

GEORGE IBBOTSON

Transcript of a recording of George Ibbotson interviewed at his home by Chris Eldon Lee 8th June 2012 Bas archives number AD/6/24/11//173. Transcribed by Allan Wearden 21st of Dec. 2014

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is George Ibbotson interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 8th of June 2012. George Ibbotson Part 1.

Ibbotson: For my sins I was named George Rex Ibbotson because I was born on the Silver Jubilee of George V and Queen Mary and I consider myself lucky they didn't name me Mary! And I was born on the 6th of May 1935 in Plymouth.

[Part 1 0:00:26] Lee: So you are now how old?

Ibbotson: Seventy seven.

[Part 1 0.00.31] Lee: What did your Dad do for a living?

Ibbotson: My Dad actually came from Yorkshire, he was a Leeds man initially but his father died early on and he was put into care. Which he didn't like his foster parents, so he ran away lied about his age and joined up as band boy in the Royal Marines, and so he did his full tour 22 years or something like that in the Marines. And came out and then in World War 2 he was called up again into the Marine band because the regular bandsmen where released for active duty. And so he, they used to play in the theatres in lieu of a civilian band, civilian orchestra and then eventually he came out of the Marines post war and went to work in the Naval Engineering College as a steward.

[Part 1 0:01:24] Lee: What was his name George?

Ibbotson: Harry!

[Part 1 0:01:28] Lee: Harry Ibbotson!

Ibbotson: Harry Ibbotson!

[Part 1 0:01:30] Lee: Was he a well educated man?

Ibbotson: No, it was I know my mother was the same she had a note from the school board or education authority at 15 to say she had reached the required standard, and could now go out into the wide world and earn a living! So no, he ran away when he was about 15 and lied obviously to say he was 16, but it came back, it caught up with him, because when it came to pension he had of course to wait an extra year to catch up!

[Part 1 0:02:05] Lee: So there's a musical streak in the family is there?

Ibbotson: Yes, I would say so I had piano lessons obligatory piano lessons! I didn't get very far my sister had them she didn't get very far, my Mother used to play on the piano a bit if she could and she was a great fan of the Musical Hall, and certainly in her head and she has passed that on to me and now a days I always maintain that whatever subject you pick there is a song written for it! So it always keeps them amused down at the church whenever I come out with a song for something, I burst into song I like music!

[Part 1 0:02:50] Lee: What was your career path [Ibbotson: Beg your pardon?] What was your own career path?

Ibbotson: Well, I was still at Grammar school and I sat the exam for the Scientific Civil Service, and I was called for an interview and I put down on my preference of a career atomic energy, which would have been at Aldermaston in hindsight I think the world survived by getting their hands on an atomic bomb, but at the same time I belonged to a youth club and the man who ran it, was deputy headmaster at one of the local schools and he said 'Have you ever considered the Met Office?' I said 'No', and he said 'Would you like me to arrange an interview?' And those interviews were local in those days and said 'Yes' and I went to the local Met Office. I was accepted, end of story, so 43 years later I retired from the Met Office!

[Part 1 0:03:47] Lee: So first of all what intrigued you about the atomic industry?

Ibbotson: I don't know, it was somewhat in its heyday then it was new, it was not that long after the war really. When we saw what destruction it could cause but it was new and possibly in my mind, thought it might be the way forward for a career, it might have a decent career structure that you could advance through it? But as I say in the end, I have no regrets in that I took the path that I did because I can honestly say that in 99% of the time I had job satisfaction! There was a small 1% of the time where I was a square peg in a round hole and I didn't like it, but apart from that I think that was worth more than anything really.

[Part 1 0:04:37] Lee: So had you had an interest in the weather before this suggestion came up?

Ibbotson: No, no it was something that had never crossed my mind, so really when it was suggested to me that I might like to try the Met Office? I, it was just another job but I liked the look of it when I went and had a look round the office and what was involved and my interest just grew after of that.

[Part 1 0:05:00] Lee: Where was the office?

Ibbotson: It was at RAF Mountbatten in Plymouth, which had been a seaplane base during the war, anti-submarine place it started off as RNAS Catwater then the RNAS emerged with the RFC to become the Royal Air force to become RAF Catwater and finally named RAF Mountbatten after Captain and later Admiral Batten who fought during the Civil War!

[Part 1 0:05:21] Lee: What was it that made you enjoy it do you think?

Ibbotson: Well it was the variety, because initially I was a Scientific Assistant and I was plotting charts and doing observations then I did my National Service abroad in Germany then I came out of there. And then as I said in my notes that I had always seen the circular going round for the vacancies notices with FIDS and I said one of these days I'm going to do that! It was one of my rash moments I had a propensity for volunteering which didn't always turn out right! But as soon as I came out of the RAF I volunteered and that was it, I was down on FIDS for 2 years and then I came out of FIDS and I went back and was working in the central forecasting office at Dunstable, I didn't really fancy that too much so I volunteered for weather ships. So I went on to weather ships for 3 and a half years, came out of there and then I went to Cyprus and got married, so after the tour of duty in Cyprus I then moved I was at Heathrow and then at Cardiff airport. Then I went out to Masirah which is an island in the Arabian Sea. Then we went as a family to Germany for 3 years and then I came back to UK and then it was civil aviation, military aviation and finally commercial services and eventually I ended up in charge of the weather centre in Plymouth at home!

[Part 1 0:07:12] Lee: Tell me about the Weather ships, because they're not around these days are they?

Ibbotson: No, they are defunct now a-day, it all goes back I think it was about 1933, I may be wrong it may have been more like 37? And when Amelia Earhart [note: it was 37] was lost in the Pacific and they instituted a vast search for her and President Roosevelt decreed, that because there was nothing for her to home in on, that Weather ships or something should be there to help in the North Atlantic as well! And the British didn't really start till, I think there might have been something before the war but I'm not sure about that? But in 1948 it was possibly partly funded by, under the umbrella of Air-Sea Rescue because by my mind the positions that the ships where placed, were on the transatlantic routes. So that one of the things that were given by the deck officers, were ground speed checks and positioning, so that in the later years with the jets and satellite navigation it was the other way round they were telling us where we were! Which wasn't a bad thing actually, but we sent out, we were 3 weeks on station plus the time it took to get out there and back. Which for most of them was 3 days each way, but there was one in the Denmark Strait between Greenland and Iceland, that was 5 days each way! So say 3 days there and, I'm going to pause now and think what else I was going to say about the Weather ships? Anyway that's right it we were positioned within a grid, 'On station' was the centre of the Grid and then it was a 100 mile Square around. And if it was bad weather you steamed upwind and then stop and drifted back or even in bad [con-call days?] There was you always floated anyway so you would steam downwind so the current would bring you back on station.

[Part 1 0:09:35] Lee: So the ships weren't anchored or were they?

Ibbotson: Not anchored no, I can always one of the things that used to amaze me was because, the deck officers or certainly the first officer on the ship I was on said 'Oh, you know it's not like Deep Sea'! And I said 'Deep Sea'! 'We've got 9,000 feet of water underneath us how much deeper do you want it to be!?' But that was it, we didn't go to the Far East or down to Australia or something, you hadn't gone Deep Sea!! You know it's nonsense I suppose they were on the continental shelf, just about, but yeah to anchor would have been a bit of a problem.

[Part 1 0:10:16] Lee: So tell me about the routine then, say 3 to 5 days sailing out 3 weeks on board and 3 to 5 days back how long did you get back on dry land as a break?

Ibbotson: About a week maybe, if it was the long trip up to Station Arthur in the Denmark Strait, you might end up with say 10 to 14 days. But ultimately at the end of the year you had accumulated quite a bit of leave because, you were working it was a financial benefit because you were working, it was manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week all the time you were out there, you were working all weekends. But no, at the end of the year you could come ashore with accumulated leave and we had one chap on there, who'd been on just about since about 1948 an Irishman and he accumulated so much leave, that he used to take at least one trip off and he would go around all the international rugby games. And that was it he would take 1 or 2 months off could afford to do that!

[Part 1 0:11:27] Lee: Was it a good life?

Ibbotson: Yes, it was rough at times necessarily you can't expect to stick yourself out in the middle of the Atlantic or even on the fringes and not meet bad weather! I can remember the first trip I did we went one, I would say the west of Finesterre somewhere like that, and we had quite a storm there. One of the instruments onboard was a wave recorder, it was an accelerometers mounted on the hull and it was scaled on a chart and the pen moved backwards and forwards over the chart to give you the

depth, the height of the waves and the scale was up to 65 feet and it went off the scale! So I am you know totally unmoved when I hear about these horrendous seas!

[Part 1 0:12:20] Lee: This of course was after you had been to the Antarctic wasn't it?

Ibbotson: Oh, yes- yes!

[Part 1 0:12:24] Lee: Was there anything, any kind of experiences or techniques anything that you learned in the Antarctic which you found yourself using on the weather ships?

Ibbotson: Well the only reason I got on the weather ships, was because I'd been doing radio sonde and I was sent to Base F which was what we called a static base there was no surveying or that. We were a scientific base and I had been sent by FIDS down to the radio sonde station at Camborne for very brief course in radio sonde. So when I came back I had done 2 years radio sonde I had 2 years radio sonde experience and that allowed me to go on Weather ships because we did 4 flights a day on weather ships as opposed to 1 a day down on FIDS.

[Part 1 0:13:15] Lee: Balloon releases you mean, (Ibbotson: Pardon?) when you say flights you mean balloon releases?

Ibbotson: Yeah, balloon launches yeah. So, but basically at base F we did 1 a day that was the routine. But in 1957 it was the IGY the International Geophysical Year and we were asked to do a second one in the evening, 12 hours away so locally it was 8am and 8pm which is midnight and midday GMT.

[Part 1 0:13:44] Lee: OK, well we haven't got you to the Antarctic yet, so let's talk about how you got there, you applied for the job as a meteorologist?

Ibbotson: Yes!

[Part 1 0:13:52] Lee: One of the few met men that actually was a met man I would imagine?

Ibbotson: Well, yes and no you see Don McNab was a Met man and Evan Roland Hughes was a Met man, but that was it now I think the other one Roger Todd White was taken on as a Meteorologist but he didn't have a career as such. And I had to go to London and recently when it was mentioned Millbank on the television news and I remember very well for Millbank where the Crown Agents were going along and I think John Green was one of the interviewers and the question 'Do you like cooking'? So that was it, I don't suppose there was much doubt unless I'd made a complete and utter fool of myself! That I would get in anyway, it was the first year of the *Shackleton*.

[Part 1 0:14:56] Lee: Well they were short of met men weren't they, that's why they were recruiting people that did other things?

Ibbotson: Well I can only assume that was the case, I didn't know that at the time necessarily. And certainly when I met Don McNab I assumed they were all going to be Met men, I met Roger Todd White at Camborne he was sent there as well and I can remember Roger unpacking his washing from his last digs all wrapped in newspaper-soggy newspaper!! We lodged at a local pub and I learnt to play Ucker [note. also Euchre] and learnt it well enough to earn my drinks!

[Part 1 0:15:34] Lee: What's Ucker?

Ibbotson: Oh, it's a card game, [Lee: Oh right] but it's very popular or it was in Cornwall anyway.

[Part 1 0:15:45] Lee: What was it that made you want to go to the Antarctic I mean what sort of knowledge did you have about it?

Ibbotson: Well I suppose the only thing I'd seen was '*Scott of the Antarctic*' [Lee: The film?] Which everybody just about had seen, and it had a fascination of sorts if you like and I had read a book about Shackleton and I was intrigued I suppose, it wasn't from what I knew it was from what I didn't know! And I wanted to find out what it was all about and I certainly did, I tell people that when I came back that I can understand the fascination the Antarctic held for the early explorers.

[Part 1 0:16:29] Lee: How do you mean?

Ibbotson: Well it's raw, nature in its rawest state and the elements it's just absolutely fascinating I found really! You see the weather that you didn't see at home but the beauty of the scenery, everything really and the fauna down there, I know the animal life people see my nieces and nephews were asking me all about penguins and seals and what have you. And I regaled them with stories, maybe a little embellished from time to time, but it's what they wanted? But yes it was the favourite American word it was awesome!

[Part 1 0:17:25] Lee: Its very topical is that word now, it's used a lot by nieces and nephews I've noticed! So had you then harboured a desire to go?

Ibbotson: I beg your pardon?

[Part 1 0:17:33] Lee: So had you then harboured a desire to go?

Ibbotson: I'm not sure, can you rephrase that?

[Part 1 0:17:44] Lee: Well did you have an ambition to go to the Antarctic?

Ibbotson: Well only in the sense I'd seen these vacancies notices, the 'Trawls' on behalf of the Crown Agents that the Met Office did. And it gave synopsis of what was required and what you might be expected to do and as I say a number of times FIDS if you like was the first one I volunteered for, the second I volunteered for was weather ships. The first one, I lie was weather ships in 1952 when I didn't know radio sonde then and when I arrived on board over Christmas, they wondered why they'd bothered to send me because I didn't know anything about radio sonde, but I did learn so that was a volunteer, FIDS was a volunteer and weather ships was a volunteer, overseas was a volunteer so I spent a good part of my career volunteering!

[Part 1 0:18:47] Lee: Do you feel going south after your National Service your were demobbed in 1955? [Ibbotson: 55 yes!] So again had that National Service experience prepared you for in some way, the kind of living style?

Ibbotson: Yes, I suppose in a way it did for many years, till such time I met and married my wife I had always been in male company and so the RAF we were sharing billets, yes that started me off if you like. Then FIDS even more cheek by jowl we were living there and we had to get on, which we did do there was no arguments really it was amazing! And then of course weather ships again was, all male company and we survived that, then as I say I came ashore and went to Cyprus.

[Part 1 0:19:43] Lee: So tell me about the interview, what do you remember apart from Johnny Green being there?

Ibbotson: Eric Salmon, Eric might have been in Stanley at the time, he hadn't married Freda at that time. I (laugh!) was lodged with, we were taken off the *Shackleton* in Stanley and lodged with Ron Tapp, with a widow an elderly widow I always remember this because she had to go into hospital for something and leave us and she had left food all ready, and when she came out, it was only a short stay she was surprised she'd left 2 cooked chickens that we hadn't eaten one each! And she was surprised that we could survive on one chicken and another thing I developed tooth ache in Stanley and I went to see the dentist which was a young German dentist, and he said 'You've got mutton teeth', because nothing unusual but you're not used to eating so much meat, mutton-mutton-mutton!! And maybe lamb at Christmas, but a new phrase to me mutton teeth!

[Part 1 0:21:01] Lee: What was Stanley like in the 50's?

Ibbotson: Well, again it was new to me I remember the FIC store, there was Binny's or whatever, Binny's was another storekeeper, I'm sure it was Binny's? Because that's where I bought my camera and it was more on the way out I think it was interesting, because we had been deprived, we had to part company with our civilian clothes in Stanley and we were kitted out and when we came back, given our clothes our civilian clothes and of course we put them on, and nothing fitted because we had put on so much muscle down on base!! [note: never heard of the clothes been left in Stanley before?] We were invited the Governor's cocktail party and a right shower we looked!!

[Part1 0:21:56] Lee: I have not heard this before, your ordinary day clothes were taken from you?

Ibbotson: Yeah, put in a kit bag and kept in the store in Stanley [Lee: for 2 years!] Because there was no need for them on base, and no room for them on base really for 2 years and you just hope that the rats haven't got to them you know!

[Part 1 0:22:14] Lee: So the stuff you were given, was that was ex-Army stuff was it?

Ibbotson: Ex-Army, ex-Navy let's put it this way ex-WD because the jumpers, because yeah it was a mixture and we initially you didn't have ski boots, you had army boots and you had to wear them for skiing actually. I believe the second year we were kitted out with slightly better gear, they sent some bits and pieces down I don't where, they must have sent it down? I certainly remember Ron Tapp wearing army boots, but I remember coming out with ski boots, which I passed on to somebody else yeah!

[Part 1 0:22:58] Lee: So was the clothing you were being given, better than the clothing you were wearing previously?

Ibbotson: Well no, as I say at that time money was short, if I remember rightly at that time the average salary was for a Fid about three hundred odd pounds? Because I was a Civil Servant I think it was for both years or the last year? I got my Civil Service salary out of it so I was rather better off than most! But the running of FIDS by present day standards, was on a shoe string the bulk of the money, must have gone into provisions, I think because all the food and fuel. So they were grateful, they probably got it as a job or even free a lot of the ex-WD clothing?

[Part 1 0:23:55] Lee: I am just intrigued why they felt they had to give you their clothing, when they could have just asked you to wear your own?

Ibbotson: Our personal clothing wouldn't have been suitable for the climate. Anoraks as such were more like a smock that you had to put on over your head it was not particularly warm you wore a

duffle coat inner underneath it and I'd don't know if they still issue mukluks, but mukluk was about the only word I could answer in *'Call My Bluff'*!

[Part 1 0:24:36] Lee: Describe your mukluks to me?

Ibbotson: They were canvas, basically they were an Eskimo piece of garment, pair of boots canvas boots knee length inside of which an inner which was a felt boot-bootie, and then your sea boot stockings and then the boot on top, and it was a rubber sole which was ridged. I don't suppose for a moment that the original Eskimo mukluks where anything like it? They were probably made of fur or seal skin or something like that? But none the less for trudging around they were adequate and you could safely put on skis, as they were quite big footed, but yeah mukluks I took a photograph of myself wearing mukluks. But most of the gear, I mean to say the skis were clapped out, the bindings were clapped out and when Joe and others came down they brought in new skis and entirely different. A lot of the equipment the second year, they had moved up a notch I think possibly the funding by Crown Agents was sufficient to allow them to improve on the equipment? And nowadays of course it's unbelievable, the stuff I saw down at BAS in Cambridge unbelievable!

[Part 1 0:26:04] Lee: Just to mention Joe, was Joe Farman who we will talk about later on. You mentioned Joe that was Joe Farman.

Ibbotson: Yeah, Joe came down on the second year he, I think his cohort was a maybe little bit in awe of him! Because Joe let him know who was in charge more or less! But then we had a hut on base that was separated by about a quarter of a mile, and it was lined inside with copper so the that seismograph and the other instruments were magnetically sensitive were inside and Joe started things up again because they missed a year, because the previous person doing it had decided to go home early, I think they only stayed for a year Joe. But he was rather unwise, you may or may not want to use it because Ron Tapp and I in about midwinter I suppose in 1957. We got clearance to go man hauling and we were going to go across the channel, which would be what 5 miles maybe more to a depot? But the sea ice conditions were a bit questionable so we didn't manage it, and we didn't go where we intended to go and the radio hadn't worked since day 1. So nobody knew where we were and Joe decided in his wisdom to bring us some fruitcake! He took a dog with him, I suppose on the on the premise if the dog went through, he wouldn't! But he was wrong the dog didn't go through but he did!! And so he had an ice axe with him and he kept on chipping away at the ice edge to pull himself out and eventually he did! But it was touch and go I think, because it was breaking off and so then he had to make fast tracks back to base, and he suffered a bit of frost bite on his hands I think because of the cold water!

[Part 1 0:28:16] Lee: That was a close call for Joe was it!?

Ibbotson: It was a close call for Joe yes, we had it was a tacit agreement that you never went out on the sea ice by yourself.

[Part 1 0:28:27] Lee: But he did!

Ibbotson: But he did so, Joe was a law unto himself but anyway he survived! But as I say we got on fine, but as I said before it's amazing that you get this mixture of personalities coming along and alright you may have a bicker at sometime, but we never really fell out couldn't afford to really!

[Part 1 0:28:55] Lee: Did you know from the outset you were going to be sent to Argentine Islands?

Ibbotson: No.

[Part 1 0:29:05] Lee: When did you find out?

Ibbotson: Maybe when we got to Stanley I suppose, obviously I knew it was to do with radio sonde because they wouldn't have sent me to Camborne otherwise. But I had no idea where this radio sonde place would be, in fact we were put to work in Stanley helping out in the office there, because we were more up to date with the latest Met Office rules, or I was able to brief them on the way of procedures and what have you. But no I can't remember, it must have been Stanley they told me really as that's when I met Ron Tapp, and knew he was going there as well I knew Roger Todd White was going because he had done the radio sonde training as well.

[Part 1 0:29:50] Lee: So what was the Met Office at Stanley like in 1957 or so?

Ibbotson: It was Pat somebody or other in charge he was, overseas stations it was regarded as if you like with a Principal Scientific Officer in charge, and I think Pat was PSO in charge but it was a Met Office man in charge. There were one or two locals who trained locally but one of them was an ex Fid Paddy Byrne ['54,'55 at F] who had gone back to UK from FIDS and got married and asked to come back to Stanley and they said 'Yes', so he came back with his wife and a big crate containing all his furniture! But at the end of my 2 years I signalled Pat or whatever his name was and said 'Any chance in me stopping off on Stanley for a tour for of a year on the way back?' and he said 'Certainly no problem'. He contacted headquarters, Met Office headquarters and no way! So that was the end of that, I didn't do a tour in Stanley!

[Part 1 0:31:12] Lee: But you were suggesting the equipment in Stanley was not the latest equipment a bit backward was it?

Ibbotson: No, no far from it the point is the procedures radio sonde procedures for computing and what have you had changed and been added to, I don't know whether it had not reached them yet, but I was able to brief them on what was to be expected.

[Part 1 0:31:35] Lee: So what were those latest developments?

Ibbotson: Well it was the fact was at the highest altitudes, where the elements and the temperature elements in particular was exposed directly to radiation, solar radiation it might give a wrong reading or as opposed to when reading it off a calibration curve, so that you had to apply corrections add a few degrees on or take a few degrees off to allow for the solar radiation, and somebody in later years they scrapped! It was somebody justifying their existence, I think it needs correcting or what have you!?

[Part 1 0:32:22] Lee: So it was a new calibration as such was it?

Ibbotson: Yeah, well what you effectively what you did with it is it came each transfer chart came 3 calibrations curves on it. Ones for temperature, pressure, humidity and effectively you redrew those climate corrections certainly the temperature curve anyway you redrew it, so you had to have a ships curve to draw all the dots up?

[Part 1 0:32:51] Lee: So the radio sonde training you had in your National Service (Ibbotson: No!). No, where was the training, where did you learn the techniques of radio sonde?

Ibbotson: At Camborne prior to going to FIDS?

[Part 1 0:33:05] Lee: Right, you'd been appointed and you were sent to Camborne to train right?

Ibbotson: Yeah, but then when I came back, as I say to Dunstable and asked to go on weather ships the person in charge of that section of the Met Office, said but you've never done a radio sonde course, and I said 'Well no, but I've done it for 2 years', 'But that's not good enough!!' 'You've got to do the radio sonde course!'

Ibbotson: So I was sent to Hemsby to do the course there, then straight on to ships. And when I got Hemsby the instructor said 'You've done this before haven't you?' And I told him the story and he said 'What do you want to do with yourself? You're wasting your time here!' But anyway that's the way the rules were written, engraved in stone you will do a radio sonde course before you're let loose!

[Part 1 0:33:56] Lee: OK so you set sail on the *John Biscoe* to go south?

Ibbotson: Yes, on the old *John Biscoe*

[Part 1 0:34:03] Lee: The wooden boat?

Ibbotson: The wooden sheaved one, that's what I understood I always thought that it was wooden sheaved to allow its resilience going through ice or something, but of course they sold it to the New Zealanders or gave it back to New Zealander, when they finished with it. When they built the new '*John Biscoe*', which is what I came home on, it was cramped but you know it's what Fids had been used but up to then they had chartered a lot of ships, the *Kista Dan* the *Magga Dan* and it was that design that the first *Shackleton* was based on really, it was just one of the Dan ships renamed RRS *Shackleton*. But instead of having 2 to a cabin, you were in hammocks virtually on the old *Biscoe* it was a very cheap ride home, very!

[Part 1 0:34:57] Lee: Was that alright?

Ibbotson: Oh yes it was the comradeship you know all laughs and jokes, and inevitable there was, I say inevitable there was a number of ex Fids down for another tour, I think there was Lofty Worswick was one who was back again and again and again! And of course Ron Tapp had been down before and I believe he'd come down to earn money to get married on? So it was, then I suppose we stopped at Deception and Admiralty Bay, Hope Bay and then next stop, I don't think we stopped at Anvers we went straight down to Base F.

[Part 1 0:35:44] Lee: What was it like then Argentine Island in '56? [Ibbotson: '56 Different!] Back end of '56 wasn't it?

Ibbotson: Different from anything than I had experienced, but it was just absolutely new of course, I say new, not in the sense of pristine, but it was new to me. And you get used to working out a routine and who was going to do what and that had to be sorted out fairly quickly and who was going to be cook for Sunday, because Gerry Cutland was the cook initially I don't know whether he did 7 days a week but certainly eventually he had Sundays off. So that, a rota had to be sorted out for that and a rota for the toilets and general maintenance humping coal and bring up the oil, all the usual jobs in fact. So each thing was new to me, starting a diesel engine by cranking it in a temperature of -5 or something like but yes!

[Part 1 0:36:56] Lee: Let's talk about 2 or 3 of your colleges then, you mentioned Gerry Cutland who went on to produce the Fid cookbook didn't he *Fit for a Fid*?

Ibbotson: Sorry he was what?

[Part 1 0:37:06] Lee: Was it not Gerry Cutland that produced the Fids cookbook?

Ibbotson: Oh, the penguin book yes I think it was that's right! Yeah, I told you Gerry had been in the control commission in Berlin I think, post war and when he came out of the army, he opened first one and then a second in Bideford north a snack bar and he taught himself pastry cooking so he could make all the cakes for his shops. So that meant he came down with no preconceived ideas and he could take whatever ingredients that were there, and adjust a recipe from all the recipe books that were there, to suit the ingredients and it was absolutely superb! It really was and it was suggested at the end of the 2 years, that he put some of these recipes together at a pinch. I have never seen the book, I must admit I've looked around for it, but I could never find it.

[Part 0:38:06] Lee: It's been re-issued !

Ibbotson: Re-issued has it, oh right. But I was his butcher you see!

[Part 1 0:38:13] Lee: How do you mean?

Ibbotson: I was the base butcher, when it came to seals and what have you, extensively for dog food but I would take, extract the offal not that everybody would eat it you know I never touched the kidneys, we ditched the liver, did the heart at one time we tried the brains but only two would try that, and the Chateaubriand [Lee: The what?] The fillet steak, right down the back either side, that long and that round? I would say about 3 inches thick and about 12 inches long and regarded as fillet steak.

[Part 1 0:39:03] Lee: Did some of the Fids then, turn their noses up at this?

Ibbotson: Yes, they couldn't, they had to make do with what the alternative was and on the way back home, Gerry was asked by the skipper or somebody anyway, maybe the chief steward if he would cook a meal for everybody onboard, which he did do and unfortunately I would say the deckhands and greasers and what have you, what they wanted something solid to keep them going you know? So salmon vol-u-vents and that didn't really go down, and he had me go down, we had just loaded a load of seals on deck to go up to Hope Bay or somewhere and he had me go and extract some fillet steak and what have you, it went down like a lead balloon it really did!!

[Part 1 0:39:58] Lee: What about his food on base though, was he producing 'Posh nosh' on base!?

Ibbotson: By comparison with the other base, I've not doubt at all, it really was! It really was you couldn't fault it, his spaghetti Bolognese was one of our favourites and you see he made fresh bread every day, fresh rolls for lunch and it wasn't tinned soup, it was soup made out of tinned veg maybe like asparagus or what have you. He made pastries for afternoon tea it was all (ha-ha!) much like Lyons corner house in the afternoon!!

[Part 1 0:40:36] Lee: So what was the Bol in the spag Bol, was that bon fide meat or was that more seal?

Ibbotson: What was that that sorry?

[Part 1 0:40:44] Lee: What was the Bol in the spag Bol was it bon fide meat?

Ibbotson: Well I can't really think, I suppose it must have been tinned steak or something, we used to get tinned brisket or something else as well that's all I can think of really? But anyway it went down a charm.

[Part 1 0:41:02] Lee: Did he ever tell you why he gave up the snack bars Bideford to go south?

Ibbotson: No, no I don't, I never did find out whether it was a 6th sense or no, and he decided he didn't want to talk about I don't know. Well I none of us ever really broached it I think.

[Part 1 0:41:20] Lee: Some of your other colleagues you've made a note about here Ron Tapp you have mentioned already he was?

Ibbotson: Well he had been a dental technician as far as I know in UK still was, but he'd been down before I don't know which base [note: '54 at Admiralty Bay.] But the word was from Ron that he was going to go back and get married, so he needed a dowry to take with him! [Lee: Right!] So that's why he was down for the second time, just fact that he been a dental technician was reflected in his skill with tools and model making and what have you he was very, very good!

[Part 1 0:41:52] Lee: What did he make?

Ibbotson: Sledges!

[Part 1 0:41:56] Lee: Model sledges?

Ibbotson: Yeah, about a foot long it was the remnants of a old ski, he'd cut down, he's plane it, sand it really was very, very good indeed! I went to Worthing once in the hope, with every intention of looking in the telephone directory to see if I could find him, but I never did, but I don't know where Ron is at all or if he is still with us?

[Part 1 0:42:23]Lee: Mario Nantes!?

Ibbotson: Ah, Mario! Again it was purely by word of mouth, not that Mario told us but that he had worked in the British Embassy in Montevideo Uruguayan Embassy, I don't know what job he could have had in the British Embassy because as far as we concerned he didn't speak a word of English! [Ha, ha!] When he came down, he was a charming chap so unassuming you know he'd do anything you asked him to, he used to help out with the filling of the balloons, he could do that fine, he'd make a mess of it once or twice, but that's fine.

When he skied you could climb to the top of Galindez and you had a straight run right down the bottom to the sea, and if Mario was coming down you just got out of the way, because there no way Mario could stop! Other than falling over, he never did master skis and there's a wonder at the bottom when it flattened out and went scuttling towards the sea that he never did end up in the sea as well! Very nice bloke and he did learn English, not all the right kind of English because, I don't know which shop it was, but it was told when we were coming out of base in Stanley he went in and used a few expletives and was asked to leave the shop [Ha, Ha]!! And I doubt we pointed him in the right direction, he met up with us when we went to Montevideo, he went to see his family first obviously and then he came and joined in with us in the evening to see us off next day. But he ended up in UK for a while anyway, he was sent to Hemsby Radio sonde school for a course, and for all I know he might have done other courses, but he didn't do any meteorology on base he might well have done an observing course as well, as the suggestion was that he was destined for great things at the Uruguayan Met Office, even directorship!? I don't know I never did find out, but the Met Office grapevine is that in Hemsby at the local village hall, I suppose at the dances this suave Latin Lothario would stroll in and all the ladies, young ladies there would swoon but eventually he married one!

[Part 1 0:44:59] Lee: An English girl?

Ibbotson: He married an English girl and she obviously went back to Monte with him. [note: He also returned to base F doing Met in 1959!] Think somebody said she was a blonde, which considering how dark he was. I can remember on base once, that inadvisably just for short distance went skiing in shorts and no shirt, well it doesn't matter about that, it was the shorts didn't go far, but it was enough to get sun burn and Mario Nates said 'Oh you Blanco's!' So he went skiing with shorts and got sun burned! He couldn't understand, how when as dark as he was he got sun burnt, but he did so we never let him live that down!

[Part 1 0:45:46] Lee: You've also got some notes here on Don McNab?

Ibbotson: Don McNab yes, he was, he liked to imbibe which he couldn't do as much as he would like maybe? So at the end of the first year, it was Colonel Somebody in charge of the Canadian forces, it must have been, I think they were met services approached FIDS asking if they had anybody suitable who would they could recruit that could go and work at Knob Lake observatory, which I believe is in Newfoundland, I'm not sure? And Don was recommended and off he went, and we thought 'Oh my lord, what have they let themselves in for!' But he did a graduate course at McGill University a sandwich course as he obviously excelled because at the end of whatever period it was, FIDS were asked if they had anyone else of a similar calibre!? So we shock horror, Don obviously is a changed man, he came back got married and he went to work in the Channel Island met service and I used to speak to the Channel Islands when I was at Plymouth, because we worked with them when they were producing their BBC forecast and I asked about him, and they said 'Oh yes he's still here but he has retired', so I never did manage and get over and see him.

[Part 1 0:47:18] Lee: I met Clive Pearson earlier this year.

Ibbotson: Oh, he came in the second in '58!

[Part 1 0:47:23] Lee: Second year yeah! (Ibbotson: No!) That's right '58!

Ibbotson: At the end of the second year, that's right he was there for '58. Well he was the complete opposite too Gerry Cutland [Ha, ha!] Because he had been taught to cook, using certain ingredients and I don't know what it was like at the end of '58, but at the beginning of '58 he couldn't cope! Because he could not get his head around dried strip potatoes and everything else, because it's all in tins just couldn't hack it! But hopefully you know, I think Gerry gave him a bit of tuition and helped him a bit so hopefully before the end or before the end of the year, he could manage to turn himself around?

[Part 1 0:48:16] Lee: So he was coming in whilst you were going out?

Ibbotson: Yes, so there was a bit of an overlap, yes as I say he just couldn't hack strip potatoes!

[Part 1 0:48:28] Lee: There's a rumour going round one or two of the Fids were offered the option of moving on, after their first year? [Ibbotson: Yes!] But they stayed because of Gerry's food?

Ibbotson: Well, myself Gerry and Ron Tapp, I think it was just because we were buddy-buddy's! It was just the way it worked we just got on so well of course Gerry was a West Country man so we had to stick together and I don't know why Gerry didn't chose to and move on? We were very fortunate to keep him I was doubly blessed to have him and Ron Tapp.

[Part1 0:49:05] Lee: Tell me about the work you were doing, it was obviously the reason you were there was to do Mmet observations, so what was the regime like George?

Ibbotson: Well apart there was 3 hourly observations, which were sent to Stanley.

[Part 1 0:49:18] Lee: How were they sent? [Ibbotson: Pardon?] How were they sent?

Ibbotson: Oh, by RT.

[Part 1 0:49:22] Lee: Morse code!?

Ibbotson: Yes, ZHF88 was our call sign that much I do remember and I can even remember the Morse for it! But that's about all and then at 8am local time, 0800 we did a Radio sonde ascent and somebody was responsible for filling of the balloon and although we had a certain number of hydrogen cylinders. We also had a hydrogen generator and the one that was there in '56 the ingredients were magnesium, iron pellets and water, bearing in Midwinter when the temperatures were so sub zero, you had to carry a couple of buckets of boiling or hot water from the base hut across and hope it stopped it stayed warm enough and not freeze before we managed to get the generator going!

But the second year we had a new generator sent down a Canadian one, called a Gill generator and that operated on aluminium flakes, caustic soda and water and we had the routine was that you measured out so much of each of the chemicals put them in to, unscrewed the plug put a funnel in, poured it in put the clamp on the hole and then filled up the water tank above, and opened a water tap and away you went, and the hydrogen hopefully came out! When you'd finished at the bottom of the generator there was a lever, you were supposed to kick to flush out the generator. Somebody who shall remain nameless didn't do that, and I was the next muggings who had to go along the next day and do a balloon, I poured in the chemicals but there was still fluid inside so they all shot out in my face, and I had to go back and stick my head in a bucket of water to stop my head from generating hydrogen!! [Ha, ha!!] So I felt a little light headed for a while! So that was the generators, if in the event we had a bad launch, there was no way you could use the generator again, that's where the cylinders came in, you had dry hydrogen you had to use the generator, it was supposed to be I don't know to have a drying agent, it couldn't have been silica gel it was supposed to have a drying agent in? The hydrogen went into the balloon dry but inevitably that didn't work, so it went in wet and so you had to tap the balloon to gently on the sides to get all the moisture to come down, the neck at the bottom and hopefully tried to get some of it out anyway. But then as I say in '57 IGL and the IGY there was a 2000 local-12GMT ascent required as well then we had to write up all the results, it was more involved than just with the IGY ascent and sending the coded message off to Stanley. We had in fact a sheet to fill in and umpteen forms which would eventually have gone on a database in the UK.

[Part 1 0:53:02] Lee: Why was it important to have 2 readings a day for the IGY year?

Ibbotson: To match the UK, your 8am was all that was needed by Stanley to forecast, for any forecasting they might do forecasting for FIC, I don't know for whatever the ship was called, I don't know if it was the *Darwin* or not? And also when the Naval Hydrographic survey launch around or boat and HMS *Protector* probably ran, the launch probably tied up with HMS *Protector* so Stanley would do forecasts for that. And even when they were down around the Argentine Islands surveying, we used to get a message from Stanley, 'Do they want a forecast?' But once the day was ended they didn't need anything more, they didn't the one in the evening at 8o'clock didn't serve any purpose, but to tie in with international requirements for IGY we were asked to do the second one, and then when I came back to UK and ended up at Dunstable what job did I get checking it all lots and lots! Not from Argentine Islands but all the British radio sonde data for the IGY for the whole year

checking it!! And finding and identifying error's sending back to the station and saying 'Will you check this if necessary?' which they did! Then having it typed out again and sent off to the WMO in Geneva.

[Part 1 0:54:42] Lee: What was the point of all that?

Ibbotson: [Big sigh!] Well I don't, it was well I don't know what the outcome was quite honestly because they didn't limit themselves to meteorology the IGY, which was geophysical would have taken in geology I imagine and seismology and what have you, it was obviously to study the climate and one year doesn't tell you much at all? But it was something because on a global basis, they had at least one ascent from all the radio sonde stations in the world a day and most of them maybe 2, so what did they gain from the IGY I honestly, don't know? Except for I think we were issued that they tried to do at least one high altitude flight, in those days balloon technology, British technology was not very good, it was never very good and they would possibly get to 40,000 feet something like that? And they wanted to go higher, maybe 60 or 70,000 feet nowadays it's a 100,000 feet, balloon technology has improved so much and the balloon manufacturers no longer exists much I regret to say my doing!?

[Part 1 0:56:14] Lee: How do you mean?

Ibbotson: Well I was when I came back, where was it from? From Germany I was based at the, I was put as site manager of the experimental site at Bracknell it was an experimental site. And I was also given a number of hats, a number of round holes to fit my peg into one of which was balloon's, Met Office balloons and I worked closely with the British manufacturers, but I could see because we brought in balloons from other manufactures to see what they were like? And in the end I went to tender for the next year and when we got them, we bought Japanese ones! And they were excellent, they were marvellous balloons and the audit commission said, 'Why and earth has it not been to tender before 'cause they are so much cheaper!?' But the point is the company that made them used to make Philly stick on soles Phillips. They'd been bought out by an entrepreneur and he had an holding company, and one of them was this balloon manufacturer and he managed to convince, and everything was done in old mills and he managed to convince Bury Council to allow him, to build if you like a new factory in the town centre. Which he did do, and so when they stopped manufacturing, he was rubbing his hands with glee so he'd got the same city premises so he had to turn into other use. And I don't know what it was, but so one of these days I should go to Bury and find out!?

[Part 1 0:58:06] Lee: When all the, back in the UK then we are leaping about a bit, but it doesn't matter so you are back in UK and you are given the job of going through all the IGY radio sonde figures, was that from all over the planet?

Ibbotson: No it was just the British ones, that would have been the UK, Gibraltar, Cyprus, maybe El Adam at that time, El Adam I'm trying to think which would have been still up, Stanley [Lee: Aden?] Aden possibly Stanley all the ones that would have been Met Office funded or run, and the weather ships as well!

[Part 1 0:58:47] Lee: And Halley?

Ibbotson: I can't remember you know!

[Part 1 0:58:52] Lee: Oh OK so did?

Ibbotson: They didn't do radio sonde did they? [note: They did?]

[Part 1 0:58:56] Lee: I'm asking you, I don't know!

Ibbotson: No I don't think they did.

[Part 1 0:59:01] Lee: Oh OK, but there'd but somebody else, they'd be other Georges all over the planet doing the same thing wouldn't they?

Ibbotson: Well one would assume that each national body had somebody, stuck away you know in an archive.

[Part 1 0:59:14] Lee: So it was a truly international project?

Ibbotson: Yes!

[Part 1 0:59:17] Lee: And at the end of it, you had a snapshot of the condition of the planet?

[Ibbotson: Yes!] So in the end perhaps it had all been done for science rather than any applied?

Ibbotson: Yeah, it was pure science rather than any applied certainly yes. [Lee: Yes.] As I say I'm going to go and do a 'Google'! And find out what they did with it [Ha, Ha!]

[Part 1 0:59:38] Lee: Good idea, did they ever present you with any serious problems was there any days that you simply couldn't do the radio sonde readings?

Ibbotson: The only time I ever remember missing a flight, was on the weather ships when the captains forbade anyone to go on deck the weather was so bad!

[Part 1 0:59:53] Lee: Oh right.

Ibbotson: They'd batten down the hatches, but as far as FIDS is concerned? I do believe there was one I do believe there was one I can't remember why it was? Obviously I can only imagine the first attempt had failed, but once!

[Part 1 1:00:11] Lee: Otherwise it was very reliable [Ibbotson: Yeah!] And what are the other weather readings were you taking apart from that? [Ibbotson: Sorry what was that?] What other Met observations were you doing?

Ibbotson: Well we were doing what you call surface observations, every 3 hours which again were sent to Stanley and no doubt ended on, well I wouldn't say charts in UK, but maybe in the UK I don't know, but places like Australia I suppose maybe if they were doing the circle polar charts for the Southern Hemisphere the observations would appear on there. 'Cause certainly in UK, the UK Met Office does circle polar charts to see what's coming, but yes oh I imagine as well that maybe somewhere like South Africa another place as it was west to east flow of the weather and they'd want to know what's coming as well, so yes.

[Part 1 1:01:05] Lee: What were the characteristics of the weather patterns at Argentine Islands at that time?

Ibbotson: Well in a sense it was like a winter and summer monsoon, you could say really because all the snow came in the winter and in the summer it all went, just about! The Islands had a permanent ice cap they never lost that, but there were very wet puddles but we gained something like 3 feet of snow compacted snow during the winter period. Because I remember that because coming out of the front door of the hut, you had to walk down several steps to get down to ground level, whereas in the

winter you just stepped off the side! It was, one of the problems was keeping the screen clean of drifting snow because it filled up, drifting snow you had to clear that out and one of the things that we did, I don't know if we did, we had equipment that allowed us to, which we kept in the observation screen and the idea was that you had a glass slide, you I can't remember which order you did it in and you put a snowflake on it and you covered it with resin, and you were left with a cast of a snowflake and I don't think we were very successful!?

[Part 1 1:03:02] Lee: Why was that?

Ibbotson: Well I think possibly it was because the snowflake melted! Supposedly all the equipment we kept in the screen would all have kept at the same temperature, so you could pick up the snowflake and that, and the point is trying to keep a box of slides clear of snow and whatever. I imagine the resin evaporated and dried rather than, it didn't freeze anyway. Well I think we obviously had an element of success it wasn't a total failure, but I nearly said observed aurora but we didn't, we used to do that on weather ships'

[Part 1 1:03:42] Lee: What was the reason for trying to preserve these snowflakes?

Ibbotson: Well I'm not quite sure the multitude, and there is a multitude of different shaped crystals on the snowflakes. A snowflake is not a crystal, it's an amalgamation of crystals so the, I think I'm not sure whether I was reading there is one type of crystal that present in every snowflake, but the rest of it the formation, whether it is to collocate temperature, humidity or whatever with the form of a snowflake, there must be a reason in why a snowflake forms in the shape it does? And I dare say that's what they were trying to, they may be collocating with other observations with other weather observations, I don't know.

[Part 1 1:04:39] Lee: Did anyone ever perfect the art of catching snowflakes?

Ibbotson: Not on Argentine Islands! [Ha, Ha!!] Oh that's right you had a piece of black velvet and these little bits come down to catch a snowflake on, so obviously you had to go out while it was snowing. [Lee: Yeah!] Which in itself if the wind was blowing any strength, you know was a problem in itself so yeah!

[Part 1 1:05:04] Lee: I remember learning at school that every snowflake was different, is that right?

Ibbotson: That is, yeah it is well I don't know I suppose that may well be true. Certainly just not one snowflake, there are a multitude of different shapes, but the crystals that there formed from, must be the coalescence of those must be due to certain atmospheric conditions I think as well?

[Part 1 1:05:34] Lee: Was it windy?

Ibbotson: Not exceptionally so, well we had blizzards yes, but not exceptionally so I've been in windier places put it that way! But windy enough, I mean to say, if you've got to go carrying 2 buckets of water across to the balloon shed and try in, without snow drifting up the inside of the balloon shed it did anyway, it the wind didn't help one little bit!

[Part 1 1:06:08] Lee: Let's pause, George? [Ibbotson: Right!]

Ibbotson: Can I get you a drink [Lee: Yes!] Can I get you anything to eat?

[Part 1 1:06:13] Lee: A drink would be lovely!

GEORGE IBBOTSON

George Ibbotson Part 2 interviewed in his home by Chris Eldon Lee: 08.06.12

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: This is George Ibbotson interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 8th of June 2012. George Ibbotson part 2: One or two questions just related back to what we were talking about, were you in anyway aware of the International Geophysical Year apart from having to do the extra sonde readings?

Ibbotson: No, no it more or less came out of the blue! I think I must have known that the IGY was in the offing? And that we would be down there for IGY but what it entailed had no idea at all 'til the time came.

[Part 2 0:00:36] Lee: You were also there at the time of the Transantarctic Expedition weren't you?

Ibbotson: I imagine I was yes, Vivian Fuchs you mean?

[Part 2 0:00:43] Lee: Yes, but that didn't impinge on your conscious at all?

Ibbotson: No, no you mentioned earlier on something about Halley whether they did sonde at all, in hindsight then maybe Halley did do some radio sonde work during the IGY, I think you are probably right there I think, but there.

[Part 2 0:01:04] Lee: Is there a great sense of isolation or were you aware of what was happening elsewhere in the world?

Ibbotson: I know that the, when I first arrived there the *Shackleton* set sail never to return as far as I was concerned. I thought to myself 'What have you done this time and let yourself in for?' But that soon passed because time didn't allow and the work didn't allow, and once we had bedded in that didn't bother me anymore but at that time of course the BBC did a programme, a radio programme called *Calling the Antarctic* and your nearest and dearest at home, were called along to the nearest BBC studio to make a recording and that was broadcast to all the bases, beamed to all the bases. The members on base in turn, were allowed to select a musical item to be played on the programme as well, that was the one programme and possibly in fact the only radio we ever listened to was *Calling the Antarctic*? [note: The actual name was *Calling Antarctica*.]

[Part 2 0:02:17] Lee: So did your parents appear on that?

Ibbotson: My parents yes, and my niece to my embarrassment 'Hello Uncle George!' [Ha-ha!] And I cringed at the time but however she was there to meet me when I returned to Southampton, so I can't, she's very fond of me and I'm very fond of her!

[Part 2 0:02:40] Lee: Was there much space for them to say anything significant or was it just a quick hello?

Ibbotson: It was, I would say 2 minutes at most [Lee: Yeah] really, because they had to cram, I don't know whether it was every month, year round or whether only in the winter months possibly? And with the changeover they couldn't possibly do it as it was too early, so they had all the bases to get in and all the people on the bases, so you are talking close on a 100 people maybe to do?

[Part 2 0:03:14] Lee: But they wouldn't deal with everybody in each programme would they, or were you told in advance which week you were on?

Ibbotson: Oh, you were told which one to listen to, when it was going to be yours and I mean to say it would be hard luck if somebody was out sledging surveying at the time, but presumably they knew well enough in advance, to make sure they were back on base in time to listen to it.

[Part 2 0:03:37] Lee: So would this be listened to en-masse?

Ibbotson: Yes!

[Part 2 0:03:43] Lee: Hence the embarrassment!

Ibbotson: Yeah, and I can remember was it Drummond Mathews and 'Hello Drum this is Mum'! And we said 'I bet he's cringing now!' [Ha-ha!] But yeah, it was things like that yeah, I wasn't unique in that respect in that maybe, but you soon got over it and it didn't bother you and didn't rag you for it anyhow!

[Part 2 0:04:07] Lee: Did you forget about the rest of the world or where you missing too?

Ibbotson: Oh yes, I had no idea what was going on outside [Lee: Such as?] I came back to the UK for instance and totally ignorant of the latest pop music, latest pop music no idea at all!?

[Part 2 0:04:25] Lee: So Bill Haley never made it to the Antarctic?

Ibbotson: No, no as far as I could recall as I say the only radio we listened to was *Calling the Antarctic*! [Lee: M'm!] Was *Calling the Antarctic* whether that was because we didn't have a wireless as such, we had radio equipment and it could pick up beamed programmes I don't know whether the BBC World service would have been accessible down there I've no idea, but it quite possibly wasn't? The only people we could speak to were Stanley and that, and with Stanley once a month we were allowed to send a, and what happened was the wireless op would send your written letter over the air to Stanley, and somebody would type it out and send it by air mail to the UK. So yes there were letters coming in and going out in that respect.

[Part 2 0:05:26] Lee: These were very short weren't they?

Ibbotson: Oh very short I think it was about a 100 words, maybe that or not that even?

[Part 2 0:05:31] Lee: Did you struggle to fill those 100 words or was it easy?

Ibbotson: Oh you would never, as there was always something different to tell them, you might argue the second year around everything is the same, you'd just repeat yourself but they would have forgotten by then! [Ha-ha!]

[Part 2 0:05:50] Lee: But of course there were occasions you were interrupted by the outside world, I'm thinking particularly of Prince Phillip God bless him, who'll be 91 this weekend!

Ibbotson: I'm not quite entirely sure of what the event was, but I know he and the Queen parted ways and I believe he stayed on *Britannia* and she was maybe somewhere in South Africa?

[Part 2 0:06:14] Lee: They'd been to the 1956 Olympics in Australia.

Ibbotson: That's what it was, but he was on *Britannia* was he that's right?

[Part 2 0:06:22] Lee: *Britannia* never got as far south as you?

Ibbotson: No? [Lee: No!] It didn't?

[Part 2 0:06:30] Lee: So he would have come on a?

Ibbotson: Oh on the *Protector* or something like that? [Lee: Yeah?] Oh, right just to say my memory is a bit hazy, what I do remember is that there we were with our shirts nicely ironed and freshly shaven and 'Himself' came ashore 'Red eyed' with a 2 day stubble and I think maybe he'd been celebrating something in the wardroom that night, I don't know or the night before but he came and it was a quick 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' virtually you know! Because I don't know how many bases he visited, maybe he called at them all I don't know, but I imagine he had to move on, time was precious, but yeah nice to meet him anyway. [note: He transferred to *John Biscoe* for the trip south, and in all he visited Detaille, Argentine, Anvers, Lockroy, Danco, Deception and finally Admiralty Bay]

[Part 2 0:07:11] Lee: He didn't stay for a meal?

Ibbotson: Oh, no-no, oh no-no it was come ashore, he didn't go beyond the hut and then it was in one door and out the other virtually!

[Part 2 0:07:27] Lee: Did he meet all the men?

Ibbotson: Yes, yes as I say the picture I have got is of him coming out of the front door, as he must come in the back door and he must have worked his way down and said 'Hello' to us all the way, I think they probably showed him the Radio sonde room and things like that. But which is probably different from the other bases, but something he's probably seen dozens of times before radio sonde, because it's used to strike me that if the BBC had got a new producer, young producer in training go and do an item on the weather and because, we used to get not down on bases but in UK as I'm saying we used to get so many visits from coming along and the young producer would say, 'Do this do that!' And the cameraman who I'd seen many times before would do exactly what he wanted he knew the drill and totally ignored the producer!

[Part 2 0:08:23] Lee: I have got a note here, which suggests Phillip came down on the *Biscoe* in fact.

Ibbotson: Oh did he, right well there you are. Well the new *Biscoe* or the old?

[Part 2 0:08:31] Lee: I don't know, [Ibbotson: You don't?] well it could be incorrect again it's coming from Fuchs book. [note: It was the new *Biscoe* her first season]

Ibbotson: 'Cause if that was early 57, no it would be the old *Biscoe*, because the new one didn't appear till the following season and it was probable being built at that time [Lee: Yeah]

[Part 2 0:08:48] Lee: So did you speak to him?

Ibbotson: Yes, 'Hello sir' and then 'Goodbye' shake hands!

[Part 2 0:08:55] Lee: So was it a bit of a damp squib then?

Ibbotson: It was a bit of a none event really, he was doing what protocol asked of him it didn't look as if he was particularly enjoying it, but then again it comes with the territory you can't always do the things you want to do! In that position, he was polite and that I can't remember any questions being asked.

[Part 2 0:09:23] Lee: Did you ever get off base at all George?

Ibbotson: Of base what?

[Part 2 0:09:26] Lee: Did you get off base much?

Ibbotson: Only the once, when I went with, when Ron Tapp and I went man hauling it was a time I mentioned where Joe Farman went through the ice [Lee: Yeah]. But he and I had to take a rather tortuous route to get to the depot on the mainland and why it was placed there I don't know, whether it was an emergency depot? If I remember rightly we couldn't get ashore directly to the depot because inshore ice was a bit fragile, so we had to offload everything including the sledge and take it across country to a, I can't remember how far to the depot? And I don't know why it concerned us, but when we checked the fuel there, it was supposed to be paraffin so my memory serves me and it was turps. And I can't see that paraffin would have survived the coldest temperatures anyway, without going waxy so I don't it might be something of abhorrence (aberration?) in memory that makes me think? But when we came to leave the next day, having survived a katabatic wind coming down the glacier we loaded up, we had to take everything back the like we had to backtrack load up on the ice, and set off and I don't know what it was made me look back, but where the sledge runners had been was open water!

[Part 2 0:10:58] Lee: All ready gosh!

Ibbotson: It was just going straight through the ice, so we just sort of sprouted wings and flew across the ice! And eventually got to firm ice and we were on our way back anyways and headed straight back to base. But that was a near death experience, you might say [Ha-ha!] Really it was as closest I've come to it, and I thought somebody up somewhere has got some farther use for me to keep me going!?

[Part 2 0:11:26] Lee: Would that just have been recreation that trip or?

Ibbotson: In a sense yeah, the second year it was decided that everybody who wanted to at sometime, could have a weekend break of something like that, down the creek from the base was the old British Graham Land Expedition [BGLE] hut of 1935 or something like that? So Gerry Cutland and Evan Roland Hughes went up and stayed there for a couple of nights in their sleeping bags, I don't know what they did for food, because I don't know but they survived anyway. Ron and I decided to try something useful and then Stanley asked us to give them ice reports, which we were able to do from hard earned experience [Ha-ha!] [note: It was not the BLGE hut! That had disappeared in '46/'47 from probably a tidal wave. And had been replaced in 1947 by Wordie house being constructed in haste using parts of Lockroy, packing cases and wood from Deception! And still stands to this day!]

[Part 2 0:12:22] Lee: Did you ever get any other visits apart from Prince Phillip?

Ibbotson: Yes, inadvertently we were running short of fuel for the outboard and we knew that some distance, what I call up river but up the channel there was an Argentine you'd call it a base I suppose

[note: most likely the Refugio on Petermann Island?] but it was very small and we knew that the *Catalina's* used to fly in and out and there would possibly be aviation fuel there? So off we set with an empty drum, 40 gallon drum up there and landed on the beach and who should come down the beach to meet us but 3 Argentinian army folk! And there was us innocently carrying an empty 40 gallon drum with us, and anyway we said no problem can we possibly scrounge a bit of fuel, they said help yourselves! And they treated us like royalty and gave us their version of a Bar-B-Q because they had plenty of beef and then, I think Gerry Cutland must have been there as well, anyway in the event Gerry spent a couple of days with them and 2 of them came, because we say 'Rank has its privileges' there was a lieutenant a sergeant and a private, so except for the Private the other 2 had someone to be in charge of!! So I think the private was left behind and they came back for Christmas I think to, obviously the ice was open or we wouldn't have got there. They came back for Christmas and Gerry stayed there with the private and then they swooped over, and Gerry brought the Private back for a couple of days and we got on like a house on fire!

[Part 2 0: 14:18] Lee: So they came to your hut?

Ibbotson: They came to Galindez yeah.

[Part 2 0:14:22] Lee: Did Gerry cook for them?

Ibbotson: Yeah, yes as I say they cooked a Bar-B-Q for there must have been 3 of us that went over there you know, so that was our introduction to the Argentines and as I say couldn't have been friendlier.

[Part 2 0:14:39] Lee: Did you have to deliver any protest notes?

Ibbotson: No, no I believe that was privilege of places like Hope Bay and that, where they were on the same, within spitting distance of each other really but I don't how true it is the story is say the British would go over deliver a protest one week, and then they'd have a party and then a month later the Argentines would of course deliver a protest note, then they'd have another party!!

[Part 2 0:15:08] Lee: Did the Governor come down I think he must have come down with Prince Philip? [note: Yes, he actually was on the same trip as the Royal party]

Ibbotson: No, no we had no visitors like that! As I say Prince Philip was the only one of note that came to visit us really, another thing that has just come to mind is the fact when I remember when I first arrived there and as you know? They used to deliver a couple of carcasses of lamb or mutton, I don't know which it was we'll say lamb anyway and they served it up for a roast, fat and all and I'm a bit of a 'jack sprat' well I was then and I couldn't understand why the people from the previous year, wanted second helpings? At the end of the first year, I was the first in the queue for second helpings and you realised how much you missed the fresh produce! You know real potatoes, fresh potatoes vegetables and fresh meat.

[Part 2 0:16:11] Lee: You were having to do a lot of physical work weren't you?

Ibbotson: Yes!

[Part 0:16:17] Lee: On not the best rations?

Ibbotson: No well, you see they use to put bowls of vitamin tablets on the dining table, but I don't think anybody ever used them we were as fit as ten really! You see, I don't say that was always the

case at all bases, but by instinct, situation or what but Gerry served up meals that were nutritious really, as I say possibly one of the reasons we stayed together? But yes it was, I imagine if you were sledging a lot then there was a greater demand on you really, the only physical work that we had was maybe bring out the coal, bring out the fuel and what have you, and of course recreation skiing was exercise in its self really.

[Part 2 0:17:11] Lee: So tell me about the skiing then, how far did you get?

Ibbotson: Not very far, well that's in the winter if the ice was firm you could go as far as you wanted to really or as far as was safe, or as far as you were allowed? We used to go across, I can't remember the name of the Island (note: Petermann Is), but I know it had Charcot's cairn on it and that was the Cormorant rookery if you like. But as far as skiing was concerned we had the 2 Islands Galindez and another small one up by the old BGLE base hut (note: Wordie on Winter Is.) But largely it was trudge your way up the top of Galindez and point your skis downhill! And away you went, you'd find some steeper slopes and try and do some fancy turns a few 'Christes here and a few Christes there!' Pick yourself up and then carry on.

[Part 2 0:18:13] Lee: Had you skied before?

Ibbotson: No!

[Part 0:18:15] Lee: So you learnt on site did you?

Ibbotson: Yes I think, we all did the only one who might have done it, I mention his name again it was Joe Farman! And he'd try a few fancy things and he decided he didn't know as much as he thought, and so he'd practice the same as the rest of us.

[Part 2 0:18:36] Lee: He's become quite a famous figure hasn't he recently?

Ibbotson: With the 'Black hole in the Ozone layer!'

[Part 2 0:18:41] Lee: Well yeah.

Ibbotson: Yes, I don't know whether it, how much he was directly involved I mean to say, how the hole was discovered was it inspecting the data that had come from there or whether somebody down there said, 'This is a funny reading'? So whether it's, I say how much Joe was actually involved in it I don't know?

[Part 2 0:19:08] Lee: Well he was head of the team.

Ibbotson: He was head of a team, yes.

[Part 2 0:19:11] Lee: Well I suppose my question is, knowing him earlier in the 50's did you spot anything in him which may suggest that he may become [Ibbotson: No-no!] a prominent scientist?

Ibbotson: No that's one thing I mean to say, he was one of the lads shall we say and this is it, see he adjusted in that respect. I think you know the university atmosphere that he'd been used to in his previous youth, because I imagine he not been long a post graduate, I don't know because he wasn't that old, but post graduate and so he was disillusioned in a few ways, I think in mixing with some people?

[Part 2 0:19:56] Lee: How do you mean?

Ibbotson: Well, as I say he was quite surprised that I liked classical music! Because he got the impression, that I was not up to that standard!

[Part 2 0:20:07] Lee: Oh, right yeah.

Ibbotson: So he?

[Part 2 0:20:11] Lee: So did he muck in then on base or?

Ibbotson: Well, he'd had no choice, he had no choice at all, he wouldn't have got far if he had? He'd have been off base otherwise, no he was alright was Joe he joined in everything, it was just that he didn't get my twisted sense of humour maybe, but he was alright!

[Part 2 0:20:33] Lee: Apart from the skiing where there other recreational activities?

Ibbotson: No!

[Part 2 0:20:40] Lee: Did you have a library?

Ibbotson: Oh music I suppose, we had I can remember going through Montevideo buying a few LP's Stan Kenton and the one I got down there, what's his Christian name Skilling the diesel mech he was a Stan Kenton fan and at the end of the first year, he said will you do a swoop so I gave, I forgot what I took in return, but he wanted to take Stan Kenton with him, so he did. A lot of the old records were old '78's which came in useful because we didn't have any ski wax, I don't think we had anyway, so Ron Tapp was very innovative he broke up some '78's records dissolved them in paraffin painted that on to the ski runners and when it set you had a classic coated ski, very innovative!

[Part 2 0:21:43] Lee: It didn't play tunes as you skied along did it!? [Ha-ha!]

Ibbotson: No, no but I thought that was so innovative really and what gave him the idea, whether he had done it before I don't know? But certainly it worked anyway, it wore off but you just stole another 78 you didn't like and broke it up!

[Part 2 0:22:01] Lee: Was there other innovations you had?

Ibbotson: Oh, we did other recreation yes, I mean to say it was a daily thing we'd have a game of Scrabble and think we had a hand of Bridge, it was Bridge and Scrabble.

[Part 2 0:22:15] Lee: Did you have dictionary, for the Scrabble?

Ibbotson: Oh yes, that was supplied by FIDS I think, but yeah I mean to say I'm trying to think who we used to played with? But yeah, that was it you couldn't go a day without a game of Scrabble and a game of Bridge, a hand of Bridge.

[Part 2 0:22:33] Lee: I'm surprised Scrabble was around in those days so many years ago?

Ibbotson: Well I'm sure it was something like that I know.

[Part 2 0:22:39] Lee: Oh, I'm sure it was, so I was asking whether there were any other innovations, like boiling down the records or any other flashes of inspiration that you recall?

Ibbotson: Well something that was strictly illegal, I'm sure that the diesel mechanic taught me and that was trying to start or crank very cold in the winter, trying to crank up a twin cylinder Lister and

get it going, it was very difficult. So we used to take the air cleaner off put any old cigarette tin with a bit of cotton waste in it, set fire to it and crank over and then start the engine that way and whip the cigarette tin off, and put the air cleaner back on!

[Part 2 0:23:28] Lee: So the cigarette tin was a sort of warmth was it?

Ibbotson: No it was on fire! [Lee: Right!] So it was, not so much spark ignition, more compression ignition, so that was one thing I was taught, but I don't think it was recommended necessarily. And again, I don't know whether you would call it innovation, but at the end of the second year we were building, we had to build a new generator hut, build a generator hut not a new one, but a generator hut! So up to then we had, had twin cylinder Lister or two twin cylinder Lister for the main power, and a single cylinder one to supply power to the Magnetic Hut. And the idea was this new generator shed would house's a water cooled 3 cylinder electric starter Lister, and a chap came down gash hand I suppose, but he had, he had been something in construction anyway. So he knew how to use a theodolite, but he didn't have a surveyor's theodolite, all he had was a Met Office theodolite like we had for tracking balloons, but he adapted, but he used it anyway in one way and another to line up all the pillars, for the cross pieces for the foundations for the hut, and I thought that was very clever! How he did it, he must have had to stand on his head, because believe me a Met Office theodolite is nothing any other theodolite! That was innovative as well, so I don't know how much cement we mixed, I don't know?

[Part 2 0:25:13] Lee: What was your living accommodation like talk me through your hut?

Ibbotson: Well the dormitory it had a stove in it, but I think we were too afraid of carbon monoxide poisoning that we never lit it. [Lee: really?] Well it was never efficient and it did leak fumes and what have you, and there was nothing you could do about it, so we went to bed with sea boot stockings, duffle coats! And my bed was right next to a window and fortunately it had frozen over, because to start off the snow used to come and drift in, but eventually that melted and froze so I was windproof! But yes, it was cold you had to go really wrapped up, with duffles on and all the rest of it but it was comfortable no bother at all, no bother!

[Part 2 0:26:05] Lee: Hot water bottles?

Ibbotson: Oh no, we didn't have that luxury at all. You came in the back door on the left was the generator shed-room, on the right was the workshop in which there was a potbellied stove, which heated the water in the next room, on the next room on the right which was the bathroom, heated the water in a tank there. We had a tin bath, which Ron Tapp again plumbed in, instead of having to you know, so just pull the plug and it went out underneath the hut.

[Part 2 0:26:47] Lee: Where did it go to, it must have?

Ibbotson: It just evaporated outside it just went underneath the hut the hut was on pillars anyway, so that was alright.

[Part 2 0:26:55] Lee: Surely it would have frozen wouldn't it?

Ibbotson: Oh it froze yes, but I dare say it went out warm and it probably spread for a while, and anyway it never presented any problem, I know what you mean it would gradually build up and lift the hut up! [Ha-ha!] But it was only while whether, he did it the first or second year I can't remember? So we never had more than a year like or 6 months like because in the summer with all

the snow, the snow largely disappeared and the temperatures got up to into the teens up to about 10 Celsius 50 Fahrenheit something like that anyway.

[Part 2 0:27:31] Lee: So what did you do for water supply in the summer then?

Ibbotson: Well that's, this is it in the winter you went out and it was one of the jobs, and if it was your turn to have a bath you finished, and if you were sensible you cut blocks of snow and piled them outside the door of the hut. And you had your bath you went and filled the tank up again with these. In the summer the same was the case, the snow was very porous by then with melting snow, so if you lifted a block it could easily fall apart, so you usually left a trail of broken snow behind you, it was the same thing about the only thing you could do really.

[Part 2 0:28:17] Lee: But you had to go farther to get the snow, did you?

Ibbotson: Not too far actually, it built up quite a bit outside the hut, outside one of the doors, backdoor they called it and because that was the path down to our jetty and it built up to about 5 or 6 feet, so that kept us going and in the summer of course it was always replaced. [pause With a visitor at his house!?] But you were only talking about less than 6 months really, without any snow and so it built up, we lasted out anyway but it did get a bit border line at times. We could have got more, but it would have been the case of chopping some ice, rather than.

[Part 2 0:29:09] Lee: Was there a shower facility?

Ibbotson: No, as I say one of my other jobs I didn't share apart from the Meteorology, was I was quartermaster the first year, so Gerry used to give me the stock book of what he wanted for the week and I would go up and divi it out. And the only thing I was not allowed to touch was anything alcohol based! Because the Base Leader locked that away in his office and it never appeared except at his behest, so any party where the parties he said we could have and every week there would be your rations for the week, by the way of chocolate and beer and maybe cigarettes and if they were not gone by 11 o'clock at that night, you never saw them again! So he did not endear himself very much to the crew if you like.

[Part 2 0:30:18] Lee: Was this the first year or the second?

Ibbotson: The first year.

[Part 2 0:30:20] Lee: This was the RAF man wasn't it?

Ibbotson: Yeah, and the second year David Emerson coming in Base leader asked me to carry on and take control of everything, I think possibly in the first year the Base leader was worried that people would abuse the alcohol? The problem was, when he had a party put stuff out, they made up for it and more likely to over indulge, so for no particular physiotherapy of mine. I put out a bottle of each spirit and a crate of beer and at the end of the month it was virtually untouched! And if you came in after a particularly hard day, you could have a spontaneous party and relieve the atmosphere, it was the same as with the cigarettes. You had your ration of cigarettes previously and if you didn't and that was it, and so at the end of the first year we had built up a surplus of unused cigarettes and sometimes, we used to go down to the BGLE [Wordie] hut, where there was old tins of tobacco and toilet paper, and roll cigarettes out of toilet paper the people, the smokers were that desperate you know! But so again, they used to come in boxes of 10 tin's of 50 cigarettes and I think there were 3 brands, so I used to put, or 4 brands as I used to put 4 boxes out which is 2000 cigarettes and hardly touched! If you treat them like children, they'll behave like children!

[Part 2 0:32:05] Lee: Where were all these stores kept, were they outdoors or?

Ibbotson: There were upstairs in the loft and as I say, there was only one miscreant in the first year, who got a bit light fingered with the alcohol and who shall remain nameless! Other than that it was quite safe, as I say it used to go under the seats in the dining room, that's where the week's surplus were stored, so Gerry would give me a list and I'd get it all down and put it all away and what have you. Then of course at the end of the year, I had to make lists and sent it off to what we wanted to bring it up to stock for the next 18 months.

[Part 2 0:32:50] Lee: Were there some stores kept outside, did you ever dig things out of the snow?

Ibbotson: No, no well coal was, which was the bane of our lives!

[Part 2 0:33:00] Lee: Why was that?

Ibbotson: Well we had an indoor coal house, but it could only hold some much coal and the bags froze absolutely rock hard! And trying to open the sacks was bad enough, but then you had to try to separate the individual coals if you like to do it, it was a question of bringing the bags inside where the temperature was enough above freezing that they would thaw out. So that you could empty them out into the hole if you like, so that was somebody's job to keep the coal scuttles full, as well. And of course with the observations being 24 hours, every 3 hours you had a fire watch at night that served a dual purpose as well. Because was it Deception or Admiralty Bay that burned down?

[Part 2 0:33:56] Lee: Admiralty!

Ibbotson: Admiralty yeah, so as I say, sending in the orders it was 18 months supposedly that if anything went wrong and a ship couldn't get it at the end of the year, you only had 6 months supplies but with judicial rationing you could last out the year.

[Part 2 0:34:16] Lee: You mention going to the British Graham Land Expedition hut? [Ibbotson: Yes] What kind of condition was that in?

Ibbotson: Shambles! It was drifting snow had got inside it was virtually. We'd go inside during the summer, but nothing had been done to preserve it at all and as I say there was some sort of stuff, but I don't know if there was any food supplies there? But there was the tobacco I mentioned and the toilet paper and I can't believe the relics of 1935 the toilet paper, but it might have been I don't know!

[Part 2 0:34:50] Lee: Had they left anything else, books or clothing?

Ibbotson: No, it was stripped as far as that was concerned, nothing at all. I don't know how long the expedition was I imagine possibly a year, but at that time of course there was no fear's of anything happening down there, as I say part of the reason for FIDS was to deny Germans access to the bases or the land if you like. Though I think it was pre-war but they, I can't think what the ship was? The German naval vessel that went down there and it carried a flying boat, and they flew over the base or over Graham Land and dropped 100's of swastikas!

[Part 2 0:35:45] Lee: Did you ever see one of these? [Ibbotson: Eh?] Did you ever see one of these?

Ibbotson: No, no it had gone by then, this must have been pre-war, so by the time FIDS started up it was 10 years later? Nothing lasts long down there, 10 years you know, you think of flags they wouldn't last, they'd be in tatters and be gone then with all the wind and snow! Yeah, what they hoped to achieve, whether the swastikas were suppose to lay claim to Grahamland I don't know?

[Part 2 0:36:16] Lee: Did you ever feel any attachment or kindred-ship with the pioneering era of Scott and Shackleton?

Ibbotson: Well Shackleton is a hero of mine definitely!

[Part 2 0:36:26] Lee: Why is that?

Ibbotson: Well I read the book *Endurance* and that really sort of was imprinted on my mind, and down there I could imagine all that he had done you know, and getting icebound and what have you and then trekking out. It was just absolutely marvellous what he did I think really. I think Scott was weighed down by the, I'm not saying the wrong thing but by the scientific side of it, it's like Fuchs crossing the Antarctic he was not going to race Hilary because he was there to mount a scientific expedition really that's what, Scott was the same. So I think his mistake was trying to do the two things at once really! And he relied on modern equipment like tractors and what have you, whereas the tried and tested ones of Amundsen of dogs, so there we are.

[Part 2 0:37:33] Lee: When it began to be the time to think of leaving, what were you thinking about, what were your feelings?

Ibbotson: Well I knew, not so much at the time I mean to say I suppose excitement I can't say I was sorry to leave! Because you know my colleges Gerry and Ron were going at the same time, and was Roger Todd White in the same year I can't remember, I think he was yes. So it wasn't that so much, when we got to Montevideo I've got to question, I wish I hadn't I thought of that! Because Wally Herbert and a few others decided to disembark and work their way up through South America and on to North America, as I say in hindsight, well everything else that happened after that wouldn't have slotted into place for me, so I can't comment but I can see I think I would have enjoyed that? It never even occurred to me, and of course Wally went on to greater things didn't he!?

[Part 2 0:38:48] Lee: You came back out on the new *Biscoe*?

Ibbotson: Yes, yes the first trip voyage of the new *Biscoe*, and that was different again as I say on the *Shackleton* we had 2 to a cabin (oh, I'll forget that?) I'll tell you later on off air! And coming home we had single cabin, going down in a sense we worked our passage, as a meteorologist I did observations from the ship which were usually done by the deck officers. Coming back some of them did took over the steering wheel, helmsman and coming back we were you know indulged and we didn't have to do anything, just come back apart from crossing the line.

[Part 2 0:39:51] Lee: You had occasion to look out of the porthole once?

Ibbotson: Oh that, that was when we first joined the new *Biscoe* at base F to come home and I was allocated my cabin and I first went in and I thought I'll get some fresh air, and opened my porthole and stuck my head out and looked down the length of the ship and there a few cabins along, was another porthole and another head poking out and he turned to me and said, 'Have they locked you in as well?' And I understand afterwards, seemingly he'd flipped whether it was the isolation or something or other had got to him and just flipped, lovely bloke! But they had then for at least his own safety, they did then but they let him out, I don't remember later on I imagine they did under supervision, but at that time of course we everybody coming and going, you couldn't be sure he wouldn't do something silly?

[Part 2 0:40:55] Lee: What do you regard as being your key achievement in your years in the Antarctic?

Ibbotson: Surviving the 2 years that's one thing [Ha-ha!] Learning to ski the hard way! Making friends, change that word make it comrades which was a new experience even when I was in the RAF they were workmates, they were friends but it was a different thing altogether down there, you were comrades that's what I found? Anyway and I think that bore fruit in later life?

[Part 2 0:41:40] Lee: How do you mean?

Ibbotson: Well I like to think when I had staff under me, that I treated them as comrades rather than just part of the workforce?

[Part 2 0:41:52] Lee: So your man management skills where improved by your Antarctic experience?

Ibbotson: Definitely, definitely and I like to think that, that approach got the best out of them. You know I didn't really have to ask, if I suggesting something they'd do it and you'd get a volunteer just like that you know, so it certainly benefitted it changed me from a boy into a man! I like to think, put it that way from a youngster I came back a lot wiser I think.

[Part 2 0:42:26] Lee: So looking back over a substantial lifetime, how do the Antarctic years rate in your life?

Ibbotson: Something I've never regretted, a highlight in my career, it was THE highlight without a doubt! Let me see weather ships were alright, weather ships I still enjoyed but it was a job, but the Antarctic wasn't a job, it wasn't a job it was a paid holiday! (Ha-ha!) I like to think of it as that anyway.

[Part 2 0:42:56] Lee: Don't let BAS hear you say that! [Ha-ha!]

Ibbotson: Well of course they don't go down, they don't winter anymore!

[Part 2 0:43:04] Lee: How do you feel about the changes these days, it is completely different isn't it?

Ibbotson: Well Rothera, I think isn't it? [Lee: Yes] Is that the only one?

[Part 2 0:43:13] Lee: No Halley and Rothera! Well they are only small teams.

Ibbotson: Yeah, well I suppose if you like a lot of the work, the spade work was done when there was 11 bases! The focus has changed now, the surveying is over now it's all scientific and they might argue you've got to work on the day to day required so it makes sense to bring them back and let them do it in the UK. But I would like to think that all of them at some time got at least 1 winter in to see whether, I think they would maybe view it with a slightly different perspective if they wintered, I do. I think you know you can't say you've been to the Antarctic until you've wintered! I know it's an old rather hackneyed view, I think so anyway, but anyway they're still doing a sterling job, how many are there in BAS now, probably more now than when there was 11 bases, are there?

[Part 2 0:44:37] Lee: I don't know precisely, but I know there about 30 people winter across the 2 bases it's just keeping the bases going really. [note: This is not including Bird Is & SG]

Ibbotson: Well we had, the establishment was 11 and the first year we had 9 because we didn't have the 2 scientist's and that was the biggest base I think? With a full complement of 11, so if you said there was 11 bases and the average was about 8 so about 80 or 90 people.

[Part 2 0:45:14] Lee: It's been a great pleasure George thank you!

Ibbotson: Thank you, thank you! And I shall go and do a Google of IGY and I will go and do a Google of a few other things I think now! And I shall await with interest, with keen interest as you say some of it is archiveable, it is available already?

[Part 2 0:45:35] Lee: Let's just stop the recording!

Interesting extracts; Disc 1:

[Part 1 0:26:04] to [Part 1 0:28:16] Joe Farman joining the Antarctic swimming club and travelling alone on the sea ice, when he should have known better!

[Part 1 0:37:06] to [Part 1 0:40:44] Interesting talk about the cook Gerry Cutland [author of *Fit for a Fid* Antarctic recipe book] and the food he produced. And doing a meal for the *Biscoe*, with poor results!?

Interesting extracts; Disc 2:

[Part 2 0:01:04] to [Part 2 0:03:43] The radio programme beamed to the bases *Calling Antarctica* and some interesting messages!

[Part 2 0:5:50] to [Part 2 0:08:23] HRH Prince Phillips visit to the Argentine Islands.

[Part 2 0:12:22] to [Part 2 0:14:22] A visit to the Argentinians to borrow some fuel and then their visit to the British base afterwards.

[Part 2 0:20:40] to [Part 2 0:21:43] Old '78' records melted down for ski wax!

[Note: Any reference to the BGLE hut refers to Wordie House built in 1947 with the last winter there being 1953 at that period.]

