

KEN DARNELL

Edited transcript of an interview with Fid Cook Ken Darnell, conducted by Chris Eldon-Lee, on 30th October 2011.

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Transcribers use of Symbols in text:

'-' denotes quick change of subject without pause

'...' three dots, denotes an unintelligible or undecipherable passage of speech or individual words, some at start of paragraph, middle, or trailing off at end.

[00.00.00] Chris: This is Ken Darnell, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee, on the 30th October 2011. Ken Darnell.

Ken: I'm Kenneth Darnell, 14/05/39, Liverpool, Garston, Liverpool.

[00.00.17] Chris: So how old are you now, Ken?

Ken: Seventy two.

[00.00.20] Chris: What kind of education did you have?

Ken: Just secondary modern. I left school in 1954, just 15 really. I was born in May, so got through the next years. If I'd been born a little bit later (my brother was born the first of September) he said he went to the next year. I didn't really do any exams at all when I left, just went straight to work then.

[00.00.48] Chris: Did they do home economics at that school?

Ken: No, we did woodwork and metalwork. We did more technical sorts of things, the girls at that time did cooking and boys did woodwork. But I always liked cooking, messing about, it's always been kids during the war, there weren't much toys and things, so just helping mum in the house all the time, y'know fiddling about, making cakes with her, what you could. And then that got me interested in cooking so I always wanted to be a cook. And the first hotel I wrote to I got a reply from so that was it. So I left school in June and was working about two weeks after I left school.

[00.01.29] Chris: Where was your first job?

Ken: Exchange Hotel in Liverpool. That was just after the war and the chef there was very strict on everything and everything was rationed. He used to give you like two eggs and say 'Keep three in the fridge' [laughs]. When we were apprentices we had to bottle peaches and things but he used to make you sit outside and whistle or talk all the time so you couldn't eat

anything. So if you stopped he kept poking his head out the door to see what you were doing .
[laughs]

But I wanted to go further, once I'd been there about two years I think it was, he said, I asked him, he was Swiss so I asked him if he knew anywhere I could write to, to go Switzerland, so when he found the details they didn't have foreign apprentices working there then.

But prior to this everybody was called Hume or ..., nobody was first names at all, you had to be there donkeys-years before even the chef to pass you at work, and we had to call him 'mister' all that sort of thing. You couldn't stand two apprentices next to each other, so you could talk, you had to just keep working and stand aside. One day, I'd been there nearly two years and he asked me something, he said, 'Boy, what's your name?' 'I said Kenneth' and he went....I said 'Oh, Darnell'! [laughs] And when he got the reply back from Switzerland he shouted me from the office 'Kenneth!' – oh.... I nearly died! Everybody stopped - he called the second chef 'Hume' and he'd been there for donkey's years. You can imagine the comments as I was walking up!

[00.03.14] Chris: What's this about him measuring joints of meat?

Ken: He used to, when all the checks came in in the evening so if he'd had the butchers, he'd go round and measure the sirloins and if they were supposed to be half an inch thick the joints or something like that, so if it was three inches he'd know there had been six steaks so if he'd only got five chits he'd moan because someone had given them too much or somebody's pinched one so everything like that he was keen on. But as I say I couldn't go to Switzerland so he advised me to go to the Abercorn Rooms in London. It was a banqueting restaurant, part of the Great Eastern Hotel but it was a separate entity really.

When I got there I started work on April 1st, and one of the first jobs they asked me about was to get some meat for, I think it was spaghetti bolognaise or something. I went to the butchers shop and he said 'Just cut the tails off those fillets'. I just stood there, couldn't believe him. April the first! They'd wait for me to do something then someone's going to come round running after me afterwards calling me all the names under the sun. It was the way he was just standing there so he just cut them off and told me to go away. It was unreal, I couldn't believe it!

And the wine, we used to get the sauce boats at the other place, always two teaspoons, you had to take teaspoons and get everything measured for, and it went on the shelf with the sauce boat he said 'The wine's in the cupboard there' so I grab a bottle out but there was no corkscrew, he said 'what you waiting for?' so I said 'A corkscrew to open it'. 'Take the bottle' he said. I couldn't believe the difference between them and the other place. Because in the banqueting restaurant you could make a lot more money really, 'cause you don't waste so much. In a hotel you've got to have stuff you waste it, but you can use it up again in the banqueting restaurant. But it was a bit of an experience.

[00.05.02] Chris: Why did you join the RAF?

Ken: I really wanted to go in the forces to start with and I was toying up with the idea but I wasn't quite sure if I had to do National Service, I was just on the borderline. So I volunteered, well actually, I got a poison finger and I thought I'd go round and see which is the best first while I'm off work. I tried to join the Royal Marines, but I was too small for them so I finished up in the TA in the parachute regiment. I'm frightened of heights so I don't

know how I stuck going there! But when I went round to the Air Force one first they said 'Would you please fill the little form in?'

If you could write your name and address you were in, if you could read the form to know where to put your name and address. And he said 'Please go to the next stage, go to this place' and then after a couple of visits and extra medicals and all the rest of it they started saying 'You will go to, you will go here you will go there..' and I went too far to back out really, I felt an idiot then. There was getting more and more people each time you went up, then we were all in a big group being sworn in and that was it, we were off to the Air Force for three years.

[00.06.14] Chris: How long did you sign on for ?

Ken: Three years. They tell you to go longer, but eventually I didn't really- mind they had some lousy postings really... in Northern Ireland and that's a bit out in the sticks so I thought I'll put in for overseas and they sent me to Christmas Island which was even worse!

[00.06.34] Chris: What was so bad about Christmas Island?

Ken: It was just - that's it, just...nothing. They had stopped dropping the bombs, testing the bombs luckily, so I just missed all that but there was nothing to do at all. It's hot, in the kitchen it's especially working over the stoves it was 80's in the shade all the time because it's just a flat coral island, there's no shade at all, in a tin shed as well, a tin roofed hut. But a couple of times like they stopped people working, y'know the offices all closed down because it was too hot, but in the kitchen over the stoves you had to keep going all the time, cooking in a hot kitchen. But the one good thing about it I went to Hawaii then for leave, you could go to an American leave centre in Hawaii.

I went over there and that's what saw me getting the travel bug the further we went because you had to fly out to Christmas Island so that took about four days. You have to fly to Shannon first, Northern Ireland, refuel from Blackbushe in London to get across the Atlantic, I think we went to Nova Scotia instead of Gander, then Gander – New York, New York – Omaha, Omaha – San Francisco then down to Hawaii. Then a raft plane from Hawaii, it was all Eagle Airlines on the way out.

But on the way back we had a choice of going because the jets had just started then, there was a choice between flying home with the Air Force or going home in a DC8, a nice big modern jet. It was 22 days by Air Force planes, or two and a half days by the other one, so we went that way, because the RAF planes can't fly overnight and they have to go through British bases, so they've got to make sure they can get from one place to another in time.

[00.08.24] Chris: Why was the RAF at Christmas Island?

Ken: They were dropping the bombs ... testing the atomic bombs.

[00.08.30] Chris: Even then?

Ken: They had just finished. They finished in 1957. When I was down there, well I had my 21st down there, so it must have been '60, they'd started withdrawing all the troops then. There was 3000 at one time, there was the Fiji Army. It was a Navy base, staffed by Air Force cooks and Army bakers. The Army had big water barrels converted to ovens, sort of like an oil tanker or water tanker.

[00.09.06] Chris: Was there ever any talk about radiation or radioactivity?

Ken: No, nothing at all. We could go anywhere on the island, because there's nothing you can do. You can't steal anything or go anywhere so they just had a petrol pump and if you wanted, somebody could drive, you could say something for the weekend, you want to go fishing, so they'd say just pump it in, fill it up and away you go. But you could just go anywhere at all. That was just after the bombs but there were so many people got radiation poisoning or they are claiming they have they don't know, the deniers say it's probably half and half really, some people would've got cancer anyway, so you don't really know what ...

[00.09.50] Chris: How long were you there for?

Ken: Twelve months, you did twelve months.

[00.09.52] Chris: So that was a third of your RAF service?

Ken: Yeah, then I came back, went to Innsworth and some nicer places. Boscombe Down, that was quite good, once you had been there you're security cleared then. The poor native people couldn't do anything without Europeans, so the educated Gilbert & Ellis Islanders they were all imported, they were all just running a plantation, nice little village there.

One of my friends that I was a square basher with, he used to run the Scouts so he said 'We will go down. Will you help me run it?', but I'd never been in the Scouts. I was trying to read the book, how to tie the knots the week before, then all the codes and all the rest of it and all the bits and pieces after that. But they were reading it quicker than I was! They came back and I was struggling all week to get the knots tied properly all they did it all, they knew everything and they was teaching me what to do, so ...

[00.10.53] Chris: We must talk about the Antarctic as well, so at what point did you start showing an interest in the Antarctic?

Ken: Well, I'd seen the Trans-Antarctic Expedition going across the pole.

[00.11.04] Chris: You'd seen that, on television or..?

Ken: No, I think I'd just heard about it more. But it was the travel bug really. I wanted to go and see all the faraway places first and as I got older, come back this way. So I thought when I get older I won't want to travel too far so I'll do it now while I'm young, and that came up. But the first time I applied it was too late, the ships had gone and then I had an accident at work and I had to go to the Industrial Injuries place, the Unions put it up.

I thought 'Oh, it's my fault, I did it at work, it's silly you know' and the bloke got upset, he said 'look, if you hadn't have been at work you wouldn't have done it, would you?' I said 'Oh no, I suppose so'. He said 'Well alright then, that's it. Take this along'. I said 'How long do you think ..., will it get better?' 'cause the nerves were all chopped. He said 'Oh, it takes anything from a year to three years to finally find out what's wrong, but put it this way, if you want to join the British Antarctic Survey they'd take you'.

And I couldn't believe it, y'know twice !!

Then I went to Stratford on Avon, I was working at the Alba Savannah Hotel in Stratford on Avon and that was - you used to have to stay and finish work at 8 o'clock/ 9 o'clock we had to wait an extra hour just in case somebody came back from the theatre. They could book it, but if someone's forgotten they might want to - used to sit there for an hour to ten o'clock at night waiting and nobody ever turned up, I got really fed up with that!

So I thought I'd look at '*The Caterer*' again, looked through '*The Caterer*' it was advertised again!

[00.12.29] Chris: So it was a BAS advert in '*The Caterer*'?

Ken: Yeah! So that's third time lucky I thought. So I wrote off this again so it must be fate, you know try...

[00.12.37] Chris: Three times is a conspiracy isn't it?

Ken: Yeah, and so I thought 'That's it', and I got the job.

[00.12.42] Chris: How much would you have known? Apart from ... so you followed the TAE, so would you have read about Scott and Shackleton?

Ken: Oh, yeah, at school as well, I think it was more taught at that time, they were real heroes, you knew all about that sort of thing. I don't think the kids of today would really...

[00.13.04] Chris: How difficult was it to get into BAS?

Ken: Well, I found it quite 'cause at the time they needed cooks ... When I went up I thought 'What if they ask the places I'd worked before', and I thought 'Blimey I've been six months here.', but occasionally you do that, I used to go away for the summer. I couldn't afford to stay in London actually 'cause there was work in the place was 9 - 3, five days a week, in the summer. Well, if you are living in a bedsit and you've got to pay your own food, I couldn't afford to stay there really.

So I had to pack up and then go up to Stratford on Avon or somewhere, and I thought 'By the time I'd been and I left to go in the Air Force, I thought 'When they see that they'll think I'm not suitable but, I heard I think it was Johnny Green said to Bill Sloman 'If he's left that many times and they've taken him back then he must be alright!' I never thought of it in that light. And they left it there...

I put my address down as Liverpool so my mother sent all this package down here - everything came today to say you'd been accepted and go to Cambridge and everything. I was though the ceiling! I knew they'd written, because the manager came to me one day and said 'What have you been up to?' They must've asked for a reference. So I thought at least I'm on the trail still. But that was great, I couldn't believe it.

[00.14.24] Chris: This was late '63, early '64?

Ken: '63, 'cause I went down in '63

[00.14.31] Chris: So how was it, going down to the Antarctic? What was it like?
What are your memories ?

Ken: Oh, it was really just lazy hazy days in the sun on the way down till we got to Stanley. Then once we got off at the Bases it was, you really know where you are then. That's when it sort of got good. Because we had to drop off at Hope Bay to help Johnny Green. They were thinking of closing it down. Mind you ... one of the first jobs I did in the kitchen, I thought, I'd never seen dehydrated food or that before and they had these nice dried potato strips and I thought they look nice, I could fry them and make some little crisps and things with them.

So I got the fat nice and hot and put the basket in and just as they were coming up to the top I took the basket off and there's nothing in it, they've all come out the side. I was about an eighth of an inch from setting the place on fire, nearly burnt it down before we got any further!

[00.15.32] Chris: You nearly burnt Hope Bay down?

Ken: Yeah, if that had gone over, the fat would have been everywhere. I didn't mention it at the time. I certainly got the pan out the way quickly!

[00.15.41] Chris: You'd done some cooking actually on the ship, hadn't you?

Ken: Oh yeah, that was a bit later on but when they were doing the Bases one of the cooks - the bottom hold on the ship apparently was for coming back home, you weren't supposed to open that at all, but he was short of something anyway so, on the way, only days before, so he'd opened the hatch, gone down, pulled the hatch cover down on top of him and he fell down the steps and broke his leg. So I got roped in to work on the '*Biscoe*' for a while.

[00.16.11] Chris: How did they find him?

Ken: I don't know if they heard him cry or something, but they were searching all over the place, they didn't have any idea he down there, they thought he'd fell in the sea. Because he used to like a little tipple, he was a bit ... But they got him out.

[00.16.24] Chris: What were the catering facilities like at Hope Bay at that point, because it was, as you say about to be closed?

Ken: Ther was just an Esse. I keep saying Aga but they weren't Aga's ... it was just a new experience to me all round. Once you do cooking you soon learn, you've got to take a stock of what you've got and you make the best of what you've got.

[00.16.48] Chris: So was it a coal fire?

Ken: Yes, coal.

[00.16.51] Chris: Had you cooked on coal before?

Ken: No. I'd done some tray tests when I went in the Air Force. That was the first time I'd ever cooked on one, but that was only an hour or so.

[00.17.01] Chris: Did you have to relearn some things, to cope with the fact that you have less control?

Ken: It's just getting used to it really. They are very similar to a gas one, with the solid tops and all that, it's just you can't regulate, but you get to know. Mind you, most of the time in the kitchen you just put your arm in the oven to see if it's hot enough to put anything in. There's no thermostat in big catering ovens really. You just open the door and put your arm in and if it singes your hair, you know what you're doing! It's a slow learning process, but you soon get used to it.

[00.17.36] Chris: Was Hope Bay generally rather run down by the time you got there?

Ken: I ... wouldn't say run down, I mean, there were lots of seals lying around, because we went round and would cut a bit off for one of the dogs. I don't know how many years they had been there but they were just like a leather case. When you put the knife in 'psssssss' like a gas bag. Oh, the smell was terrible. We went on the Chile base down there as well, they invited us over. They all came over to us, had moose-milks which went down quite well, I'd never made them before – condensed milk, hot water and Navy rum.

Then they invited us over for a meal and when we got over there, because they had fresh meat and all sorts of luxuries. And they said to try the pisco and they said 'Oh, it's very good, very strong', and we started drinking. It's a bit like drinking tequila I suppose. I togged this thing down and I started bleeding. It was nothing to do with the drink, I don't know what it was, I just started bleeding. And there was uproar then!

[00.18.33] Chris: Did I hear you say moose-milk?

Ken: Yeah ... Fids when we went down there, it's condensed milk, hot water and Navy rum. Perhaps they don't do it now, they had the old Navy rum, the big jars of Navy rum.

[00.18.46] Chris: Alright, so it was a drink called moose-milk? It wasn't actually the milk of moose?

Ken: No, but it was called milk-moose. You mustn't drink it before the sun sets below the yardarm which is pretty good in the winter! The suns always below the yard-arm then, so it's a winter drink really I suppose. [Laughs]

[00.19.04] Chris: You were destined for Adelaide Island weren't you? But there was a struggle to get there?

Ken: Yeah, it was a bit hard getting in, so they tried to offload on an ice cliff. They just wedged the bows in and got people off and they were trying to get some of the stuff off. They were going to try and fly it down or sledge it down, then the ice cliff started crumbling away so it was all back on again so we went down – that's when we got stuck in the ice again on the way. We had to get off and dig the ship out. It was good fun you know! But it was a bit scary, those lumps of ice, it's amazing what a swell they make, the '*Biscoe*' only being a fairly small ship. It was up and down like a rollercoaster, like a fairground ride.

[00.19.45] Chris: Sorry just explain that a bit more, Ken? The ice was doing what?

Ken: The ice cliff was just crumbling away, so there were great big chunks, they were higher than the ship. These lumps were just flaking off at the sides of it, and once they fell in the water there were huge waves it was making.

[00.20.03] Chris: The boat was bobbing around?

Ken: Yeah it was back out quick, then we had to get back into the ice then. Because it was just a great big open lead right along the coast and we battered through the ice, I think we stopped for about a week or so. It was ding ding ...engine start...ding ding...engine stop...back to sleep. But it was ..., I don't think you realise at the time, being youngish you don't realise what the dangers are do you really? It seemed a bit fun when you think about it after, but when you see what could happen – if it had fallen a little bit further over, or fallen on the bows of the ship it might have been slightly different, but luckily it fell the other way and just bobbed it up and down a bit like a cork in a bottle, bouncing ...

[00.20.46] Chris: So because of the difficulty in relieving the base at Adelaide that year some of the stores were flown down, is that right?

Ken: Yes, but they tried to land on the sea ice, they took the ship round and they tried to land on the sea ice – no, I think that was the next year. But they got round and managed to land on the sea ice further round in Marguerite Bay and they sledged it across. The idea was to fly some stuff down but I don't think they managed to get much stuff down from where we were. But they got it all ashore and then about two days after a storm came up and it was all snow drifted over and everything – you couldn't see anything really. Oil drums, all sorts, they just all got covered in a fantastic amount of snow. They hadn't got a clue where to start digging to find it and get it out. But the weather was so bad for a couple of weeks then.

[00.21.29] Chris: Did they ever find those stores?

Ken: Not as far as I know. I don't know if they did in later years. But it must be that it is fairly near the edge so I suppose they must have done by now. I think there was an aeroplane propeller in there as well. But all the coal and everything was down there.

[00.21.42] Chris: Well, quite. You lost a lot of coal, didn't you?

Ken: The coal, yes, and the avgas, so you couldn't use the generators very much. So they just turned them on mostly for doing radio scheds, to keep the batteries charged for the radios and things like that. With being the first trip, you get used to it. If you'd already been there for a year and you knew all these little bits and pieces, but being the first time down, you don't really notice all that.

[00.22.06] Chris: The loss of the coal and the fuel then, did that cause you privations? Were you struggling to keep your Esse going?

Ken: Oh no, there was enough for that. There was almost enough for all the time really. It was just getting it out, it was just not quite as easy to get out and all that sort of thing. Because all the stuff were in the back of the hut, there was enough room to bring the stores inside, so when we had it all lined up in nice big rows at the back of the hut ready so we knew where to go and get the stores to restock the internal larder. But that completely caused the drifts and all the snow drifting round - going down with a stick to find the boxes,

luckily you had the manifest numbers so you could tell roughly where you were, you knew what was in it, you didn't digging round for meat and you found it's apple-rings. We must have had enough apple-rings to restock Tesco's. I think if we had got space anywhere and they wanted to send something down they sent apple-rings down, it filled the space it wasn't too heavy. It was good experience though.

[00.23.13] Chris: What were the biggest challenges facing you in your kitchen at Adelaide?

Ken: Really it's the temperatures, the space and we had the numbers as well, it was hard to ...

[00.23.21] Chris: You had twenty nine men weren't there, at times ?

Ken: Some of them ate in the other place that the aircrew, with the sledges going in and out, it wasn't too bad. I started off doing menus like the Great Eastern [laughs] we had all this dried fruit so I was doing like compote of fruit, cornflakes, first courses and breakfast, bacon and eggs, well what eggs we had got - the powdered eggs or any penguins we could, and things like that. Then the same with the meals doing afternoon teas and soup, main course, ... sweets and they said no no no!, too much water being used on the washing up! All they want is something they can eat with a spoon and a fork at lunchtime so they only have to wash the knife, just wash one plate, one thing, so it was stews - we did have variations occasionally y'know, but it was all they wanted they didn't want anything else. Then breakfast was finished as people were getting up then especially when there was only a few there they just come and if they fancied something they ate it. I think the all days and all nights sort of thing, you lose touch with this breakfast, lunch and dinner thing, it's dark, it's night time it doesn't seem right having breakfast in the dark, so you might have a snack or something then, toast or

[00.24.43] Chris: So are you telling me that to a certain extent, that what you provided them with, food wise, was determined by how much washing- up they were prepared to do?

Ken: Yeah, because they had to fill the water tanks up so the more water you use, the more water it takes to wash the dishes, and the more dishes you've got takes more water so nobody wants - they all said 'No we don't want that, don't want all that washing up and all that sort of thing' !!

[00.25.05] Chris: It must have been a bit of a blow to your professionalism, wasn't it ?

Ken: Oh well, I did make other things as well ... It wasn't that all the time. They used to moan and groan a bit if you made too much, I still made cakes and things sometimes for sweets, so they had more bits and pieces in the daytime I suppose you could do that instead of ...

[00.25.27] Chris: It was a bit of a learning curve was it ?

Ken: Yeah just to get them used to what everybody wanted y'know. It was the same on the other side, I was talking to one of the other cooks, he said the same 'Big show stew, one spoon one plate' ...

[00.25.39] Chris: Well, you were catering for working men, weren't you, unlike a hotel where people were just lounging around all the time?

Ken: And if they had been used to sledging, just using the Primus stove, that was a luxury having a plate of hot food to sit down at a table and eat it.

[00.25.54] Chris: Were you adjusting what you provided, with the work rate of the men, in mind?

Ken: Not really, they dictated what they wanted to eat.

[00.26.12] Chris: There wasn't a regime of carbohydrates and fats and ... vitamins, you weren't doing it by chemistry?

Ken: No, not at all. I suppose the sledgers were probably healthier fed than the lot, their meals were designed for it weren't they. I think on the whole, the stuff they had was probably just as good. You didn't get lots of the rubbish you get in the food today, at least it was fresh if you made a pie or something ... it wasn't bits of trimmings, it was tinned food. Accelerated freeze dried food was quite good that was near enough to fresh meat, that was quite good, the fish was fantastic.

[00.26.50] Chris: Accelerated freeze drying ?

Ken: They dry it very very quickly and all the water comes out but it leaves the fish, steaks or whatever meat, so as soon as you put it back in water, it takes the water and it's just like raw fish again after about half an hour. On the steaks sometimes you used to get little hard bits where it didn't actually rehydrate properly, but the fish was fantastic. It went dry quick, it looked like fresh fish but it was slightly different but after you'd been on tinned food all the time, they were quite pleased with all that, you could cover that up better than tinned food or pre-cooked foods.

But the Governor came down as well ...

[00.27.33] Chris: The Falklands Islands Governor, who would have been... ?)

Ken: Sir Cosmo Haskard. When they came in, it was only a small Base the old Adelaide was just - they had a big long table and he came on a small table on the side with just two chairs, we didn't have enough room at the big one. So we said 'Does one qualify for this y'know', big smile - someone said 'Hang on a minute, we'll soon find out' dinged the gong and the place was full just standing there 'Oh he said I see now'... he just sat down at the table - and they passed the mashed potatoes round a Pyrex dish, they broke the end off one side they said we suggest you eat out of this side, 'cause this side might have broken glass in. He stayed an extra night, he was so thrilled - he was supposed to be going back on the ship for the evening, but he stayed the night, it was wonderful.

[00.28.24] Chris: Was he having typical Fid food or were you ... ?

Ken: Oh yeah, it was just the same, well slightly different - we had tinned chicken, so we did mustard and breadcrumbs and fried it, more like a proper feed, for Fids it was quite good. For him it must have been terrible but he seemed to enjoy it.

[00.28.40] Chris: So he had special treatments - a certain amount of special ...?

Ken: A certain amount yeah, but there's not much you can do with the veg, it's dehydrated veg, so you can't really do an awful lot with it really.

[00.28.50] Chris: What was he like?

Ken: Oh he was happy enough ... he didn't expect to be treated like - as you could tell by the sitting on the table he was quite pleased. He stayed the night instead of going back. I think it was supposed to be an hour's courtesy call really, but he enjoyed it so much, he stayed a bit longer !

[00.29.09] Chris: What was it like when, presumably you had some time off from cooking, and you had to eat food prepared by other Fids, how was that ?

Ken: [laughs] That's a nightmare !! You get things that somebody starts off and they don't know the difference between mixed spice and mixed herbs so you get a pie, probably quite good, probably like Middle Eastern food when it finished up but it started off as a steak and kidney pie but it finished up like a Moroccan dish, with herbs, all sorts of ginger and cinnamon and stuff in it. One of them, Jimmy Gardner I think, he was always moaning about this that and the other and when it was his turn to do the cook he just put - I forget what he did the main course of, but all of us was having beetroot - just whatever the meat was and some beetroot and everybody thinks it was a big joke expecting - waiting for the rest to come in - there was nothing, that was it !.

I don't know if he did it on purpose, hoping they wouldn't let them do it again.

Chris: Oh I see!

Ken: But this other one where they'd turned the pages wrong; they started off on one recipe and finish up on something else. The page might have blown over while they're doing it and they've carried down the page and finished up with all sorts of funny things in it.

But some of them were really good, they made, John Cunningham he taught me how to make Swiss rolls with - it takes about two minutes from start to finish, fantastic with dried egg, just dried egg, flour, put a bit more extra baking powder in it, you had to grease the dish quick, mix it all up while the baking powder still bubbling, wop it on this tray, bank it in the oven. He only left it for two minutes 'cause it would dry up if you didn't and you could roll it up nicely. I wish I could remember the recipe now 'cause ... you'd be showing off y'know.

[00.30.55] Chris: Were you using cookbooks?

Ken: No 'cause y'know I did enough training, I'd been in the Air Force. Lots of the things like the Fids - that was like a halfway house. At Christmas Island they had petrol Aga type cookers, it's roughly the same but not quite the same.

Every now and again on the RAF bases they use up all the emergency rations so they get rid of all the old stock, the dog-biscuit things, the hard-tack biscuits and cheese, they put it all out - they have to keep the stock ticking over they can't just keep it there forever but that was good 'cause in the RAF we used to pick out the boxes of chocolate and boxes of sweets and all the cigarettes and all sorts of bits - they all stayed in the galley and all the hard-tack biscuits went outside. But that's it's sort of half and half then.

[00.31.52] Chris: So on average, would you say that the Fid ate better than the RAF squaddie ate?

Ken: Oh no I don't think so 'cause there's still no fresh meat on the Fids, I believe now that they do don't they, well sometimes. They've got fridges down there - that amazes everybody if you say about taking fridges - it used to tickle me 'cause the microbiologists used to take fridges down to keep stuff warm, to stop it going below freezing, if they wanted to keep it just on freezing. If they kept it inside it would probably have froze up y'know but if they kept it in the fridge - got to keep in the fridge to keep it warm.

[00.32.27] Chris: Didn't that not lead to a spot of bother ?

Ken: No we didn't have any ... might have done at Signy but it was a bit warmer at Signy anyway I think it was a bit eh ... I don't think they get quite as much frost and that ...

[00.32.39] Chris: So they weren't keeping specimens in your fridges?

Ken: Oh no, we didn't have any.

[00.32.43] Chris: There was no scientists, or no fridges?

Ken: No, no fridges. They ... couldn't bring in ... 'cause they had to refrigerate the ships, that was the trouble. The only time they gave me a leg of pork, I thought it was pork ... working in a hotel, I had never seen salt meat, so I roasted it - scored it all, rubbed salt into it, roasted it It made the salt even worse... [laughs] you're supposed to soak it for about 24 hours first. So when I took it out I tried a bit off the end and... haw! It nearly poisoned me, they were all sitting there, mouths watering waiting for this lovely roast pork to come out ... tried to boil it up to get some of the salt out before it went in y'know but nobody commented though, but I don't know what they were thinking .

[00.33.27] Chris: So there were no overt disasters, just a few close shaves?

Ken: Yeh, it was funny ... one of the blokes was teaching me to do the Muskeg ... he was an Army bloke and, when I was trying to do this thing and if he heard gears go wrong he used to wack me with a big stick. He did this a few times and he said 'I'm getting out to listen to the engine, I can hear it better on the outside and see what you're doing wrong', so I just drove off and left him there. He wasn't very pleased. When he came down he moaned and he didn't speak to me for days so I made some tea-cake type things, so I made a great big one as a special treat for him in the Aga, put them all out, and made sure there were none left by the time he got back. He called me all the names ... I said look for you specially and it was black If the wind gets up that's when you've got to be with the Aga's all the time, 'cause when the wind gets up it draws the fire. That's the only sort of heat control you've got. But with all the time, I just took this thing out and it's this big charred thing. But he laughed and it broke the ice a bit really.

[00.34.37] Chris: Oh good. Did you get out much?

Ken: No I didn't go very far, no I went to Stonington. We flew over there ...

[00.34.43] Chris: You weren't going on dog training runs ?

Ken: No, oh well I went just round the Base, just to ride - I think it was for the weight to sit on the sledge to give the dogs something to pull [laughs].

[00.34.57] Chris: And Fossil Bluff, didn't you get down there?

Ken: Yeh we flew down to Fossil Bluff that was when we went to Stonington ...funny I don't remember exactly what happened but I found a photograph at home and on the back it's got 'this is Stonington where I had nine days holiday', but you'd think when there is nothing to do you'd remember everything wouldn't you. I was trying to work out ... we went to Fossil Bluff - that must have been - 'cause I didn't go on a sledge over there so it must have been on the way down, went to Stonington and then we went from Stonington down to Fossil Bluff for the day.

The pilot gave me the fright of me' life 'cause he just pulled the pin out of the front, popped the joystick thing over and he said 'You take it now, just keep that in there and that in there the little all the dials ... you can't do any damage 'cause there's nowhere and nothing ... I was sure he probably had his ears open before he could feel anything was going wrong y'know but ...

[00.35.50] Chris: They still do that today ..!!

Ken: ... It was frightening. He said if you can drive a car he could teach you to fly a plane in about three hours, y'know one of those single engine things.

[00.36.02] Chris: There was a problem wasn't there, with one of the single piston Otters ?

Ken: Well one had a heavy landed slightly on Adelaide, flying off the sea-ice that was trying to fly stuff in from round the side one time when they were doing - that was a different year, but when it came out there was a Navy officer had never been in a plane before ... just misjudged it completely, just a whiteout ... and when they came down the undercarriage of the plane pushed the seat up and he had his head on one side all pressed up against the roof of the plane, he just looked down and said 'Is this a normal landing ?' he was so nervous I suppose he didn't know what to say so he said 'Is this a normal landing ...'. But it's eh, it didn't half make a mess, it went right through the - they keep telling me it's still there.

[00.36.50] Chris: It never flew again ?

Ken: No they just chucked the pieces ... people that had just been down recently they keep saying 'Oh is that the one that's on the plateau, it's still there the wreckage of it.'
But, when another time when the Chilies came in they took us all on board to their ship to give a meal, 'cause they used to like swopping whiskey for wine - they used to - give you like a fifteen litre thing of wine for a bottle of scotch. It was better for us 'cause the bulkier the better , good for parties then. There was an old jacket there with a load of gold stripe and a cap on so when they go along they piped him aboard, they thought he was something good [laughs] and he was only a dog hander, y'know, never been to sea in his life.

[00.37.38] Chris: Was this the *Yelcho*?

Ken: *Yelcho* yeah, that's where I swapped my *John Biscoe* pewter tankard for a *Yelcho* wine glass which lasted about three weeks after he had gone, [laughs]

[00.37.44] Chris: That was later on at Argentine Island?

Ken: No that was at Adelaide.

[00.37.48] Chris: That was Adelaide, ok. So did you fraternise much with the Chileans?

Ken: Well up at Hope Bay they did, but things seemed to have quietened down a bit because in previous years at Hope Bay there was somebody fired on from the Chile base. *HMS Tigress* was in the bay at the time so that's ... all guns trained, [laughs] - they apologised!

We got on quite well with them - I found a few letters and things ... they pinched all my best photographs as well. They said 'Oh lovely...' - 'cause he can't get ashore ... and in the winter I just about managed to get some of the black & white ones ... now someones put them on a DVD for me.

[00.38.30] Chris: You did some chef work at Stonington didn't you as well ?

Ken: Not officially, it was just, I was supposed to be on holiday y'know, I didn't really ... I don't remember actually being there - you'd think something like that would be stuck in your mind wouldn't you, exactly remember every little detail of that 'cause it was such a break from the ...

[00.38.50] Chris: Who do you remember from your first year then on Base with you at Adelaide any names that particularly ...?

Ken: John Cunningham 'cause he was the Base Leader, Jim Common 'cause I shared a cabin down with him and I met him a few times after when we came back. Davy Todd, Jimmy Gardner, eh... who's the other one? .. Kenn Back, he was a good friend. Most of them, Mike Ayling, ...

[00.39.16] Chris: Mike Thompson ?

Ken: Mike Thompson, Mike Ayling, ...

[00.39.19] Chris: Did everyone get on really well?

Ken: Yeah, everybody mixed quite well really. On the way down when we were on the *Biscoe*, we had this big leveller thing on the Base 'cause when they came on they said 'Oh 'daarts', as if to say 'I don't play darts', but once everybody started ... they were all playing then. There was ... Argentine Islands, Frank Stacey was supposed to be a top scientist at Dounreay and all that, and playing darts he couldn't - if he wanted double fifteen and he only got one, he couldn't work it out [laughs] what he has to do next - one and two sevens or y'know whatever you want to do with that but he couldn't work it out. I suppose he was so used to computers ...

[00.40.01] Chris: Makes you worry about the nuclear industry doesn't it ...?

Ken: Yeah, everything else is too lokre for him ...

[00.40.10] Chris: Were you particularly friendly with Kenn Back?

Ken: Yeah, he was on the Base the same time as me 'cause when we finished up, one of the parts we had to start 'cause there's no hairdressers there is nowhere to go, so you could only bath every twenty-nine days, when you cut your ice blocks you took turns apiece ... fortnight or so you could have a bath. So he said 'Cut all his hair off', so I cut all his hair off and he cut mine off and after that I got the job as Base Barber. But people were moaning, they were saying 'Is it alright?' They were watching while I was cutting all the others to see if it was safe to let them do it, you'd think they were going into a banquet or going to be knighted or something, and they'd sit there, there's nobody coming down for at least seven or eight months so nobody's going to see them ...

[00.40.54] Chris: No women?

Ken: Nothing, nobody, only the people on the Base and they are moaning, 'Is it alright?' 'Is it alright?' 'Does it look alright?' 'Don't lop too much off there'.. y'know [laughs] couldn't believe it really...

[00.41.05] Chris: I saw Kenn in August, he was over here briefly from Uruguay.

Ken: I wished I'd have known, because when we got off on the way down, he went off and booked in a hotel, booked us down as explorers in this place and she was saying how much it cost so we thought it was like each for a night and all that sort of thing and were getting the money ready it seemed quite cheap and then she said 'Oh no' - it was like ten pesos that was for two nights for two of us bed and ... no breakfast just the bed.

[00.41.33] Chris: Where was that ?

Ken: In Uruguay, but he never got back. We went off to the town and he went someplace and he never came back. We saw him at the ship the next day. He must have been having a good time there - we just got separated everybody was wandering round all over the place ...

[00.41.50] Chris: He lives there now.

Ken: Somebody said he is coming back isn't he ...?

[00.41.53] Chris: He was over here in the summer but he was ill unfortunately whilst he was here, he was ok eventually.

Just as an aside, he was supposed to go to the Bristol reunion and then didn't make it, but I went to see him in August in Exeter at his sister's house and recorded two hours with him there. He was on good form but ...

Ken: What's he doing now for ...?

[00.42.12] Chris: Well he's retired ...

Ken: Oh I see ...

[00.42.14] Chris: Aren't you ??

Ken: Yes, only six years. [laughs]

[00.42.17] Chris: Let's move on then to your second season at the Argentine Islands and, this was a kitchen with a bit of a view wasn't it ?

Ken: Oh that was much better yeah, you'd look out at the mountains on the side, beautiful. I must have about oh forty pictures, 'cause every day it looked better as the seasons went though, more snow a little bit less snow and I had a new camera then and nothing to take pictures of and you can't - colour films you couldn't, I couldn't do slides, I could do black and white alright y'know develop and print them, but the first time I tried developing one there I did everything exactly as it said in the book it was the temperature was spot on, I was up and down in and out with keeping it cool, it was going one way and I'd put a bit more cold water in, made sure everything was right, and then when I finished off and when I pulled the film out, I diluted the, I put the fixer in with the wrong thing and it came out crystal clear not a thing on it, everything was - I had either put the fixer in with the developer or put the fixer in before the developer got the two mixed up. It must have taken me hours ..., y'know everybody else just puts it in, they don't care about a couple of bits here, a half a minute there, I was dead on thirty seconds with everything. So that was ... it got a bit eh', I think because it was a static Base ... it's hard to explain now, I been thinking about it afterwards I think some of the things we did were a bit cruel, y'know, you'd pick on somebody rather than, because people kept going and coming back there was always something new going on ... Adelaide.

[00.43.52] Chris: But Argentine was just, there were only fourteen of you weren't there ?

Ken: Yeah, like in the evening there was somebody would go and make a cup of Horlicks and they would be scraping the bottom of the cup and they'd get the lumps out, used to all the same things same time every night and just find someone and say 'Can I borrow your spoon?' and you take the spoon off him and somebody just do something just to distract to stop him doing it. And then you find out later on that, 'Oh blimey ...

Another one that was very noisy and opinionated, he wouldn't have drunks, or no parties, ... I mean birthday parties, the liquor flows a bit, he'd say 'No drunks or no women on' ... do this that and the other, and if you have cabbage, you must have vinegar on it your all silly 'cause you don't have vinegar on your cabbage. So they used to do silly things like taking the vinegar out of the vinegar bottle and put Coca Cola in it so it looks the same. [laughs.]

You could plan it ... he always came in late, he was always late for his meals, so they had a pot of cold soup ready and melted some fat and put it in so it must have been greasy and horrible as anything but he just ate it and they can see he didn't like it, he's looking and can see everybody else's place to see if it's all gone. They put a pot of curry on the table cause he was moaning - he always said it was too - it wasn't hot enough 'Oh I want it hotter than this', when you're gonna make it for that number, you've gotta make it mild so they can heat it up if they want, you can't take the heat out afterwards.

So they knew he was going to the cupboard to get something out so they just swopped the pot over and put one with a spoonful - well a whole bottle of Tabasco in it ... and he was getting redder and redder ... 'it's lovely today, just right for me, how is it with you ?' 'Oh it's just right'. He's looking at everybody else and they are just eating out of the same pot as everybody else, he thought. He's got this stuff that's ... I'm surprised it didn't hurt him. ■■■

[00.46.03] Chris: He was somebody who just didn't fit in, is that right ?

Ken: Yeah, but I felt lousy I think but I wonder if we had driven him - 'cause he never complained ... he just got on everybody's nerves, if he was in a different place he would have probably been alright you'd have said 'Alright mate' 'cause he didn't do anything wrong, apart from just making noise. I think it was a bit like *Lord of the Flies*, you pick a leader and when they split up and someone takes control. I often feel it's a bit like that y'know you're picking on one person just it covers everybody else's ills.

He didn't actually do anything wrong, he was just noisy that was all it was 'cause it was so quiet there, you are sitting and if you are reading and he's blumping about. They had a film show, everybody knew, they just put all the chairs laid out and he's sitting there watching and it was completely out of focus, nobody could see it, and he's saying 'That's not your girlfriend is it [redacted]?' and he said - he couldn't see anything, he said 'Oh no, no that's so and so' as if it's 'Oh you've got a lovely shot there' and he's poking his sides [laughs] never said a word, he's got his glasses off he never said a word he sat there for about a quarter of an hour watching all these and nobody could see anything, and he didn't bat an eyelid. I think that's what got people going then 'cause he was waiting for him to break and he didn't. There was nothing wrong with him y'know...

[00.47.28] Chris: Do you want to name this chap?

Ken: [redacted]

[00.47.46] Chris: There was a certain amount of - I know what you mean about *Lord of the Flies*, a certain amount of bonding that goes on with all the other chaps, one person is getting the stick?

Ken: We used to get cruel as well because the skuas used to come round, they were the scavengers y'know there and you start off ... with great big lump of pastry and they just eat anything kept throwing it up and each time it came, gump!! each time it came it's getting heavier and heavier, and it's coming round then somebody stuck a piece of perspex up and threw the thing up so it flew around so it bit the perspex, saw the food on the other side - crumpled up in a heap on the floor. You'd never think of doing that at home, you'd wouldn't dream of doing that sort of thing. They put bottle stops on a cat's feet and a balloon so it's freefall, so the poor cats running along on the feet every time it jumps it's going up on the hydrogen balloon it was taking him off, he was just zero balance, each little bump he was going about thirty feet leaps y'know. He just disappeared into the distance I don't know what happened to the poor thing. ... It seems cruel that bit, I think we had our regrets then actually but ...

[00.49.03] Chris: Was it boredom, do you think ?

Ken: It's lovely outside but you can't really go anywhere ... that's what I mean 'cause on the other bases you've got people coming and going all the time. The aircrew used to sleep in a separate room so you could sometimes you could go down there you could have a day out and go down to chat to them and come back. I think that's what it was really, just...

[00.49.27] Chris: Claustrophobia ?,

Ken: Yeah, especially when it's all day all the time, you're up in the morning 'cause you can't really sleep, you don't feel like sleeping. But I mean if I saw him now I wouldn't ..., if he was down there at the meeting yesterday, I'd go over and say 'Hello' to him 'cause he's one of the few people I know here.

[00.49.52] Chris: What about your predecessor at Argentine Islands, the previous cook, he did some prospecting ?

Ken: Mr Galletly, he came down the same time as me at ...

[00.50.01] Chris: What was his name ?

Ken: Galletly, something like that and he thought he had read somewhere that Antarctica must be full of gold it's the same coming from South America at the tip, the land mass is all joined and there is gold in these hills and there's gold there and there's all this sort of thing. He thought he'd - so when somebody said couldn't find - he was digging out in the rocks and they said 'What you looking for ?' he said was expecting to find Klondike, he thought it was something like that. When they were doing the beastie machines, they used to film on it, when they put in the tent lots of silver comes out of the old film sort of thing, and he said 'How do they get it back ?' 'Oh they save all that 'cause they get all the silver back out it's electrolysis, they pass an electric current through it. He was poking it with two pieces of wire, put it in the tank to see if he could get the silver back out. But he didn't - I don't know if he went home or whether he got sent home. I'm not quite sure really, I think he just realised he was in the wrong place when he got down there. He didn't have any idea what was going on. I'd never been down but I had a good idea of what to expect. I liked camping and that sort of thing before I went down, I liked that sort of life y'know.

[00.51.18] Chris: Was there a ringleader behind all this practical jokery?

Ken: Oh no not really, just somebody have a bright idea and then they carry it out. None in particular, I mean in the kitchen I did [laughs] I made the stuff up there wasn't actually a ringleader there was just a communal decision to do it.

[00.51.36] Chris: There was a visit from Palmer by a helicopter?

Ken: Oh yes, the Americans. I must have about three rolls of film of that as well, the helicopter in various poses. But when they all came on we had - they were talking about seal meat - we did seal meat liver ... it's lovely bake all these things, on the bar little bits and pieces and they were talking about eating seals and all that sort of thing. He said 'Is it nice?' Oh yes he'd be chomping away on these things quite merrily - 'that's seal liver' ... 'Ohhh' he said, he went white 'Ohh h' he had to go out, he couldn't stay in there he went outside he had a couple of deep breaths before he come back again. Silly isn't it, just 'cause it's something different.

[00.52.20] Chris: But were you actually able to get fresh food from the environment ?

Ken: No, not really. We had a bit of seal meat, we didn't do the penguins or anything, with having the dogs on Adelaide they used to get some there, but the first time I tried that it's a bit like - I don't know if you have ever seen live eels, once you skin them and everything they still wriggle when you cut them, the nerves work for a long time after. Seals too the hearts pump on the sea-ice for ages afterwards. When they open them the heart is pumping away on the side. Went to put my hand on to cut some steaks off it and it started moving [laughs]. Oh blow, I couldn't do it, I had to just drop the thing and walked out, I couldn't touch, I had to come back and just prodded it to see if it was still wriggling, you know. It's all the nerves in the seal carry on for ages and ages after.

[00.53.07] Chris: On seals or penguins?

Ken: Seals, yah. We had this great lovely big - 'cause the seal meat really nice it's....

[00.53.13] Chris: You did cook with seal meat did you?

Ken: Yeah we - not very often but if you got a nice fresh bit you could do...

[00.53.19] Chris: What would you do with it?

Ken: Same as roast beef really, and the liver was superb. Penguin eggs weren't all that good 'cause they didn't fry properly they came out like opaque so it looked like polystyrene, they were put hard but they didn't look right, but they tasted nice y'know it's just the appearance didn't look so good. Used to put people off, they used to look as if they were raw y'know.

[00.53.41] Chris: Could you bake with them?

Ken: Oh yeah, but it's hard to work out how much when it says two eggs and you've got two the size of a penguin egg ... Omelettes and frieds they were quite nice. ... 'cause I'd never made bread before when I went down; that was another thing on the *Biscoe* ... I had to make the bread on the ship then so I had a baker to teach me properly how to make it, so that was one good thing about him falling down the thing to break his leg ... I learned to make quite nice bread then.

[00.54.12] Chris: What about fish?

Ken: No we didn't catch anything there was nothing really on the lot we were on with, much like that.

[00.54.20] Chris: And the tinned meat, tinned chicken and the ham?

Ken: Oh the ham was terrible some of it, Handy Ham Company I think it was from Liverpool one of them, and the bacon they got from there it was like a roll of cellophane wrapping so you opened it up and rolled it all out and all this greasy horrible stuff - they had Hafnia tinned bacon, that was almost like raw, if I could buy that now I'd buy almost fresh bacon it was so nice tasty. But the ham - some of them were quite good I can't remember which was which now - I think the Hafnia were good, but the Handy Ham Company were terrible and their sausages weren't all that good.

[00.54.57] Chris: You brewed your own ginger beer ?

Ken: Oh yes, [laughs] that was Adelaide. We were all sitting around talking about it and I thought, I just found *Mrs Beaton's Cookbook* there, and I was flipping through that to see if - and I saw this ginger beer, I don't know where the book came from now, must have been in the bookcase all the time we were there and all you needed was yeast, but the recipe was for fresh yeast, ginger and sugar so you just left it 24 hours, strained it all off, put it in the bottles, and another 24 hours and it was fizzy to drink. Oh that's lovely, that will go down well y'know. But just we were going through the recipe again and I just realised I'd used dried yeast which you are supposed to use half the quantity and I've put twice as much in, 'cause I've been doubling the half on the other ingredients so I got all mixed up what I was doing. Just as we were talking about it, 'crash' 'crash', and all these bottles started blowing up in the - we had the corks all tied down as well they would have popped off if it hadn't have been for that, but because they were old bottles with corks, and you don't get that many bottles down there, so they were cracking all, everyone was frightened to go near it. We had the stink afterwards 'cause it freeze on the floor so you couldn't really get it up, the smell of yeast is a horrible smell yeast, a sickly horrible smell, and there was the gallon jar that stayed a bit longer, that must have been there for about two months. So we dragged it out and opened it up. That was quite nice actually, it was getting quite alcoholic [laughs]. Don't know if it could be, I suppose it could be with the sugar and stuff in it.

[00.56.35] Chris: One or two scary incidents then to finish off with if we can. You talked earlier about the ice-cliff that collapsed at Adelaide but the ship also had a problem: it hit growler ?

Ken: Oh yes I must remember not to use his exact words on this, we were all on the front taking pictures and it was a thing like the Serpentine a great big lake and there was this great big piece of ice in the middle of it and he's chugging along and it was getting closer and closer and closer and we all started standing back, and someone said on the bridge he'd said 'Hard a starboard' and he said 'Oh bother I meant port' so the boat turned to port again ... bang right in the middle of it. ... The captain was on that one. He said 'Oh it does look as if it's dented on the front' and it's flattened on right on the point of the bow was all smashed in, wires twinging, big lumps of ice falling off. Everybody was like that then ... rolling along the side we were stuck in the ice but the icebergs still moved and 'Grrrrr !!!!!' all down the side, and it's only a small ship so you can hear everything right the way through.

[00.57.47] Chris: This was the *Biscoe* was it?
And what's all this about one of the crewmen on the *Biscoe* going home covered in red paint?

Ken: Oh yeah, we went to the Falklands, and they were painting the *Biscoe*... He'd been away all the time in England and his mother still lived in Port Stanley. It's only about 100 yards down the road to where he lived and he would stay on the ship drinking 'cause he wasn't allowed to drink on the *Biscoe* the crew, when at sea, and they had been painting the ship, and he came in the bar we were in and he said 'Oh come round to his mothers' 'cause when we had finished the lady behind the bar said 'Oh you can't waste it' so she put a funnel in the .. 'cause it was closing time, put a funnel in it and she'd filled al the bottles up so we had all the bottles to take ... back to his house and we were sitting there for about oh ten minutes and all of a sudden, she was drunk when we got there actually, [laughs] she'd had a few, she

jumped up, she started wacking this bloke to pieces 'cause he'd got red paint on his face and she thought it was blood, she thought they had been fighting so ... when they calmed her down, a cup got knocked over so she'd broken a cup and you know how hard it is to get stuff down there, so we all said 'no don't worry we'll get you new cups' she said 'It was me' last drop of beer', she wasn't worried about what she'd done;

But the ... I just sat in a corner and laughed all the time, I couldn't finish my beer. I'd had a few pints anyway so ... then someone was out in the kitchen supposed cutting it up they have so much lamb there they leave a note outside in the Falklands 'no lamb today' 'no sheep today', they used to buy them y'know whole lambs and you hear this noise in the background, he's got the lamb on and he's sawing through but he's gone halfway through the table as well he was so drunk, [laughs] trying to cut some chops or something off it. She took this plate off, it looked like a nice grey plate then she wiped it over must have been about an inch of a half an inch of peat dust on it, she'd got the plates out and they opened a tin of peas especially for us, that was like opening the best of ... best of asparagus or first grouse, 'cause it's so expensive - the simple things you don't realise that they can't grow vegetables really, the conditions there are useless I suppose for growing any sort of, unless you have a greenhouse of course, but even then I don't suppose you get ...

[01.00.09] Chris: How does it rate, the, this experience in the Antarctic, this two years, how does it rate in your life?

Ken: Well it's taken me all this time now to get back to Fids, I've been trying and trying to get in touch with them again and I haven't made ... I went down to Cambridge that was the last break I had ... that was the first time I had been away for more than six days and this break now and everybody's ...

[01.00.37] Chris: This is your first reunion is it?

Ken: Yes after all this time but even though I didn't, I don't know if anybody would even recognise anybody and you were saying that Kenn Back I was a bit surprised. You said he'd retired cause I was thinking he was 24 or 25 [laughs] It is that important for me to ... my nephew drop me off at the station ... he's been frightened to death about looking after the dogs he's never had a dog in his life, I said 'Oh you'll be alright'

[01.01.01] Chris: Did you have a good time?

Ken: Oh yes I'll definitely be back next year.

[01.01.05] Chris: We must leave it Ken 'cause our horse racing bus is about to go. It's been a real pleasure, thank you very much.

Ken: Oh thank you anyway, it's nice to reminisce again.

END