

Edited transcript of interview with Dr James Andrew interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee at his home in Reigate on 8th July 2003. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/15 Transcribed by Madeline Russell, 6 June 2014.

00:00:00 This is James Andrew interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on 8th July 2003 at Reigate in Surrey. Dr James Andrew ...

Andrew: James Derby Andrew. I was married to Joan of course. She died last year. In fact last weekend was the anniversary of her death. And I was born on 29 August 1919.

00:00:30 So now you are 83?

Andrew: Yes. Well in a month

00:00:37 And the years you were in the Antarctic were?

Andrew: Well I joined up in 1945 after the war when it came to an end. I was going to go into the Navy but they took me on as the equivalent of a Naval Lieutenant, I think. Surgeon Lieutenant by the Colonial Office who ran it.

00:01:08 What were you doing before you signed up for the Antarctic?

Andrew: I was a house surgeon at Barts for most of the war. In fact I was there when that V2 landed on Smithfield Market at 11 o'clock. [laugh] We had 147 major casualties in three quarters on an hour. Arms off, legs off, penetrating wounds of the abdomen, chest and head. We worked for 3 days and nights without stopping.

00:01:40 Were you being a team?

Andrew: Well, we had 12 theatres. Every bed in the hospital occupied, mattresses on the floor, and it nearly killed me. [laugh] Well the blast was quite bad. Those were the things if you remember, you heard coming after they had blown up. So if you heard them coming you knew you were alright. [laugh] Providing you weren't buried in rubble.

00:02:14 How many surgeons would there have been? Did they call in doctors from elsewhere?

Andrew: Well we transferred some to the Royal Free, and one or 2 other places I think took them. But it was right on our doorstep and everybody from there said, 'take us to Barts.'

00:02:36 How did you come to sign up for the Antarctic? What was the story?

Andrew: Well that's interesting. It was after the war had just come to a close and we were talking at lunch around the medical staff's table. I said I thought I was going to go into the Navy and Michael Roberts was sitting at the table with

me. He was my junior house surgeon. I was Senior House Surgeon. He was the junior one. He said, 'Well I was going to go down to the Antarctic but I can't because I'm going to get married and my wife won't let me.' [laugh] So I said, 'Oh are you? Well tell me more,' because I had always been fascinated by the Antarctic since I was at school. And he said, 'Well, you'll have to speak to Brian Roberts who is at the Colonial Office and talk to him about it.' Eventually he came round to see me, actually, because I was on duty most of the time. I was interviewed and I went to see Captain Bingham and eventually they took me on. At that stage they were desperate to get people to come actually. Again they were commandeering people up to the ranks of brigadier to get them. In fact Colonel Paddy Main was one of the people who was taken down but we had to send him back unfortunately.

00:04:17 What rank were you offered then, James?

Andrew: Well, a Surgeon Lieutenant.

00:04:23 It was because you were a doctor that they were keen to have you?

Andrew: Yes. Well and I was interested. I went down to do a research programme about Bacteriology because nothing much had been done down there in those terms. But most of my equipment got left behind in a dock strike. When I got down there I just couldn't do anything really. So I sat around learning. Well, I looked after the dogs to start with and the veterinary problems and all the rest and I learned how to survey, to a degree. I was responsible for the annotations on the wildlife around everywhere. In fact I set up the first penguin survey with details of the nests of pairs that I carefully measured from a specific visible and recognisable point. Because we didn't know if they came back to the same nest every year, nor how long they lived, nor whether they came back with the same partners or all the other things. This was a way of finding out and it was subsequently taken on by my colleague, Bill Sladen.

00:05:47 Which Base was this?

Andrew: Hope Bay. Well there was a rookery there of over 100,000 birds.

00:05:54 Did you mark the birds then?

Andrew: Yes.

00:05:57 How? In what way?

Andrew: Do you know I've forgotten. I marked their nests actually. Oh I think I ringed them. Yes. That was it. I got some rings. Yes. I ringed them.

00:06:16 Was that the first study of that kind then?

Andrew: That wouldn't have been done before.

00:06:21 And your conclusions were?

Andrew: Well I didn't know. I couldn't make any conclusions. I wasn't there the following year. I had to leave it to somebody else. Unfortunately I don't know if Michael Roberts did any work on it, but Bill Sladen was able, with my compass bearings on various points and measurements, to pick out where the nests were, so he was given a really good start.

00:06:47 Did you mark every nest and every bird? Or just some?

Andrew: No. I just took a sample. It was a huge labour. You had to watch some of them for quite a while because you can't tell very easily whether they're males or females except by their behaviour, and which belonged to which. They stay together and they stay together for the following year, I believe.

00:07:17 Do you remember what species of bird?

Andrew: Yes it was the Adelie. We had a few Gentoos down there as well and we came across a few Emperor Penguins.

00:07:35 Did they object to being studied?

Andrew: Oh yes. Oh yes. They thought you were a big penguin coming to pinch their nest, their stones, which they'd carefully collected to make a nest of. If they didn't want you, they'd run up against you and grab your trouser, or a bit of your clothing and beat you with their flippers like a boy with a stick running down iron railings. They were that fast with it and it was very uncomfortable. [laugh] I had a huge respect for them. They were the most wonderful creatures. The pounding they took when they got landed on the ice and the rocks from the sea when it was rough was unbelievable. And they got up straight away and walked off. [laugh]

00:08:27 You mentioned you were something of the cook on the Base.

Andrew: Yes.

00:08:33 Did you make use of penguins in that way?

Andrew: Oh, rather. Yes. We ate lots of penguins and seals. I'm afraid I don't think they did us much good actually, because we were rather fond of the livers and the kidneys which are the nice tasty bits.

00:08:49 Of the seal?

Andrew: Yes. And of course they're rather over-full of some vitamins and I think some of us felt a bit ill. I know I did, because it was rather painful. But seal meat was good to eat anyway.

00:09:10 Can you remember the recipes? What would you do?

Andrew: Well didn't do anything with them. Roast it, fry it, casserole it, make pies with it. We did all sorts of things with it. We didn't bother too much sometimes because we were jolly hungry. [laugh] It was cold down there. I arrived down there weighing about 10 and a half stone and I ended up about 12 or 13.

00:09:38 And the penguins and their eggs? What would you do with those?

Andrew: Oh we used to eat penguins' eggs. They were very good but they were translucent when cooked. You could see through. They didn't go opaque and white like a hen's egg. You could see through it. They were solid.

00:10:02 Even when boiled?

Andrew: Yes.

00:10:06 I hear about omelettes.

Andrew: Yes

00:10:10 Penguin omelettes?

Andrew: Yes. I used to make sponge [cakes] because they made me the cook when I first arrived there on 14th December.

00:10:19 At Hope Bay?

Andrew: Yes. January rather. At Hope Bay. David James and Victor Russell. Well Victor Russell was staying there and David James stayed with him for company. You know David James?

00:10:36 Yes. I know the name. Yes.

Andrew: And David James. Let me just think. Oh they had a cook down with them, Tom Berry, the previous year when Boy Scout Marr, Jimmy Marr was in charge. Marr was with Shackleton, you know, down in 1921. And when I arrived there, the other 2 looked at me and they said, 'Can you cook?' I said, 'Well. Haven't we got anything to eat?' 'Well,' he said, 'We've run out of bread.' My mother had always insisted we learned to do everything at home. She was a Victorian lady, par excellence, and we were made, my brother and I, to do absolutely everything around the house, from making our beds, to washing to cooking, you know, gardening, serving at table, how to lay them and all the rest of it. We were put through the mill.

00:11:42 So you were fully domesticated.

Andrew: I was a highly domesticated chap, which was just as well. But I remember the first set of loaves I made dropped like bricks to the floor, [laugh] because I hadn't discovered how to make the yeast work properly in those temperatures.

00:12:02 Were you making bread?

Andrew: Yes. Oh every day we made bread and I used to make sponge cakes with the penguin eggs when we got them. I made a big batch one week, I remember, because I thought well they like those ???[inaudible] cakes so I'll make a few of those. And I made a whole lot and stuck them up on the top shelf out of the way. We had one for tea that day. They must have watched what I was doing. I went back for another one the next day and they'd all gone, every single one! [laugh]

00:12:04 That was at Hope Bay?

Andrew: At Hope Bay. Yes. We had a wonderful time at Hope Bay. Victor Russell was the most magnificent leader.

00:12:53 Why?

Andrew: Well, I don't know. He was a natural leader. He'd been a Captain in the Royal Army Service Corps, no, what's it called, Surveyors' Corps, or whatever it is.

00:13:13 What was his leadership style like?

Andrew: Oh, very straightforward and forthright. He said we'll do this, and that and the other and you did it. You know there was a certain authority and tone about his voice so you didn't argue with him. [laugh]

00:13:33 So the decisions didn't follow group discussion.

Andrew: Well not really, no. Well up to a point they did, you know, when we needed to. I remember on one occasion we were going out on the sea ice on a first venture and we ran into some troubles. Victor said, 'Well look.' He called us all together to his tent. There were 4 of us: Tom O'Sullivan, John Francis, Vic and myself and he said, 'Well look. If I get into trouble,' as I hear he nearly had, falling down a crevasse. He said, 'John Francis will take over and carry on from there and do whatever we were going to do'. And then he turned to me and he said 'You'll be the second in command if he gets into trouble. You'll have to take over.' [laugh] And that just left poor old Tom O'Sullivan. He was a lovely chap. An Irishman, Tom O'Sullivan. I had a great love of him. He's died now, but I'm still in touch with his wife, Maureen. We shared many a night in the tent.

Oh, I'll tell you one thing that was amazing. Going down onto the sea ice, down the east coast of the Grahamland Peninsula – the Antarctic Peninsula as it is now. We had only walkie-talkies, American style walkie-talkies which could send messages to the Base but we couldn't receive. One night we'd had a busy day and we were camped on the sea ice and I was playing with this thing and seeing if I could get any response from it from anywhere, and suddenly I heard music. So I turned it up and put it inside a cooking pot to make it louder and listen to it for a bit and do you know what it was? Promenade Concert from the Albert Hall. Tom and I lay on our backs on the sea ice on the east side coast of the Antarctic Peninsula as it is now, listening to that programme. [laugh] It was absolutely wonderful.

00:16:01 Did you ever understand why it happened like that?

Andrew: No. It was just a freak recording. I don't know. It must have bounced off a cloud or something.

00:16:03 Picking up the World Service?

Andrew: Well they didn't have the World Service in those days. It was just after the war. We had nothing when we went down there. I mean we had dogs, sledges and we were working just like Scott, you know. We did a lot of man hauling and drove dogs most of the time.

00:16:35 You've got lovely black and white pictures of your dogs around the walls here. Tell me a bit about them. You were telling me a little story a moment ago about one dog with a rather large appetite.

Andrew: Oh, yes. Well that's Sidney. No, Sidney, up there, was the lead dog in my team. I had 10. I had the heaviest sledge and I was always at the back and they used to get ice balls in their feet at times, and he got them in his. They're pretty uncomfy. So I let him off the lead to run around. When we went out we used to take a set of sandwiches with us because going straight from the Base food to pemmican and biscuits, it's not terribly good. [laugh] Bearable [laugh].

00:17:31 So as a buffer zone for your stomach was it?

Andrew: That's right. And I used to keep them for a day or two. Of course they froze solid in your bag, your kitbag on the back of the sledge. I put my sandwiches on top of my hot cocoa to thaw out a bit. And old Sidney looks at this and he started inching his way in. I kept a careful eye on him to see what he was going to do. It's in that book actually, *Of Dogs and Men*¹. But he, of course, was coming slightly closer all the time and I was briefly distracted by

¹ *Of Dogs & Men*: p 82 (K.Walton & R. Atkinson, 1966)

something somebody said to me and looked away. And in that moment he went forward and he got the sandwich. Now what they do, when they do that is to swallow it straight away. I knew what was going to happen and I said, 'you're not going to have it, you so and so,' [laugh] and I threw myself on top of him and grabbed what was sticking out of his mouth and stuffed it in mine ! [laugh]

He was a right And as for what he did after that. Eventually, I got round to harnessing him back because he'd got the ice balls free and I was busy doing this and I felt something warm on my leg. I looked down and I saw my seal skin boot was open and he was busy peeing into it. Now normally trees are in short supply down there. So normally they used to cock a leg twist round, cock the other leg, and keep doing that and I counted him doing it 13 times in one spot. But this time he emptied his bladder into my boot and I'm sure [laugh] he did it on purpose ! [laugh] Thinking that'll teach you he says! [laugh] and I paddled around in dog pee for the rest of the day!

00:19:30 There's one of your huskies behind you who had a rather large ??? [inaudible]

Andrew: Yes

00:19:33 Tell me the story again. Who was this?

Andrew: His name was Little Jack and he was a bit short in the leg. When the snow was soft, of course, he used to trundle along with the rest, but you could always tell where he had been. He tended to pull out from the side of the sledge a bit, because there was a deep furrow going along between his leg pawmarks. [laugh] So you always knew where Little Jack had been.

00:20:15 This is John Thomas.

Andrew: That's right.

00:20:22 One of the things they wanted me to ask you about. You were being recruited when Operation Tabarin was changing over to FIDS and so were you aware of any change in the way they recruited at that point? How were you recruited? You were interviewed?

Andrew: I was interviewed by Bingham, yes

00:20:43 Just by Bingham?

Andrew: Yes, and by Brian Roberts, Colonial Office.

00:20:49 How were your supplies and stores ordered?

Andrew: Well Bingham did that. Oh, you mean medical supplies. Well I think I took over all that was down there. Oh yes, one thing I did do was to take one

million units of penicillin. That was the first penicillin ever taken to the Antarctic because at Barts we were the first people using it, you know, in a clinical way.

00:21:32 So you took that down off your own bat, did you?

Andrew: Oh yes. Not off my own bat but I ordered it. They asked me what I wanted. I told them about various other things and I told them about this penicillin. Going through the list with Bingham he said, 'What on earth do you want one million units of that for?' He'd got no idea about penicillin. [laugh] He hadn't a clue. And a million units was just enough to treat one person if they were very ill.

00:22:06 Did you have occasion to use it?

Andrew: No. I left it down there because it kept pretty well in cold temperatures.

00:22:17 You joined this brand new organisation which was no longer the army, the navy, the services; a new organisation.

Andrew: Yes

00:22:26 So did you have any concept what it was all about?

Andrew: How do you mean? What it was about?

00:22:30 Well, how was it run? Very structured or very relaxed?

Andrew: Well it was structured to the extent that there were various fixed Bases and a Leader in charge of each one. Bingham did all the organising. He'd been down to the Antarctic and the Arctic, of course, on the Greenland Expedition and the British Graham Land Expedition earlier.

00:22:59 What did you make of him?

Andrew: Oh he was a lovely chap. Bit of a martinet. He didn't reckon much on dog training. He was more keen on the dogs and other activities organising the share which he did very well.

00:23:24 You talked about Victor. What are your memories of David James?

Andrew: Well David James² was only there very briefly. His father was a Member of Parliament, you know. In fact he came back and represented Kemptown in Brighton as the MP subsequently. He was very nice. He came down the following year [1947] with Borrowdale doing the background filming for Scott

² David James had been at Hope Bay the previous year, 1945 – 1946.

of the Antarctic, which Borrowdale did and as the adviser. I got on with him very well.

00:24:12 How about Captain Taylor?

Andrew: Yes, he was a nice quiet chap. Canadian accent, of course, but I only saw him when we took over. The story of that I might briefly read to you actually, about when he arrived.

00:24:37 These are your diaries kept at that time?

Andrew: Yes. That's right

00:24:40 You say you were instructed to keep them.

Andrew: We were. We were told we'd got to. And being a good lad I promptly did what I always did, what I was told, especially when my granny told me what to do. [laugh] She was fierce, as they say in Ireland.

Now then, can't read these things

'We arrived off Hope Bay about 3.00 am. Bitterly cold. We arrived in the *William Scoresby*.' This is with Captain Marchesi in command. I was taken specially down there ahead of everyone else. Can't think why. Oh, I had to go and see a chap called Bonner on Deception Island and he was dying of cancer of the stomach, poor chap, and I had to look at him and sort him out. He'd got secondaries of the liver and he was very ill and I was sent down there on the *William Scoresby* to see him. While I was there, the *Trepassey* came in and they said I was to go on board straight away, on the *William Scoresby*, because they had to go and relieve them at Hope Bay. So the *William Scoresby* went off to Hope Bay.

00:26:25 This was 1946.

Andrew: Yes, January 14th 1946. 'Spray was freezing on the deck and the rigging was coated with ice. Bitterly cold. Quite light. Remained so all through the night but you could see the small huts at the bottom of the mountain very close to the shore, with the Nissen hut and meteorological posts around. The dogs could be heard barking faintly and rows of penguins were porpoising across the bay to their rookery to the right of the hut. My luggage was loaded into a boat and I was rowed ashore with Marchesi and Niddrie.' He was the meteorologist from Port Stanley. 'There was a long pull and jolly glad we were to scramble up on the ice covered rocks on land. Marchesi walked round to the hut and found everyone asleep. He wakened them with a shout, 'Doesn't anyone want to be relieved?' [laugh] Tumult broke loose then as everyone got up. Everyone was introduced. A lot of scurrying around. Getting cases together and specimens'. They left fairly shortly afterwards.

00:27:55 What were you able to do for Bonner? Were you able to help him?

Andrew: No, he had to go. He was sent straight back by the first available ship. He'd been down under a year, but, poor chap, he was earning good money for him, working on that Base, to send his children to school. He'd got a son who'd got a scholarship in Montevideo and was hoping to go on to Cambridge with another scholarship, and he was earning the money to send him there. Well I felt very sorry for him.

00:28:28 How long did he have?

Andrew: Well I reckon he only had a month or two to live. I didn't hear what happened.

00:28:35 You didn't hear whether BAS or FIDS helped him out financially?

Andrew: I have no idea. They might have done. I don't know.

00:28:46 Were you having to break the news to him?

Andrew: Well I told him. Well he knew he wasn't well. Dr Back who I took over from, who's died since. He [Dr Back] was down there with Jimmy Marr in '44, '45.

00:29:41 Who else do you remember from those days? Other characters that stick out in your memory?

Andrew: Well. All of them. I mean there were only 8 of us at that Base [D] and we were a very mixed crew I can tell you.

00:29:55 How do you mean?

Andrew: Well, there was Tom O'Sullivan, John Francis, Vic Russell, the leader, Stuart Small, radio operator, and Falkland Islander, Dick Wallin. He was a nice chap too. Then Bill Croft and myself and Tom O'Sullivan.

00:30:36 Were there ever any tensions?

Andrew: No, we all got on remarkably well. We were a very mixed bunch. There was a member of the Church of Scotland, member of the Church of England, a Roman Catholic, a Plymouth Brother, a Christian Scientist, an atheist, and can't remember what the other was. Oh, Norwegian Church he belonged to. He'd got a Norwegian girl friend, Stuart Small.

00:31:03 So were there prayers held? Was there a service?

Andrew: No I don't think we ever had a service as such. Quite honestly in those days with 8 of us we were far too busy doing, to spend much time playing around, not playing around, but taking time off. We used to occasionally take a

Sunday rest, but we worked most days. You were getting food, feeding the dogs, which had to be looked after and assessed every day, and so on.

00:31:51 So the differences of religion never came into it?

Andrew: Well they were all established in the first 2 or 3 weeks, and we had discussions about this and that and the other, everything. We all got along incredibly well. I had a chap from Holland interviewing me one day about all this, and when he asked me specifically all the questions you've been asking me about, how did we get on together? Were there any rows? He couldn't understand it when I said well there weren't really. He didn't want to know me after that. [laugh] He was only interested in the altercations. I mean we might have had the odd tiff about something.

00:32:33 But nothing significant?

Andrew: Nothing really. I used to annoy Tom O'Sullivan in the tent but I can't remember what it was. And he used to annoy me because he used to smoke and sucking his pipe made a terrible noise. [laugh] But we got along perfectly well. There was never a major beat.

00:32:54 Did Bingham change the way the dogs were used at all?

Andrew: Well, I don't quite know, but somehow or other we at Hope Bay started using the wrong commands. I don't quite know why that was, because we worked with Jimmy Marr and the dogs responded to various words of command. 'Ook' was left, 'irra' was right, 'ar' was stop and 'now boys wheeet'³ was go and that was about all we used to say to them, except when they got a bit naughty [laugh].

00:33:47 I'm not clear.

Andrew: Victor Russell, I remember because it was very clear air down there, and he was the best part of half a mile away looking at something and he came back and he said to me, 'I heard what you said to that dog, James!' [laugh] I said, 'Oh dear, did you.'

00:34:05 I'm not clear. Did you say you were giving the wrong instructions? Can you elaborate?

Andrew: Well yes. Because I believe the correct words are the other way round. Left and right. I don't quite know.

³ 'Irr' for left; 'Yook' for right, 'Aah' for stop, 'Now boys, huit now' for to go. From Joanna Rae's interview with Gwion Davis, p13 (BAOHP transcripts)

00:34:19 Were there any changes in the way the dogs were on their leads, on their traces?

Andrew: Well, we used various systems, but we preferred the central trace. We didn't fix them on a short lead to each trace on each side. They had their own individual thing fixed to the central trace off the front of the sledge so they all pulled. They were 2 and 2 and 2 in the same length and the bitch was in front of course. Rachel her name was. She was a good dog. I've got a picture. Oh I tell you what I have got [starts looking for something].

00:35:10 As the doctor on the Base you said you were in charge of the dogs medically as well.

Andrew: Well there was nobody else. I opened lots of abscesses and Trigger had mange one time. We hadn't got very much to treat them with. I think we had some Dettol like substance. It wasn't Dettol in those days because it wasn't made then, but we had something similar. I made up a barrel load, an oil barrel, full of hot water with a can of this stuff inside it. It was our dogs, the new ones that seemed to have the trouble, but they spread it of course to the others. So we put all 60 dogs through into that tub [laugh] and pushed their heads under and they came out spluttering and creating like mad. Then they sat down, shook themselves and gave a good scurry around. They all looked beautifully clean from the soap we put in too, and it got rid of the mange.

00:36:39 So it was a Dettol type antiseptic?

Andrew: So yes. I can't remember what. I've got it down somewhere.

00:36:47 Were you in charge of the breeding as well?

Andrew: Well yes. Well there wasn't much 'in charge'. We had a chariot dog called Colonel who we reckoned would get out of any cage we put him in if there was a bitch on heat. [laugh] It was no good putting him in a cage. We had to put the bitches in. [laugh]

00:37:09 [laugh] So there was no programme as such.

Andrew: No there wasn't. We ended up with 120. We were quite glad of them you know.

00:37:18 Did that cause feeding problems?

Andrew: Well we lost some from time to time. Some of them died. Captain, the lead dog, was a lovely thing, chap. He used to be in charge of the show. He'd got a great thug of a dog, black Labrador, whose name I've temporarily forgot, but he was an absolute thug, and he cottoned on to Captain. Captain used him when he was no longer able physically to find control over the others. He

brought this one along with him and there was no argument. He was still the boss!

00:38:10 He was as heavy.

Andrew: Yes. They were great fun. I enjoyed looking after them I might say. But I was surprised how many abscesses they got, cuts and things and goodness knows what else.

00:38:29 Where was the infection coming from in the Antarctic?

Andrew: Well I don't know. I don't know. I suppose the faeces and that was one of the things I wanted to find out. It's why I was going down to do a Bacteriological programme. Couldn't do it.

00:38:50 So you weren't able to fulfil your prime function. That's why you ended up being part of the team? Were you surveying as well?

Andrew: Yes, I've even got a glacier down there named after me. [laugh] There were only 3 of us: John Francis has an island, Victor Russell has a huge glacier crossing it, and the Andrew Glacier opens into the Charcot Bay up on the west coast.

00:39:13 Did you name it?

Andrew: No, I didn't name it. It was only the people who did survey work whose names were put in and I did quite a bit of survey work down there.

00:39:25 Was that something you had to learn on the hoof?

Andrew: Yes.

00:39:29 What was that like?

Andrew: Oh, I understood things like theodolites, and the like, you know. It wasn't too difficult putting 2 and 2 together. What I've been doing most of my life. [laugh] Looking down microscopes and so on.

00:39:55 You injured yourself down there didn't you.

Andrew: Oh yes. [laugh]

00:39:58 I've been reading *Ice & Men* and you broke a rib or something. They've asked me to ask you if there's more to what happened than is written in *Ice & Men*⁴. So can you elaborate?

Andrew: Yes there is, but I know now how I broke my rib, my ribs. I broke a couple.

⁴ *Of Ice & Men*: p70 (Sir Vivien Fuchs, 1982)

00:40:20 This was at Hope Bay?

Andrew: At Hope Bay. It was on our Winter Journey and we were climbing up what is now the Russell Glacier, though in those days it was known as the Stanley Glacier, and I suppose we were about 1000 feet up and we had the most appalling weather, you know. It was snow, blizzards all the time and white-outs. Halfway up this Glacier we had to stop for the night and were trying to get the sledges free from the built up snow. The dogs couldn't pull mine out. So I threw myself at the sledge and of course I cracked a rib in the process. 1200 pounds I got on it. It was the heaviest sledge in the lot because it was the last one going through. And I had 10 dogs and the others had 6.

00:41:29 You launched yourself

Andrew: At the back of the sledge.

00:41:33 You were trying to push it, and you slipped.

Andrew: To help them, you see, to break it out. No, I hit it in my chest and it didn't budge and my chest did [laugh]. That was how the fracture occurred.

00:41:46 Did you know straightaway what you had done?

Andrew: Well, no, not immediately. It went on hurting rather a lot after that so I got the chap I was with, who was a Falklander, I've forgotten his name. Stupid idiot.

00:42:12 Well this was 60 years ago.

Andrew: Yes it is [laugh]. The sledge was the last one. Wallin, Dick Wallin his name was. He was with me. He was about a 40 year old Falkland Islander. I said, 'just test my ???[inaudible] for me'. And he pushed them together like that, and he did it with a great big hefty push, which I didn't mean him to do. I was afraid he'd perforated the lung because the injury was quite sharp. Anyway, when we got going I told Victor Russell in the evening. I said I don't really think I'm going to be much help to you with this rib. I've got the biggest sledge and I can't get it moving, and looking after the dogs isn't really on.'

00:43:19 You were out surveying at the time, weren't you.

Andrew: Well we were. No, we were exploring. What we were doing was to try and find if there was an overland route down if the sea ice went out. Because it was thin in places there, and Vic had discovered this one day by walking along with his ice spear. We had the 3 sledges behind us and he was prodding it through to see how thick the ice was and he suddenly stopped when he realised it was only 3" thick. [laugh] A 1200lb sledge, and he said 'back off, chaps', and we did.

00:44:00 Did you return to Base with your broken ribs?

Andrew: Yes I did. I had to. I said, 'Look I know you want to find out if there's a way across. I'll stay with you to do that,' because we were on the top of the Glacier. It was fairly level you see. It wasn't too bad. So we did that and I said, 'I think I shall be more of a hindrance to you than a help'. So I went back and Reece came out in my place and I did the meteorological observations for him until he came back.

00:44:35 And there was nothing much you could do for yourself.

Andrew: Well you can't do anything. All you've got to do with broken ribs is bind it up and wait for 3 weeks.

00:44:45 And you banged your head as well⁵.

Andrew: Yes that was stupid. We had a blizzard. It had been blowing for about a fortnight and the snow had built up all round the house. We'd put Maggie and the pups up on top of the hut on the roof and of course the wind generator worked off that. I was passing by and saw the pups were a bit close to this thing and thought I'd better go and shift them from there. So I did and there must have been a slight shift in the wind because it normally went round and round, in the constant wind, which was very constant with the same sort of force. It must have just swung round and caught me on the head. I've still got my hat with the blood on it in my wine cellar. [laugh]. And of course it knocked me out and I woke up pouring blood from these cuts because your scalp bleeds very easily. I was woken by the dogs licking the blood. So I thought, oh dear I've cut myself [laugh]. So I stumbled down back into the hut, down the snow steps.

The chaps were actually appalled [laugh] to see me walking in pouring blood from my head. So I said, 'well look here we'll have to do something about this.' And they said, 'Yes alright. What shall we do?' 'Well,' I said, 'I'd better have a look at it first.' So I said, 'Take me into the kitchen and put me on the floor.' They did and I looked at it with a couple of mirrors and I could see it was quite a gash across the top and it was pumping blood. So I said, 'Look, you'll have to put some stitches in there.' I said to Tom, 'Look you can do it, you saw me.' I had to sew up a dog bite on his hand out sledging. Incidentally, when we had those dogs, all 60 of them, not one of us got bitten. [laugh] They did incredibly well.

Well anyway, they put me on the floor and started sewing. Tom started putting some local in which I had told him how to make up. A local goes in with a long thin needle and I could see that getting broken off inside the skull and I thought that's not a good idea. I said, 'Look, just sew it up as it is and

⁵ *Of Ice & Men*: p70

don't bother about the local.' So he, of course being a naval chap, knew how to tie proper reef knots. I told him how to tie a surgeon's knot which you know is over and over twice, and then a reef on top. He sewed it up very well and stopped the bleed. The only trouble was I kept passing out in the process and he had to wait until I came to before he could decide what to do next. [laugh]

00:48:31 And you recovered perfectly well.

Andrew: Oh yes. Well I'm only half the man I was of course [laugh] after a crack on the head like that.

00:48:53 There was also talk in *Ice & Men* of this rather unusual Camp, called Swamp Camp⁶.

Andrew: Oh yes, that was terrible.

00:49:04 In what way?

Andrew: Well I was coming back down off the Winter Journey where we had found our way across on to the top of the Russell Glacier from the northern end down onto the Glacier. We'd come up subsequently later on the east coast on the Glacier and then found the way down south. But we came back off this and we'd had such terrible weather. We couldn't do very much in the way of survey work. We found our way anyway and coming back down we got down on to the sea ice near Long Island and still in the blizzard that had been blowing for a couple of weeks. All the sea ice had been pushed down and the snow blowing on to it and of course the tide came in and we didn't know. We'd parked very close to a tide crack. I got stuck on a sastrugi and they'd gone on ahead and I lost sight of them and by the time I got myself free – this is before I had the ribs damaged – I couldn't see where they were and you know, with snow blowing everywhere you've got to be a bit careful otherwise you get lost.

So I left the dogs where they were, having got the sledge free and went out on compass bearings to so many yards and then back on the opposite reading and kept doing this in different directions to see if I could find anybody. On one of them Vic Russell, who was coming back, must have seen me, because he came through to me and I told him what had happened. He said, 'Oh yes,' and of course I hadn't got a compass bearing or anything to go on. Tail end Charlie didn't get that, he just followed the rest! [laugh]

Anyway that's what happened and we decided we'd camp. Tom and I were sharing the tent and we had a pretty rough night and difficulty in putting the

⁶ *Of Ice & Men*, p 66- 68

tent up and we ended up in the morning. He rolled over and said, 'My feet are wet.' And I said, 'You silly fool. You've probably kicked the pee can over!' [laugh] I turned over and my feet were wet and we sat up in some concern and looked. And there was water rising up through the tent. So we hurriedly got out through the main thing, the exit. By then the [outside of the] tents were half way up with snow and we told the other chaps we'd been swamped out. Could we come into theirs. And oh, one of our dogs had died, he'd been suffocated.⁷

By that time Victor Russell decided he'd better move his tent on to higher ground. So he dug it out at great trouble, Force 10 blizzard blowing all the while, and you really could hardly see what you were doing. We eventually got it up in rather a restricted capacity and [laugh] just as we got it fixed he snapped the pole he was pulling. It was the only time I ever heard him swear. [laugh] Anyway we repaired it and in a rather restricted tent he said, 'Look you'd better get inside that tent and cut that dog up', because they'd had nothing to eat for 3 days. And we'd been on half rations for a week. He said, 'You'd better get inside and cut that up before it freezes and give it to them.' So I got inside the tent and cutting up a dog inside a restricted capacity of the tent without making a mess of the whole thing is quite difficult. However, I managed it.

00:54:23 Using a penknife? A scalpel?

Andrew: No. I had a dagger. Can't remember why. Oh my brother had given it to me. He was in the Royal Armoured Corps during the war and he gave me this dagger and I took it down there with me. Lost it fishing. I cut this thing open and divided it into 23 portions. We had 23 dogs left and as I was cutting it, I came to the liver, which was a good sized liver. I looked at that liver and I thought, 'My, I could do with a slice of that', [laugh] after a week on half rations. [laugh] They were only 4500 calories [full rations], it wasn't really enough. Should have been on 5 or 6000.

00:55:25 Did you give into temptation?

Andrew: No. Something said to me, don't, because there is a disease which produces cysts in the brain. Forgotten what it's called now. So I decided against doing that. In any case the dogs had to be fed, otherwise we wouldn't have got home. [laugh]

00:55:52 The dogs had no problem in being cannibals?

⁷ by the snow of the blizzard. *Of Ice & Men* p 66.

Andrew: Oh no, none at all.

00:55:56 And how was the episode concluded?

Andrew: How do you mean?

00:56:01 Well did you all get back into the one tent?

Andrew: Well we all spent a pretty miserable night in these cramped accommodations. We'd left our sleeping bags there and the sledges there, and the dogs were running a bit loose. They curled up in the snow of course. We only had 1 sledge left so we were able to harness them up and the storm eventually died, and the following day I think it was, we got going and made for home. We were going actually to meet Bill Croft and Dick Wallin who were looking for fossils in Long Island.

00:56:57 Can we talk a bit about Deception Island. How come you were lead there at Deception Island?

Andrew: Well Tom's father, Tom O'Sullivan, had died and he wanted to get home quickly so he was out of the running. Bill Croft had only come down for a year so he'd got to get back. Dick Wallin wanted to get back to his family in the Falkland Islands.

00:57:38 Sounds like Hobson's Choice.

Andrew: Well it was really. John Francis was staying on. Vic Russell and I were the only 2 left and he wanted to go and check on Paulet Island, where Nordenskjold's expedition spent the year. I'm afraid I've got Nordenskjold's ice axe upstairs in my loft somewhere which I broke killing a seal because I thought it was strong enough. Well that only left Vic and me, you see, and he said, 'Would you go James?' So I said, 'Of course, quite happy to do that,' because I said I wanted to get back by the end of the year. Anyway I'd go and do it for 3 months. So I was duly sworn in as a magistrate by Ted Bingham.

00:58:08 Why was that?

Andrew: We were all magistrates down there and each Base had one because we had the Argentines quarrelling with us. The same trouble as they'd got recently over the Falklands War, and the Chileans were interested too.

00:59:15 So, by being a magistrate you represented the Government?

Andrew: That's right. I had to deliver letters of protest to them.

00:59:25 Tell me about this. I've heard about this one. What was the procedure? What were these protest notes? How did they work?

Andrew: We were in there, in what do you call it Bay, in Deception Island, Whalers' Bay, and in this hut which had been made use of. We were trying to repair it enough to keep the snow out. Which wasn't very clever. The Argentines came in with a ship and I was advised I ought to deliver a note of protest. We had a special system of 2 way communication you know.

01:00:01 Bingham in Stanley?

Andrew: At Port Stanley. We'd got a radio operator with us, Eric Massey his name was. I was told to deliver a note of protest so I did.

01:00:37 You were protesting about what?

Andrew: About their presence there.

01:00:42 Their Base or their boat?

Andrew: Their Base, or their boat rather, because they sent their chaps ashore. On the shore we'd got the old Norwegian whaling things and there were a lot of explosives in there. Of course, these chaps found it and started letting some of it off. So I had more than one reason to go and protest to them. Rowed over there in my anorak and the other chaps came and helped. We were received at the top, were saluted smartly by Jimmy the One and the Captain, whose name I've temporarily forgotten.

01:01:27 You were saluted by the Argentineans?

Andrew: Yes.

01:01:30 This was on the shore?

Andrew: No this was on their boat, their ship. And I said, 'Please can I see the Captain.' 'Yes, Sir'. 'Oh,' I said, 'Does everyone speak English?' Of course they all spoke English, no problem, and I hadn't any Spanish at that time. He took me to see the Captain. I said, 'I'm required by His Majesty to deliver this letter of protest to you.' Handed it to him and he read it and he said, 'Yes, thank you. Now,' he said, 'shall we go indoors for a drink?' [laugh]

01:02:15 That was the first one you ever delivered.

Andrew: Yes.

01:02:18 Can you remember what it said?

Andrew: No. I didn't know how to write these letters, and I wrote a very stupid one really, but I did voice our concern at his arrival and a protest at his being there.

01:02:36 So the composition of the letter was left to you?

Andrew: Yes.

01:02:42 Did you ever get one back?

Andrew: Not that I recall. No. They sent us ashore with a load of fresh Argentine meat which was very good and much appreciated. [laugh]

01:02:56 So they weren't taken very seriously by the men on the ground?

Andrew: Well, you know, there was a certain bonhomie involved in it all really. And then the Chileans, of course, sent a destroyer in with decks cleared for action and piles of soldiers aboard. They marched in and wanted to know why we were flying the Union Jack at their Base. We said we thought it was the best place to fly it from. [laugh]

01:03:33 So tell me a bit more about that. When was that? That was in '46 ?

Andrew: '47

01:03:40 '47. They just arrived from nowhere?

Andrew: Yes.

01:03:46 While you were there for the summer. What was the conversation between the 2 of you?

Andrew: I made a protest at their arrival.

01:03:55 So you went on board.

Andrew: They protested and we didn't argue any more. All we'd got was a 42.2 and a shotgun, and they had a destroyer! [laugh] I wasn't going to argue too much with them. I had a protest to deliver so I delivered it to them.

01:04:20 So again you went over in a rowing boat?

Andrew: No they came ashore, the Chileans.

01:04:30 Did they salute you?

Andrew: No, I don't think they did. I don't honestly remember. It was a long time ago.

01:04:37 But again, once the notice had been delivered what was the next thing that happened?

Andrew: Well they played around for a bit, sailed up to the top of the inlet and then back out again through Neptune's Bellows, and we saw them go.

01:04:57 Did you offer them hospitality?

Andrew: No.

01:05:00 That was a bit more stiff was it?

Andrew: We weren't terribly keen on them, for after all Britain had very good relations with the Argentines. But of course, you mustn't forget one thing. The reason they didn't do anything about it was two-fold. They knew that I'd got a radio operator and a form of communication with not only Port Stanley and the other Bases, but the British Navy. The British Navy was only a few hours sailing away. So there was no argument about what went on, you know. If we said, 'Look, clear out,' they weren't prepared to argue the matter.

01:05:52 Whilst you were there did the Argentineans establish their own base on Deception Island?

Andrew: No they didn't.

01:05:58 That was later?

Andrew: Yes that was quite a bit later. Yes, because we had the first of the earthquakes which shook Deception Island while I was there. I rang them up at Hope Bay, cabled them at Hope Bay. Stuart Small said, 'Oh, James has had an earthquake. Typical.' [laugh] Anyway that's what happened, and 5 or 6 years later it blew up and destroyed the whole of the Whaling Base.

01:06:38 What was your earthquake like?

Andrew: Well it only lasted about 10 minutes or so. It worried me to death.

01:06:49 Did it do much damage?

Andrew: Well, no, not really. But you see there were fumaroles coming out with steaming hot water, well steam coming out of the ground and down by the shoreline. Whalers' Bay was reasonably warm because of them. In fact one day we saw, I can't remember, a Norwegian or an Argentinian vessel with a chap, stark naked, dive off the bow, looking as white as a sheet, swimming round to the stern and climbing up a net at the back and coming out red like a lobster! [laugh]

01:07:41 How much contact did you have with Stanley? Were you in daily contact?

Andrew: Well, we were required to be in touch with them at Hope Bay at certain times of the day to report the meteorological status and make sure that we were doing what we should do.

01:08:15 Were there ever instructions from them to you?

Andrew: Oh I had a cable from Bingham and I was told off by him when I got hit on the head because I hadn't cabled my family to tell them and apparently they heard somehow. The Foreign Office told them so I hurriedly sent them a cable to them saying I was alright.

01:08:46 How would you send a cable like that back to England?

Andrew: Well it would go via Stanley.

01: 08:53 Did you have any direct contact with London?

Andrew: Not that I'm aware of. Except for the Albert Hall Promenade Concert. [laugh]

01:09:08 Would you get instructions from London from time to time? Where was Bingham all this time?

Andrew: Just down at Stonington.

01:09:16 So Centre of Operations was at Stonington and you had direct contact with Stonington, not via Stanley?

Andrew: Well, I can't remember now. The chap to ask would have been Stuart Small because he was the radio operator. I never learned Morse and never learned how to manage a wireless so I didn't bother my head with it. I'd got enough problems to deal with anyway, you know. [laugh]

01:09:49 It sounds like the only man you treated was yourself.

Andrew: Oh no. Tom O'Sullivan had a dog bite which I had to sew up while we were out sledging at the start of our first winter Journey and he cracked a fibula a bit later on. What else did I have to treat? I don't think there were ever any major problems.

01:10:33 Bonner we've talked about.

Andrew: Yes. I don't think there were ever any major problems.

01:10:41 Were there ever any emergencies really? You never felt that your life was at risk at all?

Andrew: Well only when I slipped off the top of a mountain knocking a bit of rock off, straight towards a crevasse that I'd just crossed over on a snowbridge. I knew the snowbridge was good and by the grace of God I went straight across it on the snowbridge.

01:11:00 Out of control?

Andrew: Out of control. I didn't even have time to say, 'God help me.' [laugh]

01:11:25 Andrew Taylor says in one of his writings, he says, 'Looking back on it we did some very foolish things in the Antarctic.'

Andrew: Oh we did. No doubt of that.

01:11:36 Tell me about one. Can you give me an example? The fall on the mountain?

Andrew: Well that was one, falling off the mountain. Well, I went across to knock a bit of rock off and I thought it was quite good snow. I'll show you a picture of it on there. We'll look at it later. I had only taken a rock hammer, geological hammer with me. I'd not taken an ice axe which was very stupid. I took a spear with me, but the spear was only useful to see how deep the snow was. It wouldn't have stopped me sliding down the mountain, whereas an ice axe would. I could have dug the ice axe into the ice and it would have held up, but the geological hammer didn't.

01:12:38 So it was a bit touch and go for a moment was it?

Andrew: It was a bit touch and go. [laugh]

01:12:44 Did you play practical jokes at all?

Andrew: Oh, yes. We were having a bit of an argument one morning at breakfast about who could run the fastest and Tom O'Sullivan said, 'Well I can.' So we set it up. I said, 'I'll take you on anytime. Luckily we'd both put on quite a bit of weight down there. [laugh] He said, 'Alright.' And Stuart Small and John Francis immediately latched on to this and they said, 'Right, we'll measure out the distance from here to George Rocks and back, and you can run down there and back. We'll give you the word of command and I'll fire the gun.'

So after breakfast, quite a good breakfast: we usually had bacon and tomatoes, and toast and marmalade, porridge perhaps, so we were feeling quite full. I said to Tom, 'Look I'm going to give you a start. You can have a 5 yard start.' Tom was most upset. He said, 'No. I insist on starting with you.' He didn't know. I'll tell you later. So Sam Small lined us up at the top of the slope down to the George Rocks and back and John Francis watched by all the rest of the crew fired the gun when it was ready to go and the race began and off we went. Of course I'd been a half blue at Cambridge and Tom had no idea. And I left him standing. [laugh]

01:15:07 What was your reward?

Andrew: Oh, just the satisfaction. Well we both felt highly sick after. [laugh] So we sat down to recover and had a good giggle about it. But Stuart Small still remembers this.

01:15:23 Were there other recreation activities, like football?

Andrew: No we were far too busy. We had a lot of work to do.

01:15:33: What about the domestic routine? Thinking now of Hope Bay.

Andrew: Well we did a week at a time cooking, each of us. There were moans when Bill Croft had to do it. [laugh] Poor old Bill. He was no cook. Alan Reece wasn't much better either.

01:15:50 Well, I'm thinking of cleaning and sewing.

Andrew: Well we all did our own. The one thing you did have to be careful of was not setting alight to the roof. We'd got these Tilley Lamps and stupidly they'd got hangers on them and of course it was very dark in the hut, especially in the winter. People tended to hang them on the top of the bolts that held the roof together. We shouldn't have done that. That was very, very stupid and of course at one stage I set alight to one of them and I didn't half get told off, I can tell you.

01:16:39 What did you set fire to?

Andrew: I hung a Tilley Lamp from the roof and Victor Russell came along and looked at it and said, 'We're on fire'. The rafter was smouldering. Afterwards, Stuart came and put it out quickly with his fire extinguisher. I had a wonderful lesson then.

01:17:03 That was at Hope Bay.

Andrew: Yes. Hope Bay. It burnt down⁸. I expect that was how it happened.

01:17:12 Two men died, I think. Did they?

Andrew: Yes they're buried out there.

I'll tell you something else that was funny too. When we'd been out sledging we used to come back and have a bath. Only occurred about once every 3 months. The first procedure was to go and get the snow in and tell everyone at breakfast you were going to have a bath. Then you organised the snow and brought it back and set the fire going having cleaned out the mess the previous occupant had made first. We had a big tin tub to bath in, and we used to put our clothes in after we'd had the bath and stamp about on them and give them a bit of a wash, then hang them up to dry, which they did quite quickly, actually. Even when it was freezing because, of course, it evaporates. They freeze the moment you put them up but ice gets, not vaporized, what's the word⁹?

Well anyway, Alan Reece decided he'd do this one day. In order to rinse them rather than going and getting a lot more fresh water, we'd got a bit of a runnel coming past the house on this day. And he said, 'I'll go and peg my clothes out in that.' So he did, and come the evening they were frozen in. [laugh] To the best of my knowledge they're still there, though they won't be now because the temperature's gone up.

⁸ November 1948 *Of Ice & Men* p112 - 114

⁹ oblate

01:19:28 There's one more thing. You mentioned right at the beginning that before you went for your interview, as a boy you had this desire to go.

Andrew: Well, I heard one of Scott's expedition who came and lectured to us and it fascinated me.

01:19:48 Was that Evans?

Andrew: I can't remember. It's going back 70 years.

01:19:59 So you were a boy and he came to talk at school. Which school was this?

Andrew: St Lawrence, Ramsgate.

01:20:08 And that sparked your interest.

Andrew: Yes.

01:20:14 Looking back, James, do you regard it as being a key factor in your life?

Andrew: Oh, good heavens. Aside from getting married it was the best thing I ever did.
[laugh]

01:20:35 Do you see anybody these days?

Andrew: Only the ones when I get to the Antarctic Club Dinner. I can't go much further afield wherever they are because I can't use public transport. Unless someone's actually going up. There's a gathering of BAS at Cambridge in the near future I believe which I'd wondered if I'd try and go, but I don't know.

01:21:09 END of TRANSCRIPT

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Dates in Antarctic (00:00:37)
- House surgeon at **Barts Hospital** during World War II (00:01:08)
- Signing up for the Antarctic (00:02:36)
- Antarctic Bacteriology Research programme (00:04:23)
- Adelie Penguin studies (00:05:47)
- **Penguins as a source of food**, including their eggs (00:08:33)
- Childhood memories of helping domestically at home (00:10:36)
- Baking bread and cakes (00:12:02)
- Victor Russell, Base Leader at Hope Bay (00:012:04)
- Listening to live recording of Promenade Concert on sea ice (00:15:30)
- **Husky memories**: Sidney (00:16:35) and Little Jack (00:19:33)
- Interview for Operation Tabarin (00:20:22)
- Ordering medical supplies including penicillin (00:20:49)
- **Running & organisation of FIDS** (00:22:17)
- **Memories**: Bingham (00:22:59; David James (00:23:24); Capt Taylor (00:24:12)
- Diary entry, January 1946 (00:24:37)
- Bonner's illness (cancer) on Deception Island (00:27:55)
- **Group at Hope Bay 1946** (00:29:41)
- **Dogs**: commands (00:32:54); harnesses / traces (00:34:19)
- Dog medical treatment (00:35:10); Dog breeding (00:36:47)
- Naming of topographical features (00:38:50)
- Breaking ribs on **Winter Journey, 1946** (00:39:58)
- Head Injury at Hope Bay (00:44:45)
- **Swamp Camp, Winter Journey, 1946** (00:48:53)
- Appointment as Leader at Deception Island, 1947 (00:56:57)
- Reasons for appointment of magistrates (00:58:08)
- **Letters of protest to Argentinean & Chilean crews** (00:59:25)
- Earthquake at Deception Island (01:05:58)
- **Communication with London** (01:08:15)
- Stonington as centre of Operations (01:09:16)
- Snowbridge & crevasse incident (01:10:41)
- Practical jokes at Hope Bay (01:12:46)
- Domestic duties at Hope Bay (01:15:33)
- Tilley lamp fire danger and later burning down of hut (01:16:39)
- **Having a bath** (01:17:14)
- Boyhood interest in Antarctic through a Scott lecture (01:19:28)
- Time in Antarctic a key factor in own life (01:20:14)