it difficult for "abandoned Brits" the world over. In 1981, the British Nationality Act was passed, stipulating that anyone claiming British identity had to have a parent who was a British citizen, and because Britishness was understood largely at that time to be restricted to white people, the "kith and kin" of the Anglo-Saxons, they didn't see the Hong Kong Chinese as citizens, and they didn't want them. About a third of the population

of the Falklands didn't qualify as Brits under this act, either, and they joined the thousands of abandoned Brits the world over, from white Rhodesians to the residents of Belize (formerly British Honduras), who could claim nothing but heritage after 1981.

Given the mixed signals the British were putting out, it's no wonder the Argentines had no idea how the Brits felt about the Malvinas. They knew that the British wanted to be rid of the Falkland Islands, but it was taking an awfully long time. And the junta, murdering its young people and presiding over a tanking economy, desperately needed a strong shot of nationalism to bolster support. Maybe all Britain needed was a little nudge.

The final signal to both the islanders and Argentina that the Kelpers were on their own came in June of 1981, when the Thatcher government announced that it would withdraw its ice-patrol boat, HMS *Endurance*, from the South Atlantic, leaving the Falklands more vulnerable than ever.

Less than a year later, on April 2, 1982, Argentine forces invaded the Falkland Islands.

It's one thing to give away your useless comb to the bald man across the ocean, but when he takes it by force? Suddenly, there was no more sacred piece of British soil than the peat and rock of the Falklands. "We are all Falklanders now," the *London Times* proclaimed with that sentimental trope that has attended so many international crises since the blockade of West Berlin by the Soviets, when John Kennedy rousingly told the world he was a Berliner. (And it's not exactly true that he mistakenly proclaimed himself a jelly doughnut, a "Berliner," as popular lore goes.) The *Times* had it turned around in any event—the Falklanders wanted to be Brits. They didn't want the Brits to become Falklanders.

How the Thatcher government reacted and why has been the subject of much speculation over the years. Within a day, Margaret Thatcher had secured the support she needed to send an expeditionary force across the Atlantic to hold on to a small colony that most Brits had no notion even existed. Some in England confused the Falklands with the Shetlands and wondered what the Argentines were doing invading England. Perhaps the islanders should just hop over to Scotland until hostilities ended. Some in Parliament voiced their dismay as well. One Labour minister lamented, "We went to bed on Thursday in 1982 and woke up on Friday in 1882." In the *Guardian*, Peter Jenkins expressed his surprise logically, if a bit haughtily: "The Islanders cannot wish the British Empire back into existence…they cannot determine that the

whole of British foreign policy be directed towards the creation of a world safe for South Atlantic sheep-shearers."

But that's exactly what happened. The Falklands were recaptured after seventy-four days, and the Falkland Islanders were given everything they had always wanted and more: an exclusive 200-mile fishing zone, a new airport, near complete self-government except for defense, and above all, British citizenship.

All was forgiven. All was forgotten.

On my visit years later, a gray-haired man with wire rims stood at a public meeting with candidates for a local election, in the same hall where Nicholas Ridley was booed by residents for trying to sell them on leaseback, and asked the candidates not the toughest question of the night, but the one that carried the most weight, the most emotion. He wanted to know what metal the proposed bust of Maggie Thatcher, who had died seven months prior to the meeting, would be cast in. "Mother Falklands," he intoned, "our savior, the Baroness, deserves the best." He insisted that the material should be bronze and that it should last for centuries: "I think we should do the best for the lady," he pled before he sat down. No one among the twelve candidates disagreed. It wasn't even an issue, and besides, if any of them dared say otherwise, he or she would risk receiving a total of three votes, those three mysterious, unpatriotic naysayers who didn't want the Falklands to be British anymore.

If Maggie Thatcher is in heaven, it must look a lot like the Falklands.

Thirty-plus years after the Falklands War, the world is indeed safe for South Atlantic sheep shearers and their sheep, though not so much for their cows. Over the years, Adrian Lowe has lost half a dozen cows to land mines on his beach, but no sheep. "You have to be a hundred pounds to set them off," he says. "Sheep are all right. Cows don't stand a chance." Minefield signs with skulls and crossbones are as common here as animal-crossing signs elsewhere in the world, the skull-and-crossbones mouse pads sold along with Falkland Island hats made in China in the local gift shops. Fourteen years ago, Adrian and his wife Lisa started diversifying by taking day-trippers from the cruise liners on their brief stopover to Antarctica to the penguin rookery on their property, Rock Office, where thousands of penguins nest along a craggy shoreline, and by taking Falkland War veterans to memorials and graveyards to pay respects to their fallen comrades.

"A really good gather," Adrian says, pointing to the crest of the hill at a mob of sheep that his wife Lisa and his son have herded to be sheared this Saturday. He walks with a bit of a limp as he steps from his aged

Land Rover to close a gate behind us on the farm he and Lisa run with their children—10,000 acres, only of moderate size in the Falklands. Adrian, in his fifties, originally from England, has lived in the Falklands for forty-four years, but he's a relative newcomer. Lisa's family has lived here for five generations.

A hundred years ago, Adrian would have been the typical Falkland Islander, a shearer of almost unparalleled skill—though a hundred years ago he wouldn't have owned his farm but would have worked for the omnipresent Falkland Islands Company.

"I'm only five miles out of town," Adrian tells me as we take an off-road circuit of East Falkland in his Rover, "but I'm Camp, definitely Camp." Adrian frets that everyone wants to live in Stanley and the traditions of Camp are being forgotten, children growing up in Stanley, not even taught their own history by the imported teachers from Australia and the UK. Not even taught the '82 conflict.

Journalists in '82 called the landscape "barren and windswept," which likewise annoys Adrian. "It was winter anyway." Regardless of the season, an outsider's first impression as he or she travels the forty minutes over a gravel road from the airport into Stanley will almost certainly be that of a melancholy landscape, wind-stripped hills and rivers of rock that people call "stone runs." Adrian sees something different. The land is windswept undeniably, but it's also one of the most beautiful spots in the world, his home worth defending.

As we bump mile over bumpy mile, past stagnant ponds, white grass, and diddle-dee, a heather-like bush reminiscent of Scotland, an upland goose trots along, taking off like a cargo plane fully loaded; seven ewes and two lambs run in front of the Rover; a fjord like something in Iceland commands a view of rugged hills and sea; and several seemingly unperturbed cows seem stranded on an island the size of a football field. Adrian points out the places where the wind has eroded the grasses, the best places to dig peat, he says. If it's too fluffy, it goes straight up the chimney, and you have to cut it so that the hole doesn't make a hazard for cows and cyclists. There's enough peat for Adrian to heat his home and cook with for the next million years, he says. And it's free.

As he's talking, the road goes white with hail, over which nothing can be heard. The hail, after some minutes of our waiting in the heated cab, decreases but turns into a heavy snow squall, none of which deters Adrian, who says that in the days when sheep herding was done on horseback, if you hit a storm like this, you'd put on your waterproofs, turn your sheepskin over your horse, and seek shelter by a rock or in front of the horse. Stepping out of the Rover, he opens another gate,

bothered more by his bad hip than by the torrent of sleet and hailstones. On any given day, snow is possible—too bad those old journalists who misjudged the Falklands (according to Adrian) didn't visit in summer like me.

At Goose Green, the scene of some of the heaviest fighting of the war, we stop at the Galley Café, a former mess hall for farm workers that used to feed a hundred workers at a time. The café, empty except for one other couple, is decorated with de rigueur Union Jacks on its ceiling, blue plastic chairs and checkered tablecloths, military memorabilia on the walls, photos of the war and illustrations of military equipment, a map of the Falklands, and an old-fashioned wall phone. Looking out the window, you might expect to see Charles Darwin collecting fossils along the beach or the schoolhouse on fire as paratroopers close in. The one big change that Adrian noticed when we first pulled in was the absence of the letters "POW" on the shearing shed. This is where captured Argentines were held at first, and where the letters remained for thirty years.

"What a shame it is that 'POW' has come off the shearing shed," Adrian tells the other two customers. "Someone was naughty."

"It's about time," the woman says.

But Adrian disagrees. "It's a part of history," he says.

By the outbreak of the war, 100,000 or so Anglo-Argentines lived in Argentina, the largest population of Anglo descendants outside the British Empire and North America. Jorge Luis Borges had a grandmother who was English. The Anglos of Buenos Aires sent their children to British schools, spoke English at home, joined the British Club, and shopped at Harrods, the only branch of the famed London department store located outside of England.

When war broke out, the Anglos felt as though the two halves of their identity were at war with one another, the vast majority supporting Argentina's claims on the Malvinas but viewing themselves as fervent supporters of the Queen as well. They sent letters to newspapers in England and Argentina, to MPs, and to the Queen herself, begging the British to reconsider their expeditionary force. The response from the Thatcher government was cool—at best, some sympathized with the Anglo-Argentines' plight, but no one was going to call back the warships to ease their psychic pain.

In Argentina, symbols of Britishness were quickly banished or modified. A portrait of Queen Elizabeth was removed from the British Club in Río Gallegos, and the front plate was replaced with the words "British

Club" in Spanish. They couldn't be loyal to both countries, or to both ideas of themselves, though they tried.

Early in the conflict, before British ships reached the Falklands, a delegation of Anglo-Argentines visited the islands to reassure the islanders that life under Argentinian rule would not be much different for them, but the Kelpers would have none of it. To the Kelpers, the Anglo-Argentines were Argentines or, at best, imitation Brits, not real Brits like them (though a third of the Kelpers no longer qualified as Brits under the British Nationality Act). The Argentines offered at least to take care of the children of the Falkland Islanders in Buenos Aires, where they would be safe for the war's duration, but the Kelpers refused the offer.

The result of this dual snub from the Thatcher government and the Falkland Islanders was a tectonic shift in the identities of most Anglo-Argentines. They felt betrayed, abandoned, and no longer what they thought they had always been. One woman wrote to an Argentine newspaper, "I used to visit Great Britain and every time I arrived there I felt like I was at home. From now on, I will never set foot on British soil." Another turned in her British passport. Another slammed the Falkland Islanders as "idiots" for not accepting the offer of safe haven for their children.

The war taught the Anglo-Argentines not to fetishize a Britain that proved to be a well-loved mirage that could easily evaporate within the span of seventy-four days. From now on, they were Argentines. By 1998, Harrods had shut its doors, the English Social Club in Lomas de Zamora was struggling to retain members, and the venerable Richmond Tea Rooms had been transformed into a Nike outlet.

Falkland Islanders are sensitive. It's unimaginable that Argentina will invade again, but Cristina Kirchner makes trouble on the international stage, lining up allies against them. When Ezequiel Mercau, the Argentine graduate student writing about Britishness, arrived on the island, he was interviewed by the local radio station, but he had to do three takes because he kept inadvertently using words that the interviewer, a Falkland Islander, felt might be misinterpreted. When Ezequiel said that he hoped there would come a time when there was more open dialogue between the islanders and Argentina, he was told that some islanders would react strongly to that, the idea of talking to Argentina repugnant to them. When Ezequiel called the Falkland Islanders "residents" of the islands, he made another misstep. "Residents" sounds temporary.

If nations sprang up like volcanoes, then the Falklands would still be spewing lava, though it'd have slowed to a trickling river. The Falkland Islands, though ancient, might as well have formed in 1982 when their world changed—*forever*, I'm tempted to say. Although nations try to pretend otherwise, there's no such thing as forever. As Benedict Anderson, following on Renan's work, notes in his 1982 book *Imagined Communities*, nations seek justifications for their existence, their policies, and their attempts to grab land with appeals to antiquity.

Despite referenda to the contrary and their incessant loyalty to a long-gone British Empire, the islanders seem to be coalescing into a new sense of nationhood. The majority of Falkland Islanders, according to a 2012 census, see themselves as Falkland Islanders first and Brits second, though the crack of daylight between the two is only a sliver.

As early as 1984, there were those who suggested forging a new identity. One of them, Lynda Glennie, wondered in the *Falkland Islands Newsletter* if the Kelpers "would serve themselves better if they spoke more of being proud citizens of the Falkland Islands and less of being British."

To do that, they would need to admit that they are a hybrid culture and not simply "British," whatever that means—and that's unlikely to happen. The Falkland Islanders see themselves as British as the six o'clock news from London. As cottage pie. As the Union Jack. As Land Rover rallies with men and women on horseback cheering about something 8,000 miles and a hundred years distant. They have long looked eastward for salvation, never westward to their closest shore. One Falkland Islander explained to me that the islands were never part of Patagonia, that they split off from the supercontinent of Gondwana millions of years ago. He failed to note that South America was part of the supercontinent, too. In his mind, the Falklands reassuringly kept their distance from South America through the eons, leaving me to imagine the islands floating unmoored and semi-delusional, no place more separate from its geography than this place.

Meanwhile, the very thing that makes the Falklands unique is dying. The population of Camp is aging, the 2012 census showing that seventy-five percent of the population now lives in Stanley and only thirteen percent live in Camp, a barely higher percentage than the remainder, who live on the military base. At Goose Green, Adrian looked rather wistfully at the empty auditorium where eighty or more people would gather during "sports week" in late February. A year might go by between people's seeing each other, but during that week, there would be steer riding (discontinued because it's too dangerous) and horse rac-

ing (much of which takes place in Stanley now), and their solitary lives would be reaffirmed by the sense of community they'd forged over the week. Now, sports week lasts four days at most, and people see each other all the time (translation: too much) in Stanley. "I give it another decade," Adrian said. "It'll be gone."

Is it the blood sacrifice of the British soldiers that makes the Falkland Islanders who they are? Is it a referendum? A stamp? Is it letters painted on a building? Looking at the diddle-dee-covered landscape and the stone runs, do the islanders ever discern a gaucho on his horse skulking quietly by, his ghost shimmering in the incessant wind, as sullen at being erased from the island's heritage as he was in life at not being paid by Louis Vernet?

My landlady, an octogenarian named Kay, says that if there's anything going on for Guy Fawkes Day, it would be at Surf Bay. Is it within walking distance? I ask. About an hour and twenty minutes, she says. An hour and twenty minutes walking at night in the Falklands doesn't sound safe or practical to me, with Land Rovers, the islanders' preferred vehicle, racing by. The other day, I tried to walk to the closer Gypsy Cove, past countless windows with photos of Margaret Thatcher and signs proclaiming "Our Islands, Our Choice," but hail started coming down, and when I faced the wind, the force of it left me breathless and red-faced.

On Guy Fawkes Night, I dine alone at the Malvina House Hotel (named after a nineteenth-century woman named Malvina, *not* a nod to the Argentine name, Malvinas) on blackened toothfish with Asian slaw and Chilean sauvignon blanc. Facing the bay and the government house, three flags snap in the wind, the Malvina House flag, the Union Jack, and the flag of the Falklands, a Union Jack in its corner, a massive sheep standing on a patch of green on top of an old sailing ship, a logo beneath proclaiming, "Desire the Right."

A young woman at an adjoining table stands and throws down her napkin. "If there's one thing I have no patience for, it's racism," she tells the two young men dining with her, and she dashes from the restaurant for a furious smoke, pacing away her outrage. In this way, at least, the Falklands have changed with the times, much like the former British Empire itself.

Among the fewer than three thousand Falkland Islanders, you can find now living among them 259 St. Helenians (another legacy of the British Empire, the last home of Napoleon Bonaparte, off the coast of Africa, its citizens making their way to the Falklands for employment),

140 Chileans, and 89 Others. I've seen some evidence of these Others during my stay.

Kay, who lives in the house in which she was born, one of the original settlement houses in Stanley, has a couple of third-culture grandchildren, her son having married a Thai woman. And one day, looking for a little variety in my meals, I hike up a hill in the wind and rain to a place called Shorty's that has been recommended, only to discover that it's run by a family of Filipinos, and I react as though I've run into my own countrymen, chatting with the clerk in Tagalog, telling her of my travels to her country, of my Filipino wife and my own third-culture kids.

Ezequiel enters the restaurant just as I'm leaving, and we agree to see if there's anything going on in town tonight. Back at Kay's, I enlist Adam, the only other boarder at Kay's, in the hunt for Guy Fawkes. Adam is a medical student from London, on an internship here as part of his studies. Bedecked in lip and tongue piercings and something approaching a Mohawk, his father Indian, his mother Polish, he describes himself as a "royalist," and says that those who are not are a distinct minority. A proud Londoner, he even danced in the opening ceremony of the London Olympics.

That evening after dark, Ezequiel, Adam, and I walk along the darkened streets of Stanley, looking for anything resembling a bonfire, but finally wind up in the Victory Bar, and in lieu of a celebration, we clink our pints of Longdon Pride, two of us as foreign as Guy (originally, Guido) Fawkes himself. "I don't feel at all foreign here," Adam tells us. "I just feel like it's somewhere I don't know." The Falkland Islands accent he finds unusual, difficult to pin down, but that's it. Perhaps a little like an Australian accent or New Zealand accent, or maybe just something from the West Country.

On the way back to Kay's, Adam tells us what it's like to sit on Primrose Hill on Guy Fawkes Night and watch the fireworks all over London. And then he looks up at the sky and points out the Southern Cross. "Can you see it?" he asks. I try, but I'm not sure I can. I just see stars, more or less indistinguishable from one another.

Some notes on sources

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Ezequiel Mercau for his assistance. I made great use of his dissertation, "EMPIRE REDUX: The Falklands and the End of Greater Britain," as well as his article "War of the British Worlds: The Anglo-Argentines and the Falklands" in the *Journal of British Studies* 55 (January 2016).

I likewise found quite helpful the 2013 issue of *The Falkland Islands Journal* (Vol. 10, Part 2), in particular three articles, "Falklands and Patagonia: The good old neighbourhood" by F. R. Coronato and J. F. Tourrand; "Emigration to the Falkland Islands: A File in the National Archives" by D. Tatham; and "The Postage Stamp War—The First British Territorial Claim for the Falkland Islands on a Postage Stamp" by A.-F. Gruene.

The staff of *The Penguin News* were quite helpful as well, and I'd like to acknowledge and thank various members of the Falkland Islands community for their willingness to be interviewed, in particular John Fowler.