

ASH MORTON Edited transcript of an interview,
with Field GA Ashley Clarke Morton and his wife Di,
conducted by Chris Eldon-Lee, at their home in Wales, on 5th August 2011.
“30 years with BAS, 1981 to 2011, at Rothera and South Georgia”;
Transcribed by Mike Dixon, November 2016.
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Ash Morton, Part One of Three: (the sound recording comprises three separate files)

[Part 1, 00:00:00] Chris; This is Ash and Di Morton, interviewed by Chris Eldon-Lee on 5th August 2011. Ash and Di Morton part one.

Ash: Ashley Morton - I was born in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, 3rd June 1953.

[Part 1, 00:00:24] Chris: And Di?

Di: I was born in North Wales in Llandudno, in December 1952.

[Part 1, 00:00:31] Chris: And how did you meet?

Di: Are you....[laughs], I knew people who were “down south” and they told me that there was this guy called Ash Morton who didn’t get much mail and he ran the dog teams, so I wrote to him and asked for some pictures, and he kindly sent me some.

Ash: I sent some pictures and then there was some bigger ones, bigger prints I’d made so I visited Di to give them to her.

Di: But the interesting bit was I was teaching in Liverpool at the time and Ash was staying with an ex Fid, well an ex Doctor down in mid Wales and he phoned up. So I picked him up at Lime St Station and that was the first time I met Ash, on Lime St Station, and I didn’t know what – I’d seen a picture of him, and it was this big hulking guy in a Parka and that, and when he arrived on the Station he was a tall guy, really thin, and with a straggly beard and my first thought was ‘cut that beard’.

The next day, I brought him to North Wales to my Dad and I’d phoned my Dad up and said ‘he’s really shy Dad he doesn’t talk much’, dad said ‘I’ll sort that out’ so we drove along the prom and round Llandudno area, took him home for an evening meal, me Dad sat him down and said ‘pint of home-brew lad, get it down your throat’. Ash drank a pint, and then he gave him another one – he was talking then - no problem.

[Part 1, 00:02:09] Chris: Why do you – want to have these photos of dogs, were you keen on huskies?

Di: I love dogs, yeah, ‘cause I used to help a friend who ran husky teams, and I used to go to some of the events in North Wales just to watch them, ‘cause I like dogs. So, and I thought, one of my other friends who had gone south, I’d sent him a Christmas card and it was the only Christmas card he got, he was out in the field and it was dropped down to them and it was his only Christmas card, and I thought oh well I’ll write to Ash, he doesn’t get much mail - it wasn’t

I want a boyfriend – and it was about 18 months later when you came back again wasn't it ? You went back home to New Zealand, and then he was doing the kayaking expedition - I made some gear for him.

[Part 1, 00:03:10] Chris: Tell me about your childhood actually in New Zealand.

Ash: We lived in a semi-rural area so when I was young we had electricity at the house but we didn't have things like telephone or sewage, or anything like that. That didn't happen until later [laughs], but it was quite a nice place to be brought up and live yeh.

[Part 1, 00:03:42] Chris: Which bit of New Zealand was it Ash?

Ash: Lower Hutt, it's just out of Wellington, lower South Island [North Island ?], but we lived up in the hills at the outer edge of suburbia it was all farmland around us basically and sort of dirt-gravel roads, as the town expanded it sort of expanded up into where we lived.

[Part 1, 00:04:07] Chris: What was your father's occupation?

Ash: He's an engineer. He worked for the Merchant Marine for a while and when he got married he got a shore job ashore.

[Part 1, 00:04:24] Chris: Would you have had a state education in New Zealand or a private education?

Ash: No, it's all just normal – private education in New Zealand is limited to fairly few people.

[Part 1, 00:04:38] Chris: What sort of things were you good at, at school?

Ash: At school...when I was quite young I had a problem with Osgood Slatters disease on my knees so actually from quite a young age I couldn't do any real physical activity – cause it affected your knees, your knees were very sensitive so I did a lot of reading and when I was about seventeen I suppose, I got the chance to go on an Outward Bound course, Anakiwa New Zealand, and after that – up until then I hadn't really done anything particular physical cause you couldn't physically do it, but then I got into a lot of outdoor stuff after that, climbing and tramping, sailing and things, and then I haven't had a sensible job since then really [laughs].

[Part 1, 00:05:52] Chris: Did you not have a career plan at all?

Ash: No... I went to University and did biological sciences and geology and stuff, but by that stage I just didn't settle down to academic stuff there really. Every weekend we were away travelling, climbing, I was more interested in that kind of stuff really.

[Part 1, 00:06:23] Chris: What was your first brush with the Antarctic, what was your earliest memory of knowing about such a place existing.

Ash: Probably quite young, cause there is so much goes in through New Zealand, that every summer it's in the news, because your so much closer and there's so much traffic going through New Zealand you are much more aware of it than you are over here. If you talk about the Antarctic over here, people will start talking about polar bears and up-north, it's just a totally different thing. When I was in the University tramping club, there were guys in there that had gone down to Scott Base and people who did their degrees and also their post graduate research in areas that involved things that would enable them to go to the Antarctic, doing high alpine plants, things like that, so it would give them the opportunity to go south. So it was always there really.

[Part 1, 00:07:35] Chris: So was it a childhood ambition, or what turned it from being somewhere you heard about, to somewhere you wanted to go to?

Ash: By the time I was probably 20 or something, I can't remember how old I was, I did apply to New Zealand at one stage, but looking back I was totally inexperienced, and I didn't even get an interview, but that doesn't actually surprise me because I was so young at the time - but then when I came over to the UK for a trip to travel round and I saw the jobs advertised with BAS. The first year I was busy travelling round Africa and then I got back and I didn't have any work, well I had work on but it wasn't particularly profitable or interesting at that time and then a BAS job was advertised so I applied and got in that way, yeh.

[Part 1, 00:08:38] Chris: There was ten years between you applying for the New Zealand Antarctic Service and BAS so how did you make a living [unintell]

Ash: For five years in New Zealand I worked in television NZ I had a job as a stage hand set-erecting and constructing sets it was quite good for a long time 'cause we had variable hours and a lot of night work but you also had time during the day to do things, but then after a while it just got very – the organisation, the management was a bit much after a while. Initially there was a very small crew of us doing quite a lot of variety of work, but after five years it was very restricted what you did do, and it became less interesting.

[Part 1, 00:09:45] Chris: Had you taken an interest in the filming side of things whilst you were working at TVNZ.

Ash: Yes I did for a while, we were doing some film sets out on location, and so I was working with a cameraman for a while just doing basic things like pulling focus on the camera while he's doing stuff and things like that and laying out tracks, but it never really developed, it would have been quite nice at that stage, it didn't quite happen.

[Part 1, 00:10:20] Chris: So that accounts for five years of those ten, how did you spend the other five years before you applied to BAS?

Ash: I came over to Europe and then I was just travelling round doing casual labouring work in London, and get some money together and then travel round Europe and Britain and then trip round Africa. So it was just work for the summer, for a while, and then go off and do something, yeh.

[Part 1, 00:11:00] Chris: So when you saw the BAS advert in 1981, was it an obvious thing to do to apply or did you have to sit down weigh up the pros and cons?

Ash: No I didn't have to think about it for much no, because I'd seen it previously and I thought it would be good to do but just it didn't fit in, and then when I saw it again I just went for it, it didn't take much thinking about, no.

[Part 1, 00:11:27] Chris: Did you know what a GA was then?

Ash: Yeh, 'cause I'd known guys in New Zealand who'd worked in the Antarctic, well roughly what the job was yeh, but obviously different countries do things in different ways and have different titles and stuff.

[Part 1, 00:11:53] Chris: I appreciate its 30 years ago now, but can you remember the day of the interview.

Ash: Yes fairly well, not the details but I can remember bits about it. I didn't have a tie, so a friend of mine had a tie, he played rugby so it was a rugby club tie with an insignia on it and unfortunately at the interview, somebody asked about the tie and they obviously knew what it was and I didn't have a clue what it was.

[Part 1, 00:12:27] Chris: Do you remember who was on the other side of the table?

Ash: There was Eric Salmon, I think John Hall I dunno who else was there actually, no.

[Part 1, 00:12:45] Chris: Was it a rigorous interview?

Ash: I dunno it was actually I think one of the other guys was - his name was Martin, he used to be Signy BC. Different people were asking different questions, one avenue was they were asking about my interest in the history of the Antarctic and about Scott and Shackleton, and on the other side, they wanted to know about climbing experience and the practical experience of building work and hands-on things, because I think they had problems for some years with guys that were technically quite good climbers but their attitude was what they could personally get out of it rather than doing the job.

[Part 1, 00:14:10] Chris: More take less give?

Ash: They were a bit more gung-ho, but also not necessarily that practical on day to day stuff.

[Part 1, 00:14:23] Chris: Did you sense that you were being psyched out as well, that they were doing some sort of psychological assessment of you at the same time?

Ash: I suppose so yeh, because afterwards you realise what they were doing a bit more, because they had had problems, they were going for steadier maybe slightly older people that year with the GA's.

[Part 1, 00:14:55] Chris: Di smiling there! [laughs] Did you know where you were going to go then?

Ash: No didn't have a clue and it was a funny year 'cause normally they have the Conference and the field course and that sort of thing, because they were short on time cause we'd left on the Biscoe quite early in the year so we had the field course and then the conference, so the first time I met anybody was at the field course at Derbyshire and at that stage I didn't know anybody and you didn't know where you were going and I don't think until after the conference that we knew where we were going and what we were doing. I knew some places, but I didn't know where all the stations were. One guy was going to Halley, but it wasn't me so that was alright [laughs].

[Part 1, 00:15:58] Chris: Were talking about 1981 so you were being recruited after they started to think about health and safety, what do you remember about the training you got before you went down there?

Ash: The field training we did was still quite basic in some ways, some of the techniques you just wouldn't use now but they were still doing them and I was surprised at some of the ones they were doing, some I had not come across before, I'd always used new bits of kit and newer techniques. Some of the techniques they were using were quite old and basic, which did surprise me but it was nice to know there were thing like that there and you could use them

[Part 1, 00:17:01] Chris: Was the Health & Safety regime partially developed, not developed?

Ash: Partially.

[Part 1, 00:17:11] Chris: Did you do things like crevasse rescue?

Ash: We did that at Derbyshire yes. Then in my first years at Rothera, we developed that much in the first three summer seasons, better and better, and the travelling techniques much more in that period.

[Part 1, 00:17:37] Chris: So you were learning on the job. What was it like when you got there – how did you get there?

Ash: We went down all the way on the Biscoe which was [unintell], and also some parties were going to the northern peninsula so on the way down we were building the sledges cause they needed all their gear doing, so we were learning on the way down as well, cause we were building sledges, splicing tow ropes and doing things on the tents and all the stuff like that for the guys going into the field. Also travel on the ships was quite different to now as well, we were on the ships all the way down you'd spend a half day every day doing things like holystoning the decks or chipping paint or painting, there's something to do all the time really.

[Part 1, 00:18:44] Chris: So were the base leaders going down on the ship as well?

Ash: No at that stage a few of the summer people but not all, and the managers flew down to the Falklands and got on there. The air link was through Argentina and it was probably quite expensive at that stage. It was probably cheaper to put most people on the ship.

[Part 1, 00:19:25] Chris: What was Rother like in 1981, what met your eyes when you arrived?

Ash: We dropped people off on the Peninsula, went to Damoy and flew in to Rothera in the twin-otter, and you land at the ski-way which was up above the base. We travelled down by snow-cat to the base and it is a few little huts on this peninsula. At that stage there was probably only four little buildings there, though one of them was quite big at that stage 'cause it was a double storey building. It was still fairly compact, four people in a bunkroom, you still had to snow-block or get ice for water, and chemical toilets, so it was still fairly basic living conditions but comfortable enough.

[Part 1, 00:20:46] Chris: What sort of work were you given to do when you got there?

Ash: That season we were going out with a field party onto the Ronne Ice Shelf, four of us, two GA's, the scientist and a technician and we were preparing our equipment for that and doing some testing around the base, doing seismic testing and using some of the equipment around base just to see how it was gonna work but then shortly after we got there and before everyone was down from Damoy, we had some strong winds and both the aircraft were blown upside down.

We didn't have any aircraft for a field season really. So the people who were at Damoy, the ones that needed to, came in to Rothera and for the rest of that season we just did field testing of all the equipment, we had the scientific and the travel equipment on Adelaide Island and we ironed out quite a few little problems with the gear that season, so in some ways it was probably quite good because the next season when we did get down to the Ronne the equipment worked a lot better. If we had gone there the first season I think we would had problems in the field that you couldn't have fixed so in some ways it was quite good.

[Part 1, 00:22:31] Chris: So the loss of the two Otters was not a tragedy?

Ash: Well at that time it was, 'cause all the field seasons just stopped, the then ship had to come and take people out so some people went to South Georgia and they got there just in time for the Argentine Invasion and others just had to curtail their field seasons and go home.

[Part 1, 00:23:03] **Chris:** Were their lessons to be learned from that incident, how come the Otters were so vulnerable?

Ash: They were tied down but after that they did beef up the ropes that tied them down, so it's never happened again. They were just using a 10mm climbing rope and I think where they were parked, the wind was blowing from one direction again the nose of the plane, and they got a gust from the back which just flipped them over because it came from an unusual direction and it put strain on but in an abnormal way. The ropes went up to 20 mm rather than 10mm.

[Part 1, 00:23:54] **Chris:** Do you remember it being a particularly stormy night, what was it like?

Ash: No, down on base you didn't really notice, it had been windy for a couple of days and I don't think anybody had been to the ski-way for a couple of days. The aircrew went up there to check on the aircraft and dig them out and when they came on the radio to say the aircraft were wrecked, people just thought they were joking, but they had been blown completely upside down.

[Part 1, 00:24:27] **Chris:** What was their morale like?

Ash: Not very good really, 'cause one of them did get repaired and flew again, but the other one never flew so that was the damage to it. Everybody was a bit down on Base because the whole field season was just stopped really.

[Part 1, 00:24:53] **Chris:** Did you say you did four years at Rothera?

Ash: At that stage I was there for thirty three months, I did three summers and two winters in a row, yes.

[Part 1, 00:25:13] **Chris:** So you were there at the time of the Falklands conflict, how did you witness what was going on.

Ash: At that stage all of our communications to Cambridge were a radio teletext link through Stanley so we were or the radio operator was talking to Stanley every day and they would do the link through to send all our messages, it came through on a teletext ribbon printer put through the machine and it just typed it up. It was a radio link to Stanley and one day they were saying there were ships and aircraft flying around, and it was just unbelievable. We still had this radio link once the Argentines had invaded and you still heard a lot about what was going on even though it might have been monitored but you still had this link, even though we didn't then have a link through to Cambridge.

The strangest one was when they invaded KEP (King Edward Point South Georgia), and we were on the radio to KEP at the time, and actually we were all in the Radio Room and we could hear the BAS Base at KEP talking to the Argentine ships as they were coming in telling them that there were marines ashore and not to come into the Bay, that the marines would fire on them if they came in. We could only hear half the conversation because the BAS Base was broadcasting in HF and VHF, but we could only hear the KEP side of the conversation and then they left the room and took cover.

[Part 1, 00:27:28] **Chris:** So BAS personnel were actually having to negotiate with the Argentinians?

Ash: Yes the Base Commander at KEP was also the Magistrate so he was talking directly to the ship, and I guess the marines were in a better position to do something, rather than just talk.

[Part 1, 00:27:51] **Chris:** The Argentinean Navy actually came to Rothera didn't they, what do you remember of that - this was before the invasion?

Ash: It was right at the end of the season, we were quite busy at the time, there were a couple of ships, there was the *Irizar*, and the *Baia Pariso*, and a lot of big brass came ashore by super-puma helicopter, and it was surprising to see so many big navy personnel, admirals and all this kind of stuff there, it was my first season, I didn't know if the Argentines normally came down with a big fleet of ships at the end of the season or whatever, cause they had a Base further south than us. In retrospect, it was significant but at the time it was like a visit from the Argentines, really, they weren't there for long, it was just the usual get some kind of a gift and give a gift and then they were off, yeh.

[Part 1, 00:29:12] **Chris:** Was there any sense that there was something more serious in the wind, looking back on it now.

Ash: I don't know really, I wasn't really aware of what was happening in the Falklands and all the stuff that was going there with regards to the taking marines to South Georgia and all this stuff with Endurance really no.

[Part 1, 00:29:40] **Chris:** Once the conflict had started, what were your feelings at Rothera, were you feeling safe and secure?

Ash: Yeh we felt secure enough, there's an Argentine Base to the south but we didn't feel threatened by them. You didn't get much information through and it was all one sided in some ways. After a while the communications through the Falklands stopped – we could listen to Falklands radio but the official communications from Cambridge had to go via Newmayer (German Base East of Halley), and then to Halley and then across to us so it was quite limited. That's not necessarily a bad thing at times [laughs]. The personal communications was reduced to 30 words a month, sent out, you can't really say much on 30 words a month.

[Part 1, 00:30:58] **Chris:** That was after the invasion?

Ash: Yeh. It was only like 100 words a month before that anyway. You can't really say much in 30 words.

[Part 1, 00:31:08] **Chris:** Who had you left behind in England?

Ash: Oh, nobody really.

[Part 1, 00:31:15] **Chris:** Or New Zealand?

Ash: Yeh, just my family in New Zealand. I didn't really send that many things backwards and forwards anyway that much, but I suppose in some ways, because we had less official traffic backwards and forwards we did have, I don't know if we did have more freedom or not really.

[Part 1, 00:31:49] **Chris:** [laughs] Interesting time, wasn't it, that spring?

Ash: Yeh, it was also interesting after the conflict was over, the first people we had in at the end of the winter was a Chilean aircraft. They has a little Base up on the ski-way, and they brought in News-films about the war, and it was interesting seeing a broader view of it, because we were limited what the information that was coming in we were getting, so there was lots of things we didn't know about during the time.

[Part 1, 00:32:34] Chris: What surprised you when you got the bigger picture?

Ash: Just that we'd heard things like the bombing of the runway in Stanley and it was out of action, whereas in fact they'd bombed it but it hadn't really had any effect. You weren't getting a very broad picture of what was happening at the time.

[Part 1, 00:32:59] Chris: I have to say that was also true here, the government management of the news process was quite tight. We got to hear about the sinking of British ships, would you have picked up on that as well?

Ash: Yeh, I think we did, yeh. I can't remember very clearly exactly what was going on yeh.

[Part 1, 00:33:23] Chris: Are there any other key points from those first few years at Rothera you want to mention, or shall we move on?

Ash: In those first seasons in the winter and also in the first summer because we didn't have a proper field season, was doing a lot of travel with the dogs and because you are travelling at a slower pace and you notice you're going uphill and downhill and over the terrain more, I think I learnt quite a lot just because you're travelling at a slower speed and seeing things, whereas travelling on a Skidoo you tend to just accelerate a bit more or brake a bit and you cover the terrain without seeing or feeling what's going on around you really.

[Part 1, 00:34:18] Chris: How did you take to dog work?

Ash: I liked it. Some people when they were down there did a lot of skiing or photography. I just did a lot of work with the dogs. It could be really rewarding and extremely frustrating depending on the day [laughs]. One day it took us eight hours to travel three miles just because it was hard work and soft snow and the teams weren't working, and other days - a nice day, absolutely clear, still, hard surfaces ski-joring along and the only sound is the skis on the snow and the dogs panting and you're just going on for miles it's almost effortless, it was really good.

[Part 1, 00:35:26] Chris: Did you see the advent of the Skidoo as a disappointment really?

Ash: Well it's a more practical way of doing things really, 'cause when you're travelling with dogs, most of the load on the sledge, is just food for the dogs, so you're limited what you can do and you have to put lots of depots in to do anything. With skidoos, it's a much more practical and you can cover much bigger distances.

[Part 1, 00:36:00] Chris: You have to feed the skidoo as well though don't you?

Ash: Yeh, but if it's not working, if you're not driving the skidoo it stops consuming fuel whereas the dog still eats, even if you lay it up for ten days;

Di: Some of the dogs had fights, you had to stitch them up?

Ash: That wasn't so much a problem.

Di: But didn't you say you took them into the tent to stitch them up, 'cause they were quieter?

Ash: Yeh, well you'd need to take them in if you need to anaesthetise anything, to take them inside, and you'd need to use your hands anyway.

[Part 1, 00:36:44] Chris: How did you learn to do all that?

Ash: We had a Doctor on Base, and the doctor the first year was quite interested in the dogs, so he was out on quite a few of the trips. It was also the stuff you learned for doing field work anyway. You had to know a certain amount of medical stuff just for going in the field so when we were coming down in the ship, the doctor had you putting injections into oranges and stitching up bits of leather or cloth, so you'd learn the techniques even if it wasn't on an animal.

[Part 1, 00:37:28] **Chris:** So you moved from, I'm not quite clear whether you kept on coming back to the UK throughout this process or were you – or New Zealand, or were you away for a very long time?

Ash: First of all I was at Rothera for two and a half years, then after I'd finished there, that time we did two field seasons on the Ronne Ice Shelf, and at the end of that I came out. Some friends had a yacht so I joined them in Canada and we sailed across the Pacific to New Zealand. So that was about a year and I applied to BAS again so from New Zealand I came back to the UK and then went straight back down to Rothera for 18 months. Two more field seasons and a winter there, then after that came back to UK and back to New Zealand. A friend and myself went to Alaska and Canada and we were sea-kayaking for the summer up there. That was like another 18 months so I had a period in the Antarctic, then an 18 month gap just travelling round and doing stuff then back again kind of thing.

[Part 1, 00:39:00] **Chris:** So when you re-applied were you – did you get a phone call saying “would you like to come back ...”?

Ash: No, I either wrote a letter or phoned the UK, just to see if they had anything available.

[Part 1, 00:39:16] **Chris:** Why did you want to go back.

Ash: [laughs] I just really enjoyed the work I was doing there really yeh. In most seasons I've been back, I've been working in a different area, and doing different stuff, and the last time I wintered, after that I came back and then I went to South Georgia, to Husvik, and I really like the seasons there and after that season I got married.

Di: I cramped his style !!! [laughs]

So I came back, got married, and then I wasn't going to go south that season, so I told BAS I wasn't interested in going south, and then late in the year, November, I was at a bit of a loose end, and a friend of mine phoned up and said do you want a season in the Antarctic, and this was working with Adventure Network, and I took about.....

Di: Two minutes?

Ash: Probably wasn't that long to decide, yes.

[Part 1, 00:40:53] **Chris:** What was the domestic view on this?

Di: Well I met him when he was into the Antarctic, that's him isn't it? You couldn't stop him? No I just presumed he'd keep going. He was a bit bored in Liverpool.

Ash: Yeh, I hadn't intended going south it was getting into the winter, it was getting dark, cold and rainy in the UK, and I just got itchy feet I suppose and so as soon the opportunity came up I was off.

Di: I just presumed he'd be going in the future so it was disappointing when he goes, but I married that.

[Part 1, 00:41:41] Chris: What is the life of an Antarctic widow like?

Di: The first week after he goes, you hate him because you think 'you've left me', and you really resent him, 'he doesn't love me anymore', he's gone off and he's doing all these nice things and then you get into the swing of it, as long as you get good communications, initially it was 180 words a month, and you had to be careful what you wrote, because it was read over the air on the Bases. But he's always been quite good phoning, so even when he flew the planes down, he helped fly the twin-otters down from the UK, he'd either phone or send postcards, so he was good with that, and now he phones me every morning. Considering what we used to have, 180 words a month, to being able to - he can phone up - it's really nice. The first two weeks when he comes back are wonderful and you can get what you want then and after that you've had it.
[laughs]

[Part 1, 00:42:56] Chris: Is regular communication a wholly good thing?

Ash: In some ways it's not, 'cause even now at Halley, even though they've got telephones and all the rest, you have a lot of trouble getting through a lot of the time and then if you don't get through people assume there is a problem, 'cause when we were at Husvik, it was quite early on we had just ARQ over the radio but it was the stage we had a computer there so you got the ARQ and you then get a printout on the computer. It was reasonable reliable but it was still just radio waves from another Base so it had to have a few steps to get back to Cambridge and that, and then people would come down and want instant replies to stuff, and if something didn't come through, they'd start worrying because it hadn't come through, so in some ways it's worse, because if there's no communication people think there's a problem when often it's just there's no communication.

Di: Something usually goes wrong in the house within a month of him going south, something big goes wrong, the boiler packs up, we had couple of thousand volts come through the house and it blew all the power. Something usually goes wrong so I'm on the phone to me' brother, he lives in Colwyn Bay, 'Rodg can you come and fix this'.

[Part 1, 00:44:42] Chris: Do you tell Ash about it - there's nothing you can do, is there?

Ash: No, you can suggest things but if I was here I'd know exactly where to go and what to do but actually trying to describe where things are, you'd probably find them after a bit.

In some ways it was better when you just had no communications really.

[Part 1, 00:45:11] Chris: What about knowing that he could be doing dangerous things whilst he's away?

Di: Well there was one incident while he was on the South Sandwich Islands and I knew they were going in by helicopter and they were coming out by boat and you knew that was going to be a bit awkward because it was a shallow sloping beach?, because the waves were - crashing waves.

Ash: You get quite bad weather there and it is quite an exposed coastline.

Di: I'd had a phone call from another wife, one of the scientist's wives, to say 'it's alright Di there back they're safe and it was horrendous, Pete's never going to do that again, it was really bad it was touch and go the rescue boat was down - Oh it was terrible!' and didn't think it was going to be that bad so of course I was worried then.

[Part 1, 00:46:16] Chris: Is this the departure from Candlemas Island?

Ash: Yeh.

Di: And then Ash phoned and I said ‘was it was it bad...’ and he goes ‘no, a bit wet’!

[Part 1, 00:46:28] **Chris:** And what was it really like ‘cause you were trying to depart at the end of the season from Candlemas Island, what year was this Ash?

Ash: This was, Oh... ’96, ’97 season.

[Part 1, 00:46:40] **Chris:** What really happened?

Ash: Well, we were put in by helicopter from *Endurance* which was relatively easy, but then we were getting picked up by JCR. They had come in and tried to pick us up one day but the surf was too rough and the landing craft couldn’t really – we got lines ashore and had the landing craft on the beach but then it started drifting along the beach and it almost ended up on the rocks and they pulled off and went off to do some other work, cause the JCR had been doing some oceanographic work on the way to pick us up cause they had been doing stuff around the islands.

Then they went off, then the weather improved, the surf on the beach improved by then, they were so far away then they had to come back and by the time they came back, the weather had deteriorated again. By then they were on a tight schedule cause the problem was, they had to then get to Stanley to meet the flights back to the UK. So then they had a short window to pick us up so they anchored the landing craft off the beach in calm water, and with a rocket line they fired a line ashore, and then we pulled a rope ashore and then we had a zodiac inflatable tied both ends so that we could pull it ashore, load gear onto it pull it out to the landing craft and unload it into the landing craft.

Unfortunately every time the inflatable came up to the beach waves would come into it and it would get full of water again, and so all the equipment and stuff when we put people and equipment into the boat, it was floating around and had to get pulled out and also the more equipment and people that went out, the less people there were ashore to pull the boat back and also we were pulling it back by the stern so it was harder work to pull it into the beach than it was to pull it off of the beach.

We did have boating floatation suits on ‘cause we had to go into the surf to pull the boat in and also to load stuff in the boat so we were getting wet, you’d sort of be wet up to the waist or higher as the surf was coming in and was getting the boat in and we were just getting all the essential equipment off ‘cause we had scientific gear there ‘cause there had been geologists working on the Island geophysicists, Ed King was there doing seismic work and gravity work and Pete Bucktrout doing filming so we had to get all the essential gear off first and by the time it came to getting a lot of the more basic gear, the tents food boxes, pots boxes, all the field equipment off, there wasn’t enough people ashore to do the work so in the end there was just three of us there Brian, Ed King and myself to pull the boat in and load gear up and send it out and then at the end of that we were all basically just knackered, cause there had been quite a long day so we just got gear into the boat and then actually getting the last person into the boat was quite a tricky business as well, cause somebody had to hold the boat ashore with a rope, while the other people were loading gear into it so it was a bit wet but it wasn’t dangerous really, the thing was it was just the fact that the ship had to make a connection at Stanley for the flights, that it had to happen like that.

[Part 1, 00:51:37] **Chris:** So was that a scary moment, were you scared at all?

Ash: No, I wouldn’t say I was scared no. It was just tiring and hard cold work really yeh.

[Part 1, 00:51:50] Chris: Do the women actually form a kind of informal support group then whilst the lads are away.

Ash: At that stage they were weren't they?

[Part 1, 00:52:01] Chris: Tell me about that Di.

Di: When Ash first went south I'd be speaking to people in Cambridge, you know, Dawn Hall. I'd got chatting with her and it was nice having the communication there and you'd sometimes phone up cause it's nice to have a chat with somebody who knows what's going on there. Then when Ash went to Husvik,

Ash: At Husvik there was quite a few and Cambridge there's a few, Helen and Conan's wife and some others as well, weren't there?

Di: When Ash was flying down to Husvik, Brise Norton, I met Helen, Rod Arnolds wife and we got chatting and took each other's phone numbers and phoned 'have you heard anything' phone each other up and it's quite good and when Ash was down on Candlemas I think I got in touch with Helen and Ed wife, sometimes you have a little bit of communication with people other times you get really friendly with them.

Ash: I think it was more so at Cambridge, wasn't it, cause all the permanent scientists and that they lived at Cambridge so their wives knew each other anyway so they used to meet up.

[Part 1, 00:53:30] Chris: Primarily it was the women of the men who were on one particular base that kept in touch with each other, like a shadow?

Di: Yeh, 'what have you heard - what are they doing' cause it was Becky, Pete Conveys wife who'd phone me up from the ship at Candlemas to say you were safe and you were grateful that she'd phoned you up.

[Part 1, 00:53:50] Chris: Is it nerve wracking, or is it just you take it in your stride?

Di: It's a bit – you worry about him but there's nothing I can do.

Ash: It does have disadvantages though, cause Rod would get Tels down or messages from Helen saying 'well I hear Ash has done this, why haven't you done that, or I'd get one saying Helen's got some Tea- towels that Rod bought her in Stanley and things like that, so there are disadvantages for them talking [laughs].

Di: There was one advantage, I'd phoned up headquarters about something it was just before we got married and there were three flights out weren't there, you were on South G, and they said that they phoned the base and said right Ash Morton's on the flight out and there's places for two others, sort out whose going, and Ash said they said 'who do you know at headquarters cause you've got a place why haven't the others?'

Ash: That's not surprising really, especially places like Husvik because you had radio communications but often it was a sort of out of the way really you didn't have any direct communications with Cambridge it would either go through Signy or Bird Island and so it was meant to be mainly through Signy, and Signy would get stuff in from Cambridge and if they didn't bother to tell us something was happening we wouldn't know about it and sometimes there would be something that involved us but it would be a month later that we'd hear about it and we'd have to ask for things like ships-itineraries when the ship was calling, then they would say

'oh we knew about that weeks ago', when you are placed like that, or in field camps, often the information that actually filters through to you is virtually nothing at times.

[Part 1, 00:55:53] Chris: Were there dangers associated with coming back and re-establishing yourself in back in Britain again – I'm thinking of motorway travel?

Ash; [laughs] It was after a season at Husvik, you just walked everywhere and that was the fastest you went around, and the seasons there for up to six months, so for six months the fastest you had moved is just at a walking pace and then you're shipped back to the Falklands and then just a flight home but that was the scariest thing, cause I got another flight up to Manchester and it was just get in the car at the airport and straight out onto the motorway and it was absolutely terrifying to be travelling at 70mph along the motorway, it really was scary.

Di: It wasn't my driving it was the speed.

Ash: It was, it was just the speed, cause you just living life at a walking pace for six months, yeah.

[Part 1, 00:57:10] Chris: Let's take a break and we'll come back and do some more.

End Part 1

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[Part 2, 00:00:00] Chris: This is Ash and Di Morton, interviewed by Chris Eldon-Lee on the 5th August 2011. Ash and Di Morton part two.

Before we move on from Rothera, can you just tell me about the incident in '89 -'90, when you had to deal with a death at Rothera. Were you Base Commander at this point?

Ash: Ya, previous to that John Hall had been Base Commander and Field Ops, and that season he didn't come down, he sort of started working at Cambridge full time. So there was Pete Marquis and myself and Pete was dealing with Field Ops, and I was dealing with all the base stuff. There was a private expedition down it was the yacht *Saul*, which was quite a big yacht, and they had a group of people on there and they had a film crew, and they were filming adventurous stuff in the Antarctic. One part of it was they had gyrocopters and they were flying these off the Jones Ice Shelf east of Rothera. Giles Kershaw was flying this Gyrocopter and it basically fell out of the sky.

[Part 2, 00:1:45] Chris: Do you know why?

Ash: No, no it was a mechanical problem with the aircraft. It was a prototype aircraft as well, I don't think it had a "rating" or anything like that.

[Part 2, 00:02:13] Chris: Was Kershaw one of your team ?

Ash: No, no he used to work as a pilot with BAS, when the Air Unit was getting established first of all, and he did a lot of the pioneering BAS flights in the Antarctic, finding ice runways and all that kind of stuff. So, he had stopped working for BAS well before I had gone down there, well before '81. He was one of the pilots on the original Ranulph Fiennes Transantarctic Expedition. He was one of the pioneers of BAS aviation in the Antarctic really.

[Part 2, 00:03:12] Chris: Did the accident take place near the base?

Ash: It was across in Bigoudan Fjord. At the crash he fell quite a height. The Gyrocopter just stopped flying, falls, and as soon as that happens – there was something with the gearbox, so as soon as it hasn't got any forward momentum it just drops and he was killed. But because it was in BAT territory, and also Chris Elliott was the Captain of the *Saul* at the time, [he was a BAS ship Captain on leave at the time] and because they came into Rothera, we had to deal with it.

So we had a lot of communications between Rothera and Stanley as to exactly what format everything had to happen. Then we had to take statements from all of the people involved, and the Doctor and myself had to go out to *Saul* to see Giles's body and confirm....

Chris: Identify? So the body was recovered?

Ash: It was on *Saul*. Giles wife flew down by private (Boric Air) flight into Rothera and then they took his body across to Blaiklock Island, 'cause that was where the accident happened, on the Jones Ice Shelf, and that's where they buried him, on Blaiklock Island.

[Part 2, 00:05:47] Chris: Your involvement was because you were the base leader, you were also the Magistrate. How was that?

Ash: The hardest thing was communication with the Solicitor General in the Falklands, just to get the procedure correct, so that it was all legal and done properly really. It was a matter of doing it in the correct manner so that it was done properly. There were some people on the yacht were not – they wanted to go off and do filming, etc. It was quite handy that Chris Elliott was on board, 'cause he said 'we are gonna stay here until it is done properly', so that was quite good.

[Part 2, 00:06:44] Chris: So there was some tension about time, was there?

Ash: Yeh the people who were doing this filming, they just wanted to go off and do the film and do other things so there was a bit of conflict about if they should leave without things being done.

Also for Annie Kershaw, if things weren't done correctly, then legally for her in the future it could have been quite difficult.

[Part 2, 00:07:16] Chris: Did you find yourself having to put your foot down at that point?

Ash: We did but, it was the fact that Chris Elliott was the Captain of the ship, also he just agreed and said 'we gotta wait until it's done properly'.

[Part 2, 00:07:31] Chris: So was that a case of you as Base Commander saying to him, this is how it has to happen, you have to stay here?

Ash: Yeh basically, but the problem wasn't with Chris and the ship, it was with the expedition people on the ship, they had hired it. It was a bit of a shock really 'cause Giles was a bit of a legend really. So something as simple as a gearbox failure, and that was it.

[Part 2, 00:08:08] Chris: Was there an enquiry at Rothera?

Ash: There was an inquest, we had to – can't remember exactly what we had to look at really now. We had to look at all the information we had, and we had to write a report about taking evidence from the people that had seen what had happened.

[Part 2, 00:08:27] Chris: When you say "we", do you mean you? [laughs]

Ash: Yeh, but with advice from Stanley as to what to do. Then the people involved had to give a statement and it had to be written up, and then they had to read it out to say - and everybody that was involved had to hear what was being said by everybody else.

[Part 2, 00:08:51] Chris: I guess you haven't been trained for any of that?

Ash: No, no it was just something that you just don't expect to happen really.

[Part 2, 00:08:59] Chris: And what was the feeling around Rothera at that time, did it really affect the morale around the base?

Ash: No, 'cause by then I don't think there were many people who knew or knew of Giles really.

[Part 2, 00:09:22] Chris: The next generation had arrived?

Ash: Yeh, it's a bit like, quite a few years later, I was back at Rothera when we heard that the last of the dogs had died after they had gone out. The news came in but when we started talking, there was probably only three people on base that had actually been there when the dogs had been there. Even though there was photos of dogs all over the base, and buildings named after teams, there wasn't people there that had any connection, so it didn't really mean anything to most people.

[Part 2, 00:10:00] Chris: The turnover is usually quite rapid isn't it, a couple of seasons. It's unusual for somebody to spend more than more than twenty years in the Antarctic. [laughs]

Ash: Yeh.

[Part 2, 00:10:11] Chris: Let's take you then into the "Banana Belt" if we may because you spent a number of seasons at South Georgia. I wonder what was so special about South Georgia for you ?

Ash: Oh...If there one place I'd go back to the top of the list would be South Georgia, it's just a unique combination of, you've got glaciers that come right down into the sea, you've got big mountains, you've got spectacular scenery and there is wildlife everywhere as well. It's a combination of everything in a very small space. If you are based in one of the bays like Husvik, or Stromness, you can walk places and all the work is fairly local, you just walk there and there is just so much in a small area, really.

[Part 2, 00:11:17] Chris: Did it attract a different kind of Fid? Can you elaborate on that?

Ash: Some people like the "real Antarctic" feel, deep field, with not much communication, getting put in by aircraft and feel as though they are a bit remote. In reality, places like South Georgia, or South Shetlands or South Orkneys, South Sandwich Islands you are actually more remote because, you can be put into the field from Rothera it's just an aircraft flight, whereas if you're out on places on South Georgia, until you can get a ship there, you've got no access. I don't know. Like some people go back to Halley and like it there. I've spent summers there but the minimal time there is optimal for me really.

[Part 2, 00:12:22] Chris: So what is it then, it's the wildlife is it?

Ash: It's the whole thing really. Certainly when we were first there at Husvik, it was fairly basic we were in the Managers villa which was separate from the Whaling Station there and you are doing everything for yourself and everybody takes a share of the cooking and doing the gash duties. To get water, we had to get it from a stream, and we had a little generator, which ran a few hours per day, and you'd pump water to a tank on the roof, everything was just very basic. Anybody and everybody did contribute to the way the place was running.

[Part 2, 00:13:19] Chris: Your role as a GA must have been somewhat different, practically different, when there is less ice around.

Ash: Yeh, you're doing more hands-on work with scientists rather than when you're deep field with geophysics or something, most of your work is taking scientists to where he needs to go, also with a lot of the glacio' or geology projects your job is to get the scientist to where he can work and then he is doing his work and sometimes you can help by running out cables or carrying rocks and things like that but you can't contribute to a lot of the science because the geologist is looking at rocks and he is formulating the ideas while he is going along and, sometimes you can do some little jobs that help.

At a place like Husvik, typical season beginning, we'd go in early season, we would go in and be doing work with elephant seals, they would often go away then, we would be doing work with people doing work on penguins or lakes, so you're doing totally different work, or fur seals, and later in the season there would be somebody else. So you are doing a lot of different work, and it is a more hands-on approach and you are helping and involved with the science a lot more.

[Part 2, 00:15:02] Chris: Can you be a bit more detailed for me, just examples of the way you would actually be there with the scientist...

Ash: With the elephant seal work, there would be a team of about three or four of us. At the beginning of the season we'd be drugging female elephant seals, weighing them, elephant seals weight 500 to 900 kg, so you need people to roll them into a stretcher, rig up a tripod, lift it up with a hoist to weight them and you'd be doing that for the first part of the season. Once they had pupped, you would be doing it with the pup as it grew until it was big. You'd be involved with drugging the animal, keeping it drugged but conscious and alive, and just doing everything, and in a few of the later seasons, there weren't any scientists down involved directly with doing that, so Hector McAllister and myself would be drugging seals, putting the satellite tags on and retrieving them, just ourselves.

[Part 2, 00:16:33] Chris: So you were seeing more of the process?

Ash: Yeh you were getting immediate feedback. We would be doing stuff on elephant seals, and that would go on throughout the mating season and all the adults would leave, and there were still the pups there still becoming weaners and you'd be working on them throughout that period and then when they left, the fur seals would be around and you'd be doing similar work, catching them, putting satellite transmitters and time-depth recorders on them when the females are going off to feed and coming back to feed the pups. Day to day things, your putting things on and taking off a couple of days later, it can be fairly intensive. Certainly with the elephant seal work, it can be quite physically hard, 'cause we were doing males as well and they can be 2.7 Tonnes or so.

[Part 2, 00:17:49] Chris: Can I ask you how you drug a male elephant seal?

Ash: We had a system with a blowpipe and a dart. So you use a blowpipe to fire this dart which is basically just a big hypodermic into the seal, and then for a big seal you'd have to put a couple in. You'd have to creep up, get close, use the blowpipe put a dart in, then wait till they get on the edge of consciousness really.

[Part 2, 00:18:26] Chris: Did that take a week?

Ash: No, no it would take twenty minutes. For the male elephant seals because they were so big, had to dig out the beach beside them and build a platform of load cells and pallets with the

elephant seal on top and then weigh it and then we just moved back and wait for it to recover and moved off.

[Part 2, 00:18:57] Chris: Did one ever recover rather earlier than expected?

Ash: We didn't have any problems, other people had, you don't want them too drugged, 'cause they go into a deep diving response where they stop breathing, so you gotta just keep them on the edge of consciousness really, yeh.

[Part 2, 00:19:22] Chris: We are talking about the mid nineteen nineties now aren't we?

Ash: This is early this is '91.

[Part 2, 00:19:30] Chris: So it's twenty years ago, just wondering what the relationship between scientists and the GA was like twenty years ago, were they equals in the great scheme of things?

Ash: That depends on the scientist a lot. Some not just with stuff I did there, but all over, some scientists, when they write a paper they give you a credit and sometimes if you had done quite a bit of work, you'll get a credit in the title rather than just in the footnotes at the bottom, and others won't even credit the fact that you are on the same planet at the same time as them. [laughs]

[Part 2, 00:20:14] Chris: And that manifests itself in the field as well as in the paper, does it?

Ash: Sometimes, yeh. It can be interesting, cause if you have got a group of scientists and GA's in the field together, often as a GA, if you put in an opinion, some of the scientists won't credit it at all because you're not a scientist, but if another scientist from a different discipline says something, they'll give it a higher priority if you like, even though it could be absolute rubbish.

[Part 2, 00:20:55] Chris: So even twenty years ago, there was still a degree of them and us, is that fair?

Ash: I think part of it is the BAS system as well, 'cause most of the scientists working for BAS are permanent employees, whereas all the GA's are just contract staff and you are on a totally different pay structure.

[Part 2, 00:21:24] Chris: Was that still the case towards the end of your scientific work, in 2006-7?

Ash: Oh yeh, the last time I was in the field with a scientist, at that stage, the scientists were getting a "hard line" allowance which for being in the field, was higher than my total pay for being in the field. So they were getting paid their normal salary and they were getting an allowance for the conditions they were living under - like living in a tent; their allowance was more than I was getting paid. It was a totally different structure.

[Part 2, 00:22:06] Chris: Let's take you then to the South Sandwich Islands, 'cause I know you want to talk about that. What was even more special about those islands?

Ash: Well to me it's because - the last time people had been there was in 1964, we were there in ooah... '96 '97 yeh; it's a remote area, nobody hardly goes there, well since then you do get people going there, it's in the middle of nowhere so its ships en route somewhere that normally go there, and when they were there in '64 they weren't there for very long and they did as much as they could but they weren't there for very long. Also a lot of the stuff I'd done on South Georgia up until there had been seal and bird surveys and stuff like that, so just personally I was interested to see what was there.

So the party that went there was a mixture of biologists, geologists, and geophysicists 'cause it is quite a active area. We went to a few islands, with Endurance, because they had the helicopters to put people places. I went to Thule, Cook and Zavidovskii Islands and then into Candlemass with Ed King to put in some seismic stations to record any seismic activity and to put in some very definitive GPS stations because that arc is actually moving away from South America. They had stations running on the Falklands and South Orkneys at the same time as on Candlemass, so we were keeping these running. Also out of my own interest, I made a survey of all the stuff I could find on Candlemass Island.

[Part 2, 00:24:51] Chris: Biological survey ?

Ash: Yeh, all the penguins, seals, because later on Pete Convey was coming there anyway, 'cause most people were then coming to Candlemass – he was doing all the plant/ invertebrate research. It was quite an interesting area, all the other islands as well because they are small islands in the middle of a big bit of ocean so if any wildlife is going to breed anywhere, they have to breed on these islands. There were big concentrations of birds and stuff.

[Part 2, 00:25:33] Chris: So was it rather like an extreme version of South Georgia then?

Ash: Oh yeh the weather, its further south, right out in the ocean, the weather is bad all the time [laughs] and if you woke up in the morning and you could see blue sky, it would be amazing really. There's low cloud, rain, wind constantly and it's in a position in the South Atlantic that you get systems going through - if you are further west by the Peninsula, a system will go through and it will clear, but there a system will go through and then you'll get stuff moving north and south in the south Atlantic, and then the system will come back again so like in the south Shetlands, you might expect strong westerly winds and then it'll clear and then strong westerly's. South Sandwich you'll get a westerly wind and then you'll get the easterly wind, then the westerly then the easterly so it's just continually poor weather really.

[Part 2, 00:26:48] Chris: Did it ever get dry?

Ash: [laugh] Occasionally not very often though. There are big penguin colonies there, and there is just a runoff from them and it's just mucky all the time. There s just this layer a foot thick of sludge/ guano from the penguin colonies and it's because the atmosphere is moist, this is always just moist and wet. If you did get a dry day when it wasn't raining, it would dry to a bit of a crust on top and it would be ok to walk on, but as soon as it got just moisture in the atmosphere everything just got wet again. You're over-trou would just be covered with black muck halfway to your knees and a few people just fell over in it – the only way you could clean yourself was actually find a stream or go into the sea and wash it off 'cause the stuff just stayed.

It was finding clean drinking water was a real problem there actually, at one stage, from one of the high glaciers there was runoff so we had to go over there and use a funnel to fill Jerrycans with water to drink and cook with but then later in the year when it got colder, that just froze so we had to try and find either bits of ice that had washed up on the beach, or there was one part where there was a trickle out of the ground but we had to make a kind of a filter to filter out all the rubbish, and you had to just boil that before you could do anything with it.

[Part 2, 00:28:44] Chris: You're not making these islands sound terribly attractive, [laughs] Ash, yet you seem very keen to go there ?

Ash: Well nobody had hardly been there and there was no real knowledge of what the places were like. Getting out of the tent in the morning was a bit of a job at times, just getting the

motivation to go out into the blowing rain, but it was an interesting place to be, it was new and it was so much stuff you could find out.

[Part 2, 00:29:21] Chris: So it was the remoteness and the undiscovered-ness that grabbed you? Was that the most remote place you had ever been for BAS, or other Antarctic organisations?

Ash: I think so yeh, I've done seasons out of Rothera where you're down on the Ronne which is hundreds of miles away and south of Halley and things but that's not really remote, because you can fly an aircraft for eight hours or something and you'll get there, it's not – it might seem remote, 'cause it's close to the south pole but in actual travel time it's not remote at all.

'Cause when we first got onto Candlemass the other guys were still up on Zavidovskii Island and Endurance also put some Marines ashore for training on Zavidovskii, and Endurance went back to South Georgia to drop off mail and pick up stuff, so they were like three days away and we had some bad weather and the Marines tent got blown away.

They had to go in with the BAS guys on Zavidovskii just to survive, as its quite a hostile environment, and at that stage, the ship was three days away, if they hadn't got the BAS guys there they would have had real problems surviving for those three days, whereas somewhere else as long as the weathers not too bad, you can get an aircraft in in hours really.

[Part 2, 00:31:09] Chris: You had one or two difficulties of your own in your time down south, I'm thinking again back to the early 80s - 82, when you...I've not actually met anybody that has got bad frostbite, how bad was your frostbite?

Ash: [laughs] well it kept me on base for a couple of months I suppose. (at Rothera). We had a dog trip out through the fjords and we had really good sea-ice and we had gone out through the fjords there was two dog teams and three people and we were coming back towards Rothera and coming through Bigourdan Fjord. We'd had quite a heavy dump of snow so there's quite a weight of snow on the sea-ice so that had actually depressed the sea-ice so through cracks in the sea-ice you had water coming up, laying on top of the sea-ice and though it was still water, it was covered by quite thick snow.

The front dog team weren't working very well so there was two people there, Nige' Young and Martin Greene, they were running with the front dog team and I was on the back dog team with the Admirals and because they weren't running very well – the front team were also breaking trail as well so it was harder for them and it's always easier for the back team to follow the front one and so occasionally they would drop boxes of dog food that would enable them to go faster and easier, and I would have to stop and put them on my sledge which took time.

It also made my sledge heavier and as we were travelling along my sledge broke through the snow into the water that was laying on top of the sea-ice, so I had to unload my sledge, to get the sledge out onto solid ground and then reload it again, so I got wet feet. They were comfortable but then I was then quite a long way behind the other team. They got to Pinhiero Island and started to camp there and I called them up just before Pinhiero and as we were camping it was getting later in the day and colder, and my feet were getting cold – they weren't uncomfortable particularly, but then by the time we got in the tent, toes and heels were frozen.

[Part 2, 00:34:11] Chris: How is it, what's it like ?

Ash: It was painful....[laughs]. The Doctor Martin Greene, had to give us some drugs because of that, and then I couldn't use my feet 'cause they had started to thaw out and had blisters

forming and then I couldn't use them. The next day they sent a Skidoo team across from Rothera and I had to travel back all wrapped up in a sleeping bag back to Rothera. The worst thing was I had to be very careful with my feet and was stuck on base for a couple of months, when we had nice weather and trips going out all over the place I was stuck there and not being able to do anything. In the long run they healed ok and I haven't had any problems since. It was just circumstance and just frustrating in the end really.

[Part 2, 00:35:30] Chris: Did you fall down a crevasse at all, or get close to doing that?

Ash: I've never fallen down a crevasse working south, I got close one time yeh. It was the first season we were on the Ronne Ice Shelf, we were doing geophysics traverses across the shelf, and part of it we were going onto Berkner Island and some of the other ice-rises. These islands and ice-rises are basically static, and the ice-shelf is moving past them. Upstream there is sort of like a a rumpled zone and then on the sides there is crevassing and downstream it is quite crevassed. We were doing these seismic lines and gravity lines so we had to go across the ice-shelf and then on to these islands, so we were coming off one of these one time and it was a fairly crevassed area, so we had to on foot, we had to probe a route that we could drive the skidoos through.

This particular section, it was about three miles I suppose, in the end it took us three days to probe a route on foot that we could actually come off. I was tied to Bill the technician on a rope and I was probing on foot this route in front, normally when you're getting crevasses in areas like that, you get a slight depression, but on this bit there was a slight rise and it was quite hard snow and I was probing up it and the next thing I know I'd actually jumped backwards and this big cavern had opened up just where I'd been probing [laughs]. That in itself wasn't so scary but it was when I looked behind and noticed that the rope still slack behind me – Bill hadn't really taken the slack in on the rope that was the scariest thing – but it was quite a big hole. !!

It was a situation where you were probing but you weren't probing because you knew there was a crevasse you were just probing to see... but it was a bit of a surprise that one !!! We had to go back and probe off in another angle to find a different angle around it. People think ice-shelves are just flat and boring - well a lot of the time they are but as soon as you try to get off the ice-shelf onto something else it can be quite tricky really.

[Part 2, 00:38:45] Chris: Was that the sort of incident that you wouldn't bother to tell Di about ... [unintell] ?

Ash: No no, - no [laughs] I wouldn't have ventured that

[Part 2, 00:38:54] Chris: Had you heard that one before?

Di: No.....[laughs] but he did say at times, if we go for a walk along some cliffs, and I'll say "don't go too near the edge Ash", and he'll say "you just don't know what I've done, do you" and you think no, maybe it's best I don't.

Ash: The number of times south - in the winter you're taking base people out and in the summer it's scientists and that, but often you're travelling through crevassed areas and afterwards sometimes the base people haven't actually noticed that you've been through a crevassed area. They'll think you've just been driving along and they haven't noticed that you've been almost zig-zagging through areas – sometimes the person travelling on the skidoo behind is just following you in front and has no actual awareness of what's around them really. It's been amazing at times you've taken people someplace and they have been unaware what they've been going through.

[Part 2, 00:40:07] Chris: So is the skill of a good GA rather unsung then, in the sense that they are self-effacing modest types, are they ?

Ash: Well....some of them are. [laughs]

[Part 2, 00:40:30] Chris: So to elaborate on your point, it's obvious what scientists do, whereas what GA's do is perhaps – if you are doing your job well.....

Ash: Yeh, people don't notice yeh, it's not just glacier travel it's having everything organised and having the right amount of fuel and fuel depots and the right amount of food so that when you arrive there you've got enough for the next stage, you haven't got too much so you're leaving stuff, you've got enough for the next bit to get there and you're not having to call in an aircraft resupply or something unnecessarily just because you've forgotten somebody's hat or pair of gloves or something like that.

[Part 2, 00:41:08] Chris: So management is quite a big part of being a GA?

Ash: Yeh, yeh it takes quite a lot of organisation, yeh. But also, being a GA in the Antarctic, especially glacier travel on skidoos is quite different to people travelling in the Alps.

There have been GA's who have got to Rothera and who basically haven't been able to handle the situation because it can be quite worrying, and it's quite a responsibility 'cause you'r travelling along on a skidoo which weighs 600lbs and if you go down a crevasse, it's potentially... – you rig it up so that it's as safe as you can possibly be but if something happens then potentially it's fatal, and your responsible for all the people that are following you behind. There have been cases where people have not... – that's just been too much for them, (the responsibility) yeh we've had people that have then... they've basically feigned other problems so that they didn't go out. So they didn't have to get into that situation sort of thing really yeh.

[Part 2, 00:42:38] Chris: Is that something you notice in your base-leader capacity?

Ash; Oh well... when I was base-commander one year, we had a GA that didn't like going out, that was... because he was just lazy when I was on base other times we've had people that just couldn't handle the responsibility in that particular situation. In other situations they would've been fine and they were very responsible in other situations, it's was that particular situation sort of thing, yeh.

[Part 2, 00:43:20] Chris: Talk a bit about these two yachts if we may that you got to know, *Damian II* and the *Golden Fleece* at various times down south, tell me about Jerome Poncet ...on *Damian II* ?

Ash: He's quite a character, he's been sailing for a long time initially when he was down in around South Georgia he was just on a very small yacht with a friend of his that sailed up the Arctic and then around the world via the Arctic and the Antarctic really and then he built a steel yacht *Damian II* and came down to the Antarctic with his wife Sally.

[Part 2, 00:44:11] Chris: As far as you were concerned, what were they doing down there ?

Ash: Initially, they were just travelling around kind of thing but then, I didn't meet them until they'd been probably five years or more after they had first been down and Sally had in her own interest had started just doing bird-counts and basic biological surveys just out of her own interest and so I was doing similar things so we got on like that really. So I had met them before on Deception Island when they'd been there with the two eldest boys and I'd been working on

Deception with John Smilly and they came into there and anchored and we got to know them then.

When I was on South Georgia the first season, Jerome had been contracted by BAS to do a fur seal count around the whole of South Georgia and I was on board with Ian Boyd doing that and I was meant to be doing the small boat handling and I was also doing the counting we were going everywhere round South Georgia, every little island, every little bay, counting with binoculars from the yacht counting seals and then we'd go ashore when we could and do counts ashore and then go back again and do other counts so just getting repeat data to try and get any errors out of the count really.

[Part 2, 00:46:19] Chris: Were they doing this out of their own interest or were they being contracted by... [unintell].

Ash; Jerome was being paid to do that and he had two crew on board with him that time. Sally and the family weren't on board at that stage.

[Part 2, 00:46:37] Chris: How did you get on with him?

Ash: Fine, Jerome's a bit of a character and if he doesn't get on with somebody then they don't get on sort of thing, but also some people can be very set in their ways so they won't get on with Jerome as well, Jerome can be quite easy going but it's his boat and he wants to do things his way and he's got quite a [laugh] quite a relaxed attitude about things at times you know, which other people may find hard to take, but Jerome will actually... and if he can see that somebody's getting a bit up-tight about something he might play on that as well.

He'll do things that most people on a yacht won't do. We were going into Salisbury Plain and there was a king penguin colony there and everybody on board wanted go and have a look at it so basically he just drove the yacht onto the beach bow-first, kept the engine running so it would stay there and everybody jumped off the bow and walked up to see the penguin colony and then came down and got back on the boat and we just reversed off,most people with a yacht wouldn't do that and to some people it would be scary but also when we're doing the fur-seal count we had to get in really close, so I would think every day the yacht actually hit rocks and y'know it was a steel yacht but it still would bounce around a lot and there would be an impact.

There were some people on board one season, not when I was on board and for some reason the yacht had hit a jetty and the front where the front stay was attached it was a bit bent and it could have broken and because one of the guys on board was worried about this, Jerome kept looking at this and saying "...oh I think the crack's bigger and I think it's getting weaker.." y'know it wasn't, but if - you had a very tidy mindset - you wanted things really secure, then travelling with Jerome wouldn't be a good way to travel.

[Part 2, 00:49:34] Chris: And what was the *Golden Fleece* I know nothing about this yacht?

Ash; It's a lot bigger than *Damian* it's more like a motor yacht, it's got sails, they do use the sails but it's a much bigger vessel so you can carry more people and it's a lot more comfortable.

[Part 2, 00:50:02] Chris: Was this more of a tourist ship or what?

Ash; Well it's small it's still only... it must be 65ft or something like that, but for a yacht it's quite big.

[Part 2, 00:50:13] Chris: Did you come across the owners ..[unintell] ?

Ash; Jerome owns that as well 'cause *Damian II* got quite old and battered and also they were doing a lot more charter work for people like the BBC and film crews so they basically needed a bigger vessel so they got the *Golden Fleece* and then *Damien II* wasn't really used but *Damian II* was then refurbished by one of Jerome's sons so it's back in action now.

[Part 2, 00:50:51] Chris: Is this when you got reunited with the film world,or is that over egging it slightly?

Ash; [laughs] no no, I've never really been involved with films down there but over the years when we've been at Husvik and that, there have been - David Attenborough film crews down doing films like *Life in the Freezer* and then there was Nigel Marvin - if you're on South Georgia, every year there will be at least one film crew either from some country in the world down there making a film.

[Part 2, 00:51:32] Chris: Did you enjoy that, was it a diversion for you from the usual work you did.

Ash; We didn't really get involved.

[Part 2, 00:51:42] Chris: Tell me more about Husvik because again we haven't got much on that in the archives, it's on South Georgia isn't it, you were there in the mid 90s is that right ?

Ash; I first went down there in 1991 I think, and at that stage Husvik was just like a five year programme, it was a joint BAS and some other university, so there were some Swedish scientists there and some Belgian scientists - don't think there were any other nationalities, but it was based at Husvik because you could do a lot of science from there and it had a building you could use, it was fairly basic, it was better than living in a tent but it wasn't a Base, so it was very cheap to run.

We had a generator which ran for electricity for the radio and some of the scientific gear,

Di: You had a sauna !

Ash: There was also near the whaling station, so - which was quite good cause scientists would come in with gear to do stuff, some scientists would not have enough gear so you'd end up going to the whaling station for a piece of wood or a piece of metal to make something, to make the science work.

At Husvik it's quite a nice bay there, it's quite good weather but around the bay there's a king penguin colony so there were people studying them - its a small one as well which makes it easier to study, and over the col into Fortuna Bay there was a large king penguin colony there so that was good to look at occasionally, there was fur seals around there for doing work on fur seals, there was elephant seals there, so you could do work on the elephant seals, there was a long peninsula with lots of lakes on them, and also lakes going inland, so because the glaciers had retreated the lakes on the end of the peninsula were older than the ones further in, so you had a series of lakes which had also dried out to form peat bogs and sinkholes, so you had whole series of geomorphological features going inland. So you had people looking at the geomorphology, the peat, the vegetation, the lakes, the invertebrates, all sorts of scientists coming in there. So there was a great diversity of science going on there which was also quite cheap because all these scientists and there was basically a GA and Hector who was the terrestrial guy who looked after the base mostly and he was there all the time.

You'd have people doing stuff like the elephant seals and then the fur seal work and then once the snow had gone, you have people coming and looking at the lakes once they had thawed out, so

you had scientists coming in throughout the whole season, but it was quite hard for people like the GA and Hector 'cause people would come in and they'd work for a month or six weeks or two months and work quite intensively then they'd go out, next guy would come in really fresh and he'd be working hard and - because everything was moved around by foot you'd be carrying loads of stuff out to lakes or out to the penguin colony 'cause they had a hut out there you'd be carrying rucksacks of equipment here there and everywhere and so after a while you'd need a break actually, 'cause people would come in fresh do their stuff and go out, next lot would come in, the field seasons would end up being four five six months and some were going up to seven months long. So that was quite a long time in the field really, but it was a nice place - where it was topographically was in the rain shadow of the main mountains so you had really good weather generally so, you'd have long sunny days it was quite a nice place to work.

Di: Some of the scientists were interesting, that Dutch guy he wore his - just arrived with his kit.....

Ash: He was Belgian, he was a geomorphologist he was looking at the peat samples so he was doing big peat samples, but he was a professor from a university and he played the mad professor a bit so he turned up and he got all of his clothes out of his kit bag and put them on, his snow goggles still had stickers across the eye, and there was all these tags saying what things were hanging from his hat and his clothes but it was a bit of an act at times I think, he was a bit of a mad professor.

[Part 2, 00:57:50] Chris: Was he the only eccentric you met?

Ash; No there were some others as well, I suppose, if he'd been more practical it would have been better but he had these ideas for getting peat samples, one of them involved knocking a piece of four inch drainpipe into the ground to get a sample and then pulling it out. Knocking a three metre piece of plastic pipe into the ground was quite easy but actually trying to pull vertically a piece of four inch pipe out of the ground when it has got four inches of peat inside it and also got the friction of three metres of peat around the outside, so without the whaling station we couldn't have done these things [laughs].

End part 2

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Chris: This is Ash and Di Morton, interviewed by Chris Eldon-Lee on the 5th August 2011.

Ash and Di Morton Part Three.

[Part 3, 00::] Chris: Where were you Ash when the three men went from Faraday, what year was that ?

Ash; That was eighty two, winter - at the time we were actually out on the sea ice, with the dogs travelling through the fjords, because we were hearing things over the radio - in those days all the bases were talking to each other on the radio all the time really. When you are in the field you are listening to the radio.

[Part 3, 00:00:56] Chris: Remind me of the incident?

Ash; There were three guys at Faraday, who had gone across to Peterman Island on the sea ice, and - it is only eight or twelve miles, or it might even be less, they travelled across there and were living in the hut there, just a recreation trip from base and they had some bad weather and the sea ice had blown out and then it had reformed, but it wasn't very thick so it wasn't very strong really and I think they'd been advised to stay there until it got thicker but they had decided to go back to Faraday and between the time they left Peterman Island and before they got to Faraday the wind blew up and the ice just broke up and they would have gone with it. When the sea ice is quite fresh its fairly flexible but it has got no strength in it so you could probably ski across it on skis and you wouldn't go through, but if you got a wind up a strong especially if you had a strong wind up with open sea to the west of there then it would have just broken up the ice.

Part 3, 00:02:39] Chris: So what was it like listening to that unfolding on the radio.

Ash; Well... mostly you thought ... it was just a silly thing to do. There have been a few accidents or whatever you like to call them that have happened, and often it's been people not being sensible really ..or just a whole series of little things that just add up and just keep increasing and then it happens. It's a bit like the Shambles accident. That was just a series of events that then led up to people being killed.

[Part 3, 00:03:36] Chris: ... Sorry remind me about that one ...

Ash; That was the year before I was at Rothera the '81 winter. Four people were out on Adelaide Island, there were two parties of two people - there was two, a GA and one of the base guys down at the southern end of the Island and a GA and one of the other guys, one of them was a mechanic and one was a cook out with two GA's, and one of them was up the north end of the Island and there was just a whole series of events that just got worse and worse.

They were up in an area of deep soft snow where people wouldn't normally go in the winter, and they broke a track on their skidoo, so they only had one skidoo and two sledges, so then they were travelling back south back towards base. The guy that was not the GA was travelling on the sledge but he was getting frostbite on his face because he was just out in the elements on the sledge and then they had problems with soft snow and it was taking them quite a long time to get back to base. So they joined up with the party that were coming up from the south end of the Island to go through the Shambles Glacier, up McCullen Pass and back to Rothera.

So they joined up and they had three skidoos and all the sledges and stuff but because they didn't have enough skidoos for everybody, they decided that one of the guys would just travel on the back of the skidoo. They weren't travelling all linked together either and then it was not very good weather, and they'd been waiting there for quite a while because of bad weather so they'd been out for a long time, they wanted to get back to base and it was a Saturday and people like to get back to Saturday night cause there is a better meal on a Saturday night, and they were travelling in bad weather off route. The first skidoo and sledge went across no problem but because of the weight on the second skidoo it broke through a crevasse and went in. Ultimately both the guys on that skidoo were killed

[Part 3, 00:06:40] Chris: When you hear about these accidents whilst you are in the Antarctic, does it change the way you go about what you do?

Ash; You learn from these things I think, yeah! When I've been doing field work since then, you try to eliminate all these little things that add up to that out of it, out of the equation. You don't

travel when you can't see what the snow conditions are like, you just try to eliminate all the errors out to reduce any errors that you can.

[Part 3, 00:07:31] Chris: You strike me as being a cautious man anyway, so does it make you even more cautious?

Ash; N.....I don't think so no. You have just got to think about all these individual things that are there andsometimes - like when we were on the Ronne, we'd pack up the gear in the morning to travel to the next site, and if by the time you've got all the gear packed up the weather's manked-in you would stop, you would put the tent up again you put the gear back out. But then you know, two hours later it may clear so then you have to go through the procedure again you've got to pack up and go and travel. You've just got to accept that that's the safe way to do it even if you've got to unpack and pack and unpack and pack, which can take an hour or more at a time, even if you do that three times a day, rather than just going on blindly hoping that it's going to be alright, you have just got to do it the safe way really.

[Part 3, 00:08:44] Chris: One of the truisms about accidents is that they usually are a result of a series of small incidents that build up one after the other - so does a good GA spot that pattern beginning to happen in other words, if its four incidents for an accident, you begin to realise after two or three incidents, that there is an accident about to happen.

Ash; No I think you try to stop it before the one or the two really, yeh.

[Part 3, 00:09:14] Chris: So how do you feel when you hear about that are you sad for the people involved or do you get slightly angry?

Ash; Yeah 'cause a few years after the Faraday guys went missing we were talking to people that had been at Faraday and some of the things they were doing there then - we wouldn't have even considered at Rothera and because the accident happened, they introduced regulations - "the ice had to be a certain thickness before you could go on it"..... and "you had to go on skis..." and then all the rest of it..... but then a couple of years later, there were people - because there were regulations, people weren't signing out and were going out around the island on skis and falling through the ice and things like that which so for some people it hadn't been a learning experience at all and that was quite scary in some ways.

In the first years we were at Rothera we developed a system of - we actually put skidoos over cliffs linked up to show that you could actually stop it happening and make it safe. Then you hear about people - other bases that would implement half of the system but not the other half, so they actually made the whole thing worse by not doing the whole thing after you've got the system working well. In that way it is a bit frustrating that people were not.....

[Part 3, 00:11:19] Chris: But BAS wasn't enforcing then - wasn't enforcing the policy?

Ash; I think sometimes its the way people interpret it, but also like for quite a long time at places like Halley they had GA's there sometimes but a lot of the time in the winter they didn't have a GA so people would get this information but it was how they interpreted it and how they passed on information year to year as well I think, yeah.

[Part 3, 00:11:57] Chris: Looking back are you surprised that BAS's safety procedures weren't more watertight?

Ash; Well..... probably now they've got lots of procedures but it depends on somebody being sensible and implementing them really, 'cause I think you can have any number of regulations but if somebody's sensible there without any regulations they can do it safely.

[Part 3, 00:12:36] Chris: What were the Americans like on the sensible front?

Ash; [laughs] They were alright..... we had two seasons out of McMurdo, we went in through New Zealand to McMurdo and then we were out at a camp on Ice Stream D - there was three big ice streams which come down off the plateau into the Ross Ice Shelf, and they are immense glaciers really - they're like twenty miles across kind of thing, and they had a camp there which was quite big camp - the Americans have got a totally different way of doing things, everything's bigger really.

So because we are going in there they had to put a camp in so therefore they need a camp manager, they need people to put the camp in, they need a radio operator, they need a cook they need a mechanic to groom the runway 'cause they - once it gets above a certain size they have to fly a Herc' in to take all the gear in, so therefore they need a vehicle to groom the runway so that the Herc' can land and you've got to do that fairly continuously and you've got to fly fuel in for the vehicle that grooms the runway so it ended up being quite a big operation.

The first year was alright actually 'cause - there was a joint BAS American - but it was sort of separate and I was working with Ed King from BAS so a lot of the time we were just travelling round doing our own work separate from the Americans really so we actually went out to some remote sites from the main camp and worked and then travelled back. The second season it was big travelling seismic project and there were eight or ten people, so there were eight or ten skidoos, probably fifteen sledges and some of them were double sledges with a little hut on them for all the recording equipment, and the seismic array was something like five or ten kilometers long.

Once we started, the seismic array was in hundred metre lengths so the whole array was laid out and then we'd pick up the back hundred metres, it would go forward to the front and then the drilling team who were drilling the hole for the seismics, for the explosives would then travel forward another hundred metres, you'd shoot it off and then you'd just do the same thing again. So it was very big and very slow.

[Part 3, 00:16:28] Chris: Were the Americans efficient in the way they conducted themselves?

Ash; Well, that stuff in the field was fairly efficient - the information though getting back was very - there was a lot of data back from it but then we'd do lines in certain places and then move but a lot of the guys that were there were students from Universities some of them had never been to the Antarctic before, some of them were from Texas or Mississippi or something, they had never seen snow before and they didn't have any practical - they went through the snow school at McMurdo but they didn't have any real practical experience using skidoos and stuff so they would stop a skidoo and expect a sledge - they'd put the brakes on the skidoo and stop and the sledge would be coming up at the same speed as they were travelling up from behind and they would be surprised that it crashed into them or almost knocked them over.

Di: Didn't they lose a lot of stuff;

Ash: Yeah, for me it was quite frustrating 'cause there were only two GA's on the project and I ended up being the one following behind all the time, picking up things that people had dropped. Its amazing that people could drop a sledge and not notice and so sometimes when they'd stop for

a drink out of the thermos I'd come in from behind and I'd be pulling two extra sledges or a drum of fuel or something like that, that people had lost off their sledges. It was just amazing really.

[Part 3, 00:18:15] Chris: There's this perception isn't there, that the British produce more science with fewer resources than the Americans, even though we've got fewer resources we do more science, and they've got more planes, more machines, more personnel, is that your view as well?

Ash; Yeah, out in the field camps there's just big base of support people, a greater number of support people than the number of scientists, but also its just getting out of McMurdo its Hercules flights to get anybody anywhere unless its really close and then they'll use a twin-otter.

[Part 3, 00:19:05] Chris: Did you spot any cultural variations at McMurdo compared to British camps.

Ash; It was just the size of it really, there were three bars there, it's a little town it's just a totally different thing and people - well I guess in some ways some of the BAS bases have gone a little bit that way as well having people doing the domestic stuff as well. Certainly at McMurdo there's a whole crew that just go around cleaning up and doing waste - there's somebody for every job at McMurdo - there's a postman and there's somebody for everything and it is very much a nine to five job and I think BAS has got quite like that as well on the bases.

[Part 3, 00:20:03] Chris: My next question is, over the twenty odd years - nearly thirty years that you have been going south, how have attitudes toward being south and working south changed? In what way?

Ash; They have changed a lot I think. Well, when I first went down we were going to the Antarctic and we didn't expect it to be luxurious or anything. When we were first at Rothera it was quite a small building, the toilets were Elsan buckets - you had to empty them every day and the person on gash had to go round collect all the s**t buckets, take them on a sledge down to the bay and chuck them away - you had to do everything like that. If you wanted water you dug snow, melted it and you had water so you really only had a shower on a Saturday night.

[Part 3, 00:21:12] Chris: So has the nature of the Fid changed, and in what way?

Oh yeh, certainly like on the base there when I was first down, everybody did everything - there were some things that were technical that not everybody did, but generally everybody took part in every job and on Sunday the cook had a day off and everybody cooked. The first time I really noticed it was in back in '88 they had put in a pipeline for saltwater up to the base - there was always a pipeline for saltwater for the RO but it never really worked very well, by then they had a Reverse Osmosis for getting water so then they had a plumber so then immediately nobody wants to have anything to do with anything plumbing and it just got more and more like that, that everybody's job became more insular and isolated from everybody else and everybody just did their own job and their own specific thing and it became more 9 to 5 and more six days a week as well.

When I was first down there in the winters if it was a good day on Monday, you might go out with the dogs but if it was a bad day on Sunday you'd work. You didn't have a fixed routine of like a five or six day week, you just worked the work that needed to be done even though you'd be working at night time 'cause one winter we were short of GA's in the winter so we were having to do the work of more people with less people, so you were working long hours and nights but the job needed doing and you just did it.

[Part 3, 00:23:40] Chris: That's evaporated has it ... that approach ...?

Ash; Yeh it's more like a nine to five job to do your specific job and as soon as Friday night comes or five o'clock comes that's it.

[Part 3, 00:23:49] Chris: Final question so final answer - in 1993 when you received a polar medal, what did the Queen say to you ?

Ash; [laughs] I don't know what she said really.

Di: Do you know what he told me ? He signed the official secrets act so he can't divulge the informationliar!!

[Part 3, 00:24:13] Chris: For the record ?

Ash; It wasn't much really, I can't rememberthere was something about 'you have been down there a few times - you like going down there' or something like that but it's just that other people keep asking me about it so I just say 'I can't really say', [laughs]. It wasn't anything particular.

[Part 3, 00:24:47] Chris: The usual question is 'have you come far...' which in your case the answer is yes, [laughs]

[Part 3, 00:24:52] Chris: How has he changes, how has the Antarctic changed Ash, over the years you have known him?

Ash: I've got slower.....

Di: No I think he misses the old camaraderie of the bases, y'know like he was saying how it's changed so much, I think he - 'cause everybody did everything and now it's all bits of this - you know you've got your own specific job I think he seems to miss that a bit.

Ash: Yes, that's probably why I enjoyed going back to Husvik. It's comfortable but it's very basic and also the other seasons on South Georgia were in the field but I wouldn't particularly like to work out of Rothera, it's just big and impersonal, ...yeh.

[Part 3, 00:25:49] Chris: You've been working on Halley for the last three years, are you planning to go again?

Ash: Yeh, yeh but that's different, that's just for the money !! [laughs]

[Part 3, 00:24:52] Chris: There we'll leave it!! Thank you very much indeed Ash. [laughs].
Thank you Di

Di: No problem.

Significant events for Ash Morton in the recording;

Part 1: 00	Birth, early life and education in NZ
08:38	Working in NZ TV & travelling Europe
12:27	BAS Job Interview
20:46	First arrival at Rothera, Twin otter aircraft upside down
25:13	Falklands conflict - while Ash was at Rothera
46:40	Difficult departure from Candlemass Island
Part 2: 00	Death of pilot Giles Kershaw near Rothera. Ash was BC at the time.
12:22	Husvik South Georgia. Life down south at a simple level
22:06	South Sandwich Islands harsh living and working conditions
43:20	Jerome Poncet, yachts "Damian II", "Golden Fleece" - working on board
Part 3 03:36	Reflections, on the loss of three at Faraday and Shambles Glacier two
12:36	Working with USA out of McMurdo, seismic sounding across the Ross IS

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