

MARK GREEN

Edited transcript of a recording of Mark Green interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee in Bristol on 27th March 2011. BAS Archives reference AD6/24/1/112. Transcribed by Dawn Sutcliffe on 16th June 2015

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Mark Green recorded by Chris Eldon Lee on 27th March 2011.
Mark Green part one

Green: My name is Mark Green. I was born on 7th February 1962 in Bristol.

[Part 1 0:00:17] Lee: What sort of education did you have Mark?

Green: Normal for the time, comprehensive secondary.

[Part 1 0:00:25] Lee: University?

Green: No. Couldn't wait to leave school [laughs]. I wanted something practical so lucky enough at the time 1978 to get a job, and even better to get an apprenticeship.

[Part 1 0:00:42] Lee: In what trade?

Green: Actually it was pipe fitting welding, heating and ventilation.

[Part 1 0:00:51] Lee: Was that a lifelong career?

Green: I didn't look at it like that at the time. You've got your mates and you go to work and you like the trade, you learn the trade but I never saw it as a lifelong thing. Once you go down a road like that you do tend to get a bit stuck because the family comes along, the mortgage comes along and that's the best way to earn money.

[Part 1 0:01:21] Lee: Well here you were 3 decades later still doing it were you?

Green: Yea, yea

[Part 1 0:01:26] Lee: Had you travelled much?

Green: No not really. I used to travel daily to Reading which is, past Reading, which is a couple of hours drive and back every day.

[Part 1 0:01:39] Lee: I meant abroad really.

Green: Round the usual places. Not many places in the world I would like to go and see; very selective: A few parts of America, bits of Africa.

[Part 1 0:01:54] Lee: But you'd not got there yet?

Green: No, if I don't get there, I'm not really bothered.

[Part 1 0:02:00] Lee: You said to me on the phone you were something of a home bird, is that still the case?

Green: No, we're home birds; we're not ones for going down the pub and going out and stuff like that. We like each other's company.

[Part 1 0:02:13] Lee: So why the heck did you want to go to the Antarctic then?

Green: Yea, that's a good one. I'd been moaning at Anna for years that I was fed up with doing the same thing week in week out, month in month out, and I just heard it on the radio one night and I said 'well how about this?' She had a listen and she said 'go for it'. I think we both realised what an opportunity it would be. I don't know if we actually realised the implications of being apart or you know, the magnitude of the thing really.

[Part 1 0:02:54] Lee: Had the Antarctic crossed your consciousness before in any way?

Green: No. You see programmes and you're in awe of what you see

[Part 1 0:03:04] Lee: *Life in the Freeze* and that kind of thing?

Green: Yea. You never actually think you're going to get to a place like that.

[Part 1 0:03:09] Lee: So is it true to say you had no particular ambition to go there until you heard the radio?

Green: I didn't think it was possible for people like me to go to Antarctica. I thought it was all scientists

[Part 1 0:03:24] Lee: That suggests you kind of thought about it earlier

Green: No, no, no

[Part 1 0:03:34] Lee: So you heard the radio interview?

Green: Yea

[Part 1 0:03:36] Lee: You consulted your partner?

Green: Yea

[Part 1 0:03:38] Lee: Then what?

Green: And then I applied.

[Part 1 0:03:43] Lee: Can you remember much about the application form? Was there anything in there which made it irresistible to them?

Green: I think I just put down who I was. I didn't try and pretend to be somebody else. I just answered the questions as honestly as I could about me because if I was the sort of guy that they wanted then they'd have me. If not, if you're away for 15, 16 months, and you are not who you say you are then you're going to get found out.

[Part 1 0:04:19] Lee: How did you react when you realised you'd got an interview?

Green: I don't know because my interview was for, I'd missed the intake for the year that I applied, so the interview was quite a few months away, about 5 months away. So it was 'right ok, its 5 months away'. I was told I would have an interview in March, and I think March came and went and I didn't hear anything so I phoned up. Because the advertising campaign, I think, had a huge response and then you were just sifting through people and making a cut; and said that I would be interviewed so I just thought 'ok, just go and see what it's all about'.

[Part 1 0:05:20] Lee: When it was one step nearer were you any more nervous or confident?

Green: Oh no nervous no. My confidence went from 'I know this is the job for me, I know my job, I can do this, I can get on with people' to 'Oh my God I'm too old, I'm not the sort of person they want'. It sort of fluctuated not day by day but you know

[Part 1 0:05:50] Lee: Can you explain a bit more about why you felt that you were right for the job bearing in mind you had never been there?

Green: The actual heating ventilation plumbing job I knew I could do. I think on my application form, that is one thing I can remember, when they put previous experience, I think I just put I know I can do the job. Heating systems, plumbing, I don't really need to go into big depth

about. I knew I'd be questioned about it but some of the points were 'do you get on with people?' They said you had to help out with the cooking, the cleaning, and all the other various base tasks. That appealed. I think that's why I thought I would fit in.

[Part 1 0:06:51] Lee: What do you remember of the interview when it came?

Green: Not too much actually. Maybe two questions; they asked me to sell myself [laughs] and I think I said 'I don't know how to sell myself. I've only had one interview in the past 30 years'. So I rambled on about something as I'll probably ramble on in this interview.

[Part 1 0:07:23] Lee: That's alright

Green: And when pushed I think I said 'if I haven't got the job by now I don't think I'm going to get it anyway'. The other bits were 'how do you think you can get on with people?' Oh actually yes, one of the questions was 'if everybody was in a funk how would you cheer them up?' I said 'I know how to cheer my young son up when he was in one, but 10 people I don't know yet'. People have got to be treated differently; some people like to be left alone. I did say that I used to put a sock on my hand and then do a puppet for my son and they said 'yea, that would go down well at Halley'.

[Part 1 0:08:13] Lee: Do you think you were kind of being sussed out psychologically?

Green: I don't know, that's what you think before the interview. [Pause] It's a hard one. I hadn't actually revisited that. I thought that before I went to the interview, what sort of questions were they going to ask and stuff like that, but I hadn't revisited that at all.

[Part 1 0:08:43] Lee: So there was no overt psychological questioning?

Green: Not that I picked up on.

[Part 1 0:08:52] Lee: So you came out the interview, had you changed your view of whether or not you might get the job or not?

Green: No. I thought I did ok, but then I didn't know if ok was just enough. I might have done more than ok but I don't know. You don't know the other people 10, 20, 30 people that you're up against so(...) When I got the phone call they said they'd contact me within 10 days, I think I got a call a day and a half later from BAS. I thought it was a goodbye thank you very much call. Anna ran out into the garden didn't you, because

you thought ‘how am I going to deal with this?’ They said ‘how do you think you got on?’ I said ‘Well, I don’t know’ and I got Halley!
[Laughs]

[Part 1 0:09:53] Lee: Did you actually want Halley?

Green: Yes

[Part 1 0:09:56] Lee: You did?

Green: Yes

[Part 1 0:09:58] Lee: So why would you have chosen Halley?

Green: Why did I choose Halley? The challenge I think.

[Part 1 0:10:06] Lee: It’s more extreme than Rothera isn’t it?

Green: It’s more extreme, it’s more isolated. You actually rely on your other ten people. That was another big thing. Once you got the job then the next big thing, you go to Girton¹ and you think ‘Oh my god who am I going to spend 15 months with?’ Or 8 months isolation actually, 15 months is the whole tour. Very lucky I think.

[Part 1 0:10:33] Lee: Did anybody from BAS ever explain to you why you were chosen?

Green: No

[Part 1 0:10:38] Lee: What do you reckon?

Green: No idea. [laughs] We chat about that while we’re there. It could be because we were the only ones that applied. We don’t know.

[Part 1 0:10:57] Lee: So you put the phone down, Anna was in the garden, then what?

Green: A few whoops, whoopee’s! [Pause] and then a realisation that ‘oh my god, I’m actually going’. They said to take a few days to actually think about it, because it is slightly different when you get told that you’re going. And that’s when you really, really think about ‘right, what am I doing?’ Discussed it with Anna; I still wanted to go. Yea, the decision was sort of underlined; full stop, yea going to go. Mind you I was still

¹ Girton College, Cambridge where the pre-deployment training takes place

in two minds when we got to Heathrow. Not in two minds, it was just getting on that plane and leaving Anna behind, and my Mum.

[Part 1 0:12:10] Lee: Let's talk about Girton then, because you went to Girton College in September 2009 it would have been, started to meet the other guys who'd also got the positive phone call. What was that experience like?

Green: Oh that was good. Girton's got a very small car park with very small places; I pulled up into the car park reasonably early. There was quite a posh looking Peugeot fastback thing and this tall guy just got out walking, and I pulled up next to it in my old van, reversed parked it in and I might have looked as though I got a little bit close. He came back and gave me a look and 'it's alright, I'm not going to touch your van mate': It turned out to be Craig.

[Part 1 0:13:03] Lee: Craig Brown?

Green: Craig Brown, brilliant, brilliant, fantastic. That was our first meeting. I still say 'oh you gave me a look then'. As I do on building sites, you either talk to people or you don't talk to anybody so we got chatting and instantly found out that we were both going to Halley, so that was one. Then you meet the rest of the crew. Prior to Girton it's 'what do I wear, do I get my hair cut, do I not?' You turn up and they're all the same as you.

[Part 1 0:13:49] Lee: Most of them were younger than you, weren't they?

Green: I was the oldest at Halley this year, but most of BAS, the away guys are younger than me.

[Part 1 0:14:02] Lee: Was that ok or did you (...)?

Green: Oh no it was fine! I love young people. I don't think I am too old to get on with them.

[Part 1 0:14:20] Lee: Is there any time during those few days at Girton and then again at Coalcart [phonetic] Craggs², did you ever at any time have any doubts about it all?

Green: No, no. There's 'blimey how am I going to cope with that, or that?' different things but not doubts that I was going to go ahead and do what I could at all.

² Field training courses are held on the Derbyshire crags as part of pre-deployment

[Part 1 0:14:48] Lee: You had to wind up your business didn't you?

Green: Yes we were going to do that anyway because we'd moved back to Bristol, and my business is a fare few miles away. But my business is basically me anyway, self-employed so should I decide to go back to that I can just start up again and find some work.

[Part 1 0:15:09] Lee: So that part of closing things down wasn't a nuisance, wasn't a difficulty?

Green: No, no. It gave me time off because I couldn't take any more work on, so for 3 months rather than 3 days a week on jobs I was doing then filling in with other bits I'd take on, I didn't take on the extra work which gave me time to prepare, spend time with Anna and the family and that was good.

[Part 1 0:15:43] Lee: So, we've got you to Heathrow, we got you past the barrier and the handkerchiefs, ok

Green: Yea

[Part 1 0:15:49] Lee: Tell me about arriving at Halley?

Green: Blimey that was (...)

[Part 1 0:15:52] Lee: What was the journey like?

Green: The journey, first of all you go through Cape Town. We had I think 4 nights in Cape Town, lucky enough to be able to walk up Table Mountain and get out and about and have a walk round. It's a city, it's not the countryside; you're in shops and malls and stuff like that but it's still lovely. We saw some penguins down there and they took us down the coast road which is fantastic. It's like the Amalfi but 20 miles of it rather than 4 or 5. And then on the Ilyushin³ which is a Russian old cargo plane. Strapped in, the toilet was a portaloos chained down, for the flight into Novo⁴ and it's 'what do I take, what do I wear?' All the guys that have been there before said 'oh you'll be alright in those boots, those gloves and those overalls' so you get out and it lands

[Part 1 0:17:10] Lee: This is the Russian base?

³ Ilyushin Il-76 Russian aircraft

⁴ Novo is a Russian base on Antarctica relatively near the Weddell Sea and Halley

Green: Yes, Novo. The plane lands and you're waiting to get your bags off and its bloody freezing! [laughs]. I think it was about just under minus 20 and about 16 knots but the clothes that I put on, I should have put a windy on, you don't know. You do harden to it. It's a bit of a shock first of all. I had a lot worse than that over the winter obviously but it was blimey!

[Part 1 0:17:45] Lee: The plane had no windows at all? Could you see out of the windows?

Green: No windows but somebody had put a camera feed in from the nose of the plane to a screen so we watched the takeoff and the landing. There wasn't much to see in between times, it was all black ocean, but yea, we could actually see ourselves take off from the nose view. I've got it on a film there, and I'm sure the pilot left it to the last minute to pull up on the gear because we got a little bit close to the end of the runway and the dual carriageway at the end where all the cars come on. It was good.

[Part 1 0:18:32] Lee: Do you think your pilot knew you were watching?

Green: Oh yea I'm sure he did.

[Part 1 0:18:35] Lee: What's it like flying in a plane with no windows?

Green: It's pretty much like a night flight anyway. It was the noise more than anything. Not the most uncomfortable flight I've ever had.

[Part 1 0:18:51] Lee: OK so you've arrived at Halley, first impressions?

Green: Oh no you've got to; Basla flight, which I think is one of the only things that you were a bit jealous about wasn't it? So we got to Novo and we were lucky enough only to spend 4 hours there.

[Part 1 0:19:11] Lee: Why do you say lucky?

Green: Well because some people got stuck there for 4 or 5 days with the weather. No showers and Russian food, apologies to any Russians. But we did get that on the *Igarka* which I'll tell you about later. In and out to Halley where we wanted to be; we flew out from Novo to Halley on a Basla which is an old DC3. They've been lengthened and they've got turbo props now rather than the old engines that they had in the war but I think the one's *Lidia* and I can't think of the name of the other one. They're 1943 and still flying. One crashed last year, or I think it was

the year before and the Canadian pilots went down and stitched it back together and flew it through Halley last winter and she was back, I was going to say on the tarmac but it's not tarmac its ice, all looking spic and span and as good as new. Yea, wonderful flight.

[Part 1 0:20:31] Lee: Tell me about arriving at Halley then?

Green: Arriving at Halley, you're very tired. Your body clock is all over the place. You don't really know what's what and where is where although it's only 3 or 4 buildings. You get a quick tour but you can't really take that much in, and you're in the permanent sunshine, 24 hours sun. So I think I went to bed with most other people round about 8 o'clock at night local time, I don't know what time that was to me, I think it was probably a lot later. Fell straight to sleep and woke up 2 hours later, saw the time 10 o'clock, thought it was 10 o'clock the next morning, thought I was late for work [laughs]. Caroline Lewis B/C laughed and told me to go back to sleep. You just fall in and find out where you've got to go and what you've got to be doing and meet your wintering team actually in situ. And they come in dribs and drabs. I think Tim the operator and

[Part 1 0:22:02] Lee: Tim, second name?

Green: Tim Gee and Jack Parker who's the mechanic; they were already in. They are an early input to vehicles, as Martin will tell you vehicles are everything, we have an extensive range. They need to get the vehicles up and running so that things can be moved around, snow can be managed, and the site can come to life again after the winter.

[Part 1 0:22:36] Lee: What was your relationship with Caroline like?

Green: Caroline was great. She gave me a big kiss and a hug when she came back in this summer.

[Part 1 0:22:49] Lee: Any more to say about that?

Green: No I don't think so

[Part 1 0:22:52] Lee: I'm not looking for negatives.

Green: No, no I like Caroline.

[Part 1 0:22:59] Lee: Must be quite hard to pin down that kind of job anyway. Most of the people there are the opposite gender to you, were they?

Green: Oh blimey! What opposite gender to Caroline?

[Part 1 0:23:08] Lee: Yea

Green: Absolutely, yea! There was probably 3 or 4 women on site last year when she was there in the summer.

[Part 1 0:23:17] Lee: Tell me about your accommodation. What was it and how did you feel about it?

Green: It was basically what you'd expect. It's warm, you've got very limited space which you know you're going to get. I probably took too much stuff down as everybody did, so some of it never even got unpacked. It's exactly what you imagine it will be.

[Part 1 0:23:45] Lee: Sharing a room?

Green: Not a problem. I was lucky enough to have Gareth, Gareth Johnson who is the summer carpenter. I think he is a bit of star of the future with BAS. I didn't even know Gareth was there: he was a lovely chap.

[Part 1 0:24:05] Lee: So you shared a room in the summer season but then had a room to yourself?

Green: In the winter you have a room yourself. I think Richard ended up, I keep mentioning Richard don't I? Richard ended up with 3 for storage [laughs] He won't mind me saying this because he knows it's true. He had what we call clutch [phonetic] everywhere; corridors, workshops. Richard's wonderful, he takes on 16 projects at a time, knows exactly what he's doing.

[Part 1 0:24:38] Lee: Richards's second name?

Green: Richard Sands.

[Part 1 0:24:43] Lee: So let's talk about going to work because presumably you had to be introduced to the work you had to do. I guess there was two kinds of work: there was the routine maintenance work and then there was emergencies?

Green: Yea there's routine maintenance and that comes up on a thing called Amos

[Part 1 0:25:01] Lee: What sorry?

Green: Amos

[Part 1 0:25:03] Lee: Is that a computer programme?

Green: Yes. Basically jobs come up weekly, monthly, possibly daily and once you've done the job you report it and tick it off and then that generates the next four weeks and the next week

[Part 1 0:25:22] Lee: What kind of things are we talking about here?

Green: Changing filters, changing filters, cleaning grifters

[Part 1 0:25:32] Lee: Sorry cleaning...?

Green: Grifters

[Part 1 0:25:35] Lee: What's that?

Green: Grifters are macerators, I don't know if you've ever heard of [pause] sanitary flows

[Part 1 0:25:45] Lee: We're talking about toilets here are we?

Green: Toilets yea. Obviously there's no mains drainage so basically all the toilets go into a tank. Then they are pumped out through a macerator, a pump which chops everything up and pulps it and pumps it out into an external down pipe which goes into the snow. They've got sensors and when they fill up the sensor tells the pump when to come on and when the pump comes on pumps it out and then obviously you don't want the pump running all the time so the low level sensor shuts it off. Bits of waste and toilet paper get stuck on there sometimes so your sensors need cleaning and that's not the most pleasant job.

[Part 1 0:26:35] Lee: So you travel 10 thousand miles to clean toilets [laughs]. To clarify the waste in the end doesn't stay in the Antarctic does it?

Green: It does, yes. It forms a massive great what they call an onion in the ice, and it will just break off with the ice shelf and float away.

[Part 1 0:27:00] Lee: Go out to sea and melt?

Green: Yea

[Part 1 0:27:03] Lee: So any other routine jobs that you'd like to talk about?

Green: It's just basic routine stuff.

[Part 1 0:27:13] Lee: For a non-plumber what would that include?

Green: For a non-plumber?

[Part 1 0:27:18] Lee: I mean describing it to somebody who isn't a plumber. What sort of things would you still be doing? Presume you have to maintain the water supply?

Green: Well everybody does that. You dig snow every day and that's on a Rota, and basically you check the pumps and change duties, because you've normally got duty on standby on everything. You'd switch over duties which is just turning a switch from one pump to another just to make sure you don't have one pump run 3000 hours and another pump run 10. So once a week or once a fortnight you change the duty on the pumps: check the filters, clean strainers, do rounds, make sure there's no (...) most of the time if there was leaks, which there were, it wasn't me that spotted them. A couple of times when people were going into the loos, so whoever goes into the loo and says 'that taps dripping' or night person might find something dripping or something like that. Or people cleaning, you're on a Rota for cleaning as well, so if you're mopping behind the loos and you see a drip then tell the plumber.

[Part 1 0:28:36] Lee: Did you ever have a frozen pipe? That was the thing you were most concerned about before you went I seem to recall.

Green: Yea, we had a frozen grifter line. And everybody said 'ah bloody plumbers'. But it wasn't the plumbers it's the electrical heat trace. Obviously pumping out into that atmosphere it will freeze so all the pipes are heat traced. It was an old heat trace that failed. The waste going down there froze; the pump which pumps up to 5 bar, probably more than that actually because it goes round on the stop at 5 bar so maybe 78 psi. Pumps it out, got nowhere to pump it and then the pipe burst. So there was waste everywhere. You've got to repair the pump, find the heat trace that's gone down, melt the pipe; thaw the pipe out, replace the heat trace, lagging and set that to work again. That was an unpleasant couple of days when we did that.

[Part 1 0:29:46] Lee: Why was it unpleasant?

Green: Because there was waste everywhere [laughs]. These flanges, they're plastic flanges and they're ok under normal circumstances but once they get the pressure on them they'll hold for so long and then they'll just go and it's all over the walls and ceilings

[Part 1 0:30:05] Lee: Shower of shit!?

Green: Yes basically! I'm glad you said it! [laughs]

[Part 1 0:30:11] Lee: Were there other emergencies like that that you had to deal with?

Green: The one that sticks in my mind was about 10 o'clock on a Saturday night the pump that pumps the water up from the melt tank, that went down. There's a melt tank under the ice which melts the water, there's a transfer pump that pumps it up into our day tank, which stores about 2 cubic metres of water. The pump failed so our day tank alarm went on, low water so me and Craig went down there about 10 or 11 o'clock at night on a Saturday night, and I think we came up about 5 o'clock in the morning, Sunday morning.

[Part 1 0:31:02] Lee: Tell me about those 7 hours then.

Green: You first of all go down because

[Part 1 0:31:08] Lee: Down where?

Green: Down the melt tank silo which is at its lowest point about 100 feet below the ice. You've got various levels to go down with trap doors and a vertical ladder. Initially you don't know whether it's an electrical failure, hence why Craig comes. Craig is probably the most suited to working with me anyway because of his experience. You don't know if it's an electrical fault and everything's shorted out down there. You don't know whether the outlet of the pump is frozen which would obviously stop water coming up. You don't know whether the outlet of the pump is burst, so initially you go down and investigate, and we found the pump was [pause] it was a stator which is a rubber inside which a worm screw like an Archimedes screw turns and that's how it pumps water. So we found that that one had gone so then you're up; we had a spare pump so you look at your spare pump and then you think 'right what tools do I need to take that bit off'. You don't want to go down with a full tool kit but you check what spanners you've got and screw drivers and have a cup of tea and have a think 'Right, how are we going to do this? What do we need to shut off?' By 1 o'clock you're back down there. Unfortunately the pump was an old pump that had

been refurbished; there's lots of spares down there. There's a spring that holds a seal in, and there's a 20mm shim that that forces against, and in the spares packets they're only about 15mm and one of these had been put in. No fault of the guy that had put it in, this was the spares packet for the pump. So we put that pump in and it leaked, and it leaked and it leaked and we took it apart and put it back together 3 or 4 times. It was like right we'll take it up in the light because it's quite dim down there. You've got head torches but it's still not the same as actually getting something on the bench. Looking at the old one that had just failed, taking it apart bit by bit, I discovered that the thrush shim was 20mm longer so it was 'OK we'll fit that one'. If that one had been unserviceable then Matt Hooper, Super Hooper, would have been kicked out of his bed. He could have turned one up on the lathe so the job would have been done, but as it was it wasn't a part that was going to wear, it was just the right one to fit so we stuck that one back together and down we went again, bolted it up and it's fine, it's been working ever since.

[Part 1 0:34:35] Lee: Was it cold down there? The conditions that you were working under, apart from being dark must have been quite unpleasant?

Green: It's about a constant minus 12 down in the silos, in the tunnels which in the winter is quite pleasant really because when you've got, I think our lowest temperature was almost minus 48 so you'd rather be working down in the silo in the tunnels with no wind and minus 12 than up even at a 3 knot breeze at minus 40 will chill you down.

[Part 1 0:35:11] Lee: One thing which puzzled me listening to the recordings was how if you're storing all this water under the ice and it's minus 12, why doesn't that water supply freeze?

Green: Because it's melted by the heat generated by the generators that give us electricity. There's a flow and return pump down constantly through a heater battery, like a kettle element but a big one and that keeps the melt tank temperature up. As it's pumped out its heat traced again and insulated all the way up to where it gets to a reasonable ambient temperature on the Laws.

[Part 1 0:35:55] Lee: If you talk to any old Fid and they'll tell you one of the biggest problems they had was lack of spares; in the old days, in the heroic days. Did you ever hit that problem?

Green: There's too many spares of stuff like the pump, I think there was probably 15 service kits for that one pump. When I got there 15mm

olives, which is an absolute must, I was scratching around for a 15mm olive. One of my orders was we need lots of olives and there were fittings without olives in. In the past they hadn't had them so the plumber had obviously robbed the fittings: 'oh there's a new fitting with 2 or 3 olives in, we need an olive, we'll use those and robe those'. You might think there's a lot of spares, but sometimes they're not always needed.

[Part 1 0:37:00] Lee: An olive is a washer is it?

Green: An olive is a thing on a compression. It's like a metal band like a wedding ring. It clamps on to do a compression joint.

[Part 1 0:37:10] Lee: Then you screw it tighter?

Green: Yea

[Part 1 0:37:12] Lee: So generally speaking spares has always been a problem in the Antarctic and I was wondering how efficient it is now compared to how it was in those days. Were you surprised at the lack of certain types of spares or was everything ok?

Green: You can always get round things. Rory who's my replacement this year, he's more a machinist. He is a machinist and he was actually making olives that we never had for fuel pipes, on the lathe. If Rory hadn't done it, Matt would have done it or Jack, there's a lot of skills down there.

[Part 1 0:38:02] Lee: So spares management was still a tricky business was it?

Green: Last year I did a complete indent of all our spares and that takes quite a while, especially with the plumbing. It's about the worst one because we've got years of pipework and stuff like that is no longer used, like there's ventral which I think is an old acid waste and we've still got boxes of fittings for that. They still had to be counted and still had to be ticked off. They might use it on the new base, I don't know but I shouldn't think so.

[Part 1 0:38:49] Lee: But you can't throw those things away can you? You have to send them back.

Green: I was told don't throw anything away.

[Part 1 0:38:56] Lee: Did you find yourself having to improvise at any time?

Green: Just doing things in a different way really. If you haven't got a; plumbers will know what I'm on about; a 28 x 28 x 15 T you use a 28 equal T with a 20 to 15 reducer. We did have to make up a few reducers ourselves; lathe down bits of brass bar and then drill a 15mm hole in it to give you a reducer, but you'd get over it. Or you'd be down to 3 toilets rather than 4 for the rest of the winter because at the end of the day if you can't do it, that's what you're down to. That's why they've got 3 generators that they can put on line. If one goes down they can start another one up. You can see why things are done as they are. There's a lot of talk about we should do it this way or we should do it that way but it would take a lot to change that, it could be done but it would take a consensus and I don't think that's going to happen.

[Part 1 0:40:23] Lee: We're talking about resourcefulness here aren't we?

Green: Resourcefulness, yea that is a requirement but having things down there that you should have is another.

[Part 1 0:40:42] Lee: Do you think looking back on it now that, I shouldn't put words in your mouth so can always deny this, that actually they probably thought a 48 year old plumber was going to be more resourceful than a 24 year old plumber?

Green: Not necessarily, my replacement Rory is a wonderful chap and he is not a plumber, but he's got the right attitude.

[Part 1 0:41:10] Lee: Anything else about plumbing before we move onto other things? There was that trip you did with Mike down into the melt tank.

Green: Yes, we blocked the melt tank on (...) that wasn't the recording I did but we did actually block the melt tank mid-winters week which is when you get your week off. We all decided we'll have mid-winters day without having to dig the melt tank, so we dug it a little bit too much the day before, trying to make it last for two days and managed to block it

[Part 1 0:41:39] Lee: With snow?

Green: With snow yea.

[Part 1 0:41:42] Lee: Tell me a bit more about going down there because it sounds like it's a kind of a crystal magic land almost?

Green: In places at different levels you get more crystals. It seems to be about 3 or 4 levels up from the melt tank that it gets cold again and obviously you've got a bit of moisture in the air and it all condenses off and you get lovely crystal formations. The first time you go down the tunnel shaft you open a trap door and you're on a safety wire but you're looking at a vertical ladder 100 feet down and you're thinking 'oh blimey!' It's not the 100 foot drop, it's where it is; on building sites you're up scaffolding, all sorts of stuff like that. When you actually start going down the ladder the top rungs are a good inch square and they've got another inch all round of ice on them so what you're actually holding onto is thick ice bars for about 10 or 15 rungs and you do tend to hold on a little bit tighter than you would normally. But you get used to it, you get used to it.

[Part 1 0:43:07] Lee: Is there anything more to talk about plumbing that you feel we ought to know?

Green: Not really, I did enjoy Rory's first grifter clean [laughs]. Paul his electrician this year came out and took a film of him because his eyes were watering but I think that wasn't far off mine neither. It's not pleasant.

[Part 1 0:43:33] Lee: Let's get you off base for a bit. You did some trips didn't you?

Green: Yes

[Part 1 0:43:40] Lee: You went out

Green: To see the penguins.

[Part 1 0:43:41] Lee: Tell me about that

Green: Oh fantastic! Fantastic! You've seen the pictures?

[Part 1 0:43:46] Lee: I've seen one picture. Let's have the full version now for the BAS archives.

Green: Basically Windy Creak is about 12km away from where Halley V is now. It's going to be a lot further away from new Halley VI; it's going to be an extra 18km. On a Sunday if the weather's ok and the wind's not too much, you get opportunities to go on the back of a snow-cat in a German sledge about 20 at a time, 20 one Sunday 20 another Sunday, to have a trip down to see the penguins. You put all warm clothes on, make your sandwiches, make your flasks and jump on the back; it's a

bit like a charabanc. It's about an hour, not even that, about 40 to 45 minutes to the caboose and then a 400 or 500 yard walk to the top of the cliff edge to see the penguins. As you get closer and closer to the cliff, you've seen the cliffs before but every view is different although it's just ice cliffs. The way the sun is in or out makes a difference to what you see, sort of light bouncing around. So you can hear them before you can see them. I can't remember smelling them but you can smell them when you're down there. You're just allowed to walk down onto the ice. You're roped up because it's a bit of a steep slope and spend some time with them. You don't go too close but if you stay quiet and still they'll come over and have a look. It's wonderful. Although since being down there the Adelie's are my favourite penguin; that was the Emperors. Emperors are quite boring really but Adelie's are just fantastic.

[Part 1 0:46:09] Lee: Why is that?

Green: They think everything's theirs; they try to chase you off, they come and have a look, they'll chase each other. They're much more animated. Emperors are all sort of cool together, Adelie's they're quite bossy.

[Part 1 0:46:32] Lee: Were they in separate places the two of them?

Green: Oh no, they will mix. The Emperor colony, I don't think I saw any Adelie's there, but when you go to different Creaks you'll see them and they'll roost together if that's the right word. And they all come up on the barrel line, appear on the base. They'll see a barrel in the distance, we've got a barrel line to show us where we go so every 2 or 300 yards there's a barrel. Apparently the penguins see a barrel in the distance and think it's a penguin and think 'I should go over there and see what's happening' and the barrel doesn't talk to them so they see another penguin in the distance and they do actually follow the barrel line 12km or more and eventually end up on base. November 2009 we had about 200 Emperors on base which was quite good fun.

[Part 1 0:47:38] Lee: When you say on base what do you mean?

Green: Just walking around. There are no fences or anything so they just go wherever they want to go. They do a bit of business by the melt tank which is not good so sometimes you've got to clear that away before you can dig ice and snow in for your drinking water. You don't tend to think too much about that. But there's a UV filter and a filter so it's pretty clean before it starts.

[Part 1 0:48:07] Lee: How were you with the penguins? What sort of experience was it for you?

Green: Oh brilliant! You want to reach out and touch them but don't know if some people do, but you just sort of think 'no best not'.

[Part 1 0:48:18] Lee: Do they touch you?

Green: No unfortunately [laughs]. They will come in very close and have a look and when one comes three or four will come, and then one will get startled for no reason and he'll go and they'll all go. They're birds.

[Part 1 0:48:38] Lee: What other recreational expeditions did you go on?

Green: We went climbing, ice climbing. That was this year. That was fantastic! Basically about 10 of you, two G.A's⁵ and Rory because Rory does quite a lot of climbing so he's ok for looking after people that go down

[Part 1 0:49:06] Lee: We better have Rory's second name

Green: Rory Fleet. Rory the Lion as he's known; I think there was about 12 of us plus those 3 in a Snowcat again, out to the cliff edges. They put in some snow anchors and chuck a rope down; the cliffs are about 100 foot, a bit of sea ice at the bottom in the sea. Over the sides you go, abseil down and then you've got your crampons and some ice axes to get yourself up. That was absolutely fine. It's just like climbing a ladder really because it's not like normal climbing where you're looking for hand holes, you just put your axe in, but it was a fantastic experience to do it. The setting: we saw young albatross, that's amazing they fly into the wind without flapping their wings. God knows how they do that. Can we all learn [laughs]

[Part 1 0:50:19] Lee: Have you experienced ice cliff climbing before?

Green: No, never and when you get to the edge of the cliff, I think I was one of the first to go over, because you're all stood there in a line and 'who wants to go first then?' I was like 'oh alright, get it over with.' And then you want to do it again obviously. So you don't really want to look over, I don't think I looked down until I was well below the lip. Once you're on an abseil you're fine but actually looking over that cliff, and then having to go over, it's a lot easier just to swing your leg

⁵ General Assistants are people with BAS with advanced mountaineering skills.

over and go down without looking for the first 10 feet at least. And then you come up and you go 'I want to do that again!' [laughs] It was nice because the 3 guys had set up 3 abseils on three different gradients of climb so there was none easy. I think about 90 degrees was the first, then the last one was a bit of an overhang so we had a go at all 3. I didn't fall off so quite happy with that.

[Part 1 0:51:37] Lee: And that was purely recreational or was there a practical value to that too?

Green: There would have been if you're on an expedition, if you're an explorer but that was purely recreational.

[Part 1 0:51:53] Lee: Tell me about camping on the ice.

Green: Camping on the ice; you hope it doesn't blow. You're just out with your mates in a wonderful place and you've got 4 or 5 days, so you've got time to really look and [pause] really look. You're not in a rush and you can sit there and actually soak it in and realise where you are. The camping: the tents are great; the sleeping systems are so comfortable and so warm. Actually we were camping and I think it was only about minus 12, it's too warm for minus 12. Matt will tell you a different story because Matt Hooper, our gene mech [general mechanic] got stuck out for 10 days and it was blowing 50 knots. It wasn't cold, it was only about minus 4 or 5 but it was blowing at 50 knots so he had an unpleasant time. But no, camping's great.

[Part 1 0:53:10] Lee: Did you ever feel threatened by any of this, or fearful?

Green: I did get a little bit scared; I'm the oldest so it's my duty to take the flag down. On the day the sun goes down I get the honour to take the flag down. When it comes up again Jack Parker, who was the youngest, puts the flag up. Somebody last year, I don't know who it was, had tied knots and knots and knots so I had to take my gloves off and it was about minus 20 and 15 knots. My fingers froze to a point where it was 'oh my God I've got to come it'. So I came in and they were actually white and rock solid and Michael said 'really bad frost nip'.

[Part 1 0:54:10] Lee: Michael was the doctor?

Green: Sorry Michael Ramage. That frightened me. Well I don't know it frightened me but it made me mindful of what could happen. Because if you go out there and you get cold, you're not going to get warmer until you get into a warm place. You will only get cold and with all

your kit on minus 20 and 20 knots is not pleasant; I had my hands out for just a minute too long and they froze. A couple of months later I noticed all my nails had bumps in. It was about July and I said ‘Michael is that dire?’ and he said ‘No, that’s(...)’ It was the 1st May and my nails must have stopped growing for a day or so and then started again. That was a bit of a shock.

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: This is Mark Green recorded by Chris Eldon Lee on 27th March 2011. Mark Green part two

[Part 2 0:00:11] Lee: Mark we were talking about close shaves and there’s a story about a skidoo I gather?

Green: Oh yes that was quite frightening actually. It was towards the end of the winter and when it blows the snow comes in and a wind tail forms on the leeward side

[Part 2 0:00:35] Lee: Of the base?

Green: Of everything, drums, everything. The garage is positioned every year to be face on in the wind. You know the base layout and the way it comes off the garage, there’s two big wind tails with a scoop in the bottom. The snow had built up probably about 10 or 12 feet around the garage so over the distance of about 100 metres you’ve got a 12 foot drop into a little road into the back of the garage, which is where you go in and out, to nothing. So I had to go to the garage, but this particular day it was really bad contrast and quite dark. I knew my approach, normally you can see the scoops, and I was coming back into the garage and the garage was actually positioned possibly 5 degrees off the prevailing wind. The wind obviously changes every year or this particular blow had been 5 degrees off, so I was actually coming in directly the back of the garage

[Part 2 0:02:08] Lee: On the skidoo?

Green: On the skidoo, and the scoop was coming off to the side so all of a sudden I went over, only very slowly, over the side of a 3 or 4 foot drop on the skidoo to my side. Of course there was no one about, you tag out to say you’re going to the garage and there are other people about different buildings and on the Laws, and I was going over to get some tools to do something, and the skidoo almost rolled over on top of me. Thankfully it never because it was an old Alpine 2, which takes 2 good blokes to lift the back end up alone, and I would have done myself some serious damage. If that had happened you could have

broken a leg at least, and you would have been there possibly for an hour in the cold on your own.

[Part 2 0:03:18] Lee: No radio at all?

Green: Oh you had your radio if you could use your radio. If you're going along 5km something like that and you go down a 3 or 4 foot drop that you didn't know was there, it's all over so quick and you don't feel the fear till after.

[Part 2 0:03:44] Lee: Did that change your approach to your time down there at all?

Green: No not at all. You realise that after, then you go back and revisit the scene and say 'Ah that's why', because it was 5 degrees out from where all winter with good contrast you can see it, even in darkness, but this particular day no. So, no not at all.

[Part 2 0:04:20] Lee: You weren't more cautious consequently?

Green: No, no not at all, no. When the new replacements come in obviously you tell them this is what happened to me. People do crash skidoos and forget about wind tails. Contrast is a very strange thing in the Antarctic that if you've got no contrast you can have a massive hole in front of you or a massive snow bank and you can't actually see it because you cannot distinguish between ground, sky, anything. There are no shadows so everything's white, everything's the same white.

[Part 2 0:05:02] Lee: Is all the snow the same?

Green: No, no, you get to know what snow's like especially digging melt tank. If it blows in then you can pick up a massive shovel full of snow and it's just powder so you've got lots of digging to get your daily quota of water. Then it hardens off, you get a bit of when I say frost, it's permanently below freezing, but when you get some cold temperatures it tends to compact and get harder, and then in goes through the range of 'Oh this is good snow to dig', then you start thinking about getting the pick axes out because the ice is so hard. What would take you 5 minutes to dig with good snow will take you half an hour when it's absolutely frozen solid. We're grateful that we had a bulldozer there at least once a week it to break it up and build a mound and then we could dig that.

[Part 2 0:06:14] Lee: Let's just go through some of the key points of the year whilst you were there; festivals and celebrations, but also the rhythm of the year.

One of the first jobs I seem to recall you having to do was to start helping unload the relief ship.

Green: Oh the *Igarka*. Looking back that was great fun but at the time it wasn't, well actually it was. The *Igarka*: Basically relief is once a year, the *Shackleton* normally comes in, brings fresh food, fresh Fids, spares and stuff that you need for the winter and the season ahead. Because of the build season, BAS for the second time hired a freighter which was a Russian ship the *Igarka* and all the vehicles were mobilised. It was a massive task; all panels for the new base⁶, everything from generators, steel work, bed soft furnishings. I don't know exactly what it was because most of it was crated up. I spent 7 days, well 7 nights unloading on the sea ice side of the *Igarka*. They crane off the loads and there are 2 or 3 snow-cats in relays pulling sledges down and you load whatever cargo comes off onto the sledge and it parks it so the prime movers, which are the John Deeres and Challengers⁷, to move it on back to base. You spend 12 hour shifts on the snow and then you spend your days or nights sleeping on the *Igarka* Russian freighter which is a bit of an experience.

[Part 2 0:08:28] Lee: Why is that?

Green: Well its Russian [laughs] the crew, the food. They do two meals a day, one's breakfast and one's dinner. The dinner is like a random meat, you don't know what it is, and boiled cabbage, it is true you get boiled cabbage! But we were on nights so when we got up in our morning that was the meal we got. So you had a big stew before you went and then when we came off shift it was breakfast time so I think we had some processed cheese and spam for our breakfast. That was different but Ant, our chef had a caboose up on the top so our lunch times were ok because he brought down food that he'd cooked on base and there were burgers and stuff there and Mars bars and stuff to keep you going. In contrast I spent this New Year's Eve loading up the *Shackleton*, getting rid of all the waste from the base so I got to spend New Year's Eve on the *Shackleton* which was wonderful. The captain, he rang the bell at midnight and we had champagne and a few drinks and a wonderful party atmosphere. It's such an astounding setting. Yea, that's a bit of a memory.

[Part 2 0:10:14] Lee: Who was the captain? [pause] It doesn't matter. Tell me a bit more about that. So you stopped work for midnight on New Year's Eve?

⁶ The new base Halley VI was being constructed and was completed in February 2013

⁷ Vehicles used on base to move equipment around the site

Green: No we were working days, because the relief had already happened so it's the second call of the *Shackleton* to take away the waste, and then eventually all us old winterers and the Morrison's⁸ crew who'd worked on Halley VI through the season, so we were working days so we had a bit of a do on New Year's Eve.

[Part 2 0:10:57] Lee: Ok so we've book ended one year. When the winter starts to approach and people start to leave, how is that psychologically?

Green: Oh you can't wait for it to happen.

[Part 2 0:11:12] Lee: Really?

Green: Yea, yea. The big draw for me was that I'd be down there looking after a base with these other 10 people. I think that's really what the experience is, the people [pause] as much if not more than the place. You've got your Aurora's in the skies and all that and the trips but we got on extremely well and gelled as a family. So you can't actually wait for people just to go away and leave you to it, because that's what you're there for. This year you could see it with the new winterers that came in. It gets to a stage where just after Christmas; they've been there almost two months and they know their work, they know what to do and they're just looking forward to their winter. That's the natural order of things.

[Part 2 0:12:22] Lee: So how was it when it started getting darker and darker and darker, and colder and colder and colder?

Green: The cold; when I said it was minus 20 when I landed at Novo. That's a thought when you think 'oh my god this is only minus 20, what is it going to be like at (...)' well minus 50 is the magic figure which we never actually got to but then you think 'my god, how am I going to cope at that?' But then you dress better, you know what to wear, when to wear it. Sometimes you get it wrong, you sweat, you just get so hot it's unbelievable, but then you learn what to put on, what to take off depending on the conditions. You get used to it. The dark allows you to see the sky and the stars which is another reason for going down there. The permanent dark, we had light boxes which we used so I don't think any of us got any ill effects; you know the SAD syndrome? So you don't know whether they worked or not but we had them. In the winter in the UK, I certainly do, get times when you're working in a factory

⁸ Morrison Falkland Ltd were the contractors who constructed Halley VI and removed Halley V

and you get to work in the dark and you come home in the dark and you don't see the light of day. Alright that's only about 4 or 5 weeks maybe, but [pause] you get skies, you can go out at night and see the Aurora's and that's what the dark brings you rather than any fear. It's a bit spooky when you're on nights and you know you're the only one awake and you go out and you think 'blimey, I'm on my own'. But that's not fear or anything like that.

[Part 2 0:14:35] Lee: Does the base kind of resemble or feel like a ghost town in the winter?

Green: Sometimes yea. Of the 11, there's always one on nights so during the day there's somebody sleeping. Then there's base work to do like drum lines, they bury so you could have 3 or 4 people off during the day raising drums so that's 5 gone. If Richard's over the Simpson, Jack and Tim are over the garage, there could be only 2 of you on the Laws. You have a walk around there's nobody there sometimes.

[Part 2 0:15:21] Lee: So you were able to go out quite a lot even in winter?

Green: Absolutely, yea, even when it was really blowing. You'd go out; obviously you wouldn't go very far, but just to even stand at the bottom of the stairs. You know you've only got about 12 yards to go until warmth, you can stay out there and push it a bit and experience what it would be like. You can't see a hand in front of your face, yea it's amazing.

[Part 2 0:15:54] Lee: Tell me about the Aurora, did you see it?

Green: We saw several. Most of the time you could only really see it clearly on a camera with an exposure, but we did have one and it was perfect. I've got and seen several time lapses of an Aurora and they move and spark in different colours. But one night, and we were lucky; it was the night we were taking our midwinter photo, and it actually happened in real time but only for about 5 or 10 minutes. We just stood there, actually we laid there in the snow gazing up at the sky and it was just unbelievable. It was actually sparking, swirling, doing all the things that normally only a time lapse will capture, but in real time and that was stunning.

[Part 2 0:17:00] Lee: Does that make you think about life, the universe and everything at all?

Green: Oh I think a lot about that anyway. Oh yea that night I think we had Jupiter, Venus, Mars all in a line, you've got the milky way running through the sky; yes, yes insignificance and all stuff like that yea.

[Part 2 0:17:24] Lee: Did you have enough to do in the winter workwise or recreation wise? Or was it all a bit boring really?

Green: Oh god no, the winter was fantastic. Workwise; most of the work that you do is base work. Ant Dubber our chef, he can't cook for everybody 7 days a week. For 3 or 4 weeks he's on nights so when Ant's not cooking you've got to take your turn cooking so we all got a chance to cook quite a lot. There's obviously cleaning, the base work, as I said the drum lines. Because the Laws' on stilts and the ice moves, it took us about 10 days to jack the actual legs up. There's 20 legs on there and because of the distortion the amount we had to jack ranged from 20mm to 125mm some of the legs we had to jack up. There's always something to do; raising hand lines, the power cables to raise, they bury in so that's a days or day and a half's job just getting the poles out, taking them back upon the surface and lifting all the cables back up so there's always stuff to do. When Richard's on nights somebody needs to do his meteorological, fill in his data sheets, yea there's always stuff to do. That's the work. The social; I was with a great bunch of guys. You get to a stage where you're comfortable in people's presence. You don't feel as though you've got to have a big conversation every night. It's very comfortable. We did have a few parties and dressing ups and there's the midwinter film festival that we made two films for so that takes up your time. There's midwinters week where a lot of people design their own golf hall so we had a crazy golf competition and various other competitions; a soup making competition.

[Part 2 0:20:13] Lee: Soup or suit?

Green: Soup. Somebody made a soup for dinner one night every week, apart from the two chefs I did rather well on that one. I came a very good third I think.

[Part 2 0:20:27] Lee: What was your recipe?

Green: I think it was chicken noodle soup, spicy.

[Part 2 0:20:34] Lee: Midwinter itself, it's a very emotional time isn't it on the base because there was the BBC World Service broadcast which Anna starred in.

Green: Yes she did.

[Part 2 0:20:45] Lee: I thought she has a career in the BBC any time you like. But tell me about that from your angle.

Green: The big thing about midwinters week is it's traditional to make gifts for another person on base; it's like a secret Santa. We've all got name tags on the board so as soon as everybody goes we put all the names into a hat and you pick one, and that's the person you're going to make a gift for. There's a lot of time spent making these gifts, a lot of thought and a lot of love goes into them because it's something unique in my experience. At home you think what does somebody want for Christmas and go and buy them a CD or something like that. But to actually think about a person and make something, most of them have got Antarctica themes. There were clocks and ships of (...) Matt 'super' Hooper made Jack a snow-cat, a model of a snow-cat. The hours he put into that was phenomenal but the thing was actually stunning in the end. Craig made mine. He made me a model of the new base, of one of the modules, brass and aluminium. I can't show it to you because it's in my P-box⁹ coming home but I love it, I love it. So I'm looking forward to getting that one.

[Part 2 0:22:22] Lee: How emotional was it to listen to that broadcast?

Green: Oh it was fantastic. And it wasn't just emotional listening to my bits either; when Richard's Nan came on and Craig's family and Tim. They're all your family so all the messages are for somebody that you care about so yea, it was absolutely wonderful, a fantastic day.

[Part 2 0:22:52] Lee: And then there was the Burn's night?

Green: Burn's night January, yes we had one again this year. Burn's night, Michael, yes; he's very proud of his Scottish heritage as he should be. Michael does everything just so; he really gets people into the swing of things. We had haggis and because there's so many people on the Laws eating, I think there was 3 sittings this year, he had to do the poem to the Haggis three times. I think he got better every time so by the time we got in there, yea it was great.

[Part 2 0:23:36] Lee: When things like that happen where you're connected suddenly back to Britain again, back to home or Scotland, did you feel at all homesick at times like that?

Green: No, not at those times. Not homesick, just people really. Sometimes I missed Anna or Jake or my family but not the place no, back here now, I'll be here for a long time now.

⁹ Personal box for taking personal possessions to and from Antarctica

[Part 2 0:24:11] Lee: You're all in the same boat together particularly in mid-winter, so I'm wondering if there's any danger of an epidemic of home sickness floating about.

Green: No, I think probably Christmas is more, because mid-winter is not really celebrated at home here because it's midsummer's day, whereas it's a massive thing down south. It's something that is sort of unique to there, but Christmas this year especially, Andy Dixon, the new Met guy that came in, two young children and he did get a bit emotional. It was his first ever Christmas away from his children so yea, more Christmas I think.

[Part 2 0:24:58] Lee: How were communications with home?

Green: Oh brilliant, yes. We actually did manage to get the video link up

[Part 2 0:25:07] Lee: Skype?

Green: Not Skype, I don't know what it was. I think it was Google mail or something like that, but then it was like 'Oh yea I've seen you, that's alright' so we didn't do it again did we? Just chatting and emails and photos back and forward; I certainly knew what was going on.

[Part 2 0:25:28] Lee: Your wife was moving house wasn't she?

Green: She did she moved all on her own. She found it, bought it, moved in, she did very well. Now she's planning all the work for me to do.

[Part 2 0:25:44] Lee: Tell me a bit about Halley VI because I know it was being built some way away from where you were, but you did have some connection with it didn't you?

Green: We looked after a module, or Craig actually looked after a module. They wanted to do some heat loss tests, so we had one of the modules pulled up alongside Halley V and we put in an electrical cable for Craig to put in heaters just to see how the thermal dynamics of the building, and how much energy it used at the cold times. So that was our module, and then when the Morrison's construction guys came back they were all moved into a line going out from the Laws and they worked on them, trying to get them finished this year. I think they're almost there and now the modules have been all towed out to the Halley VI site. All the ground works were prepared, electrical cables between buildings were already put in, so they're out there and I think

they did very well to move especially the A module which I think is 75 tonnes, I may be corrected, to get that thing in position within very small tolerances, sideways and front to back. Yea, they did very well.

[Part 2 0:27:19] Lee: What do you make of Halley VI?

Green: It's very sexy.

[Part 2 0:27:26] Lee: Sexy?

Green: Sexy, it looks. You see pictures of Neumayer¹⁰ and other modern bases and you think when Halley VI is finished it's going to be (...) it's like space pods on the moon on a different planet, which basically Antarctica is very much like a different planet. It's unfortunate that they didn't get all they wanted, obviously money constraints, but yea it should serve well.

[Part 2 0:28:09] Lee: We were going through the year weren't we; we've gone through the mid-winter now. The sun is due back, I wonder about the psychological impact of waiting for the sun.

Green: I don't know, it's like you want to see the sun come up over that horizon and that's another big time as well. Richard consults his charts and computer and everything else and then we have a bit of a lottery on when the sun will actually show its head above the horizon. Richard then, even though his prediction was slightly off, says 'Ah but that was because of refraction in the atmosphere'. These scientists you can't, you know [laughs]. It's all good banter. It's been away and you know in the UK you've had the sun, although you didn't sort of miss it, it's like the start of the end of your winter as well. I think that was the time I was thinking it is going to come to an end. You're not melancholy, but you think 'oh this isn't going to last forever'. And to be quite honest you could spend your life (...)

[Part 2 0:29:35] Lee: Really?

Green: Oh yea; as long as I had Anna and Jake, yea.

[Part 2 0:29:43] Lee: One of the advantages it seems to me of being down there is that you are divorced from the irritating triviality of ordinary life. Is that fair?

Green: Yes

¹⁰ Neumayer III is a modern German Antarctic research station

[Part 2 0:29:56] Lee: I see that you've got your council tax forms

Green: Yea, yea all that's got to start again. If I emptied my pockets now I'd probably have 2 sets of keys, a mobile phone, a wallet, cards, cash; you've got to get involved in all that again. Me and Anna went to the car boot this morning and I had to drop the car in and I said 'I'll drop you off' and I gave her all my cash and forgot that I had to pay to get her back in again. So I had to go and take some more money out. It's so easy to forget.

[Part 2 0:30:36] Lee: How was driving when you got back?

Green: Absolutely fine. I'd heard all these stories about 'oh you won't want to drive; it'll all be too fast'. I'm a careful driver anyway so you can't drive very fast in the cities anyway.

[Part 2 0:30:58] Lee: Well you got back about a fortnight ago so all this is still very fresh

Green: Relatively new yes

[Part 2 0:31:02] Lee: I'm just wandering what it was when you did return to civilisation, what struck you about it?

Green: Little things had changed. We did laugh because I had to go into a shop the other day and a young chap came in and his T shirt was tucked into his pants and it was like back to the future. 'Is this the fashion now?' Little things had changed, a couple of road layouts have changed and there's a couple of shops that were there that weren't. A butcher's had moved hadn't they? Just little things really.

[Part 2 0:31:40] Lee: And green grass?

Green: Green grass, yes. As I said I tried to dig a bush out yesterday or the day before and the smell of the earth, I didn't find any worms though, we're wormless in this garden.

[Part 2 0:31:56] Lee: You took with you a little mini disc recorder and you were recording for the BBC. How was that? Did that kind of change your relationship with your colleagues or did it give you a different view on what you were doing?

Green: No, I made them aware that I was going to get it out. Tim especially was 'oh bloody you with that bloody tape thing again'. I don't know. I

haven't listened to the tapes of in the bar, so did they let their guard down and did it get back to normal after? I think for the first 5 or 10 minutes things went quiet didn't they?

[Part 2 0:32:30] Lee: Well it seemed quite normal to me, but I've not been in the bar at Halley. I was thinking more whether it gave you a special position or a special sense of responsibility?

Green: No I don't think so, I don't think so. I did ask everybody if they were doing something interesting that either they could take the tape, or I'd come along and have a chat. To be quite honest I don't know how that worked out.

[Part 2 0:32:58] Lee: How was it hearing the programme? How did you get to hear it in the end?

Green: Well, your CD

[Part 2 0:33:03] Lee: I gave Caroline Lewis a CD

Green: Yea she came through and Caroline and about 12 others packed their selves into our workshop, I think the same evening, and listened to it on there. Me slightly embarrassed because I don't know why I'm doing this now, because and I hate bloody listening to myself. No, it was really good. I think you did a fantastic job.

[Part 2 0:33:29] Lee: I'm not looking for compliments, I'm just wondering what it was like in the (...)

Green: It was great! They actually loved it. I think you put in the bit where I said that we were in the real Antarctica and Rothera was banana belt and there was a bit of a cheer [laughs]. Caroline Lewis especially liked that one. She couldn't remember you interviewing her at Girton either.

[Part 2 0:33:52] Lee: Couldn't she?

Green: All of a sudden she came on and you know how Caroline goes!

[Part 2 0:34:01] Lee: So tell me about the overall experience then. I'm trying to avoid putting words into your mouth Mark but how was it for you?

Green: It was fantastic. It was all that I thought it would be. What you get to do, especially a 49 year old plumber who never dreams he's going to

be in a place like that or do things like that. We spoke about taking controls of an aeroplane

[Part 2 0:34:30] Lee: Well let's talk about that for a moment. I was going to ask you about your highlights and I guess flying (...)

Green: Yea, yea, Tornado Doug. All the pilots are cool but Tornado Doug, I don't know his second name, just Tornado Doug. He was a really nice guy.

[Part 2 0:34:47] Lee: How did that happen?

Green: If things need to be dropped off at little science sites or people need to go in the field, then the pilot will take them out but he needs a co-pilot. At the end of the day we don't know what the bloody hell we're doing, [laughs] we get a little bit of training so that we can be a co-pilot. It's a bit of a jolly. You fly to inaccessible places by ground vehicles, and maybe that's just dropping fuel off for somebody that's going to go on elsewhere or checking a science array. I was lucky enough to go down to a site 80A which is over the Theron mountains and down by the Shackletons [mountains] and that's 80.26 degrees south so I actually got on the continent. Of course Halley is not on the continent, it's on an ice shelf. It was about a 2 hour flight either way and Tornado Doug let me take controls for about an hour either way. One of the good bits of that was flying through the cloud just on instruments. Fantastic!

[Part 2 0:36:15] Lee: Nervous?

Green: No, he's there by the side of you and it's not that hard. You've just got to take it gently. You get the hang of it but it's only flat and level. Taking off and landing on snow would probably be a bit of a different challenge.

[Part 2 0:36:36] Lee: Was it a different feel on the continent itself by the Theron Mountains or the Shackleton Mountains?

Green: It's something else you soak in. You knew where you were. It's sort of 'my God, I got here and then I got here'. [Pause] It's very personal. I don't know what you think. You don't get much time because you've got to refuel, but you've got time to walk around and have a look, it's very good. And also the landscape below you, flying I think we were at about 5000 feet. You can see all the crevasse fields and I said the Theron Mountains are just one out of a range of mountains in Antarctica. It's beautiful.

[Part 2 0:37:28] Lee: And again there was no concern, I mean let's face it if anything went wrong

Green: I'm a fatalist. Me and Mike had conversations deep into the night about this. If it's going to be ok, it's going to be ok. There's nothing you can do about it.

[Part 2 0:37:47] Lee: What sort of relationship did you strike up with the scientists? Did you become aware of the science that was going on?

Green: There wasn't actually much going on in the winter; it was mostly weather obs [observations]. Because of the build, the Piggott building¹¹ and the CASLab¹² were shut to science and there was only one Met person which was Richard this year. Although he did let me take a Dobson's spectrometer reading which is measuring the ultraviolet. The trouble with scientists they are so brilliant, but they'll tell you everything you need to know. I only need to know that sort of bit. Richard brilliant, 24, his first job, God knows what he's going to do for a second job, NASA I should imagine.

[Part 2 0:38:47] Lee: So what are you going to do now you're back?

Green: Me? I don't know yet

[Part 2 0:38:50] Lee: You unemployed?

Green: I'm unemployed. I'm going to sort this house out first of all. We've got work to do on the house, walls to build, stuff to do. If I do go back to plumbing then what I've done with BAS will be enough to you know, that's my thing that I've done.

[Part 2 0:39:15] Lee: That was your big adventure in life?

Green: Yea, yea that will be enough.

[Part 2 0:39:20] Lee: You say if you go back to plumbing. Have you got other ambitions?

Green: We don't know. I could list you off so many things that we've talked about. Yea, watch this space. We shall see.

¹¹ Named after Dr WR Piggott, Head of Atmospheric Sciences Division of BAS 1973-79, contains the space science laboratories.

¹² Clean Air Sector Laboratory where research on the atmosphere is carried out.

[Part 2 0:39:30] Lee: I ask the question for this very purpose, after an experience like that, an experience of the life time for over a year is it unsettling to come back and have to start thinking about normal life again?

Green: No, I don't think I've even thought about it, normal life yet, what I'm going to do. We're just sort of out in the garden digging bushes up and going to be planting stuff and talking about Anna's experience over the past 18 months and mine, and catching up with Jake and family and stuff.

[Part 2 0:40:07] Lee: I imagine you've got to go and earn a living somewhere sometime?

Green: Oh I will do, yea

[Part 2 0:40:13] Lee: And silly question, but do you wake up some mornings and think you're still in the Antarctic?

Green: I dream about it.

[Part 2 0:40:20] Lee: Tell me more

Green: Just people I know, not necessarily the guys, but just people I know in the Antarctic setting which I never had any dreams about the Antarctic while I was down there. It's something in my psyche now I suppose.

[Part 2 0:40:38] Lee: Are you grieving for the place now?

Green: We'll see as time goes by, yea, yea. Again I'm missing people more than the place.

[Part 2 0:40:52] Lee: Did you fly out?

Green: No, we came out on the *Shackleton*. We left Halley on the *Shackleton* and I think we were 8 days to the Falklands, and then we flew back from the Falklands.

[Part 2 0:41:10] Lee: How was that process, to have the Antarctic slipping away from you?

Green: Ah yea, that was (...) looking back we all went up on deck and took a last look, then up actually on the bridge because you can go up; just taking some last looks. You go to bed and then you look out and all there is is Ocean so it's gone. You know when you go to bed that's it, you're not going to see it anymore.

[Part 2 0:41:44] Lee: Did you go straight from Halley to Falklands or did you make some calls on the way?

Green: No we didn't no. Michael was lucky enough to go back to KEP¹³, Signy, Rothera and he actually comes all the way back to the UK on the *Shackleton*.

[Part 2 0:42:01] Lee: This is Mike Ramage?

Green: Mike Ramage yea

[Part 2 0:42:04] Lee: So when you got to the Falklands and you saw grass for the first time and heard bird song, tell me about that

Green: We just piled off the ship; we didn't actually go into Stanley, we had to go round to, I think it is Southport. There was nothing there, but we just get off the boat and go for a walk. So we walked a couple of miles up the road and a couple of miles back. I don't know if you know the Falklands but there's not much to see [laughs] in that side anyway. Somebody told us where there was a beach and a penguin colony so it was nice to go and see some penguins and not have all your clobber on. You're in a T shirt and plimsolls, if anybody knows what plimsolls are, and just walking along the beach. Very nice, smells and stuff like that.

[Part 2 0:43:07] Lee: Smells? How do you mean?

Green: Well just smells. There are very few smells apart from AVTA which is aviation fuel

[Part 2 0:43:15] Lee: The penguin poo?

Green: And curries as well which were fantastic. You might be on one part of the base with the wind in the right direction and you'd know its curry night tonight.

[Part 2 0:43:29] Lee: So what smells hit you when you got to fertile land?

Green: I think grass really, is the main sort of thing. Actually I think the sea air as well because it smelt more fishy, you don't get that sort of fishy sea air smell unless you're around the penguins at Halley.

¹³ King Edward Point Research Station on South Georgia

[Part 2 0:43:56] Lee: Were there instance and things that happened that made you think of the pioneers who'd been there before you? Were you aware of them at all?

Green: Oh absolutely. We did go to the museum on the Falklands and they've got a hut, a four person hut from Operation Tabarin and you go in that place and it's all authentic. There are pictures on the wall and magazines and the beds they slept on you think 'my God!' You look at Halley VI and they would just think that was something from outer space. Even Halley V with our comforts, running water and warmth and TV's and stuff like that. These guys never had (...) they had books; there was an old record player with half a dozen (...). In one of the journals we used to put whatever song it was on and we all knew the words of course. How they did it I don't know.

[Part 2 0:45:10] Lee: Did you think about Scott?

Green: Yes. Somebody said something that Scott must have had days like this when it was a fantastic sunny day and that thought went through my mind a few times although his ending was tragic. Because actually around the Brunt was where he was, so you're not thinking 'oh, I'm stepping in his footsteps' or anything pretentious like that, it's just he must have experienced some of the things that I was lucky enough to.

[Part 2 0:45:59] Lee: How has all this changed you Mark?

Green: I don't know. Have you noticed a difference? No [laughs]. I don't know.

[Part 2 0:46:14] Lee: Do you think it might have changed you, in a way that has yet to become apparent?

Green: I think so yea. I've sort of said to people like my son, I've always said to him you can do whatever you've set your mind to, so this has sort of underscored that sort of thing. I don't know if it's changed me though.

[Part 2 0:46:43] Lee: Would you go back tomorrow?

Green: No.

[Part 2 0:46:47] Lee: Would you go back?

Green: I would love to (...) the thing is if I went back to Halley then the guys wouldn't be there, I'd be there with different people. I would love to

see Rothera, KEP, Signy which I'm not going to I know, but yea like I said that was enough. We'll see, we'll see.

[Part 2 0:47:10] Lee: Was there a sense of being part of a network down there? Were you aware of the other bases all the time or were you so far away

Green: We managed to play darts with Bird Island and Rothera. Bird Island apparently had never been beaten because apparently they'd never been beaten for a few years, they never even had a dart board but they still won. Over the internet, yea that was a good night, that was a video link as well and I think it was Tim's birthday. I think we were all dressed as cave men. That must have been a bit odd but if they're wintering at Bird Island then they don't know what it's like anyway.

[Part 2 0:47:57] Lee: So you did feel part of a broader community?

Green: Oh yea, yea. There's snippets, and you're in the workshop and one of Matthews friends from Rothera who he'd wintered with before phoned up. You don't just say 'oh Matt', you'd have a little chat 'how's it going on there?' and you get little bits back and forth.

[Part 2 0:48:18] Lee: Mark it's good to see you again. Thank you very much

Green: OK thank you

[Part 2 0:48:21] <ENDS>

Possible Extracts:

- The BAS application process [Part 1 0:03:43]
- The journey to Halley [Part 1 0:15:49]
- The plumbing work and regular day jobs at Halley [Part 1 0:24:43]
- Challenges with lack of spares for equipment [Part 1 0:35:55]
- Trip to see the penguins [Part 1 0:43:40]
- Ice climbing from Halley [Part 1 0:48:38]
- How accidents can happen – the Skidoo incident [Part 2 0:00:11]
- Unloading the relief ships [Part 2 0:06:14]
- Life at Halley during the winter – the cold, Aurora's and mid-winter [Part 2 0:10:57]
- The Halley VI build [Part 2 0:25:44]
- Returning to 'civilisation' [Part 2 0:31:02]
- Taking controls of a flight over Antarctica [Part 2 0:34:30]
- Leaving Antarctica and the psychology [Part 2 0:40:13]
- Reflecting on the Polar Pioneers [Part 2 0:43:56]