

TERRY TALLIS

Edited transcript of a recording of Terry Tallis interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee at the Marguerite Bay Reunion at Bowness-on-Windermere on 28th October 2011. BAS Archives reference AD6/24/1/140. Transcribed by Maggie Russell on 24th December 2014.

[0:00:00] Lee: This is Terry Tallis recorded by Chris Eldon Lee on the 28th October 2011, Terry Tallis.

Tallis: The name is Terry Tallis and I was born in Lemington Spa on the 13th June 1939.

[0:00:20] Lee: So you're now how old?

Tallis: 72.

[0:00:25] Lee: 72, Yes some Fids struggle with that question.

Tallis: Yes, yes I can understand it too; I mean I have to sometimes think aswell.

[0:00:32] Lee: Education, what sort of education did you have? Did you go to University?

Tallis: I went, yes my education really I suppose well didn't really start in Australia but I went to school in Australia for a while because we actually emigrated you know with those in the end of 1949, 1950.

[0:00:32] Lee: £10 POM?

Tallis: That's right £10 POM, we didn't stay in Australia very long, probably just under 2 years. My father worked for Lockheeds; I latterly worked for Lockheeds as well, but he then came back to the UK after Lockheeds had started in Sydney in Australia and then we came back and although we lived in Leamington and the main factory was of course in Leamington Spa Lockheeds in those days. They started a very large factory just outside Liverpool so we moved to Liverpool in about 1951 I guess, something like that and I went to school there obviously and also went to college and did a sandwich course when I was working for Lockheeds did a 7 year apprenticeship, engineering apprenticeship hence my diesel electric mechanics experiences which got me down to the Antarctic.

[0:01:52] Lee: What was your first brush with the Antarctic, when did you first become aware such a place existed?

Tallis: It really became fairly obviously at school I think because I think I did some projects on polar exploration and I think I got very interested in the "*Great Britain*" which of course was in The Falkland Islands at that time.

[0:02:14] Lee: So you did a school project on it?

Tallis: Yes yes, so that's how it

[0:02:17] Lee: Why?

Tallis: Why? I don't know really in those days I suppose it was something there that attracted me. I just missed National Service. Well I actually I was going to go into the Navy but it all stopped within about 6 months of me having to go; because I wanted to go into the Navy because I lived in Liverpool at the time you know, I used to spend quite a lot of time. At the time they had a fleet based in Liverpool which was all part of The Cod War if you will obviously remember The Cod Wars, so I was very keen on going in the Navy and had a great friend who was also, he would have also gone in the Navy as well so that was my interest then started I think on polar and Antarctic, Arctic and Antarctic interests.

[0:03:11] Lee: Had you had an outdoors streak in you?

Tallis: Yes I did because right from the very early days I'd been in scouting, had run in fact a Scout troop in Liverpool with a lot of climbing friends because at University we tended to spend a lot of time in North Wales so we did a lot of outdoor work, did a lot of climbing and also I was one of the first instructors at the scout mountain centre in North Wales in the Ogwen Valley so right going back to, a good few years before I went down to the Antarctic so that's really got me into outdoors and I did a lot of skiing in Norway as well with the scouts.

[0:03:55] Lee: You went to see the Fram?

Tallis: Yes I did, yes.

[0:03:58] Lee: Which I've seen as well.

Tallis: Yes, which was fascinating, I've never been back since, I keep thinking I really must go back.

[0:04:04] Lee: It hasn't changed.

Tallis: It hasn't changed I'm sure no, but that was very interesting you know I was very very interested in Amundsen's journeys as well. I've got such a very large polar library as well.

[0:04:20] Lee: So all this was kind of building up then to the possibility of going there yourself?

Tallis: It was, yes and what triggered it. I had finished my 7 year engineering apprenticeship at Lockheeds, my father still worked for Lockheeds and was a senior engineer there and he said 'Well what are you going to do now?' and I said 'I don't really know' and he said 'well I don't think you should stop here, I think you should go and get more experience somewhere else' and then I think it must have been very shortly after I finished my apprenticeship, I would have been 21 still probably at the time, there was an advertisement in The Daily Telegraph for FIDS in fact it was the Crown Agents at the time of course and I think I applied for it, tongue in cheek I think because it was for a diesel electric mechanic and I mean I was an engineer and I was always

pulling. I had a Land Rover and other cars and I was always taking them to pieces and I knew quite a bit about engineering, my father was an engineer, we had an engineering shed at home where we had a lathe and things in it so I was always tinkering with things. I think somebody, if I remember rightly that somebody had been injured or hurt at Deception and I think they had to get somebody down there fairly quickly. I don't think there was a great deal of notice about it because I remember going home after applying for the job and saying to Dad 'well I've applied for this job in the South Shetlands' and I think my mother said 'Oooh the islands off Scotland, how lovely and you're not that far from home'.[laughter]

[0:06:02] Lee: Seems to me a universal mothers rule that all theses place aren't that far away.

Tallis: Yes that's right.

[0:06:07] Lee: So were you kind of fast tracked then or did you have to go through the interview process?

Tallis: Oh no I did have to go through the interview process with Bill Sloman at the time and I met John Green and other people then of course down in London. It was of course at the offices in London at the time.

[0:06:07] Lee: Do you remember that as being a fairly rigorous interview?

Tallis: I can remember it, I didn't think it was fairly rigorous at the time but perhaps it was, I think what I can remember more or less because I had actually been skiing in Norway not long before and I had twisted or not actually broken my legs but I had had a really nasty fall skiing and I think I was limping a bit because I can remember being sent to a doctor in London for a medical and he said 'Oh theres obviously something wrong with your knees, will you bend down' and I thought oh I'm gonna have great difficulty doing this, kneel or crouch down. I remember him putting his hands on my shoulders and actually pushing me down and both me knees creaked and cracked but after that I was fine.

[0:07:11] Lee: Oh right so he cured you?

Tallis: More or less, I don't know what he did but he certainly did, I was certainly a lot more manoeuvrable after that.

[0:07:19] Lee: So you were unusual in that you got on the ship, on the *Shackleton*....

Tallis: On the *Shackleton*, yes.

[0:07:24] Lee: knowing where you were going and what you were going to do?

Tallis: Yes I did, because I had already before getting on the ship I had been to Dursley in Gloucestershire to Listers in fact.

[0:07:34] Lee: On your first trip?

Tallis: On the first trip before going down.

[0:07:36] Lee: And why were you, why were you sent to Listers?

Tallis: Because of the Lister engines that they had at Deception at that time and at a lot of the other bases as well.

[0:07:44] Lee: So you were being trained on those particular ones?

Tallis: Yes on those particular engines because I ended up with a huge great pile, in fact I have only got rid of them in the last year or so, of all the Lister maintenance service manuals which of course are sought after by lots of people on Ebay.

[0:07:57] Lee: So when you went to Listers were you the only FID going there or were?

Tallis: I think I was because I remember staying in Dursley in bed and breakfast there and I think I was the only person on that particular course.

[0:08:10] Lee: OK tell me about the trip south with Captain Turnball?

Tallis: Well it was an excellent trip really. I have only just recently been reading diaries for the first time for 50 years and I think we soon settled in on the *Shackleton*, it was a good, a really good experience going down into Monte Video and then on from there.

[0:08:32] Lee: Anybody particular on the boat? Ben Hodges?

Tallis: Ben Hodges, yes Mick Cousins, who else? There were probably lots of other people that the name I'm sure is there. I remember crossing the line which was a wonderful ceremony as well. I'm not sure if Abe Lincoln wasn't also on the boat at the time, I think he possibly was, Bob Bond was on Deception at the time he was obviously one of the pilots. Abe Lincoln of course has also passed away now and he was on the ship going down as well.

[0:09:03] Lee: Has Bob passed away?

Tallis: No Bob hasn't, no he

[0:09:03] Lee: No he lives in Church Stretton now?

Tallis: He does, Abe Lincoln did of course, I don't think he went back to New Zealand because he was a New Zealander of course. Ricky Chinn of course was the BL going down who.....

[0:09:23] Lee: Tell me about Ricky's style?

Tallis: Ricky's style; well he was a great boating man and because we had both done a far bit of boating and sailing so obviously we had quite a lot in common and I knew Ricky for a long time, even after we came back from the Antarctic and because I think he was involved, there used to be groups of perspective FIDS coming out to the Peak District for training and things and we used to bump into them so I liked Rick very much, we got extremely well together.

[0:09:55] Lee: and did you have much to do with Captain Turnball?

Tallis: Yes we did, yes I liked him, frosty, liked him very much and I thought he was a good Captain. I am trying to think who the first mate was at the time, I can't remember his name but also we got on very well with the crew indeed.

[0:10:13] Lee: Paint me if you will a little thumbnail sketch of what you saw when you went through The Bellows at Deception? What was the Base like in 62?

Tallis: It was I think, going through The Bellows, seeing the lighthouse, seeing the old whaler that was beached, which was on the rocks which was still there of course in those days, I have no idea if there are any remains of it I rather doubt it now, quite a formidable place really.

[0:10:39] Lee: Why so?

Tallis: Well I think perhaps you didn't expect what you would see going through The Bellows because obviously we knew it was a volcanic island in and we had obviously looked at it on maps but The Bellows were fairly narrow really when you were going into the bay, into Whalers Bay so formidable because it was volcanic I think and I don't think there was a great deal of ice when we went in but it was fascinating really. I can remember seeing my first icebergs on the way to South Georgia of course as well, I think that was probably much more exciting.

[0:11:18] Lee: Was Deception steaming?

Tallis: The fumaroles were, they were yes, I had a great friend who followed me down to the Antarctic, Phil Myers, who of course was on Deception when it finally blew its top and they were picked up by the Chileans by helicopter. I am not sure whether I was down at Stonington at that time actually when that happened.

[0:11:39] Lee: Did you sense in 62 that you were living on a volcano that might go off?

Tallis: I think we knew when it had last been fairly active and I think we probably talked about it but I don't think it ever crossed anybody's minds that there was any problem.

[0:11:56] Lee: That there was no escape drill?

Tallis: No, not at all, no we went swimming of course in the hot fumaroles and things.

[0:12:04] Lee: At that time it was the base for all the Antarctic planes or most of them?

Tallis: It was that's right yes,

[0:12:08] Lee: So I guess there was a fair amount of coming and going?

Tallis: Yeh and at that time of course the two aircraft, the two Otters had never been

inside, we went down to build the hanger basically, well that was one of the main jobs there and it was one of my main jobs obviously to put power into the hanger as well which was you know a few hundred yards away from the old Base hut.

[0:12:30] Lee: Was that a challenge?

Tallis: It was a challenge yes

[0:12:34] Lee: In what way?

Tallis: Because building anything in that kind of climate is a challenge.

[0:12:38] Lee: Tell me the problems associated with it.

Tallis: Well a lot of it of course was due to permafrost, we were obviously having to dig footings and dig trenches for the cabling and things like that and obviously the weather. Building something of that size to get two aircraft in was quite a challenge because we were a bit sceptical about the design of it because it came as a standard design, I am not quite sure who it was, was it Bob Ball? I can't remember, but the doors actually ran in channels on the ground, instead of being hung from girders in the ceiling so they were clear of the ground, so they would freeze in of course and drift in so we had some comments about the design of it, but it was built and we put the aircraft into it of course which meant they could be serviced properly during the winter.

[0:13:33] Lee: And not blown away?

Tallis: And not blown away, yes

[0:13:35] Lee: So the runners where the doors had to go they were actually, you had to cement those into the ground?

Tallis: Yes obviously they had runners with massive great wheels so the weight of doors, the hanger doors were actually taken on these like, big, big wheels that ran into these channels on the floor and of course they would freeze in so it was, we used to open the doors with the blade of the tractors the two Massey, we had three Massey Ferguson tractors

[0:14:05] Lee: Sorry say that again, you had to?

Tallis: We had three Massey Ferguson tractors and we used to use the blade of one of the [tractors] which we used to use for clearing the doors of snow drifts, we used to open the doors by pushing the doors open with the tractors because they were virtually impossible to manhandle.

[0:14:22] Lee: You couldn't set, have little bonfires under the wheels?

Tallis: Probably not because obviously the doors were quite wide I mean it was a wide hanger and I think the other problem was, the design of it, it had a cut out at the top of the doors to get the aircraft tail plane in, unfortunately they hadn't measured very well and you couldn't get the aircraft tail plane in, you had to

take that off before you could get the aircraft in.

[0:14:47] Lee: In terms of supplying electricity to this building, the biggest challenges were to put the cables?

Tallis: The biggest challenge was actually, it was a huge cable you can just imagine it was very large cable I mean extremely heavy, probably weighed about 7 or 8 tonnes because it was on a massive great spool and it was very heavy lead covered cable armoured cable so we obviously had to dig a trench from the main hut to the aircraft hangar to put power in so that as quite a big job.

[0:15:17] Lee: Was there any power loss over the length of the cable?

Tallis: Well there would have been a voltage drop yes but it wasn't significant to cause any problems yeh.

[0:15:24] Lee: You still had dogs at that time at Deception?

Tallis: We did, not very many but we did have dogs so obviously we were still feeding them on seal so one of the tasks was to go out and get some seal to feed the dogs which we did.

[0:15:39] Lee: How did you get on with the dogs, did you do much dog work yourself?

Tallis: We did, we used the dogs for going over to the penguin rookeries on the other side of the island there was massive chinstrap, mainly chinstrap penguin rookeries on the far side and we would sledge also up to The Chilean and the Argie Base as well, they hadn't got any dogs so quite a novelty for them.

[0:15:59] Lee: How did you get on with the South Americans?

Tallis: Very well indeed really, very well, probably better with the Chileans than we did with the Argentinians I think at that time but we got on with them extremely well, yeh, not a problem at all, they spent a lot of time with us because obviously they were military personnel and obviously we weren't except for the seconded pilots and the engineers for the aircraft but we got on very well with them.

[0:16:26] Lee: Was there a sort of a sense of a different culture about the way they were run those bases because they were military rather than civilian?

Tallis: I think there was definitely a difference yes, we were never sure what they were actually, whether they had a scientific programme or what they were doing whether they just there because they needed to be there.

[0:16:44] Lee: for political reasons?

Tallis: for political reasons yes.

[0:16:46] Lee: So even in 62 you were aware of the political background?

Tallis: We were very aware I mean it was during that time that Hope Bay closed at

that period and I can remember that there was an Argentinian Base or was there a base near Hope Bay? my memory gets vague on that but I can remember either a story or it was an absolute truth that the Argie ships would come in and would actually shoot at the penguins, they were obviously very, very strange. We of course had water at Deception we had the wells there and both the Chilean and Argentinian ships would come in and actually take on water for the ships there because there were some deep, some very deep water wells and I can remember Ricky at that time because we had to say, this is Crown Property, you know, you have got to have permission to land I think at the time and you certainly had to have permission to take out water from the wells as well.

[0:17:43] Lee: So you were into the protest note culture?

Tallis: We were at that time that was before, obviously before it was taken over if you like or it changed to the British Antarctic Survey.

[0:17:57] Lee: There was a Russian ship that came in at one point, I think wasn't there?

Tallis: Yeh there was a catcher that came in.

[0:18:00] Lee: A catcher?

Tallis: Yes.

[0:18:01] Lee: What's a catcher?

Tallis: Well it was a whale catcher.

[0:18:05] Lee: A whaling ship OK.

Tallis: A whaling ship that came in which had a small, I don't know quite what it was, it may have been an ex-corvette like a lot of the whaling ships that were used from South Georgia that Salvesens used and it came in because the Captain had been shooting, shooting shags I think with a 12bore off the gangway if you like that goes out to the harpoon gun on the bows and had either fallen off it, I think actually had completely fallen off it and damaged his back and they came into the bay and anchored and asked if we had a doctor and we didn't have a doctor but we went out to the catcher because I have been reading my diary recently which is a lot more exciting than my memory, we went out to the catcher in one of the dinghies and I think it was Ricky and myself and we took the Chilean doctor out as well to the catcher, then they wanted to take the captain up to the Chilean base to see what damage there was, they obviously had more equipment up there, and the catcher actually went astern and sank the dingy that we had actually gone out to this boat with but we managed to haul it up on a derrick and tip the water out of it and it was still useable although I think we couldn't start the outboard which was still on it, they were seagull outboards but I think we rowed it ashore but anyway that was a short interval and I think there was also female crew on this catcher as well, they were very grateful for the assistance we gave them anyway.

[0:19:46] Lee: Did you fraternise with the ladies?

Tallis: No we hardly ever saw them; I don't think we even recognised them actually to be honest with you yes. [Laughter]

[0:19:57] Lee: The Whistler programme was getting underway wasn't it at Deception?

Tallis: It was yes.

[0:20:00] Lee: I guess you were supplying power for that as well were you?

Tallis: Well yes but that was really done by mobile generators that they took out because obviously they had to put this cable across from the centre of the island to the outside of the island, quite how it all worked I am not absolutely certain but we were doing the Whistler programme for that season as well, I don't think it was very successful at all to be honest.

[0:20:23] Lee: Not early on perhaps? What's your memories of it though do you remember glum faces because it wasn't?

Tallis: Glum faces because it wasn't working and lots of people listening for these whistlers on the equipment that they were using to see whether this transmitter which was supposed to be transmitting was actually working or the receiver was working anyway. I didn't have a great deal to do with it.

[0:20:46] Lee: My memory of taking to other people about it is that it seemed like the entire island was being used?

Tallis: It was they were using the island as an antenna so they quite how this was being done I don't know but obviously it was to do with actually I think it was, I am not sure whether it was a cable or they were stretching something between the inner, the volcano core and the external but it was basically using the island as an antenna.

[0:21:09] Lee: You mentioned the cold water wells, did you also have to find ways of generating hot water for them?

Tallis: Well we spent I think the whole time I was there trying to get fresh water into the base hut so that we had actually running water which I think latterly we did succeed in doing but I think it was actually the year after I had left Deception when it became really productive but as far as hot water went we didn't use the fumaroles at all for heating any water. The emergency hut there was the old FIDASE hut of course which had been used before we arrived and of course they had had a very serious fire at Deception in previous years as well which had destroyed some of the old buildings.

[0:21:59] Lee: Had you signed up for 2 years?

Tallis: I signed up for 2 years, yes.

[0:22:02] Lee: So you knew you were staying a second year?

Tallis: I did, I didn't know where I was going of course at that time and in fact I think,

again reading my diaries recently it changed I was actually at one time going to go down to Halley Bay from Deception, that didn't happen, and then I was going to Adelaide, that didn't happen and I ended up by going down to the Argentine Islands to Base F for the second year.

[0:22:25] Lee: How was that?

Tallis: It was good, I really enjoyed it, I did I enjoyed it.

[0:22:29] Lee: Because?

Tallis: Well because we had twenty-four hour power there obviously which was a bit more exciting so I was kept a lot busier because obviously we were restricted at Deception we were having to fill diesel the oil drums for running the engines from the diesel tanks. Argentine Islands we had far more fuel reserves and because of the scientific programme there. I was very interested in the Whistler programme, not the Whistler programme the ionospheric programme I got much more involved in that as well and we were running twenty-four hour power we had three engines there not two like we did at Deception, same engines, both Listers at that time.

[0:23:15] Lee: Was maintaining the generators a real challenge? Were you always you know only just in charge or was it all very serene?

Tallis: Well I think because I knew something about Listers and they are extremely hard working not complicated engines to be honest with you so I don't think they ever caused a problem, we did have some problems of course but we always had, I don't think Argentine islands, although at Deception we did have some problems because there were only 2 engines but at Argentine islands we never had a problem and I think that very rarely did we ever have a power breakdown. I mean not even when you were switching engines over because you could phase them together and then drop an engine out without anybody noticing that there was a change.

[0:24:06] Lee: This was all down to the skill the engineer was it?

Tallis: To some extent and the equipment, yeh. [Laughing]

[0:24:14] Lee: Wasn't terribly good winter, that winter for ice was it? So I guess?

Tallis: It wasn't no.

[0:24:18] Lee: You were a bit restricted in what you could do?

Tallis: We were quite restricted, that year we did a lot of boating I think to be honest with you, we didn't get over to the mainland at all, we didn't get out to many of the islands either but it was a good winter I think that was the winter that we probably built the tide gauge and things like that so

[0:24:35] Lee: Tide gauge sorry

Tallis: Hmm

[0:24:37] Lee: what do you mean?

Tallis: Well they were measuring the, the

[0:24:41] Lee: Rise and fall?

Tallis: rise and fall of the tides, yes.

[0:24:41] Lee: Was that something that was manufactured on site or was it a kit that came down?

Tallis: No it well obviously material came down and it was quite a difficult job to do because we had to find a suitable place to do it, it was all done with steel girders and things like that and a hut built on top of it so it was just a just a challenge.

[0:25:04] Lee: What did it look like?

Tallis: It looked

[0:25:05] Lee: It was quite large was it?

Tallis: It looked like a large loo, square box sitting on top of girders, yes and obviously the equipment was all then going down into the sea which was measuring the rise and fall of the tides and we had to keep the ice away from it of course which was a bit of a challenge.

[0:25:24] Lee: The tidal range in the Antarctic isn't

Tallis: It isn't huge

[0:25:28] Lee: Significant is it?

Tallis: No it isn't, no, no

[0:25:29] Lee: So do you know why they were doing it?

Tallis: I don't to be honest with you obviously it was coupled with some scientific programme I'm sure there will be somebody here today that will know.[laughter]

[0:25:39] Lee: Apart from the dogs you had a cat on base?

Tallis: Yeh we did, we took a cat down.

[0:25:42] Lee: You took it with you?

Tallis: We took it down from Stanley yes, yeh, yes.

[0:25:46] Lee: Why?

Tallis: I think we took live chickens down, all kinds of things in those days, it was before the moratorium on what you couldn't, could and couldn't take down you see.

[0:25:58] Lee: How did the cat cope?

Tallis: It was fine actually; I think it was just a base pet.

[0:26:03] Lee: Did it go out much?

Tallis: It did go out not a great deal, but it did, yes, yeh, yeh I think it was down there for quite a while I'm not sure whether it was there for my second year, well third year in the Antarctic or second year at Argentine Islands of course, yeh.

[0:26:21] Lee: Well let's talk about that because you came back to the UK, you were back here for over a year I think weren't you?

Tallis: I came back in the spring as the ships get in and I

[0:26:30] Lee: 60?

Tallis: went, of 64?

[0:26:33] Lee: 4?

Tallis: 64 it would have been wouldn't it? yes and then I spent some time then looking at the new generators that were going down to the Argentine Islands and then I went up to see the actual alternator being connected and tested for the Rolls Royce engine of course that went down and that was quite exciting. I think it was Filey in Yorkshire I spent some time in digs there where I also met at that time I think the diesel mechanic we were both there at that time who went down to Halley Bay cos I remember the digs there, we had been booked into some digs and we were shown into these digs and the landlady was upstairs and said well this is your room and we went into this room and there was a double bed and we looked at each other and thought, oh well you know [laughter] we were there for about a week I think yes.

[0:27:27] Lee: So was this part of the plan then? That you would come back, be re-trained in Rolls Royce generators and go back again?

Tallis: That's right yes.

[0:27:33] Lee: So they must have offered you an extended contract or a new contract?

Tallis: Yes it was a new well I don't know if it was extended; it was probably a new contract, further 2 year contract.

[0:27:40] Lee: And did you leap at that or was it a case of?

Tallis: Yeah, I think so, I think I had already decided that I'd like

[0:27:45] Lee: Got the bug?

Tallis: I had got the bug, yeh, yes quite like to go down again.

[0:27:50] Lee: How was it to come back for a few months knowing you were going to go again?

Tallis: I don't think it was a bother at all to be honest with you, I was fairly busy during that period obviously because of there was quite a lot to do to sort out and then the return trip was on the *John Biscoe*.

[0:28:10] Lee: So you sailed down with the intention of going back to Argentine Islands but there was some work to be done on the way south I think?

Tallis: There was yes I was involved in the HiFix camp, there was a HiFix it was the *John Biscoe* and I think the *Shackleton* were involved and the *Protector* was involved as well and this was where they were doing this very accurate measurement of the sea bottom, within meters so we set up some triangulation points if you like with HiFix equipment so that the position of the ships could be very accurately measured. I was with John Noel on these camps and Dave Matthews and there was a couple of other people whose names, but anyway I was with John, John Noel for most of that time and we were based in the South Orkneys not far from Signy doing this work with the ships we were there probably for oh nearly up to 2 months I think. We camped, it as camp.

[0:29:17] Lee: It was a better winter as far as the ice was concerned in 65?

Tallis: It was a much better winter yes it was. The Argentine Islands was a much better winter we had really good sea ice, the aircraft when they came down from Deception actually landed on the sea ice as well when they were heading south to Adelaide and Stonington and we took the opportunity to be able to get out and about which we did of course and we.

[0:27:46] Lee: Your mountaineering skills came in handy?

Tallis: Yeh, that's right with

[0:27:50] Lee: What were you doing?

Tallis: With Tony, we decided because, Mount Lumiere I think, I am not quite sure about this whether Mount Lumiere had already been climbed, I'm not sure but Mount Peary most certainly hadn't and we decided, because obviously the base looks at them they are very prominent from the base and we decided we would really, we ought to go and have a look at that area and there was also the background of it was also to see if we could find a route over to the other coast because that had never been found and that would have perhaps been interesting as well so Mount Peary.

[Transcribers note: Terry is being shown a photograph at this point in the interview]

[0:30:24] Lee: Have you seen that photograph?

Tallis: Yes, yes that is my photograph yeh.

[0:30:31] Lee: Who's the person in the photograph?

Tallis: That is me.

[0:30:32] Lee: Oh that is you?

Tallis: It is.

[0:30:33] Lee: and where are you?

Tallis: Well I'm on the summit there of Mount Peary.

[0:30:38] Lee: You're looking very relaxed.

Tallis: Yeh well I think the whole thing, the weather during that trip was absolutely perfect for what we wanted to do, we had absolutely no problems whatsoever the sea ice was good for the crossing over to the mainland and we climbed Peary and then went back and climbed Lumiere and then went off to Peterman Islands and then we spent some time there before going back to base so we were away I think more than a week or so, I've actually still got the report to confirm it. Yes it was a good trip, Tony Bushell, myself, oh who were the other two? Hopeless really aren't I?

[0:31:25] Lee: Don't worry.

Tallis: Anyway yes, there were four of us.

[0:31:27] Lee: [Incomprehensible]

Tallis: Three of us climbing and one of us, one of them, one of the lads was just looking after the base and the dogs because obviously we took dogs over so you couldn't leave the dogs at all anyway.

[0:31:39] Lee: Were there any adventures with the Otters? Did you have any unusual incidences with them?

Tallis: Well the Otters not so much but the Beaver previously which had also come down from Deception in previous years had landed on water at Argentine Islands in the cove and had hit a chunk of ice which had holed its, holed one of the floats and it sank. A lot of it I think which was actually before it sank, which it sank quite slowly, I think they managed to take the, I'm not sure if they actually got the engine out I think they actually did, they got the engine off the aircraft it sank, it sank very slowly but that was the end of the De Havilland Beavers I think that was the last of it. Which of course they still had in Stanley when we were there, because they were float planes there as well. We had a big glass bottomed box which we used to take out in the boats to take photographs of things you know underwater so I think I have still got a photograph what, what was left of it [laughter]

[0:32:43] Lee: So I gather there was an Otter landing on the sea ice in the area of [Transcribers note possibly School?] Island.

Tallis: Yes

[0:32:48] Lee: So they were quite happy about landing on sea ice?

Tallis: They were yes, not a problem at all yeh, well they landed at Stonington on sea ice and also they would drop off

[0:32:58] Lee: Which is where is where you went next? Because the following season you were at Stonington?

Tallis: Yes I was, yes

[0:32:59] Lee: 66?

Tallis: Yes, that's right yes

[0:33:01] Lee: As Base leader?

Tallis: As Base Leader that's right

[0:33:04] Lee: Was that a surprise to get that?

Tallis: I'm not sure really, it might have been a surprise at the time cos Mick Cousins had preceded me there, who was with me at Deception of course as well.

[0:33:16] Lee: Now of course there was this rather tragic incident at.....

Tallis: There was

[0:33:20] Lee: Stonington that season when Tom Noel and John Allan....

[Transcribers note: It was Tom Allan and John Noel]

Tallis: That's right

[0:33:24] Lee: died. And you were Base Leader?

Tallis: I was the Base Leader so obviously

[0:33:27] Lee: So can you talk me through that?

Tallis: Well I think you feel very guilty about anything like that, I mean it was, it was a very busy season, there was a lot of, the programme was fairly hectic. We hadn't had particularly good weather for the geologists and the surveyors to get out and we needed to get depots out so it had been a fairly hectic, a hectic year and obviously the people on base, as you do because John was obviously the radio, the radio chap and Tom was the diesel mech so they're fairly key people really. OK I was a diesel mech so could handle that side of things and also I had an amateur radio licence as well so I knew a fair bit about radio comms but to me it hit me particularly badly because I had been with John on the HiFix camp off Signy and things and John and I planned as many of us did to go back through South America when we finally left so obviously when

they set off on a fairly short holiday if you like, I mean that's what they were, just to give the people who were stuck on base a break from base when we were back and it happened in June and we just got this spell of appallingly bad weather, I mean extremely bad weather with extremely high winds, katabatic winds coming off the glacier. John had my dog team of course because I was BL and general assistant and Tom had one of the other dog teams and we had never known dogs not getting back to base even in serious conditions dogs will generally get back but conditions that they were caught in obviously were extremely bad where they dug a, they obviously couldn't get the tent up, the wind the weather was too bad for that, they dug a snow cave and lived in that for a few days but probably completely unaware of the conditions above them where a lot of snow had accumulated, had completely buried the dogs as well, they were spanned out and obviously the dogs hadn't even tried to get away and obviously they had realised at some time that whether they were just using the Primus stoves to boil water and obviously had realised that they had a carbon dioxide problem and John had presumably John Noel had tried to, had dug a hole to get out of the base at the top of the cave and they had got through and they were, John was found kind of just with his arms and the top of his body out of the snow cave on the top of surface and when they were actually found, when we went out, I'm not sure whether it was Neil who went out, it was Dick Balding certainly went out I think and a couple of the others looking for them when they had not got back to base and I think we only had radio communication with them for the first two days away that they went out obviously because we realised they must be something seriously wrong. We had tremendous weather at base as well where it the wind had been picking up coal bags off the coal pile outside at Stonington and blowing them around so you can imagine what the weather was like.

[Transcribers note: Neil Marsden states he went out with Keith Holmes, they were the only 2 that went out initially. When they found them they then went back to base and went out again with Ian Ross and Ken Doyle to recover them. He remembers this very clearly]

[0:37:06] Lee: Did you go on the reconnaissance trip?

Talis: I didn't go no I stayed at base, mainly because I was looking after both the generators and also manning the radio at the time so I stayed there and just communicated with them and of course for the rest of the year I had got out and sledged quite a bit prior to that on the sea ice as well and also onto the piedmont but after that I spent a great deal of time on base obviously because of communications.

[0:37:37] Lee: Just, go back slightly then, so when they were found John was in the snow hole entrance?

Talis: He was in the snow hole entrance yes.

[0:37:46] Lee: Where was, where was?

Tallis: Now if I remember right Tom was still in the cave if I remember right I've got the report, I would need to read it again to be completely correct on what happened. We also recovered their camera and their diaries and we developed

a film on base so we knew what had happened the previous days, what they had actually been doing and building the snow cave so it was an extremely sad accident but I am sure they had done what they thought was the right thing and it probably was, what they hadn't realised is that they hadn't got sufficient ventilation.

[0:37:46] Lee: My memory of reading this in Of Ice and Men, Fuchs' version suggests that one of them was actually out of the hole completely and had gone to look at the dogs.

[Transcribers note: Neil Marsden states Tom was found lying on his back about 100 yards away from the snow cave]

Tallis: He may well have been, it may have been Tom that got out of the hole and maybe, I would need to read my report which I have the report which I wrote about it of course.

[0:38:44] Lee: OK

Tallis: I'd need to read that again to be absolutely certain.

[0:38:48] Lee: I think

Tallis: But you may be right, you may well be right

[0:38:50] Lee: that version is that one had gone to check on the dogs and hadn't come back and the other one was in the entrance looking.

Tallis: Looking for trying to think where he was yeh. We found, they were both very close together anyway, when we dug the dogs out or when the dogs were dug out, I mean they were 6 feet under the surface.

[0:39:08] Lee: And were they still alive?

Tallis: No, none of them.

[0:39:10] Lee: The whole lot?

Tallis: Yep.

[0:39:12] Lee: So as a Base Leader you been looking now seeing if there was anything you could have done or anything that should have happened, avoided it because even in those days there was a semblance of health and safety concerns.

Tallis: That's right.

[0:39:20] Lee: was there anything?

Tallis: I mean there was nothing you could have done because we, obviously the weather when they went was reasonably fine, they had all the equipment they needed just to have a few days away from the base but never the less you know you do feel as if, you know

[0:39:43] Lee: If only?

Tallis: You know what could you have done really? I mean you could have stopped them going but that wouldn't have been a particularly sensible thing to do as you would have had a good reason for doing it anyway. I think what ultimately what happened of course we brought them back to base obviously, I mean we dug them out, brought them back. The dogs were left there to the best of my knowledge. We brought back some of the equipment and I think at the time that I mean you'd need to, I would need to check on this, we were asked actually to keep [the bodies]. Now that was a very difficult thing for us to do or would have been a very difficult thing for us to do to actually, if there was going to be a post mortem for instance to keep two bodies basically from June until the ships appeared you know the following spring whatever it had been. I think the morale on base would have been pretty low, it was pretty low anyway to be honest with you, and we decided that and I think we needed their parents' permission to actually, to bury them basically which isn't easy either. So that was done on an outcrop of rock not far from the base where ultimately there was a cross erected which came down on the ships later. So I think anything for that to happen on base and it happened you know obviously on other bases you know at other times, it, the morale on base on a small number of people I think how many would have been there at that time eight or ten at the most you know you have to get on with the job but it's not easy.

[0:41:18] Lee: Did you have to fight your corner with, with London?

Tallis: Yes, basically because they're in a situation where they probably think we would really like to know how they died or why they died and the only way you can do that obviously is to examine the body and as far as I was concerned it was pretty obvious what had happened, there was obviously, you know it was, the Primuses were there, the water was there, they had obviously had a problem with poisoning there was no. Obviously they had got out of the cave but probably they realised and dug themselves out very quickly that they were in a bad way who knows but anyway we decided that we would have a burial ceremony.

[0:42:08] Lee: So just, how was that actually resolved? Did you simply put your foot down and say I'm not doing what you told me to do?

Tallis: Yeh I think so, well to some extent we probably reasoned with them or Ted Clapp at that time was at Stanley and I think that Ted would obviously see the reasoning.

[0:42:25] Lee: So your argument was with London or with Stanley?

Tallis: Well it was with probably with both actually because obviously Stanley would be asking London what to do.

[0:42:32] Lee: How did you as Base Leader, do you have any memories of trying to pick up morale? Was there anything you could do? Was it just a case of time passing?

Tallis: I think really we just got on with the job, hmm obviously like any, like any

situation like that when there's some disaster you just keep busy and get on with things which we did and I think the work that was done during that year wasn't affected greatly by that loss but obviously. We had some really good people on base anyway who just got on with the job.

[0:43:09] Lee: So people didn't start having doubt about whether to go on journeys?

Tallis: No not at all, never crossed, I wouldn't think it crossed anybody's mind.

[0:43:16] Lee: The circumstances were so extreme?

Tallis: The circumstances were extreme yes.

[0:43:20] Lee: OK, thank you for talking about it I appreciate

Tallis: OK.

[0:43:23] Lee: your clarity on that, not quite the same league but I think you had one or two rather scary experiences didn't you? You were depot laying for east coast trips when things started to go a little awry?

Tallis: We did, yes very often I think sledging on sea ice is never, you are never quite as ease with sledging on sea-ice I don't think, because you never know what the weather is going to do and it can change very quickly and of course there had been problems at other bases with staff and breaking up sea-ice and disappearing of course so we were always wary about it and I think because we were depot laying you tend to have a base camp and then run off with a depot and a pup tent to drop the depot and then go back to your main tent and I think a couple of times weather got really bad on the sea-ice and it was kind of, your navigation was not quite like it is today with a GPS, it was just done with dead reckoning with a compass and a couple of times it didn't work, we didn't get back actually to the base tent and had to put the pup tent up for the night and then set off back on dead reckoning but we always found the actual base, no problems at all, I think perhaps a lot of it goes back to my scouting days and using a compass and things like that.

[0:44:46] Lee: Oh really some of those scouting skills did come in?

Tallis: Oh I think so, yes

[0:44:50] Lee: There's an incident where you cut yourself whilst you were sealing and that always been [????Inaudible] isn't it?

Tallis: Yes that's right yes

[0:44:54] Lee: Doesn't sound terribly serious when you say it like that.

Tallis: It doesn't really, it did need some stitching of course and this was with Ricky of course as well and we did a good job of actually having somebody to sit, the scars still there, having someone put stiches in your hand actually with no anaesthetic, it can be, I think we had a couple of glasses of well tots of rum I think to help it on its way and we did actually go out to the *Protector* later on

which came in during the summer just so the Doc could have a look at it and see if it was all right and I think he said you made a good job of that I think I will just put one more stitch in so that was it.

[0:45:33] Lee: There's always that worry about catching some sort of infection from seals isn't there?

Tallis: There is yes I don't think, I mean we never had colds or anything so we never I mean I can't remember any illness really on base I think the only problem I can think of, I don't know if Ricky Chinn would like me saying this, but I don't think he went to the loo for about 3 months I think. I think it worried him because I can remember us having skeds with the doctor in Port Stanley and they said oh don't worry about it you know the more you worry about it the less likely you are to sort the problem out, but anyway I don't think we were ever worried, I don't think there was any infections, I don't think we worried about infections from sealing either, maybe they do now.

[Transcribers note: Skeds is a term for scheduled radio communications]

[0:46:15] Lee: I think it's through the cut.

Tallis: To do with the cut yeah, there was certainly no infection whatsoever anyway.

[0:46:24] Lee: I have to ask you about a ship hitting the jetty in Stanley, what's that story?

Tallis: Oh that's right well that was the *Shackleton* actually I think they had forgotten to actually to take off one of the mooring lines from one of the bollards on the and we were busy setting off I think it was a pretty windy nasty day and I don't think it had been cast off sufficiently or properly and we did quite a bit of damage to the jetty I think as well.

[0:46:52] Lee: Was that on the way south or on the way north?

Tallis: It was on the way south yeh, yeh.

[0:46:56] Lee: How do you regard those four years in the Antarctic compared to the rest of your life?

Tallis: I think those four years in the Antarctic actually made the rest of what I have done during that, because I came back from the Antarctic and I think like so many of us did who were probably completely disorientated not sure what you were going to do in the future and I then decided that there was no way I was going to go back into engineering and I think I had become very concerned about, I think about my life and how it affected the future really and I was extremely concerned about the environment and I think everything I did after that because I came back from the Antarctic and for the rest of my working life I've worked for National Parks and been very involved in conservation so I worked for Snowdonia National Park and Peak District National Park for 43 years.

[0:48:00] Lee: In what capacity? Always outdoors?

Tallis: Always outdoors, well within reason outdoors, I was always part of the ranger service I was a field ranger until ultimately you end up in an office because you become a senior ranger or a principal ranger or whatever but never the less I've always worked for National Parks.

[0:48:22] Lee: You went south in 62, you came back in 67.

Tallis: Hmm

[0:48:27] Lee: Britain had changed enormously

Tallis: Well a lot of things went on of course.

[0:48:32] Lee: in those 4 years,

Tallis: They did, it was the Cold War as well wasn't it? President Kennedy I can remember exactly where we were when he was assassinated.

[0:48:40] Lee: Where were you?

Tallis: I forget which base it would have been, when was it? Was it 63? So I would probably still been at Deception he was assa.... and of course then there was all kind of world problems going on at time.

[0:48:53] Lee: Well there was Cuba.

Tallis: There was Cuba, that's right

[0:48:56] Lee: The Bay of Pigs, I know one or 2 FIDS who were very worried about that.

Tallis: I don't think we were worried about it, it was very interesting of course yes we used to have Calling Antarctic where we used to be kept up with all kinds of news that was going on.

[0:49:07] Lee: But I was thinking about the cultural life in Britain you had basically gone from rock and roll and Bill Halley and come back to Psychedelia.

Tallis: Missed The Beatles completely because I wasn't at home during that period and came from Liverpool of course as well so that was a big sadness of course I was completely you know, I mean I knew the music but I was not there from when was it? 63 the heyday wasn't it? Really so missed The Beatles era.

[0:49:30] Lee: So was there an adjustment that had to be made when you got back?

Tallis: I think there were big adjustments when I came back yes.

[0:49:34] Lee: Such as?

Tallis: Well I think just getting back into touch with living at the time, it became very difficult in fact, think you wanted to shut yourself away somewhere and you couldn't understand why everybody was rushing around you know and everything had to be done at a certain time and everybody was worried about

money and things, well we hadn't had to think about things like that had we really?

[0:49:56] Lee: So it wasn't a case of the rest of the world speeding up, it was a case of you not having to worry about it for 4 years?

Tallis: I think it had speeded up and we had not kept up with it and what we considered as important was entirely different to what was important in general life back in the UK or elsewhere in the world for that matter.

[0:50:15] Lee: The pound in your pocket.

Tallis: Yeh.

[0:50:17] Lee: All that was going on wasn't it?

Tallis: Yes it was I went to live in Snowdonia, brought a small farm and I suppose then slowly got back into the way of life.

[0:50:28] Lee: When you applied to the National Parks was your Antarctic experience, did it help you with your application?

Tallis: I think it did, I think that experience has helped me with everything to be honest with you in many things I have done it has helped me considerably because I think you are very self-reliant. I think most people who have been down there would be very self-reliant so I think it did help yes. I was actually applying for two jobs, one with the Snowdonia National Park and at that time I was supposed to have to speak Welsh of course as you had to be bilingual, my only profession to that was I did actually go to school in Wales during the latter end of the war because we moved from Warwick in Leamington which was close to Coventry during the blitz we had moved to North Wales and I actually went to school in North Wales I could understand Welsh quite a lot but I don't think I spoke it very well.

[0:51:22] Lee: Did you go back through South America? The last time.

Tallis: We didn't, it was planned to but because of John's death that was actually cancelled, yes there was John and Tony, Tony Bushell and also Judy Sands who was one of the girls in the office at Port Stanley at the time, we were all going to go back through South America but that didn't happen. It didn't happen for another reason as well because in fact we were thinking of doing it but my passport had actually been renewed in Port Stanley and the Argies would not have taken kindly to that passport, so that became, I think it was some advice we had as well.

[0:52:06] Lee: When you got back, there's one more question about the tragedy at Stonington, did you have any contact at all with the parents of the two who had

Tallis: I did yes, both John's parents and his girlfriend of course,

[0:52:19] Lee: Did you go to see them?

Tallis: I went to see them yes and also John's parents in Scotland, in Peebles
[Transcribers note: Neil Marsden knows that Tom Allan's parents lived at St. Ronan's Well near Peebles]

[0:52:24] Lee: So Tom and John?

Tallis: Tom so I saw all the parents and family as well yes.

[0:52:28] Lee: How was that experience?

Tallis: They were, well the experience was difficult obviously because I had actually taken personal belongings back as well, things like that are never easy but they were extremely good about it and extremely understanding, perhaps they had wanted to know some more detail than they had been given official details and things like that but they were extremely understanding and lovely wonderful people.

[0:52:58] Lee: Do you remember that the Official account of what happened was pretty close to what really happened? Or were there gaps?

Tallis: I think it was, I think it was pretty accurate I think what they had been told was pretty accurate and I don't think we could add a great deal more to it, perhaps we did, small things, I mean we were able to tell them more about what John and Tom had done on base because and John was quite a talented artist and had done quite a lot of painting and things and he had built models and things of sledges and of course I had spent a long time with John as well, not so much Tom but John, yeh.

[0:53:35] Lee: Finally have you ever had any inkling to go back?

Tallis: Oh I think you always have an inkling, I've always felt though it would be never quite what I had imagined it because things have changed so much and I have never been back to The Falkland Islands although I have had the opportunity to do that obviously since the Falklands War and I think that will have, would have changed and has changed so much that it wouldn't be quite the same and obviously how things are managed in the Antarctic now have changed so much that it would never be quite the same I don't think.

[0:54:11] Lee: But you could still come to the reunions 40years later?

Tallis: I do, not very frequently very often, I think the older you get you think well maybe I ought to get back and spend a bit more time and meet people that I knew many years ago, yeh.

[0:54:24] Lee: It's been a real pleasure, thank you Terry.

Tallis: It's been a pleasure telling you some of the tales.

END

Possible Extracts:

- [0:06:07] Knees “cured” by doctors at interview.
- [0:12:30] Building the aircraft hangar at Deception in 1962.
- [0:18:05] Russian whaling ship Captain injured shooting shags.
- [0:25:39] Base cat at Argentine Island Base.
- [0:28:10] HiFix Camp.
- [0:27:50] Climbing Mount Lumiere and Mount Peary.
- [0:33:27] Death of Tom Allan & John Noel.
- [0:44:50] Cut hand whilst sealing.
- [0:46:24] The *Shackleton* hitting the quay at Port Stanley.