

Hugh Simpson

Edited transcript of a recording of Hugh Simpson at his home in Kincaig by Chris Eldon Lee on 14th April 2011, BAS Archives AD6/24/1/120 (2 items). Transcribed by Stuart James Lawrence 13th June 2014.

This is Hugh Simpson recorded by Chris Eldon Lee on the 14th April 2011

Hugh Simpson part one.

[00.00.10] Hugh: My name is Hugh Walter Simpson and I was born in the Manse of Ceres, Cooper, Fife on 4.4.1931.

[00.00.35] Chris: So you are just eighty years old.

[00.00.36] Hugh: Just eighty last week. My birthday has been postponed because my wife was having a second knee operation in hospital and we decided, like Easter it's a feast that could be changed slightly, so actually all my presents are still under the bed, and we have got family coming home from various places like Barcelona on Sunday and we are going to have the birthday then.

[00.00.52] Chris: What sort of education did you have Hugh?

[00.00.54] Hugh: Well, being born in a Fife Manse with my father on a stipend from the Church of Scotland, you would have thought that I would have gone to the local school and so on, but, the fact is that my parents were unusual. My Mother was a doctor and she was interested in research and my Father not your normal pastoral minister, in a way. He had a degree from Edinburgh and they had a lot of friends who were very interested in education. My eldest Sister went to the local school, and this was full of what we call in Scotland *Kiwis*?, and it was a disaster. I don't want to make too much of a social thing about it, but, the reality was that my parents realized that that was wrong. She finished off at the Quaker School in York and that choice tells you a little bit about our parents, how did she get there? When my turn came I was just sent to a local preparatory school in St Andrews and then they took a lot of soundings from people all over the country, their contacts were much wider than normal people, and they sent me to a school called Bryanston in Dorset. Now Bryanston was a bit like the Kirk Hallam School in that it wasn't all games; there was an unusually specialist education and so on. A lot of music and arts and things like that. So at the age of fourteen I was put on a train to London and then to get the express out to Blandford and then spent three years there. Then, my parents wanted me to do medicine, because that was the family tradition, there were a lot of family connections with medicine, such as my grand-uncle who was the pioneer of anaesthesia using chloroform. So, what my parents wanted was that I would do medicine. Now, Scottish education is different from English, because you start earlier. You start at the age of seventeen and that meant that when I got to Edinburgh most of the other pupils there, and this was the post war era when nearly all the people going to university were ex-service, but I was just short of that. So I had a hell of a struggle to start with, doing

physics and chemistry and things like that, the basic subjects before starting medicine. After I had recovered from that difficult first year I then passed all the exams and became a doctor in 1954. It was during this time, while working a house physician, in the fever Hospital in Edinburgh, I saw the advertisement for the Antarctic that was how it started and I ended up in Millwall, in London, and the next thing I had a telegram to report to Berth 37, Southampton, to be the Medical Officer on the Royal Research Ship *John Biscoe*. This was the old *John Biscoe*, the wooden *John Biscoe*. I went down there and met John Heap, with whom I had done geography at university at the same time, and he was into a study of the distribution of sea ice in the Southern Ocean. He was going down South on the *Biscoe* to see for himself what that distribution was. Drummond Matthews, who was another rather exceptional FID, he was concerned the period of magnetism of rocks. So, these were two academic friends. But, when I got onto the *John Biscoe*, I found that I was in a cabin which said 'Certified for One Seaman' and there was hardly any, well you could just stand on the floor. Everything creaked, because it was wood, and in the cabinet were instruments for opening the cranium and things like that, for which of course I had no idea how to use. Then I discovered that I was in a very privileged position in the Royal Research Ship, because I was the Medical Officer for the ship, whereas the other people in the Survey were accommodated down below, I messed with the Officers and so had it much easier and better than they had it on the trip. We went first of all to the Canary Islands and then to Montevideo. At Montevideo I was asked for my medical report of the ship and of course I didn't even realize that I had to make one. So, I had to go and write it quickly. The ship had broken down and so we had a whole month in Montevideo while the ship's diesel electric engines got re-wired. During this time we went inland with Drummond Matthews and John Heap to explore the interior of Uruguay and succeeded in getting ourselves arrested by the local police who thought we were on the run and that sort of thing. So that was really the start of it.

[00.06.18] Chris: Can I ask you why it is you wanted to go to the Antarctic, what attracted you to it?

[00.06.21] Hugh: Why did I want to go? I think that, basically, I was very immature and immature people, children, want to explore. They don't want to get married and have insurance policies, life insurance policies, and a mortgage and things like that. They really want to; they are interested with what's on the other side. My Mother had once been to a lecture by Shackleton and I think she wanted me to, she didn't say as much, but, I think she wanted that. So, this was all part of that. Now, I was actually called up for the Navy at the time as National Service, but, the reality was that I was given the choice of deferment in the Antarctic and I thought that sounded much more exiting. The other thing was that I was very interested in mountaineering and I set myself a whole lot of targets, for example, shortly before graduation, with two others, we climbed all the four thousand foot mountains in Scotland without support in one go, which is some ninety something climbs without support, which is the first time that I had done this in a few days. That was the sort of person I was. The Cairngorms, where my interest mainly lay, the ascent in all the nine highest Cairngorms in a day, for example, which I thought was worth doing at the time. I am not sure now, I have got too mature, I have matured out of these fairly childhood sort of things, sort of point scoring or something like that. Now, what has

actually happened is that my medical training and this exploration has gone into medical research and I am looking for a test to find out who has got breast cancer; who is going to die and who is not. The Ministry of Health asked me to look into this because that is a major problem in medicine at this time with one in eight women getting breast cancer. Roughly half are going to die from the disease and half are going to be OK, so that half can really go home, they don't need to have radiotherapy, chemotherapy, very expensive things, which apart from that their whole life is destroyed by the attendance at the clinics and that sort of thing. What has been happening is that my exploration has matured into a study of breast cancer. After I came back from Antarctica I went up the ladder in medicine, so that I became a consultant pathologist that is interested in the science of disease, how is disease caused, what the complications are, that sort of thing. I practiced as that and then became a professor in Glasgow University as well as a consultant and that gave me the chance to get cases of breast cancer and then find out, twenty years later, who had died and who hadn't. Before that I had developed an idea as to how I could tell the difference. The way this actually happened was that, in the Antarctic I became very interested in the effects of stress hormones in the people on the Base and in the field, and this led to an interest in the fact that the stress hormones have a twenty four hour rhythm. They are much higher at breakfast time, what is all this why are they much higher at breakfast than at other times of the day, so I thought it would be rather interesting to study the rhythm of the stress hormones on a day that didn't last twenty four hours, to find out what happened to the rhythm. After the Antarctic, with the experience of the Antarctic, I took an expedition to Spitzbergen, which is light all at the time during the summer, and we had; well what happened was that I got married in the meantime, my wife was expecting a baby, but we decided that because of all the Antarctic experience I had we could take the baby to there aged four months. We lived for six months in Spitzbergen in the hut that had belonged to the Scottish explorer Bruce in the 1920s. So we had a secure hut and we could make it dark at night, if we wanted, by putting blackouts in the windows. It was completely isolated about 70 miles from Longyearbreen. So, with the continuous daylight we were all governed by clocks which had had their hair spring shortened so that they ran three hours fast a day, but, we pretended that they were right, so meals were always on the clock time. Every two hours we collected urine samples to study the hormones in them to find out what happened to this twenty four hour rhythm on what was, in fact, a day lasting only twenty one hours. Because, the day lasted only twenty one hours after seven days we had seven lots of three hours saved up, twenty one hours, so in fact, an extra day, so we had an eight day week instead of a seven day week. The question was what do the hormones do? Well, we brought back two thousand samples of urine and I got a chance to work in Glasgow to analyze the hormones in the urine and what we found was that most rhythms in man stick to twenty four hours, or slightly more than twenty four hours, but other rhythms like sodium excretion go onto twenty one hours which is what we had. This had relevance, obviously, to space where you are free of all terrestrial influences. That was a PhD. As a result with that I got an invitation to go the University of Minnesota, the main centre of the world for the study of biological rhythms, where they have the software to analyze the rhythms in data. So I am a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota. At this time I was interviewed by a CNN reporter and I was telling her about this twenty one hour day studying serum and she said "Doctor" she said "are you just accumulating the sum total of human knowledge,

you don't seem really interested?" I took this rather to heart, and I realized that one of the most interesting things that I was involved with, as a consultant pathologist, was the diagnosis of breast cancer. A big problem with breast cancer is who is going to die from it, that's about half the patients, and who is not, and that that would be a tremendous thing if only I could do that.

[00.13.20] Chris: How far away are you from coming to a conclusion about that?

[00.13.22] Hugh: Well, I got an e-mail this morning about the taking of patents for the test and this is what all this is.

[00.13.39] Chris: The cable on your desk?

[00.13.40] Hugh: That is the signal there, that's the survivors versus the non survivors, but it is extremely difficult and intellectually I am getting old. For example, I got unexpected results today and it upsets things slightly. But, I think I can pass it on.

[00.14.12] Chris: So your ambition is to be able to take this to being able to decide which breast cancer sufferers require treatment and which don't?

[00.14.18] Hugh: Exactly, that is the big problem at the Ministry of Health.

[00.14.22] Chris: And somewhere there is an indicator if you could put your finger on it?

[00.14.25] Hugh: Well, the indicator is that I developed a bra, an electronic bra, and this measures the menstrual cycle of the breast, it measures the rate at which the blood is going through the breast during the menstrual cycle.

[00.14.53] Chris: This is a bra with electrodes in it?

[00.14.54] Hugh: Electronic. So it can hold; that little box can hold four thousand temperatures.

[00.15.02] Chris: So thermometers, things like that?

[00.15.03] Hugh: Yes. It is accurate to a twentieth of a degree and there is a clock which can move at different speeds. So all my patients wear this and then you get this rhythm. So, the question is, is the rhythm different in those that are going to die versus those that are not going to die; and that's the crux. We are on slightly sensitive ground now because there is a question of patents and the reason that the patent; I've got plenty of money, but that is not the issue, the issue is, is a commercial company going to be interested in taking up the thing and taking it into practice and I want them to go up you see.

[00.15.46] Chris: How do you; this is nothing to do with the Antarctic except that this work has grown out of your Antarctic experiences, so I am going to ask you a couple of questions then we will go back to the Antarctic afterwards. How would you persuade a

woman that she did not need treatment, because in some respects she is taking a risk in saying that I don't need treatment for this disease, I am going to get better on my own accord?

[00.16.05] Hugh: Well what happens is; she has to have to have the lump removed and then come back for follow up clinic and the surgeon is looking at all of her data, for example, does she have glands involved in the incision. Glands are a bad thing; this is one thing that I agree on.

[00.16.27] Chris: Glands under the arm or what?

[00.16.28] Hugh: Yes, because that's the vascular drainage from the breast. All body tissue has blood going into it and blood going out and the vascular drainage is partly lymphatic where the large molecules go, and partly venous where everything else goes including the red cells. I was able to collect patients in the post operative phase and the question is, each menstrual cycle is a rehearsal of pregnancy, you are getting ready to become pregnant, you lay an egg in the middle of the cycle, is it going to be fertilized, and if it's not then the breast goes back to where it was and it starts another cycle. Is it analogous that an electric cardiogram of the heart, that from the parameters of the changes in the electro-cardiogram, you can see whether someone had had a heart attack, does that tell you the pathology. So that is what I have been doing for the last seven years.

[00.17.40] Chris: I am fascinated by this, but, my job is to talk to you about the Antarctic.

[00.17.42] Hugh: I know.

[00.17.47] Chris: Can you relate what you are doing now with what you were doing then?

[00.17.50] Hugh: It's all really the same thing you see. It's because I think explorers are immature, they don't want the security of marriage and the things talked about, Insurance policies, mortgages and things like that. They are constantly looking; and research is the mature version of that.

[00.18.14] Chris: But in the medical context this research that you are doing now into breast cancer does that have any relationship with what you were doing to your FID colleagues back in the 50s?

[00.18.22] Chris: Yes you see, the connection was that the Eosinophils that I studied in the Antarctic and which get less in lots of people who have got lots of stress hormones circulating in their bodies because their interpretation of the environment is rather stressful, like we might be leaving on a journey the next day or they might have just heard that the ship, with our parcels onboard, is sinking. Things like that and we have all that documented. These hormones are cyclical and the cyclicity is now part of a new science called Chronobiology, the biology of time that; all living things have a structure in time as well as a structure in space. Like we live three score years and ten whereas

mayflies live for one day, but, a tortoise saw Napoleon, it's all sort of the structure of time. The application of the stress hormones which are rhythmic is that that is part of Chronobiology and I am now applying Chronobiology to the science of disease.

[00.19.37] Chris: So let's now go back to the work that you were doing in the Antarctic. You went South as the Medical Officer on the *John Biscoe*, but I guess you had already created your own research programme, did you choose....?

[00.19.51] Hugh: That's right. The Antarctic authorities wanted me to study sleep rhythms in the Antarctic, in the unusual daylight conditions of the Antarctic, which had been done by a chap called Masterton, but, I just couldn't get settled light for that research. I found that I wasn't motivated enough to go through the very arduous work in collecting the data. The other thing is; like that CNN reporter told me, "are you accumulating the sum total of human knowledge, you have done something important", because the currency, of course, is your life. A lot of people don't understand the currency of life; they would look at the Saturday versions of the paper and pick what holidays they might do in the Seychelles. Other people think, oh! I am going to spend some of my life there, I am going to loose some of my life, perhaps I should spend it on something more important. A lot depends, I think, on your origins, what your parents might have interpreted it; because you often think back on your decisions and what your parents might have wanted you to do, or wished you to do, or, whether you thought they were right or not. But, it is all part of the same story.

[00.21.00] Chris: So tell me about the research programme that you set out for yourself then, as you were heading South? What was your plan, what were your ambitions?

[00.21.08] Hugh: Well when I set off on the *John Biscoe* I was so soon after being a house officer in a fever hospital where our main cases were as a result of the epidemic of poliomyelitis in the 1950s, which was very very serious. Somehow you came to grips with life and death, you would you would get, say, a young man coming in unable to move a limb. So that was the importance, but then, getting onto the *John Biscoe* was a full time involvement of your mind, becoming in a cycle of the Canary Islands, Montevideo, Port Stanley, playing billiards with the Governor and so on. So, to some extent you started with a bit of a blank sheet. You had all this education behind you, but the question was what where you going to do after the ship had left and being on the Base, what were you going to do next and that was when I got interested in study the study of Limnological study of Lake Boekella, a small lake near Hope Bay Base, which was thawed for about a month every year. Did anything actually live in that water? I had a microscope on the Base so I could look at the water, look at the weeds in the water see what was on the weeds. Photograph them with my Leica camera and provide a documentation and I found that Shackleton had done a similar documentation in his book. That was the start of it and then I just suddenly thought that well perhaps the Eosinophils that we had studied could monitor and get a profile of people living in the Antarctic, living in the security of the Base hut and in a very stressful environment sledging on the Antarctic Peninsula, where it is very it very common to get winds of a hundred knots, or something like that, thin sea ice, the uncertainties of that life. Some people loved the life;

other people weren't really suitable for that sort of thing. So I thought to myself a profile of these things could be a worthwhile time in the Antarctic, could make it worthwhile time in the Antarctic just to see what was what. That what I did and I found, in fact, when there was major excitement on the Base, like hearing that the relief ship was sinking, or, for example, in a small boat rescue in which I was involved, that people are highly stressed at that stage when they could have been blown out to sea. So suddenly I had an objective measure of what was going on inside their minds. That fascinated me as a doctor and the fact that one person, in particular, who was in a profound state of stress according to his Eosinophil cells virtually throughout the year had to be sent home, because he was unable to cope. So that was; when I came back that was then written up as a thesis which then shut that chapter, but, it gave me an interest in these cells and the rhythm of these cells and that led to my later research.

[00.24.15] Chris: So the blood samples; how were you establishing what the cells were doing, you were taking blood samples and urine samples?

[00.24.20] Hugh: In the Antarctic it was mainly blood samples and all you needed to do was to have a syringe and one needle. I used to sharpen the needles up on a carborundum and look at them with the microscope to make sure that they were sharp. The trouble was that the bevel end of the needles tended to bend away from the carborundum. Then I would have to boil the needles up on a billi-can with the primus. Then of course I didn't have to think twice about that; and of course explorers have big veins so it was quite easy to get blood out of them. So you would get just a few drops of blood to which you would add various things which makes the red cells and the other things that you don't want to see invisible, whereas these curious cells called Eosinophils that are like the red stock of red ink. These cells particularly picked up this red dye and then you have then to put the drop on to a special slide which had an etched draught board on it. Then you looked down the microscope at these etched squares and you would see how many cells had picked up the red stain and then you made hundreds and hundreds of counts for the people on the Base, people in the field, and then developed a profile. For example the two hundred and fifty mile journey round James Ross Island on the sea ice counting cells every time we had a rest day to get a profile of a very physical type of exertion to contrast other journeys that were more mental. This psychologically is quite important, because if you were selected for jobs you could do an Eosinophils check to see if you were suitable or not. But of course the data were obviously anecdotal rather than, you know huge numbers or something like that and so it was OK for an MD thesis which was actually commended by Edinburgh University, but that was the end of that I wasn't going to become a psychologist with my career.

[00.26.30] Chris: So when you put the cells or the blood under the microscope, after you had added the ingredients which clarified the picture, where you counting the number or the size, I mean how were you telling what was who and what was that?

[00.26.41] Hugh: Yes. So you looked down the microscope and you were looking at a draught board of etched squares and you would see that this square has got one in it, this has got two, or this has none in it, but, you were identifying them and recording them in a

book. The remarkable thing that first came out about that was that everybody has a different count to start with and I realized that I had got a finger print and I that for forensic evidence that if on the half a dozen people I was studying, for example, I could tell whose blood it was by the number of Eosinophils. Some people have only got forty in a cubic millimeter of blood and others have got four hundred in a cubic millimeter of blood, but, it went up and down from their own personal level. Nobody really discovered what the Eosinophils do they no that they increase in certain allergic conditions, for example, but it is still a great mystery, one of the great mysteries of medicine. Is it good to have a lot or is it good to have a little, I never never knew that, but, you have to find out each person's levels in the Base hut. So that the Base hut secure level, then you would have Base hut excitement level when something happened on the Base or the relief ship which was; very few of these relief ship ones, one or two with that sort of situation. Then leaving on a journey on the next day, for example, or involved in rescue situations, people falling down crevasses, and a desperate small boat rescue situation that I got involved in. I mean Hope Bay Base, at the end of the Antarctic Peninsula, looks down on to Hope Bay in which the current swirls from the tides are about four knots. One day we saw a rowing boat out in the bay and a chap waving in it, so we got binoculars out and realized that what had happened was he had run out of petrol and he had got no oars, he had forgotten the oars. The wind was offshore and the current was going out into the Antarctic sea, so the question was he was clearly a 'gonner' if somebody didn't do something very quickly, it was winter. Quick as a light....

[00.29.00] Chris: Do you know who it was?

[00.29.02] Hugh: Well actually it was an Argentinean, but that made the thing more complicated; they were slightly more foolhardy. The Base Leader, I wasn't the Base Leader, said, you know, "we have got a boat; it's in the ice on the shore", so the whole base turned out. We were picking axes to get this boat which was frozen into the ice on the shore and the Base Leader said "get the outboard motor, the one outboard motor ready", but he couldn't get it going. After about an hour; and by now the chap was just a speck in the distance, floating out in an offshore wind and it was beginning to snow. What happened was that the boat was eventually got out of the ice, but, it had a plank missing from the top, so it was not all that seaworthy, and it was very small boat. But what it all boiled down to was; there was a big argument because the Base Leader didn't want anybody to leave, but three of us got into the boat, that was Roger Tufft; I can't remember who the other guy was; and we rowed out in the direction in which the boat had last been seen and when we got about a mile out to sea, we realized that we hadn't a hope in hell of seeing him. It was snowing hard, the wind was offshore, and we realized what were we looking for, I mean the chap was several miles out by now. So the moment of truth came when we tried to row back and found the wind was too strong and we couldn't make anything of it. Then we found that the waves were coming over the bows of the boat. So one person had to bail and the other two had to row absolutely flat out. We were all very very fit. There were a lot of icebergs floating around so we sheltered behind one of them and thought what we were going to do next. The wind was getting stronger and the weather forecast was bad and then we realized that if we didn't go straight back to the base, but, went on a sort of tangential line down the coast the wind

wouldn't be so much against us and we could gain against it. Some hours later we finally made the coast, several miles downstream, and absolutely exhausted. We got out of the boat went back to the Base. The Base was now storm bound. The Argentineans, who were several miles away, came up to the Base to find out what the score was, but, we have sent a signal out to the icebreaker the *San Martin*, which is about four hundred miles away, and it has put on emergency speed to try and find this guy. Well a day passed and this place was still storm bound and the helicopters couldn't take off from the *San Martin*. But the next day two helicopters arrived at the Base, but they said it was too bad to take off. So they stayed for some hours and then they decided that the weather was lifting and then they went and searched where the boat might have been, and they found him twenty miles out lying in the bottom of the boat. He was never brought back to Hope Bay. The Argentineans were very ashamed over the whole incident and he was taken back to the Argentine directly, so we never saw him again.

[00.32.54] Chris: But he lived?

[00.33.00] Hugh: Well he was alive and I am trying to make a statement here, he was a ballet dancer in his private life and I could probably remember his name, some other time when I have thought more about it. After that incident we had very very low Eosinophil counts the next day because I think that at the time we thought it was a very close call.

[00.33.21] Chris: Those cells were responding to the stress and anxiety levels with inside the community?

[00.33.24] Hugh: Yes the brain interprets anxiety and it varies dramatically, let's say on the next day or something like that, and what happens then is that the brain signals to the adrenal gland, which is sitting on the kidney, to produce more stress hormone and what the stress hormone does is to re; it reallocates the body's resources, for example, it starts to make; it mobilizes sugar into the blood where it is been stored, it has been stored in the liver as glycosides, it releases sugar into the blood for the supposed emergency and in the long term it will, for instance, burn up muscles, make new energy, so it is revamping the whole of the status quo of the individual.

[00.34.16] Chris: So is it just simply an equation the more of these cells you have the better able you are to cope with stress or the fewer cells you have the better are in...?

[00/34.21] Hugh: We don't know the answer to that question. The question of what Eosinophils do is just completely unknown; it is just through observation that they do fluctuate with the prevailing stress hormones. Stress hormone, namely called Cortisol, which comes from this adrenal gland and it rises forth in; the issue in several civilizations is whether those people that have high levels of Cortisol are more likely to get high blood pressure and fail, because their interpretation of stress all the time and they re-vamp their metabolism and the general running of their body for a stress emergency situation as opposed to normal living.

[00.38.08] Chris: So the chap who was sent home after a year...?

[00.35.15] Hugh: Actually, I can remember his name it was Oscar Bempo.

[00.35.19] Chris: So he was sent home and he had very high...?

[00.35.21] Hugh: Well he was sent home so, of course, I never got another chance of studying him again, but what I am saying is that the Eosinophils on the rescuers, the supposed rescuers, who were completely unsuccessful, was very very low. It goes down; the Eosinophils go down with stress hormone levels. Sometimes even to zero, for example, in laboratory experiments we have rats that are half drowned and their Eosinophil levels would be nearly zero. The work relating to Eosinophils started with a famous physiologist called *Selieu?*, who talked about the stresses of life and tried to extrapolate from the levels. What he found was that animals that were stressed like being subjected to cold, being subjected to forced swimming, or something like that, that when they had a post mortem carried out they had very very big adrenal glands because they were making a lot of this adrenal stress hormone, Cortisol, and Cortisol, in turn, diminishes the Eosinophil cells.

[00.36.32] Chris: How did your FIDS react to the idea of becoming guinea pigs for your research, were they co-operative?

[00.36.37] Hugh: They were very co-operative. The secret ploy I had was that there were twelve people on the Base and I only asked half of them and I never wondered whether; the other half, I said well I'll tell you what I am going to take blood off you and do these tests and so on, are you willing to co-operate and they all said yes. But the other half were never asked and I thought it was quite good to play one lot against the other, as to whether that was a silly idea I don't know. I think it has got a lot of relevance to life in general, but it was a research project which I couldn't really take any further when I got back and to talk to psychologists, for example. But the point is these stress hormones had these rhythms, so that it is the rhythms that I then went off on.

[00.37.39] Chris: And this relates to the work that you are doing now with breast cancer...?

[00.37.40] Hugh: Well then you see that was rhythms. Living on twenty one hours a day, an eight day week, in continuous daylight conditions in summer sun on Spitzbergen, but that then led to OK what is the importance of all these things, perhaps it's important to breast cancer, because the breast is a rhythmic thing. People don't understand. The breast changes in size during the menstrual cycle about by a fifth. The blood flow changes in it, the *Warner?* Concave changes and so it is very cyclic organ and by studying the cycle maybe you can see who, for example, if they get cancer, is going to have a cancer which is at the end of the blood supply, which is different at different times, as compared with others. Is it a survivable metabolism?

[00.38.35] Chris: Shall we move on to something else. Let me ask about what you found in the waters of Lake Boekella, what did your microscope reveal?

[00.38.41] Hugh: Well the main thing you see are things called 'Water Bears' but, in fact, it looks a bit like a caterpillar, a tiny microscopic caterpillar. There were other things but I didn't get much further than that because I wasn't a zoologist and technically it is called a limnological survey and other people may have done that. It was more for the fact that I was an academic at heart and I wanted to do something and it was expressed in the terms of oh! Well we have got to have a look at Lake Boekella.

[00.39.20] Chris: Where you surprised to find any life at all in the lake?

[00.39.22] Hugh: Yes.

[00.39.22] Chris: I mean bearing in mind that it was frozen.

[00.39.27] Hugh: It was frozen solid in the winter. Shackleton discovered that if you freeze these 'Water Bears' to minus an incredible amount, they still wake up when the water thaws. Of course that is very interesting biologically because inside a cell, everything is made of cells, inside a cell there are a whole lot of little sub-compartments like energy making machines and if you freeze it you take out the fresh water so that everything has more concentrated salts in it. Does that kill you; I mean that kills humans, if you freeze humans too much, that is the trouble. It changes the ratio of the different things that are dissolved in the fluids. A lot of people don't realize that the polar ice, of course, is fresh water and when I had an attempt at the North Pole, we were using polar ice all the time and now people worry that with Global Warming that all this fresh water, fresh water sunk to the bottom of the ocean is going to change the Gulf Stream.

[00.40.32] Chris: OK. Let's look at one or two of the expeditions you did whilst you were South and in no particular order you did a trip to Brown Bluff which was a skiing trip. Is that right?

[00.40.41] Hugh: Yes, well when I got to Hope Bay, a Major Ellery Anderson was the Base Leader and he was rather authoritarian and he was quite a dominant character and supposed to be married to some princess, or something, that sort of character and the first thing he said was "right you are the doctor, here is the revolver we need some Adelie flesh for a dinner in London, so you go out and shoot some penguins and find out how much we get off each breast of an Adelie Penguin?" I went out and shot a couple of penguins and did what he said, but the killing was clearly a farce, it was going to be sent on the ship back to London for this stupid dinner. So I wasn't, actually, very enthusiastic about him. Then John Heap, who was Head of the Polar Regions Section at the Foreign Office afterwards and who had done geography when I was doing medicine at Edinburgh, said "Hugh we could go to this peak called Brown Bluff," which was, I suppose, about ten miles from Hope Bay and he said "I will be able to see the Antarctic Sound, I will be able to monitor the sea ice that is floating there which is what I am doing for my PhD, the distribution of sea ice in the Southern Ocean." And the idea that two people go off and ski to this peak, which hadn't been done before. Ellery Anderson was extremely unenthusiastic, but the point was that John had the academic trump card and so the two of

us set off on our skis to this point. It was a long trip and normally you weren't allowed away from the Base unless you got a dog team, a sledge, and ten days food. We just went off with a little rucksack. With my Scottish experience of going up the mountains there was really nothing to that; and John Heap was a kindred spirit who later became in charge of the Heritage Trust. I could talk more about the Antarctic Heritage because I think that is one thing that is of interest to you. Roger Tufft and I were; well, you see, I was asked to go to Livingstone Island, which is in the South Shetland Group, to look after a rooky geologist who was going to look for metals for the interest of the Government. So Roger and I and the geologist, who was called Hobbs; the Island is about thirty miles long and with an icecap in the middle, but a lot of ice free capes go out from the icecap rather like the spines of a Star Fish. Anyway it was a great privilege to be on this party because we were landed by helicopter with three months supplies and they said "We will come back in three months and pick you up." I mean it is just amazing when you think about it...

[00.43.55] Chris: This is virgin territory is it?

[00.43.56] Hugh: It was almost virgin territory. We knew that the *Discovery* had landed there in the 1930s and there were some pictures, but, it was virtually virgin and question was, these rocky coasts could be great havens of wildlife, which we were interested in. When we landed there were Weddell seals on the beach, there were Crabeater seals, there were Elephant seals, there were South Atlantic shags, there were Leopard seals feeding off the coast and it was just a haven of wildlife. So we traveled over the Island, particularly to the west end, which is six miles of volcanic rock and gravel, an absolute Antarctic paradise for wildlife. So the three of us moved over the icecap, man hauling a sledge with our food on it, and stopping at each peninsula to have a look round. Now, we knew that years ago this place had been very important because animal oil was used for lubricating the early machines of the Industrial Revolution; I am talking about the early eighteenth hundreds. Mineral wasn't really going then to lubricate the machines, but, these people had street lighting running on whale oil. The first ship, really, to land in this area, in the South Shetland Islands, was in 1819, with an Englishman who was going from Valparaiso to Montevideo, sailing round the Cape, forced farther south. Later, he landed, realized it was important to claim this land, so he landed with the Union Jack, and so on. I think that was early 1821. Now what happened was the news got out that this was an absolute haven of wildlife and it was well known in the New England ports, at that time that people could make a fortune by getting a lot of this oil. The oil was mainly from Elephant seals. So what happened then was that everyone who could sail south from the Union ports did so. Now that was difficult because there was a blockade off the East coast of America at that time, by the British ships and indeed the incredible thing is that I actually have the Sailing Directions of my Great, Great, Grandfather, who was actually in the British patrol, that had actually got his orders to sink ships in that area in 1815. Anyway to get back to Livingston Island we came onto one cape and there in front of us on the beach was a huge sea cave. Now what I mean by a huge sea cave, it was close to the waterline, the entrance was about twenty feet high, it was about twenty feet broad and there was this great hole of blackness looking into it. I mean; and we walked in and we saw a whole ring of whale's vertebrae as if a man had been sitting there and then we saw a knife on a table, all rusted, and at the side were barrel staves, which we assumed, of

course, that these barrel staves were from barrels which the men had actually been putting oil in. There was a boat hook and on the beach outside was a rudder, a rudder that was about, I suppose, about four or five foot high with the pintle still attached, but, made of very very rough wood. Also there were spars of a ship with wooden pulley wheels (*blocks*) on them, which we thought must be old. Then the most extraordinary things of all was that one of the whale's vertebrae was carved with a man's name and it was quite clear, and the name was *BS Cutler* and then there was a superscript with the letters *SCHR*, which we interpreted as 'schooner'. So we photographed everything very very carefully and left it *in-situ*. Later on we discovered twenty other places where people had camped, stone circles, usually with whalebone as a bit of a roof, a bit of sail cloth at the edge, in other words, it had been a sort of a house where they lived and we wondered if this was, in fact, these people looking for seal oil, whale oil, about 1820. That is eight years before Captain Scott had; you know, the romantic period of British Antarctic exploration. Well, I sat, we photographed all that and this work is unpublished and so when I got back to this Country I wrote to the New England Museum at Mystic, in Connecticut, saying that does this name *Cutler* mean anything to you and the remarkable thing is that the Head of the Museum, at that time, was called 'Cutler', I thought it might be some connection, but that was actually red herring. Anyway nothing happened for thirty years and my letter lay in the Museum in Connecticut and then at Christmas about three years ago I had a letter and the letter said I am the Great Great Grandfather...

[00.50.40] Chris: Grandson?

[00.50.41] Hugh: the Great Great Grandfather of *BS Cutler*, and he lives in America, so, I have now got a correspondence to him, with the direct descendants and Benjamin S Cutler had sailed in the Spring of 1820 to the Southern Ocean, having got married in the January of that year, and with a description of him landing on Livingston Island and when he got back; he was very young, he was born in 1811; I have not got that quite right, he was just a teenager on the ship. The ship made so much money that he was able to buy the ship and I actually have the purchase document of the US Government of Benjamin S Cutler buying the ship. He became a Master Mariner and the family legend is that he showed Fitzroy how to sail Darwin through the Beagle Channel. I have got Darwin's diaries, but, I don't have verification of that, but, that is the family folklore. So there was a complete continuity of history from the name on the vertebrae, which I have. So I have a correspondence going with him and we tried to write it up with the National Geographic Magazine, but, they weren't interested. Anyway I have a correspondence going with them and I have a whole box, in my room here, full of, for example, the purchase document of the ship, and Benjamin S Cutler is mentioned actually in Brian; the guy who was before John Heap at the Polar Regions Section of the Foreign Office, a well known senior guy (Editor: *Brian Roberts*). Anyway, he records Benjamin S Cutler on the early Antarctic sailings, he wrote a book on the early Antarctic sailings and Benjamin S Cutler was there he sailed many many times to the Southern Ocean and he was obviously a very good mariner to have done that. It was very hard in the days with sail only; I mean Captain Scott had the advantage of steam if he got into difficulties. So I have all the documentation. Now what has happened in the end, I don't know whether you want to cut this out and so on, but, FIDS got my report, and there was an extensive report of this

in the FIDS files. I reported everything we found and the photographs and so on, some photographs, I kept the coloured ones, and they sent down Fergus O’Gorman, who was a zoologist, because we also discovered on one of these peninsulas on Livingston Island the Fur seals, which were the first Fur seals to be seen in the South Shetlands in the time that I was in that area. They are found that much farther south now, but that was the first sighting and Fergus O’Gorman was interested in which type of Fur seal it was. He was also sent down by FIDS to pick up the ‘vertebrae’, but, everything had been lost. So I have got all the photographs, but, the relics are not there.

[00.54.19] Chris: I am sorry, but, when Fergus got there they had gone?

[00.54.20] Hugh: No.

[00.54.22] Chris: What, when Fergus found them and they have gone since then?

[00.54.23] Hugh: They brought all the things back and they have vanished.

[00.54.25] Chris: So Fergus returned them to BAS, and they have gone...?

[00.54.29] Hugh: Yes, he was; my understanding of the story, and I have got fragments of the story, is that he was sent to pick up all the relics. Now how true that is I don’t know. But I do know from that people who have been down there since then that there is nothing left. The Chileans have also reported some discovery of relics and presumably taken them. What I’ve got is all the pictures as the things were originally found, so it was rather like the tomb of Tutankhamen, as far as we were concerned, and the photographs are excellent so it’s just on a project. The trouble is that I have got so involved with this project that I can’t get to that at the moment.

[00.55.18] Chris: One of the reasons that you went to Livingston Island, with Roger Tufft, I believe was because you were looking for copper, is that correct?

[00.55.23] Hugh: Yes, though what happened was that we could see copper staining on some of the rocks, and that is what Hobbs was interested in, but, we sledged over there and got some samples, and so on, but there wasn’t anything of commercial value. But, what happened was that these peninsulas, these sorts of tentacles, that run out from the icecap Hobbs noticed immediately that there was volcanic sand in places, there were a whole succession of raised beaches. So when he came back, he wrote up about the levels of these beaches and the interpretation was, of course, that the land had been heavily under ice until comparatively recent geological time and successively had raised itself causing raised beaches. So he wrote an MSc thesis on that and I have got a copy of his thesis here, but, I am slightly out of touch with him. So the interest wasn’t in the rocks but in the geological formations and it was quite clear on some of the peninsulas that the sea level had been much higher on the rocks than it was now. Maybe that was why the sea cave was completely out of the water.

[00.56.43] Chris: Tell me a little more about your friendship with Roger Tufft, because you did several projects with him?

[00.56.46] Hugh: Well Roger Tufft was a very special companion. The reason is that, you could be in a tent with Roger Tufft for a whole month or longer, and Roger had always got something new to say. It might be about the sexual activity of Henry VIII, or something like that, but Roger was basically an academic and interested in the wildlife of the Antarctic, the birds of the Southern Ocean, for example. He was very strong and physically very fit. Now in 1957 Roger and I made; had an idea when the ship left that we would get the ship to land some stores on the Antarctic Peninsula, well away from Hope Bay, and we would then be able to pick up these stores and try and get onto the central spine of the plateau of what is called the Detroit Plateau. The last ship left Roger and me and others there, a party of six, and we had an eighty six day journey to try and find routes on the top of that plateau. Roger was a key man; so, our base camp was at a place called Pitt Point, and the plateau is about five thousand feet high there, and obviously it is a major thing to try and get dogs and stores up. There had been a previous route found by Victor Russell, who was one of the original FIDS in 1945, and Victor kept fantastic records, he was a very very strong sledger and he had done the original mapping of Pitt Point from where he found a route onto the plateau. We had tried to do better than he had done with a whole succession of journeys in 1956, but, we never managed to improve, we always got stuck on the crest of the plateau. But eventually Roger and I got on Victor Russell's route, we got to his nunatak, which, actually, is now named after him, on the edge of the plateau at about three thousand feet and found Victor Russell's depot there and then Roger and I sledged onto the crest of the plateau and that was one of the great moments of my life because from five thousand feet, on a clear day, you could see the Bellingshausen Sea on one side, the Weddell Sea on the other side and, because the visibility is so good in the Antarctic, you could see where Shackleton's ship had foundered. You were then about one hundred and twenty miles from Base or something like that and we sledged back and it was on the return journey that we very nearly were finished. The curious thing is that the glacier that we were on is called the Victory Glacier because Victor Russell had found it the day when Victory in Europe (VE Day) was announced. It is a huge glacier and it is a place where the wind can come through a channel from one side of the Antarctic Peninsula to the other, from the Bellingshausen Sea to the Weddell Sea. Climbers do not camp in places like that, so there were two teams, Roger was in one tent and I was in the other, and the trouble was there was no depth of snow, the glacier was virtually dry with little bits of snow in between. And when the first gust of wind caught us that night I thought, you know, there is no way we can stand this, but then the tents are supposed to withstand a hundred knots, it just was a wind that we had never quite experienced before. What happened was; it was the middle of Winter though, so there was very little light, it was a tremendous gust of wind, both tents were flattened immediately, the sledge which had been anchored up-wind of the tents blew over the top of the tent and we wanted to get out. There was a deep feeling of claustrophobia, it was dark, the wind was absolutely terrific, and we got a feeling of being trapped, we got a feeling of being trapped, which was almost a fatal thing. We should have stayed in the collapsed tent, which was frozen into the ground. So what happened was; the other tent had had the same experience, so we took our sleeping bags

into the open and what I can remember was the clouds were being passed over the moon, and we felt something almost biblical had happened, that the clouds had sort of opened up the light from the moon which was very bright in the snow. Our sleeping bags had this very thick cover on them so we weren't immediately going to get wet, it would keep the weather away at a distance, and in the morning, in the two hours of light that we had, we could see the two tents; the two poles had broken, and we could see that we could make was one tent out of the two and all four men get into it. So we moved about a mile and dug a huge hole in the snow, put up the one good tent, and all got in it. At that moment as we lit the primus; the primus is absolutely life giving, to get the primus going in all conditions is where your life comes from when you are absolutely frozen, but we noticed that the flames from the primus were getting bigger and bigger, and the candles were going out and we suddenly realized that we had got carbon monoxide poisoning, because the tent was wet. It was just on freezing point and there was no oxygen getting in and so we burst out of the tent and found that the dogs had eaten their way into one of the boxes and eaten all the butter and things like that. But, after we had survived that, we then managed to continue our journey back to View Point and get back, as I say eighty six days after we had started out, which was really quite a long time. Now I had done the Eosinophil counts throughout this journey and the only reason I had any records left was because I always kept my data book in my sleeping bag. (Laughter from both parties) To get an idea of the stress when we woke up in the morning, after the tent had been flattened, Roger's Tufft was the only one who had any energy left, we were all exhausted. He said "I will go and look down wind for what I can find", because the fifty pound food boxes had just blown away. He came back after a few minutes and said "well I have found two boots"; we had had some leather boots as well as our normal canvas snow boots, and he said "clearly you only wanted two" and we looked at them and they were both left foot, (laughter from both parties). So Roger evidently he had the strength but he was still so exhausted and hadn't realized the situation was. That's the sort of companion that you need to have on a journey and years later, after the Antarctic, he came to Spitzbergen for six months with us; we sledged on to the icecap. He later skied across Greenland with us and later on we had an attempt at the Daily Telegraph North Pole Expedition; when three of us tried to get to the North Pole unsupported, and Roger was on that too. So, it's a sort of lifelong companion. People go to the Antarctic for different reasons, but he went, I think, because of his intellectual curiosity and satisfaction about the whole polar environment, the animals, the birds and that sort of thing. Of course if you are interested and read about where you are you don't get bored.

[01.05.26] Chris: Let's leave it there Hugh and Myrtle has got some lunch for us and then we will come back and do some more.

[01.05.30] Hugh: OK. This isn't the end.

[01.05.32] Chris: Marvelous. Thank you very much, thank you.

This is Hugh Simpson recorded by Chris Eldon Lee on the 14th April 2011

Hugh Simpson Part 2

[00.00.10] Chris: I would like to talk to you a bit more about Roger Tufft, so tell me about tell me about your trip with Rodger round James Ross Island?

[00.00.20] Hugh: So, Roger Tufft and myself, the intellectual travel of moving in the Antarctic was how far you could go completely unsupported, of course there were depots around, but, by and large the question was had dog sledgers ever gone better than man haulers, that a good old argument, but the reality is that totally unsupported dog teams that man haulers had actually gone further, though people like Martin Lindsay sledging of course had done well over a thousand miles unsupported and that was a pretty hard record to beat. But, Roger and I were really man haulers and one of the reasons was that it's the tranquility that you get when you are camping out on the sea ice, that there is just you and nobody else. If you have dogs, the dogs are always on the move. The dogs may start a fight that you have to get up to during the night, and when you are of course traveling with dogs you are traveling much faster than you would, but, the trouble is you are spending a lot of time getting them started, getting them into the harnesses, sorting out the fights, sewing up injuries if they start fighting and catching them if they escape. So there is a lot of hassle associated with dogs and so it's just a different deal, but, if you really want the tranquility of the Antarctic, man hauling itself takes a lot of beating and of course the trouble with dogs is you have got to carry dog food, the dogs would get a pound of pemmican each day, so that meant that it was a journey, if you have got nine dogs to pull the sledge, weighing, say, three or four hundred pounds, a lot of that is actually dog food. So there is a perennial argument about the value of dogs versus men. But, at that time Roger and I probably ran more than anybody else in the world and that's why later on when we started to take on Greenland, so Roger and I and Myrtle, my wife, skied across Greenland in 1965, that's 400 miles, completely unsupported, no radios, or anything like that, and we got this fantastic feeling of tranquility crossing and then camping on the tundra on the far side, and then our children coming in by plane to rendezvous with us on the west coast of Greenland. Anyway the point about the James Ross thing we couldn't, you see, I suggested to the Base Leader, at the time, that it would be very interesting to me to do these *Eosinophils* counts on a purely physical journey on the sea ice of two hundred and fifty miles. So, Roger and I decided that what we would try and do is to try and make conditions as light as possible, so where as the normal Nansen sledge in use had five bridges holding the load up on the top we would take out two bridges, which seemed that it would lighten it a bit even though the bridges only weighed about three pounds each, but three pounds of kit and three pounds of wood, and it was going to be a really rather sporting event. Except that every other day we would stop in the morning, after breakfast, when I would take out my syringe, my medical syringe, boil up the needles and take off some blood from the three of us. It was quite difficult to take off your own blood, pushing the needle in, and so on, but, I don't know.

[00.04.00] Chris: So did you take your own blood?

[00.04.01] Hugh: Did I what?

[00.04.02] Chris: You did take your own blood, or not?

[00.04.03] Hugh: Yes.

[00.04.04] Chris: There was you, Roger and one other.

[00.04.10] Hugh: Yes, the third one was a chap called Mike Ruby. Mike Ruby was an ex policeman, who was, he had worked in zoos and was a very lugubrious character. He would get very excited about, if you were sort of making pemmican in a forty four gallon oil drum and you would put in this meat and that bit of thing and add fat and suet and add some salt you would get explorers pemmican. Well we were slightly more involved with that and we preferred to use the FIDS rations, which were packed by *Sekes?* of London, and every box contained enough food for one man for twenty days and bars of chocolate and de-hydrated meat bar was the mainstay, tins of butter and bits of cheese, and everything was the same. So it was slightly civilized in that respect. Anyway, the idea was to travel as light as possible. Now, the next question was, this is the intellectual challenge, to see how far you could travel if you don't want to carry packaging, so we put everything into plastic bags to save weight, and the idea was could we do this two hundred and fifty mile journey, basically, without re-supply. It was a sort of academic challenge. Anyway, we set off from Hope Bay and as it so happened there was exceptionally good weather and we did the job, the two hundred and fifty mile journeys in three weeks, in spite of stopping every other morning for at least the full counts, and we managed to get back to the Base, having gone round James Ross Island, without, basically, any stop and get back again without a single day lie up because of bad weather. The sun shone the whole time.

[00.06.16] Chris: This was on sea ice you were traveling?

[00.06.18] Hugh: We were traveling on the sea ice all the time.

[00.06.21] Chris: And when you say you took the counts every day, did you actually analyze them?

[00.06.24] Hugh: Every other day.

[00.06.25] Chris: I beg your pardon. When you say you took the counts every other day were you actually analyzing them on the spot, putting them under the microscope?

[00.06.29] Hugh: I could get a reading. I would read out to Roger what I was seeing on the microscope. Now the microscope itself was quite heavy, but, I found that by taking the base off, which is obviously heavy and sort of cumbersome, I could sit it on the corner of a sledge box. The next thing that I found was that a candle is a very good flame for using with a microscope because instead of the incandescent light bulbs, the film which is a lot of light in a very little place, a candle has quite a lot of light in quite a lot of place, when you get it going. It is very good for using with a microscope. So, each day

we would get the microscope out, boil the one needle up, take the blood off them and that would take, for the three of us, maybe three hours work and it was all kept in a note book and then brought back for detailed analysis later, *cystic?* analysis, that sort of thing. In a thesis which I drew up afterwards you can imagine that in this draught board, etched on the glass, you looked down through the microscope and you could see that this has got one, this has got two, this has got three, this has got none, and so on, and sometimes is this a bit of dirt or is that the Eosinophil. The crucial thing about my thesis was that I was able to test in advance whether the distributions were right, a thing called *Bussel?* distribution, and that is the standard deviation of the count, the standard deviation of the one, two, three, fours and fives is equal to the square root of the average. So, I was able to find out whether I had been cheating in advance, but a billiard ball expected distribution of the draught board, and I had cheated very slightly, but, it was very very slight and it was a magic way of testing. People who developed early counting methods for blood cells and blood counts and so on, people who used shakers which was supposed to shake the blood up better, but, the reality is with this *Bussel?*, which is used to find out whether cheating or whether this cells got five, this has got four, how often have you got to go before the next one is going to have five and so on. No, the numbers were counted and then brought back and then afterwards, the British Antarctic Survey, FIDS, as they were called at that time, paid for my salary for a year in a physiological department so I could write the thing up properly as an MD thesis in Edinburgh.

[00.09.15] Chris: Anyway you were traveling around James Ross Island with Roger and Mr. Ruby and you found something you weren't really expecting?

[00.09.22] Hugh: Yes, well the first thing that we weren't expecting was that we were right on the sea side, that is close to where Shackleton sank off James Ross Island, and we found a Cadbury's Dairy Milk chocolate, sweetie paper, and we were absolutely amazed, you know, because we knew everybody was on the Base, they couldn't possibly be here. The Argentines seemed to have the logistics to be able to get to such a place, which was at least one hundred miles from Base, what on earth was it? But, as we moved ahead we then came upon some tracks, fresh tracks on the snow, and in the distance we could see Nordenskjold's 1901 hut. Now Nordenskjold was one of the first people to winter-over in the Antarctic, which was virtually the same time as Scott, and as we drew nearer we saw two figures and then realized it was Wally Herbert and Lee Rice. Wally who had a secret ambition to go and see Nordenskjold's hut had pre-empted us, with our rather slow man haul trip, they had come with dogs from a different direction and got here first. Of course, it was quite a friendly rivalry. The second thing that happened was that after we left Nordenskjold's hut which it was virtually in its original condition, with the skeletons of the dogs in the harnesses around the hut where they had been shot, when they had their emergency evacuation after their first relief ship had sunk, still in position the skeletons there, and the underwear of the various expedition members was still lying on the bunks which they had just abandoned. The wind was blowing through it but it was still fairly intact and then we went on from there...

[00.11.23] Chris: Sorry, a bit more about the hut. Was it in good condition or had somebody left the door open?

[00.11.27] Hugh: The door was shut, but it wasn't really wind and watertight. There was some snow in it, but, it just needed maintenance, it didn't need anything fundamental. I was very upset, years later, to find that parties had gone and renovated it and changed the appearance of it completely from the original, fairly gross from the original.

[00.11.53] Chris: Roger seemed to you think they went looking for, his depots, his local safe house depots?

[00.11.58] Hugh: Well, yes but it wasn't at that hut. A place that we had passed earlier on called Brown Bluffs, there was a story that he had left, Nordenskjold had left camera glass plates, you can imagine the excitement of finding old glass plates, a bit like Mount Everest and that sort of thing, and finding the old camera, you know, and people had perished and that sort of thing. But we weren't actually all that nearby and there were no photographs, or anything as immediate as that in the hut. We moved on rapidly and Lee Rice moved off in the other way and Wally went off in the other direction. But, we had sort of laughs and jokes with them. Because, they had tried to replace the nipple of the primus, the primus is absolutely the only source of warmth and heat in the tent, absolutely fundamental to the life of explorers to be able to get in there and get hot, but, they had stripped a thread so they had tried to jam the nipple of the primus with lavatory paper and just when the primus was getting up to full pressure the whole thing blew out and they were literally like black men. So that was a joke, you know. But we were glad that we were not on that expedition, we were on our own expedition, which was properly organized. Anyway, way south, just at the southern point of James Ross Island we suddenly, in the evening, came to the edge of the ice, like the edge of a cliff, it's like coming to a cliff, and we were tired, we were exhausted, and we thought what the hell is happening, why are we out on the sea ice and suddenly we come to the edge of a cliff on the ice? So I said let's camp and we will have a look at this cliff in the morning. What had happened was that in fact, although we didn't know it at the time, the break up of the shelf ice that used to be around James Ross Island, and what had happened was that a chunk of this shelf ice that we had been sledging on, we had suddenly come to the edge of it before the next bit and in fact the drop was not all that much, it was maybe twenty or thirty feet. Well we got down there easily enough, but, later on we came across, we saw some steam in the distance coming from the ice, and then we saw that the steam was coming from a herd of seals, hauled out onto the ice, and as we got closer I realized that the seals were not moving, they weren't going anywhere. As we got closer still I realized that the seals were very ill, some epidemic pollution, bleeding from the mouth, and then the really poignant thing was the baby seal were coming out of the holes in the ice to their mother to suckle, but there was no milk there, because their mother was dead, and now this epidemic of seals has been seen in other places and I think it is some kind of virus disease and maybe if I had had the training that I have got now I would have collected some specimens to bring back. But, they were about one hundred miles from the Base, which was quite a thought, so we actually sledged past this awful scene of anguish these seals were in and made our way back to the Base. As we got towards Hope Bay we could see that the three week weather, which had been absolutely magic, was changing and what happens first of all is that the cloud comes lower and you notice it and then a few

snow flakes fall and then you know that you had better hurry up, because, the local winds of over one hundred knots, that happen several times a year in the Antarctic. So we started to pull more strongly on our man haul sledge and we realized that we had got about five miles to go over a hill. We were going absolutely as hard as we could and suddenly realized that the form of Wally Herbert and Lee Rice was a speck behind us. So the question was should we wait or not? However, we got the impression that it was better that we got back and then in a slightly less charitable moment we actually just went absolutely flat out. Well, as we actually got down to Hope Bay the blizzard struck and we were very very glad to get in. Now, Wally and Lee Rice didn't make it and they came into the hut about three days later after the storm had blown itself out, and said that what had happened was that at the last depot, they had a depot collection for their trip, they had picked mentholated spirit instead of paraffin, and primuses don't work on mentholated spirit, so they had had no food either. So that was the occasion for another good joke rather than commiserations and there was the friendly rivalry that we had done it and they had not done it and so on and so forth. I say I am very very friendly with Wally, but, if I had been, having Roger with me you never make a mistake like that, and it is just such a different beer, he is just so close to the way of going and making sure everything is right and generally that sort of thing.

[0017.40] Chris: Did you ever join the whale patting club?

[00.17.44] Hugh: No, actually that is a great regret and I think the people that did have got something that is absolutely marvelous. What happened was that on that trip we were crossing the sea ice near James Ross Island and we heard the whales blowing in the distance and, as Captain Scott reported he had heard whales blow from about ten miles, its incredible at the low frequencies, but anyway, the trouble was I was young and so hells bent on speed and trying to do things at such precious a speed. However, I said we should deviate, maybe a mile, to where the pool was, kept open by tide races, where the whales were actually surfacing, but, I was just stupidly immature at the time. I would love to have gone there and taken the opportunity, except that we wouldn't have got back and we were also aware that we had go special permission to leave on this Eosinophils collection and that it would have left other people doing visual observations at night and so on. So, there were definite pressures, and at the time we were almost certainly proving the point that we could do a thing and that then endeavour to do it well.

[00.19.01] Chris: Did you have any occasion to do any treatment to dogs?

[00.19.04] Hugh: Yes, well as the doctor the dogs would have to be treated. A dog team consists of eight dogs and a bitch and the bitch... In FIDS you have what is called the tandem style which is different from what is called the Eskimos fan style, so the dogs were all in a line, a line of doubletons, double, double, double and then a single, the leader of the front. But, behind the leader is a bitch and a dog and behind them only dogs. Now, because there is only one bitch there is not too much fighting. The bitches will fight worst than any dogs; they will fight until they are just about a pool of blood. The dogs will fight in certain circumstances, for example, you never want to walk in front of a dog team because, if you fall down a crevasse and your head is out they will attack your head.

So, I don't recognize that it is you and that is an extremely dangerous situation. You are trying not to fall further down the crevasse with the dogs attacking your head.

[00.20.18] Chris: Ellery Anderson mentions that in his book, doesn't he?

[00.20.21] Hugh: Does he? I don't remember that.

[00.20.22] Chris: That he was attacked by his own dogs and other FIDS have said that they felt that that was unlikely, did you witness it?

[00.20.28] Hugh: What?

[00.20.30] Chris: *Repeats the question?*

[00.20.41] Hugh: I have seen dogs attacking in an unusual situation. The times when dogs are extremely dangerous, for example, if you have them in a helicopter or on a ship when they are tied up and you are leading another dog past them within reach. What will happen is that they will take a bite out of the other dog's backside very quickly and the dog that you are holding will then bite you and the teeth will go straight down to the bone. But, if the dogs are fighting and you wade in among them and pull their back legs out they never bite you. You can be right in the middle of a dog fight and because they recognize that it's not a dog that they are going for, they are not frustrated in that situation. The other thing which is interesting is that sledging on the sea ice you don't want to feed the dogs pemmican if you can avoid it. If you see a seal on the ice in front, and it's coming towards the evening, you stop maybe half a mile from it and then ski very very quietly to the seal which is sleeping in front of you with its hole close by, and what you would do is to take off a ski and then using it like an executioners axe bring it down with all the force you can possibly muster on the seal's nose. Now if you do it properly, and I mean on the nose I don't mean on the back of the neck or on the mouth, on the nose, what happens is that seal will rear up with head two or three inches above the ice surface and then with a very very sharp knife you cut its throat. We got very good at that. Then what would happen is that you would then take the steaks off the waist of the seal for cooking in the tent and then let the dogs loose on the carcass, so you wouldn't have to use any pemmican. But, it did take quite a lot of skill to do that as it was very easy in the circumstances to miss, in which case the seal goes straight back down the hole and you lose it. These were usually Weddell Seals.

[00.23.00] Chris: Did you ever meet, you followed his sledge tracks, and did you ever meet Victor Russell?

[00.23.02] Hugh: Yes Victor was a good friend of mine.

[00.23.05] Chris: Tell me about him?

[00.23.07] Hugh: Victor Russell was before me in the Antarctic, but, the point is that he was based at Hope Bay and as a surveyor and an ex military man, he had worked in Iraq

with the Anglo Iranian Oil Company. He mapped the north end of the Antarctic Peninsula and the thing about Victor was he kept very very good records, his sledging records are absolutely immaculate, you knew exactly where Victor was, and everything he surveyed was very precise. He had a very, being one of the early FIDS, interesting time. For example, he came back to the Base at Hope Bay and found that it had burnt down and so there was nowhere to go, and the two boys, two FIDS, who had been left at the Base, Bird and I have forgotten who the other one was now. One was the son of the headmaster of Bootham School, in York. They were both killed because the door to the hut opened outwards and the snow had piled up outside and inside they had been filling up the generator with petrol whilst smoking. That was the story. So that was the sort of life Victor had on the old Hope Bay Base. Now what happened then was that he retired from FIDS and bought a house in the Spey Valley, very close to ours, and so we would go skiing here and actually, last week, I had a letter from him, a postcard from his eldest daughter, Madeleine, who works at Alnwick, is a school teacher at Alnwick, and she has been sort of resurrecting his diaries and because of him, Victor finding this route up onto the Plateau, finding a route that completely defeated us, but, we then acknowledged it as Victor's route, I had his diaries, but, I had photographs also of all the all the different way points on the route and I had been annotating it for Madeleine. There is another daughter as well and as I say they live round here so we do skiing trips and that sort of thing together. Victor was a really great FID and the Survey should be really proud of him and the maps and so on, the accurate records that he kept were no bull.

[00.25.46] Chris: Another name which you mentioned earlier was John Heap, so can you tell me a little more about your relationship with John and the work you did with him?

[00.25.51] Hugh: Yes, well I met John at University which is well before FIDS and so on, and he was studying geography at Edinburgh. John Heap was an unusual person because he was always footing expeditions, he was an expeditioner, but, anybody who wasn't on the proper side of it, he would say that is a field survey, John would say. He was a meticulous person in that sense and in university in the early 1950s people hadn't been abroad, they hadn't been to Greenland or bits of service expeditions and things like that. But, there was no money; there was no means of chartering planes or anything like that. But, John Heap was always talking about ideas, he would, at luncheon, at the union of the university of Edinburgh, he would say "what about burying cosmic ray plates in the top of the atmosphere and we will see how much radiation is coming from outer space". Now that was never fulfilled but it shows the way his mind was working. All the time he would say "I'll tell you what Hugh I am going on an expedition to the *Lemming?* Peninsula in Norway, we are going to study the ecology of voles". Well you see this obviously an excuse to get to the *Lemming?* Peninsula but that was the way John felt. He had a scientific background behind him and he had this future and so then he had this idea of doing a PhD in the distribution of sea ice in the Southern Ocean. Now, of course, there are lots of polar records of how thick the ice was in a particular year and that sort of thing, so he had quite a big data base to start with. He worked at Scott Polar Institute and that is why, for example, he came down on the *John Biscoe* in 1956 to see the sea ice for himself. But he never actually stayed at a Base, as such. John to us was he was slightly authoritarian, which wasn't quite our style of things, you know with the authorities, but,

John was slightly establishment, though I say that in a completely friendly way, and that is why he became the Head of the Polar Regions Section of the Foreign Office. For example, when there were oil claims for the continental shelf off the Falkland Islands, John was a key person. I think, I am not sure about this but, I think John was quite keen for the Argentines getting hold of the Falkland Islands, obviously belonged to them and we, of course, were dead against that because, as you know, the Falkland Islands voted unanimously against that. But, that was a sort of friendly discussion that I had with John. He married Peggy and he always had an incredibly attractive house that came with thatched roofs and old style. His son is now an ecological reporter for the BBC, Tom Heap. So I have had some discussions with Tom too, a bit of a dauntless task too. So with that long Antarctic connection with them, he would come and stay. He phoned me up, from his house on Mull, and said "Hugh I am dying, I have got lung cancer, I have been to the Radcliffe Hospital, but they say there is nothing they can do." I said "John we would love to see you and talk about old times." He didn't say anything, but, a car came along our drive and I saw him getting out, but, he didn't see me, but the old man he was just relieving himself before facing up to come into the house and he came into the living room and sat in a chair and as I watched he went a sort of grey colour, and I thought he was going to die. He got very still and then I started talking about our skiing expedition to Brown Bluffs when he was looking at the sea ice in Antarctic Sound and his colour came back and the old John was there. He managed to stay with us for a couple of nights, then got back in the car and died three weeks later in Cambridge. So, his origin was really the Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club and some sort of first ascents on the *Lemming?* Peninsula, the *Yericavara?*, I think was his first ascent and that sort of thing. So he was a slightly different sort of person, he was half way between the establishment and the field people, that was where John really fitted. He was quite a special guy.

[00.31.08] Chris: You went as the doctor to Hope Bay; did you ever have to use your GP skills at all?

[00.31.11] Hugh: You see, when you qualify in medicine you get a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery, and doctors who were so duly qualified to set up in the Crimean War, in the 1850s, were expected to be efficacious, after a qualification like that, which is pretty desperate stuff. Yes there were some GP skills but often the GP skills were on the dogs rather than the men. I think one of the main things was that you had a medical radio schedule at night and there were twelve Bases of radio communication and they were from I've got a pain in my stomach, what am I to do? Now the reality was that there wasn't any means of evacuating people in the winter, so it wasn't a question of sending a helicopter, or anything like that. Hope Bay would get one or two ship visits a year, so evacuation was a difficulty. I mean there was a Norwegian expedition further back where they took somebody's eye out, I have forgotten exactly, the eye was damaged in some way, and there have been instances of appendixes being taken out. That never came my way, but, what did happen was that one of the Argentineans, close to us, fell down a crevasse and was found unconscious and I was called in to see him. He had a severe head injury and was profoundly unconscious away far away, and the question was should I have done something. I know that other people, in this situation, would probably have got the brace and bit out of the carpenter's thing and made a hole in the skull

wherever he thought the pressure might be, might have saved him, but, there are so many different things you might have been trained for, you can't help but have a slight feeling of inadequacy in situations like that. A lot of the things were people imagining that they were ill and you could do a lot for them, because you could give them an examination and say, well actually there is nothing wrong with you. People often fell, for example, when we had had a thaw freeze/situation, and they had a very heavy fall and were knocked silly and then we had morphia and things like that for that situation. I think one of the most exotic things we got was a thing called 'seal finger'. Now 'seal finger' was a disease that you see in people, women preparing/gutting fish in Aberdeen and they cut themselves with a knife and they get his disease known as 'seal fonger'. Well, what happens is, nothing happens for about six weeks, and then the fingers and the hand start to swell so the hand looks twice the size of the other one and the lymph glands in the arm become enlarged. They get a temperature and they become quite ill, with temperatures thirty eight thirty nine degrees, that sort of thing. So the question becomes what should one do? In the Falkland Islands they call it 'speck finger', it was seen in people in the sealing industry quite a lot, people cutting open the seals to feed the dogs and they cut themselves. It is a virus disease that is quite well documented as an occupational hazard, but, the treatment is to do nothing. It usually gets better with the bodies natural immune system. I had this one case with a meteorologist, and his hand was pretty big, but, the trouble was the lymph glands in his arm were like tomatoes, and the question was should that be knifed to let the puss out? I had a radio 'sched' with Stanley to discuss it with the senior medical officer there who was categorical that that nothing like that should be done as it only an enlarged lymph gland and nothing would come out, actually fluid is going to flow past the glands. This was the sort of minor things, but, the reality is that, you know, I was there for two and a half years, and the last year was six months in the field so I was basically inaccessible to everybody. Then when other people were peeing blood, and it was a question of whether it was a stone that was causing the blood and again it was advice to drink lots of water or do nothing. I am afraid that I think I was slightly evasive, but, probably the patient was better for that. Then there were the dental problems, of course, people's teeth fillings falling out, for which we had oil of cloves and things like that. I wasn't really skilled at dental work to put in fillings or things like that. But, these are the sorts of things that happened to young men in their twenties. So that is why there was so much time to do research. Of course, I was privileged to have my own surgery and my own room, which was very important actually because I was reading all the time medical books and that sort of thing. The big joke in the hut was making a door for the surgery, there was no door just a curtain and I thought that not enough, I want to have a proper door for the surgery. I wasn't very much of a carpenter, so what I did was I got scores of tongue and groove planks and I put them together so that it was bigger than the door and then I put it against the frame and cut round it and now it is called 'Simpson's Door'. We all had projects like that going on. Others were involved with making model sledges, which were very good. There was the very curious social life of the Base, which is difficult to explain, but, when you get a crowd of men together, personal prestige is frightfully important, and people joke about other people's idiotic things, the way they eat their bar of chocolate in bed in the mornings, things of trivia like that. One day Mike Ruby, who was the ex-policeman, who sledged with us round James Ross Island, was a very big guy and the rations were inadequate and we were having

tinned strawberries. Now the cook was, we all took turn as cook for a week, there was no special cook on the Base, and the quartermaster issued the stores for every person on a Saturday, that have got to last for the week, including twenty five pounds worth of loaves of bread, which most people liked until they came across this piece of 'elastoplast' I'd had on my finger in a piece of bread! On the day of the pudding with the strawberries, Mike had already had his strawberries when he said "I could eat five tins of these!" and there was silence until somebody said "Bet you couldn't!" Immediately everybody started to look at the Base Leader, who was the only person who could sew, and said to the quartermaster, acting quartermaster, "why don't you get five tins?" and a great big soup plate was produced and the five tins, gurgle, gurgle, and went into the plate. Everybody was watching and nobody was speaking. "How much was the bet, was it a fiver?" Now there were quite often bets on the Base, what would happen is you would send a signal to Stanley, "please will you transfer form the account of so and so to the account of so and so and that was that done. So Mike started off and he had eaten about a half when he got very slow, because the strawberries were quite rich, and he got slower and slower and slower, everybody was watching and I could see from the soup plate that there were at least two tins to go and then he slowly but surely stood up and ran to the door and was sick. Well that was a big social event on the Base. Another time there was a tremendous blizzard and the dogs had to be fed. When I say there was a tremendous blizzard you could actually see the roof timbers lifting about three inches in the gusts and the anemometer went from nothing to sixty, but it was switched on to half scale, so it really went from nothing to one hundred and twenty knots, and the question was who was going to feed the dogs. Well, it was Roger Tufft's turn to feed the dogs and that meant going to the pile, which was maybe a cricket pitch length away, picking up the bits which we had axed from a frozen seal and taking seventy dogs, each had a bit, and the dogs were just over a similar distance away. Well lunch time came and somebody said "where's Roger, why hasn't he come back from feeding the dogs?" While the wind was blowing above one hundred knots you had to shout in the hut because of the noise and if you looked out the door all you could see was white. The Base Leader was talking about, well perhaps we should rope up and go and have a look for Roger out where the dogs were spanned. So a rather half hearted attempt was made to go and look for Roger and we came back, it was then about three o'clock and it was going to get dark about five. Still no sign, Roger had not come back to the hut and he had been out there for about four hours. What happened was that everybody in the hut went very quiet, because it was obvious that Roger was going to die. Somewhere out there, but it was all white and we didn't know which way to look and one way was a cliff into the sea if you went the wrong way and there was this terrific wind and even with goggles on and you anorak hood up you wouldn't have seen very far. If the wind is above eighty knots you have really got to crawl on the ground, when the wind is blowing you can't really walk, although you can walk between gusts and that sort of thing. People just stopped talking about it. They didn't say why hasn't Roger come back they just became quiet because they didn't think that there was anything that could actually be done. About six o'clock that night Roger came in. He was very quiet and he was completely blue, and then somebody said "what happened?" He said I fed the dogs and I came back and missed the hut and I knew that I was somewhere near the sea, so I just lay down in the snow and waited until it was going to clear so that I would know which way to go. He had gone out

very very well dressed and so, everything was very very quiet as I remember, we thought Roger had gone, but he had got back and it was really a measure of his character. I think a lot of people would have died in those circumstances. That was a really big event on the Base when something like that happened.

[00.43.04] Chris: So he lay in the snow waiting for the wind to drop?

[00.43.07] Hugh: Yes he couldn't have been more than, well, a few cricket pitches distant from the drop and then that would have been it.

[00.43.17] Chris: Did the wind drop or did he...?

[00.43.19] Hugh: I think the wind dropped a bit, it didn't go away completely, but, it dropped enough for him to be able to see a few landmarks. In this survival thing it's about fighting, but, the weather will get better in the end and that was always the thing. When we were in a tent and the tent blew down, for example, we were stupid we should just have stayed in the collapsed tent. It has happened with our children in Scotland when we had the tent was blown down in Glencoe and Martin and I tried to carry the two small children back to the, we were quite high up and the wind blew and blew us flat and the child blew out of the rucksack into the snow in the darkness and we thought we are not going to make it we had better get back to the collapsed tent. The tent poles had broken. So we got into the tent and managed to stand up to get the primus going. So I have learnt the lesson now that when your tent blows down stay in it, don't try and do something stupid.

[00.44.26] Chris: I wondering whether there were any other lessons or remarkable moments that you remember from your time at Hope Bay?

[00.44.33] Hugh: Well I think that one of the moments with Roger was quite interesting. We were coming back from a trip on the top of the Detroit Plateau and we had to get to a place called Pitt Point which was a peninsula on the other side of a bay. Now to get back to our camp, which was where our supplies were, we had to circumnavigate the bay round the edge. Now the circumnavigation was on an ice cliff, there were glaciers coming all the way round in a semi-circle, imagine the semi-circle and the lowest point of the cliffs was about twenty feet. Well we were very tired and to go round the edge with the ice slip in all directions because when you traversing this with a sledge it all slips, either the dogs don't like it, they don't pull well near to the edge of the cliff because the glaciers are all parallel, which is the wrong direction. When we got to the edge of the bay and we looked across at our camp on the other side, about three miles away I suppose, I said to Roger "I wonder if the ice in the bay is strong enough to hold us?" It had had only been there for two days, but there were other bits of ice in there which would strengthen it. So the bay was full of ice but further out it was open water, and because we were tired we thought it would be just magic to get down there on to the easy sea ice instead of than traversing round the edge of the cliff. We would just get down on the ice and within fifteen minutes we would be back to where we had all our supplies. So we stopped and nobody said anything so I said "we will have a go" I wasn't trying to be rude but I think that opinion

pervaded. So I said "I'll go first". So, I was lowered on a rope over the cliff onto the sea ice and when I got down I realized what we had actually taken on, because it was a twenty foot drop and with two dog teams up there and there were bits of ice which was nice, something solid, but, when I got down I found that I went through! So I said to Roger, who was on the edge looking at how I was getting on and the others were somewhere further behind, "I think it is alright, but, the ice is pretty thin" and Roger said "well you can't get back up here again and that's for sure", so we tied a rope to the dogs and pulled them over. Ronnie was holding at the back, and the dogs would jump, but of course, they didn't have enough rope, so they were left hanging like this and eventually the first sledge was down, and I have forgotten how Roger got down, I think he was lowered by the others and then they came down. Yes, and before Roger came down I was just sitting with the dog teams wondering how strong the ice was, when I shouted "I think the ice is going out, I think the gap between the tide crack has increased to a foot, its all going to out". Ronnie said "let's hurry up then". So we did that, the others came down and we sledged across, and although the ice was very thin, we got home that night. However, a few hours later all the ice went out so it was a very very close call. The ice didn't come back for weeks, just open water!

[00.48.11] Chris: Was that a calculated risk or tom foolery?

[00.48.14] Hugh: I think it was a mistake taken because we were tired, and that's what people always forget, that when you're, at the end of the day you're tired. If you are going to do something difficult do it at the start of the day, don't do it at the end of the day, when you make wrong decisions as you are intellectually very feeble when you are tired and you tend to take risks which are going to save time and that's true of every pro. The other thing is that accidents take place, usually happen as a succession of faults, something minor happens, there is an expediency, then something major happens and about the third event of someone getting killed. But, fortunately in that case it was could we get across the ice. The thing about Roger is, he never was worried about getting killed, I mean, he was sensible and he wouldn't panic, I think I was for more panicky than he was. Once on a ridge in Spitzbergen, the highest mountain in Spitzbergen, we were using crampons along this arête and I fell off one side, and the rules are in mountaineering, if you are going along an arête, you jump off the other side and that is what Roger did, otherwise I would have been catapulted off down the slope. So it's a sort of lifelong companionship and trust and the most important thing is to be not intellectually boring after a long time in a tent. You are always thinking of something new, and the discipline of always doing what is necessary, that you have an outside man in the tent and an inside man and the dogs. The outside man has to get out of his sleeping bag, which is always difficult to do in intense cold, put on all his clothes and get out and sort the dog fight out. The inside man has got to wake up in the morning and got to make the porridge, which is what your breakfast is, and biscuits, ship's biscuits, with thick butter and a bit of Marmite in a tube, and the whole thing is to try and wake up and be off in about an hour, it would take about an hour, between putting your head out of your sleeping bag, having your break fast and that was efficiency. Because you weren't traveling al that fast you have to make the most of what is a particularly short day and that is whether you would get there or not, the most successful thing is to arrive.

[00.50.59] Chris: You clearly had an interest in the history of the Antarctic and I understand that since you have been back, which is now quite a long time; you still maintain an interest in some of the old huts and their preservation. Am I right in thinking that?

[00.51.13] Hugh: I think it is more of a fact that I find old roads, old draw plates and old buildings. I feel that there is a human spirituality about them which will live forever. To go into Nordenskjold's hut, I am trying to remember the name of the seaman, there was a bunk which had the name of one of the seaman on it, it had his vest inside, the spirit was still there and I think that you're looking after the immortality of the huts. The spirituality of these things is immortal. I get the same feeling when we're on an old road that people don't travel on now, I think of the carriageway and the horses and the fatigue that people must have had and what they felt when they get to places. The thing is I have read the books, most of the books, so I know roughly what their thoughts were like when the relief ship came, for example. It is interesting when relief ships arrive people call it the 'silly season'. What they mean by that, they mean that their lifestyle has been completely interrupted by ridiculous events like, 'be down at the boat immediately' or, 'we have to leave in an hour' or, and you hate planes arriving or something which disrupts the schedule and it seems selfish in a way, but, you have got this incredible tranquility in the polar regions and somebody is interrupting it.

[00.52.45] Chris: Did you sense any other kind of spirituality in the Antarctic or indeed in the Arctic, some people say that they were, they felt...?

[00.52.48] Hugh: When you slept out in the open after the tents blown down and there were these clouds skidding past and suddenly the moon was exposed and shining on the snow I felt this sort of spiritual thing then because we were a hundred miles away, lying in our sleeping bags in the middle of the snow is not the best place to be, but, the FIDS equipment had been tested over quite a long period of time, it was pretty heavy, but you needed heavy equipment in a situation like that and you could zip it up and you would last a day or two before the snow would start to fall through and get you out. There were spiritual moments. It wasn't so much dangerous things, moments of danger though, it was to do with things like light and people. No, I don't think we had quite what you are referring to.

[00.53.51] Chris: You, subsequent from the Antarctic you did expeditions elsewhere, a lot of the Arctic areas you have been in Spitzbergen and so on, and an attempt on the North Pole that went inadequately. What is the difference between the Antarctic and the Arctic, what is the key characteristic difference?

[00.54.08] Hugh: Yes, the main thing about the Antarctic Peninsula is it is a small place. On the other side across at Cape Legoupil, for example, and other crossings, it is a small environment, rather like Scotland. But, Scotland is great as things change rapidly from place to place. When you get into the Canadian Arctic, which is the; or the north Greenland Arctic it's a big big place and the distances are absolutely enormous, and you

tend to get swallowed up with the sheer size of it. The other thing of course is that the wild life, the natural Arctic, the birds and the seals have really taken a bit of a beating, but, they exist in remote places still and you just see one thing, something like a seal, that's it one seal a day if you do twenty mile up the west coast you might see one seal, or you might see a colony of turnstones, or Icelandic gulls, but this is a matter of remark, whereas in the Antarctic, particularly the Sub-Antarctic, I have never got excited about going to the High Antarctic because it is just ice. It's the edge of the Antarctic where the Convergence comes by and it would all be the krill in the water, the foodstuff in the water, and the life. That's a living place. The other place is just a great big polar enormity. But, that is because I am biased because I haven't been to the South Pole and those places like that. The North Polar pack ice, going in the North Polar pack with my wife in one just tiny expedition, with one little mountain tent, the three of us keeping in one sleeping bag to try and get to the North Pole, that was a very, very special experience. This was because the ice is alive, you know, its just sea ice and it's creaking and groaning all the time. It can crack open with sounds like pistol shots going on in your head during the night. There aren't many polar bears up there; in fact, there isn't much life up there, but the ice is alive so that you feel it's a living place, even though it is a completely dead place. It's very very cold, much colder than the Trinity Peninsula in Antarctica. The cold, with three days never warmer than minus fifty and the difficulty with that is when you stop pulling your sledge you start huffing and puffing, but, the air is so cold that it starts to freeze your lungs and you feel you have got to stop. If you don't get your primus going in ten or fifteen minutes you have had it, you are just going to freeze. As you are going, you sort of, oh! I have lost my hands and my arms, then you have got about another twenty minutes before you have got to get that tent up otherwise you will perish. It's a brinkmanship situation because you have got to keep traveling to get to your destination. I wouldn't have missed being on the central plateau of Grahamland, being at the top and looking out on to the Bellingshausen and Weddell Seas was magic. Being on the high Arctic Ocean in the north was also very special. But, these are personal things which are difficult to communicate to someone else. Of course the Arctic has become a farce now, when I read in the Times yesterday that somebody has skied to the North Pole in four days, and I thought what is going on here? He did twenty miles a day on skis and then he went back to Longybearn, which is about 1500 miles. What happened in between, there must have been planes buzzing around, you see. To us there is no point in that. We would rather go, as we did last week, to ski to Ben MacDhu and just be alone on the mountains, making tracks. It's rather like a sheet of fresh note paper you use to write to your girl friend and putting a pen to paper is like skiing 'alfrente', you know, remake the tracks, others may follow if they want, but, it's to do with, I am not quite sure but I think it is quite spiritual in a way, but, it is a very personal thing. Other people want to go to a ski resort with thousands of people, and that's actually good too, but, most people do that for social reasons, but not actually for the skiing, it's at least fifty per cent social. When my wife and I go, we ski at Aviemore quite a lot each year and I ski for nothing, because of the age thing, and they have a great social programmes like skiing for nothing for many particular ages, but, we would want to go back to the hotel in the afternoon, old style hotels, not skiing chromium plated type of hotels, but old type hotels, with old standards and a fire in the corner, maybe a little drink and meeting other people who want to do the same sort of thing, chatting with them and

meeting interesting people, because people are most interesting of all in the end. Meeting People in special environments brings out special qualities in them and we have had very special people here like Eric Shipton, for example, has stayed in this house and I will always remember his blue eyes. A man who should have become head of the Everest Expedition sitting in front of the fire and wondering whether he wanted to camp on the hill. Or Tillman, for example, who sailed with Roger quite a lot to the Southern Ocean, you see Roger has got all this sailing experience, sailing to the Crozet Islands, for example, with Tillman.

[01.00.16] Chris: What did you make of him?

[01.00.18] Hugh: Well he was, you know, he had really the altitude record, before the war, climbing Mount Everest, at twenty six or twenty seven thousand feet, or something like that, and he was one of those British Pre War climbers who wanted to do it without logistic support. He wouldn't see any point; I mean Hunt had, people say what about having a mortar here and we could fire shots and put supplies at the South Col and the British Government saw it as a National prestige a Union Jack on the top. The Swiss are going to come next year; we've got to beat them. Oh! We had better get the Army and then they said well Eric would be good to get the Base Camp but we don't think he would be good for the Summit, and so we will get the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society planning very much the Establishment situation, which is what happened very much in Scott's day. It's just really another world. Then the Tillman, the ship issues, what to do it with minimum resources, because the reward is so much greater even if you don't make it. We failed to get to the North Pole, but the time on the Polar Cap was something that can never be taken away.

[01.01.46] Chris: I am surprised that you never went South again, with all the expedition work you did after you left Hope Bay in 1957, I am surprised that you never made it to the Antarctic again? Did you ever desire to go?

[01.01.55] Hugh: No. I mean a lot of my friends have lectured on these Antarctic tours and that sort of thing, and we were actually invited to be guides on the *Lindblad Explorer*, which went north and the other Naturalists on that ship, like Roger Torvil Peterson, for example, the bird man, it was a great privilege to meet him and the people who put the pipe things on the deck saying come and look there are Sei Whales off the port bow and that sort of thing. However, we never wanted to do it again. I mean to measure the type of trip. You pick up the ship in the Hudson River, sail under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge out of New York and the cold table goes right across the ship, with millionaires and people like that. You would say to the Captain "Let's go and land over there that Alexander Fjord", you know, "historically it's important it where the Japanese come ashore in rubber boats", and the Captain said "well I will tell you what we will drive into the fast ice opposite Thule and we will get out, it's my birthday so we will get out the barbeque stands on the ice. A polar bear disappears into the distance. It's the Roger Tuffts that you want it's not those people, it's just different, the cruises. Going to Antarctica, I don't think that I could ever do it now. I did enjoy being let loose on Livingston Island for three months with nobody interrupting, just looking, and finding

these old relics of 1820. Is there an old dwelling there, you know, I have got photographs of them all, finding relics and finding that rudder, for example, and just being on your own. We did have one interruption, one day, after we had been there about six weeks, the helicopter came and came landed beside our tent; Roger and I were in the tent with Hobbs. A naval officer got out and said “would you like to come to come on board HMS *Protector* for dinner?” We said that we would be delighted, but, the thing was I had thought ahead and I knew about the Navy and I had said to Roger that we had better have some clothes with us, hidden away, just in case something like this happens. So, we were ferried on board and said could we go the ‘heads’ please, where we put on all our pristine clothes, and went into the mess and they were all frightfully impressed, and then they flew us back and we enjoyed that. But it was a complete break in the tranquility of the trip. It just, I wouldn’t say destroyed it, but, it took us about a week to settle down after the intrusion as we saw it. But that is mental and I think that Roger felt the same thing. I am not sure what Hobbs thought, he just didn’t say anything.

[01.05.00] Chris: I am sorry but we must leave it there, but, it has been a real pleasure thank you very much indeed.

Editor's notes:

Additional notes, details of the interview and track records are available on a separate sheet AD/24/1/120 (2 items) printed on 14.5.2014 at 16:28.51. This document provides access to all the Special Events.

Names in which the Editor was unsure are written in *italics* followed by ?, a question mark.

The Editor decided to leave double adjectives in the transcript to give strength of meaning to Hugh's responses.

The Editor regrets that the transcript of the two parts is in the wrong order, but, that was the way it came off the USB stick. This means that the pagination will NOT be correct.

The Editor has endeavoured to transcribe Hugh's interview to give note of any innuendos that Hugh implied in his responses, but has amended the grammar on occasions.

The Editor is prepared to tackle another transcript if so desired.

SJL

13.06.14