

RAY BERRY

Edited transcript a recording of Ray Berry interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on 8th of July, 2012. BAS archives AD26/24/1/182. Transcribed by John Zerfahs on 17th June, 2016.

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Ray Berry, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 8th of July 2012. Ray Berry, part 1.

Berry: The name is Raymond Arthur Berry, and the 28th. of 11, '29, 1929, and it was in Gillingham in Kent.

[Part 1 0:00:21] Lee: So how old are you now, 80..?

Berry: 82.

[Part 1 0:00:23] Lee: 82, ok. Would you say your father was an educated man?

Berry: No, sort of middle, not poorly educated but not well educated.

[Part 1 0:00:35] Lee: What did he do?

Berry: He was in the Royal Marines, he ended up as a Colour Sergeant.

[Part 1 0:00:43] Lee: Is there a long military history in the family?

Berry: Yes, I think the Royal Marines have been, people from the family have been in the Marines for a long time, yes, it's a family regiment really.

[Part 1 0:00:58] Lee: What was your schooling like?

Berry: Well of course interrupted by the war, and I went to an ordinary local school, and then very fortunately I went into a grammar school in Canterbury, not King's School but er, ??? [incomprehensible] went to, and I was there, throughout the war, saw half of it burnt down...

[Part 1 0:01:23] Lee: Really, what half the school?

Berry: Yeah, in the blitz, yes, and helped demolish part of it, and er, it was really exciting of course during the war for a young lad.

[Part 1 0:01:34] Lee: And dramatic as well?

Berry: Oh yes, wonderful, I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

[Part 1 0:01:38] Lee: Having your school burnt down must have been a bit disturbing, surely?

Berry: Well it was mainly the girls' section. [laughter]

[Part 1 0:01:44] Lee: Well that didn't matter then did it?

Berry: No it didn't, not at all, not at all. And then of course we had a barrage balloon in the playground, oh it was really great, and that was my first meeting with RAF personnel.

[Part 1 0:01:56] Lee: But was your dad actually away at the war?

Berry: No. He retired right on 1939, he'd done 20 odd years, and they said 'You've done enough, mate', 'cos he'd been through the First World War, and been in the Dardanelles and all sorts of terrible things, and they said 'Right, you can leave the service now, we don't need you again'. It was very fortunate because a lot of his friends were killed at Narvik, in the Norwegian campaign, so that was sad.

[Part 1 0:02:34] Lee: So were you, it's a classic image of lying back in the summer's heat watching the Battle of Britain going on overhead?

Berry: Absolutely! And it was so exciting. We didn't realise the death side of it, but obviously looking back on it we obviously saw a lot of people die in the sky.

[Part 1 0:02:55] Lee: Can you describe what you might have seen?

Berry: Well, one Sunday we saw what seemed like hundreds and hundreds of German bombers heading towards London, and ...

[Part 1 0:03:08] Lee: This is broad daylight?

Berry: Broad daylight, yes about 2 o' clock in the afternoon, and only about 3 or 4 came back two hours later, they'd all scattered and gone off in various directions, but that was the last daylight raid the Germans did.

[Part 1 0:03:25] Lee: They learnt their lesson did they?

Berry: They did, yes.

[Part 1 0:03:27] Lee: So were the British Spitfires in amongst them?

Berry: Oh yes, yes, but they'd varied spots, you know, one section of the country would be, anti-aircraft guns, and there would be a section balloons, and then there would be an overall area more out to sea I think for the fighters to have a go at them. And of course we had the radar stations, you know, the Chain Home Low, just near where we were which, 'course that was really why we won the Battle of Britain, 'cos we knew where their planes were at all times really, you know it wasn't hit and miss, we intercepted the German aircraft 'cos we knew exactly where they were, a tremendous advantage.

[Part 1 0:04:12] Lee: Yes, absolutely, yeah. And that stayed with you for the rest of your life, because I think you had mentioned on coming over just a few minutes ago you had quite an interest in aviation.

Berry: Yes, yes I do, 'cos National Service was 2 years in the RAF and actually working on aircraft as an engine fitter working on Dakotas, and they just finished the Berlin Airlift, that had just come to an end, and we worked on them planes, very near here actually Waterbeach and Bassingbourn, and I had a great time, loved every minute.

[Part 1 0:04:48] Lee: Did you go to the RAF straight from school?

Berry: Yes, I suppose I did, yes.

[Part 1 0:04:56] Lee: And that was where you learnt about fitting planes and ...

Berry: Yes that's right, engines and things, yes, and oh it was marvellous, I loved, I even liked the square bashing, [laughs], which is fairly unusual I think, but, no it's all good, all good, and that was a good grounding in practical skills. I mean before then the only practical things I done was Meccanos which lots of children did at that time, but to get your hands on actual aeroplanes with actual people who were actually flying is quite something.

[Part 1 0:05:33] Lee: Did you ever learn to fly yourself?

Berry: No. No. I would have liked to have done but, no it never sort of came my way. It was always expensive to learn, but, no it's, I was quite happy with what I did.

[Part 1 0:05:47] Lee: Now you went to the Antarctic as a meteorologist so was that, did you pick up any of that in the RAF?

Berry: No. No, I'd always wanted to go to the Antarctic. Just to backtrack a bit, some time in the final two years in the south (phonetic) being at school at the Langton they did a trip, a school holiday trip to Switzerland and during that trip, of course we had all sorts of exotic food which we'd never had throughout the war, but one of the things we did we went to the top of the Jungfrau on the railway, and I don't know whether you know what I'm talking about but you go up through the mountain in a tunnel and you come out right on the very, very top, and it was all white and blue and glaciers, and I thought 'It's so wonderful, I want more of this', so I thought 'Right, Antarctic, that's the ...'

[Part 1 0:06:42] Lee: So it was the scenery what got you?

Berry: Absolutely, well I don't know if you've ever done it, have you ever been up the Jungfrau?

[Part 1 0:06:48] Lee: No, but I have been to the Antarctic so I know what you mean. [laughter]

Berry: Well it's all blue and white but it's exactly the same, hot summer's day down at the bottom, but at the top you're in Antarctica.

[Part 1 0:07:00] Lee: That's quite an adventurous school trip wasn't it, in the post war years?

Berry: Yes. Yes.

[Part 1 0:07:04] Lee: Going across France.

Berry: Well as the train meandered across France every time we came to a bridge the railway line converted to a Bailey bridge and crept very slowly across it and then accelerated again the other side, so virtually every bridge was gone and just a temporary Bailey bridge, and lots of things like that stick in the memory don't they?

[Part 1 0:07:28] Lee: They do, yeah. Was the RAF a career then or was that just National Service?

Berry: National Service two years, yes.

[Part 1 0:07:35] Lee: What happened at the end of that?

Berry: Well, I thought Antarctic that's the thing I really want to do, and so I thought 'Right I'll join the Met Office get a job, which I know they'll want down there, and it'll increase my chances of being able to get there, by possibly 90, a 100 per cent'. And so I did four years in the RAF working in the Met Office, and I went to Uxbridge, you know the control centre for the whole of the air lanes over Britain, and then on down to an aerodrome near Southampton Eastleigh airport, and then to a small airport near me, doing observations and information for aircraft landing and taking off from the particular aerodrome I was stationed at.

[Part 1 0:08:24] Lee: So you were playing a long game were you?

Berry: Absolutely.

[Part 1 0:08:27] Lee: To get into FIDS?

Berry: Yes, yes.

[Part 1 0:08:29] Lee: Did you actually enjoy the meteorology?

Berry: Oh yes, it was quite good except fish and chips at 3 in the morning is not my idea of heaven [laughs].

[Part 1 0:08:39] Lee: I guess these are the night shifts?

Berry: Yes, terrible, terrible.

[Part 1 0:08:43] Lee: Had you had a previous interest in weather over and above the usual British conversation?

Berry: Oh yes, yes. I've always looked at the books with the pictures of clouds and, you know, the warm fronts and that sort of thing I was always interested in that. I think I gave the impression to the training, the training we had in London for the

meteorology, I think I gave them the impression I was quite well up in it but, that's why I went to Uxbridge but I didn't last very long at Uxbridge.

[Part 1 0:09:13] Lee: How do you mean?

Berry: Well that was the control centre and it was very important that the weather was super duper, and every quarter of an hour information used to flood in by teleprinter to be sort of annotated and decoded for the flight controllers to read, and that was horrendous ten minutes of work and then nothing for another ten minutes, and then a horrendous ten minutes of work when everything went mad, you know the miles of punched tape shot at you and you had to feed that into – oh, it's just a crazy, crazy atmosphere.

[Part 1 0:09:54] Lee: So this information was coming from other weather stations...

Berry: All round Britain.

[Part 1 0:09:58] Lee: Right, and was it arriving in telex's or?

Berry: Yeah telex then onto punched tape.

[Part 1 0:10:03] Lee: In morse?

Berry: Yes, I suppose so.

[Part 1 0:10:05] Lee: In code?

Berry: Well some sort of code, and the, I mean the people that had been in the Met Office a long time could actually read the punched tape, I'm afraid I never mastered that [laughs], they were very clever and obviously well practised really, and they could read punched tape but, oh it was interesting but as I say after a couple of months' trial I went down to Southampton where the pace was a bit slower and enjoyed that down there.

[Part 1 0:10:37] Lee: So had you calculated it to be four years for the Met Office then you'd be ideal for BAS?

Berry: Absolutely, yes.

[Part 1 0:10:43] Lee: Right. And just going back a bit about your interest in the Antarctic, apart from the scenery were you also, had you read about some of the heroes?

Berry: Yes, I'd read the books you know there's Scott and Shackleton and Amundsen and, that was, I found that very exciting, interesting but it was that, the sight of the blue and the white from the top of that mountain that really grabbed me, I thought ??? [inaudible].

[Part 1 0:11:15] Lee: So the national heroes weren't necessarily your national heroes or was Shackleton somebody you especially ??? [incomprehensible]?

Berry: Oh my yes, that comes later when you get the finer points of the stories and who you believe an' who you don't believe, that sort of gradually comes that Shackleton's a bit of a hero, and of course after a while we visited, I did visit South Georgia where he is buried and that all brings it more to life doesn't it?

[Part 1 0:11:44] Lee: Ok, you're unusual amongst Fids 'cos most Fids just happened to spot an advert in the paper, and think 'Oh I'll have a go at that', whereas you actually had a game plan, didn't you?

Berry: Oh yes.

[Part 1 0:11:53] Lee: So when you applied, which would be 1951?

Berry: '50, early '50, yes.

[Part 1 0:11:59] Lee: 1950. Ok. Were you responding to an advert or did you just write to BAS?

Berry: I just wrote just...

[Part 1 0:12:06] Lee: To FIDS.

Berry: Yes, applied to join.

[Part 1 0:12:11] Lee: And what was the response?

Berry: Yeah, got called in to interview, and 'course that was a bit daunting that was the first interview, and I think the only interview I've ever done for a job, and I thought 'Oh dear I've done terribly here and it's no good and it's hopeless', and they said 'Yes, you're in', I was absolutely amazed.

[Part 1 0:12:30] Lee: What do you remember of the day, the interview day?

Berry: Going up to London and, near the Houses of Parliament near ???
[incomprehensible] I think it was, something like that in the Crown Agents upstairs, all very official, you know great long table and people sitting behind it, which were obviously Frank, and ...

[Part 1 0:12:49] Lee: Jack Elliot.

Berry: ... Johnny Green, and Frank Elliot, yes, and Johnny Green and, don't know who the other ??? [inaudible].

[Part 1 0:12:54] Lee: Was Sir Vivian there?

Berry: No.

[Part 1 0:12:56] Lee: Vivian Fuchs?

Berry: No, don't think so.

[Part 1 0:12:59] Lee: And, did you get the feeling this was a testing interview or was it just a kind of formality?

Berry: No it was testing I think. But I mean I'd no experience, I had no coaching what to expect at an interview, and I couldn't sort of gauge what impact, or what sort of impact I should aim for, I had no previous experience or knowledge of interviews I was completely green and just said what I thought at the time.

[Part 1 0:13:30] Lee: Do you remember any of the conversation, it's a long time ago...

Berry: No, I don't remember.

[Part 1 0:13:34] Lee: No, ok, 60 years ago. So, did they offer you the job then, there and then?

Berry: I think it came in the post, just a day or two later, I'm not too certain about that. Yes I think it came later.

[Part 1 0:13:52] Lee: How did you break the news to your parents that you were going to go to the Antarctic for two years?

Berry: I just said 'I've got it! I've got it!' [Laughter]. No, I was overjoyed and they seemed pleased so, they knew I wanted, it was about time I did my own thing rather than, 'cos life was very, you know I'd been to school, been at home living at home and then in the RAF every minute of your life's controlled by other people up to that point, and this was really the first big decision I've ever made in my life.

[Part 1 0:14:25] Lee: It was a big one, wasn't it?

Berry: Yes, yes, yes.

[Part 1 0:14:29] Lee: Did you have a at any point have any collywobbles or regrets, or...?

Berry: No, never, no I didn't, just the thing.

[Part 1 0:14:38] Lee: Well there was quite a gap between you getting the job and you actually going south wasn't there?

Berry: Yes, it would have been eight or nine months I suppose.

[Part 1 0:14:44] Lee: How was that filled?

Berry: Well I was still in the Met Office of course, still going to work, I worked up to the last minute and then caught the boat at Southampton.

[Part 1 0:14:55] Lee: In the autumn of '52?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:14:58] Lee: In the meantime I gather you actually managed to get to the Festival of Britain?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:15:02] Lee: What was that like?

Berry: Oh tremendous. I could remember quite clearly walking along the Embankment and seeing the Skylon and the Shot Tower and all those things over the water and then walking across the bridge at Charing Cross station there probably, and going up these various things up the Shot Tower, and that was interesting, 'cos they had a radar dish on the top of the Shot Tower which was picking up thunderstorms all over Europe, and that was a thing that was actually working all the time, and you could see the great chain of thunderstorms over the erm...

[Part 1 0:15:45] Lee: Channel?

Berry: No, over the - what's the mountains that separate Spain and France, the...?

[Part 1 0:15:51] Lee: Pyrenees.

Berry: Pyrenees, yeah, Pyrenees is always thunderstorms, and it be brilliant to see this great map and these thunderstorms sparkling up.

[Part 1 0:16:00] Lee: So was this coming up on one of those green sweep type screens that you see in the Second World War films?

Berry: That's right, yes, that's right on the map, but it was impressive display, and of course the forerunner of what's watched every day now, isn't it?

[Part 1 0:16:14] Lee: So even then you were heading, when you got to the Festival of Britain you headed for the meteorological stands.

Berry: Yes, yes.

[Part 1 0:16:19] Lee: I think FIDS had an exhibition didn't they?

Berry: I don't know, I didn't, I can't remember it.

[Part 1 0:16:24] Lee: Weren't there some huskies there?

Berry: Possibly, yeah, but the only other thing I remember is seeing all the brand new designs of, you know irons and teapots and electric kettles and toasters and things all impressive designs.

[Part 1 0:16:38] Lee: All those things you weren't going to get for the next two years.

Berry: Yes, and then of course I think it was the Coronation Scot, a great big steam engine, in the middle of it as well, it could have been the, one of the top notch steam engines was on display there as well, 'course I love steam engines, don't we all?

[Part 1 0:17:02] Lee: No, there was, the Antarctic and the er, FIDS had an exhibition there as well including Darkie, Sir Vivian Fuchs's husky was on display, and I've got a, one of the Fids I interviewed some while ago he was here this weekend, has got a photograph of huskies and sledge going down the Chelsea Road, as part of a, no the Embankment as part of a prelude to the Festival. So you were proud of Britain were you?

Berry: Oh yes.

[Part 1 0:17:28] Lee: And couldn't wait to leave! [Laughter]

Berry: Well.

[Part 1 0:17:33] Lee: Did they give you any kind of training in that gap between being selected and departing, any health and safety training or?

Berry: Health and safety, what's that? No, no, nothing like that, no, not really. I suppose they must have gathered from the interview that I was, would be quite happy outside, you know, I was an outdoors type.

[Part 1 0:17:55] Lee: Outdoors boy.

Berry: Yes, yes, I don't know, but ...

[Part 1 0:18:00] Lee: So had you done mountaineering or that kind of thing?

Berry: No, plenty of walking and cycling, always been, tennis, always been active in physical activities, not a sedentary person.

[Part 1 0:18:14] Lee: So the big day came you were in Southampton looking for the *Biscoe*, which wasn't easy to spot, was it?

Berry: No, it was almost out of sight at low tide. You could easily overlook it, it was a tiny, tiny ship, but oh it was great, to get on board and see where we'd be. I think my parents came down with me and marvelled at the bunk I would have and all this sort of thing, I seem to remember vaguely that, but no it was nice to meet the other fellas that were going for the first time, and sort of chum up with them, and as chance would have it there was somebody at the met station where I'd been working last, picked up that I was going and he'd applied and got taken on as well, so I had a chum, a friend.

[Part 1 0:19:03] Lee: Who was that?

Berry: Brian Kemp, from Ashford nearby, and he went down to Hope Bay.

[Part 1 0:19:14] Lee: Would you have known at that point which base you were going to be sent to?

Berry: No.

[Part 1 0:19:17] Lee: That came later did it?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:19:20] Lee: They normally tell people at Falkland I think didn't they?

Berry: Yes I think so, yes they did, yes.

[Part 1 0:19:25] Lee: So how was the journey south because the *Biscoe* is not the best sailing ship in the world?

Berry: No. The first trip out I was a bit seasick, but it didn't bother me too much, you know it wasn't a complete disaster, but it was excruciatingly hot in the tropics, and most people slept on deck, and of course the spot I chose to sleep was directly under the outlet of the captain's bath [laughter], so in the middle of the night, it seemed in the middle of the night I got a douche of bathwater [laughter].

[Part 1 0:20:05] Lee: Oh that was not so good.

Berry: It was all good fun, but er no I sort of moved my position a couple of metres and it was ok after that. No we slept on deck in the tropics because it got terribly hot of course, because there was no air-conditioning or anything like that, and we had the meat from the freezer of the *Biscoe* used to hang outside, where our bunks were, defrosting, and so you get great sides of beef swinging as the ship rolled and just zooming past the end of your bunk [laughter], which is not the best of circumstances.

[Part 1 0:20:42] Lee: You also got nightly invasions of fish didn't you?

Berry: Yes, flying fish used to come on board occasionally, yeah, at night, and of course it's wonderful to see the things, flying fish you've read about them in books, but when you actually saw them skimming the water, it's quite amazing really, something I'd never expected I'd ever see - flying fish, wow! You know that's something else, but of course when you're on a small boat, right down close to the water you get a really good view of these things, and the dolphins playing round the bow of the ship, we used to get up on the bow and look down and see the dolphins scooting ahead, wonderful really.

[Part 1 0:21:24] Lee: So did any of these creatures end up in the kitchen?

Berry: Yes, we used to have the occasional flying fish fried for breakfast, and er, oh it was lovely.

[Part 1 0:21:33] Lee: Were you cooking?

Berry: No, no, we had a cook. How he managed when the ship was in rough water I don't know but he always produced hot food, a long serving chap possibly from the Navy, a Navy cook that really knew his stuff. How he survived in the galley I'll never know, it was just incredible conditions, heat in the tropics, and then rolling and swaying around crossing the Roaring Forties and Fifties, it must have been horrendous, but the guy was absolutely magic with his pots and pans.

[Part 1 0:22:11] Lee: Were you having to kind of work your passage, and did you have duties?

Berry: We used to chip paint sometimes on the deck, and holystoning, rubbing these brick things up and down the planking to make it nice and white, just to keep us busy really I think, and then we had some huskies on board, which we were taking south, and pups, little husky pups, so we used to make a fuss of those, and painting, painting the anchor white, you know, the old in the forces idea 'If it doesn't move paint it', it was the same thing on the *Biscoe*. And of course we had Captain Johnston in charge.

[Part 1 0:22:51] Lee: Bill Johnston.

Berry: Bill Johnston.

[Part 1 0:22:52] Lee: What did you make of him?

Berry: Oh, terrific, what a guy. He always appeared to be doing absolutely nothing, until there was trouble [chuckles], and then he was there. But, oh a wonderful chap, he conveyed the right sort of atmosphere, you know the right, when we were in danger, at one time the ship began to ice up, and that's really serious when you get an accumulation of ice above the waterline, the ship can eventually the ship can roll over, and he was cool and calm and got everybody out to the deck hacking at it, and we survived you know that's partly down to him, to a big part.

[Part 1 0:23:40] Lee: So he was a seasoned operator was he?

Berry: Yes, yes, he gave that impression anyway, I'm sure he was.

[Part 1 0:23:45] Lee: Ok. Where did you call on the way?

Berry: I got mixed memories because I did four trips to and fro altogether. The usual first call was, the first landfall was going past Madeira, which is a beautiful island to look at from the sea, and on from there the next port of call would be Cape Verde islands where we'd get fuel, more fuel, and from there the next port of call was St. Paul Rocks, which are just jagged rocks sticking up out of the middle of the Atlantic, which are a navigational point really, there's nothing there but just black rock.

[Part 1 0:24:31] Lee: No people?

Berry: No, nobody just the waves dashing over them, and then from there one trip we went into Rio de Janeiro 'cos there was a strike in Montevideo, so that was a wonderful unexpected port of call, we spent two or three nights there, then Montevideo next, and other trips on the *Biscoe* I even managed to get to Punta

Arenas, where of course you must kiss Magellan's toe. He's got, there's a statue of Magellan in Punta Arenas and all travellers are requested to kiss his toe, so to make sure you come back, or make sure you never come back, I'm not quite sure [laughter] which it is.

[Part 1 0:25:15] Lee: And the Falklands, I guess, as well?

Berry: Oh yes, into the Falklands, yes.

[Part 1 0:25:19] Lee: So, I mean the Falklands was pretty undeveloped in 1952 wasn't it?

Berry: Yes, no airport of any sort. There were, they did have some Argentinian young people land a plane on the race course.

[Part 1 0:25:36] Lee: Oh yes? A time warp.

Berry: The sort of first glimmers of invasion really. But they couldn't take off again, and no other plane ever attempted it. I think it sort of partly crashed. I don't know the final, but I know some people from Argentina did fly.

[Part 1 0:25:57] Lee: Were you there at the time?

Berry: No. It was a year or two before.

[Part 1 0:26:00] Lee: I see.

Berry: But in a way no airport was the salvation of the Falklands, at that point.

[Part 1 0:26:08] Lee: How do you mean?

Berry: It couldn't be invaded. So in a manner of speaking it was a bit of a bad step to build an airport in some respects because it meant that once anybody had gained control of it, it was open for invasion.

[Part 1 0:26:29] Lee: They were worth invading, weren't they?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:26:34] Lee: Paint me a little thumbnail sketch of Stanley in '52.

Berry: It only had one stretch of proper concrete road, and that had been put in for Prince Philip, and that was a hundred yards long, and er, a tiny town, like a very small Cornish fishing village sort of thing. Corrugated iron roofs, wooden panel buildings, a little cathedral with whale jaw bones outside, which used to be on all the stamps, and the jetties all ended in hulks of windjammers that had been dismantled going round Cape Horn. The old windjammers used to go round Cape Horn and some made it and some didn't of course, and if they were badly damaged they would limp into Port Stanley, and they would be too expensive to repair and they would just stay there rotting, and they were used as storage and jetty endings and that sort of thing in the

harbour, and of course that's what's happened eventually to the S.S. Great Britain, you know, good ship ended up for a long time in the harbour, and then finally taken round to Sparrow Cove.

[Part 1 0:27:57] Lee: Oh right so from the harbour to Sparrow Cove where she was dumped effectively?

Berry: Yes, just about a couple of miles.

[Part 1 0:28:02] Lee: Yeah. We all know where she is now of course.

Berry: Yes!

[Part 1 0:28:05] Lee: In Bristol.

Berry: Yes, great.

[Part 1 0:28:08] Lee: Whilst you were in Stanley you would have been a) briefed about where you were going, did you know what Signy Island was, when you were told you were going...?

Berry: Deception first.

[Part 1 0:28:16] Lee: Oh, Deception, I beg your pardon.

Berry: Yeah, and, yes we were sort of told, I think everybody just accepted that they were where they were going. Really it was all unknown, so we had no idea particularly, any particular details for each place, and we generally thought of them as being all the same, just a little hut somewhere. But, of course, when you got to know the various dispositions of them you began to realise that some were slightly better than others, [chuckles], but that came later.

[Part 1 0:28:48] Lee: You were kitted up as well. Can you remember what kit you were given?

Berry: Yes. Long woollen drawers, underwear, that was originally issued for submariners in submarines of course, and woolly jumpers and windproof tops and trousers and lumberjack boots, (what else did we have?), nice woolly gloves...

[Part 1 0:29:12] Lee: Hats?

Berry: Hats, yes. Mukluks, the sort of furry eskimo type boots that really would keep you warm when it really got cold. For the time it was a reasonable equipment.

[Part 1 0:29:29] Lee: Was this still ex-army mainly at that time?

Berry: Bits and pieces of it were, yes, bits and pieces. No, it was all quite good kit, but of course nothing like what you get now ??? [incomprehensible].

[Part 1 0:29:46] Lee: So there you were sailing off to Deception, with your image of the Swiss hills and mountains in your mind...

Berry: Yes! [chuckles].

[Part 1 0:29:54] Lee: ...and you couldn't have ended up anywhere more different, could you?

Berry: No, no it was all black [laughter], no white, hardly any white.

[Part 1 0::] Lee: So what were your feelings at that point, Ray?

Berry: Well I wasn't downcast, I mean I sort of, on the way to Deception we'd passed, we'd gone close to other bases, we'd gone to Hope Bay, called in there and got people off, and at Admiralty Bay we got, it all looked proper Antarctic, but Deception looked so different it being a black volcano, and really relatively recent in geological terms, and with quite a bit of snow and ice on it, but of course the impression was mainly black ash. But, oh it was great, I sort of really looked forward to it there, and I was quite happy.

[Part 1 0:30:47] Lee: What did you see once you got through the Bellows, Neptune's Bellows?

Berry: Well the ruins of the whaling station, and then the nice, really well preserved Norwegian hut that was going to be our base hut, and really our hut at Deception was far better than the other ones, the sort of purpose made ones at Hope Bay, Admiralty Bay and Lockroy were quite primitive looking buildings really, just like two or three beach huts together, but the nice hut that we had from the whaling station was excellent, great thick walls full of sawdust, that was full insulation, and a nice dormitory upstairs, it was good. I was pleased with that, and of course an inexhaustible supply of timber for me to practise the carpentry on.

[Part 1 0:31:36] Lee: Yeah I was interested in this, you obviously had a passion for Barry Bucknell type activities did you?

Berry: Oh yes. Barry Bucknell, that's history!

[Part 1 0:31:43] Lee: That's later than this, isn't it? So where were you getting your raw materials from?

Berry: From the old whaling station. It all had been sort of pushed over and messed about a bit over the years since the whalers had abandoned it.

[Part 1 0:31:58] Lee: Was it well preserved wood or was it...?

Berry: Yes! Oh yes, and very high quality, no knots and beautiful Norwegian timber. No it was an inexhaustible supply of stuff, and I very soon had a workshop down in the old whaling station, with a Yukon stove, which I stacked up with timber and got glowing red hot during the winter months, and, oh it was great. And we'd picked up a pig, a little piglet in Port Stanley, yes, the radio operator had this brainy idea, and

bought this little piglet, and he made a little pigsty for it in the old whaling station, and fattened it up for Christmas.

[Laughter]

[Part 1 0:32:42] Lee: What else did you make with your endless supply of Norwegian timber?

Berry: Well there was always odd jobs to do around the billet, round the main place we lived, and there were repairs, shelving, carpentry, I'd make things, I'd sort of built a little slipway for the dinghy, dinghy maintenance I would do that sort of thing, varnishing up the dinghy, making sure the Seagull outboard motors behaved, 'cos they were desperately temperamental, though quite often we chugged out into the bay when it wasn't iced over, and it would be quite difficult to get the motor going again if you stopped it, and things like that. So maintenance mainly with the dinghies, the various trips we did on the water in the centre of Deception Island.

[Part 1 0:33:36] Lee: So where did you learn all the maintenance skills, 'cos you weren't the DEM were you?

Berry: No, but I mean in the RAF I picked up handiness with tools and engines and stuff, there'd always been, an interest, I'd always helped me dad tinker with his car, so I was ok with engines and that sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:33:56] Lee: Most carpenters end up building the base bar, did you have that fate?

Berry: No, no, but all the bases I went to had their own bar which was quite sufficient.

[Part 1 0:34:09] Lee: What about the met work then, that's why you were there...

Berry: Yes, yes.

[Part 1 0:34:12] Lee: ...and I'm intrigued to know why it was so important at Deception, I can see why it was important later when flying began, but why was met observations at Deception so important before flying began?

Berry: It was probably all part of maintaining our claim to the land. We sort of claimed the Grahamland Peninsula, we sort of claimed that was part of the Empire so to speak, part of the Falkland Dependencies, and part of the claim was bolstered by having stamps, having a J.P. on the base, base leader was the J.P. as well, and then doing met observations was all part of the general appearance that this was British ground.

[Part 1 0:34:58] Lee: Oh right, I realise if you started surveying the island you kind of gained a stronger grip on it, but I hadn't realised that keeping meteorological records also had the same effect.

Berry: Absolutely anything that you could do that could patently, conceivably bolster the thing was done. I mean the Argentines even had the first birth, they took a

pregnant lady to their base, and had the first baby in Antarctica, so that was for their claim, it was all a bit silly really. The Chileans claimed it as well, so three countries, Argentina, Chile and Great Britain in the Falklands claimed that particular bit of ground, and all did their best to, cheaply as possible, [laughter], to keep their flag flying.

[Part 1 0:35:49] Lee: In that case does that mean that you didn't need to take the met observations too seriously?

Berry: Oh no. No, we were trained meteorologists so we did it properly. Yeah. We actually got up at three in the morning.

[Part 1 0:36:01] Lee: You did?

Berry: We didn't cook it up at nine the next day. [laughter]

[Part 1 0:36:08] Lee: The very suggestion is suspicious, Ray.

[Laughter]

[Part 1 0:36:12] Lee: So tell me about the daily routine of met observations in Deception.

Berry: Every four hours, every three hours, sorry, right through the whole twenty four hours so obviously midnight, three in the morning, six and so on, and you do wind speed, air pressure, temperature, dew point and dry bulb, so you could work out how humid the atmosphere was, and cloud cover, whether the pressure was going up or down and rising and falling, the proper meteorological coded message was put together.

[Part 1 0:36:54] Lee: Were you sending up balloons at this point?

Berry: Yes, but just for wind direction which we'd follow with a small theodolite. We didn't do that too often because it was quite often cloudy in Deception, so we couldn't follow it very often. But later on we did proper radio sonde at Argentine Islands. We took the weather observing very seriously, 'cos there was three of us doing it, so we could have time off from it, it wasn't, we did it two days on and one day off I think, and it wasn't unduly arduous and we had plenty of time for skiing and walking and hill walking, a bit of mountaineering using the ice axe for the first time, photography 'cos of the bird life is fantastic, photographing everything that moved.

[Part 1 0:37:46] Lee: Did you have a darkroom?

Berry: Yes. Yeah we used to do our own developing and printing. I'm not sure I ever really mastered printing [laughter], it's quite a mysterious art, for printing the photograph. But, no, we had all the equipment that we'd need for that. I just bought a ??? [incomprehensible] posh camera in Port Stanley, spent a whole year's salary on it [laughs].

[Part 1 0:38:09] Lee: The number of times I've heard somebody say that – must be a very good camera shop in Stanley.

Berry: Oh yeah.

[Part 1 0:38:15] Lee: What was happening to the recordings, weather recordings you were making, who was getting them?

Berry: Well they were sent, I think there were two periods in the day when we ran the generators and the radio transmitter was working, we had a wireless operator who would, using morse code would send the messages to Port Stanley where they were collected, and what they would do with them I wouldn't know. Course later on all that sort of thing was collected in a world-wide network, moment by moment. No, they were sent off properly, and there would be other morse messages for the running of the base ordering up new supplies, and the wireless operator was a very important job really, and we had some wonderful, highly skilled wireless operators, people that had been trained during the war, and he was absolutely master at the morse code, and they were really great guys in the main, the wireless ops.

[Part 1 0:39:18] Lee: Did you ever forecast the weather as well?

Berry: No. No, that was, that would have come later I suppose when the aircraft got more and more used, but there were no aircraft there, while I was down South there were no aircraft, so that came a bit later.

[Part 1 0:39:36] Lee: What else were you able to do, I mean you were out skiing did you take the dogs out much?

Berry: It used to be a full time job feeding them, because we had to catch seals, kill seals for dog food, and they were fed four pounds of meat every other day, nothing else, just a great hunk of seal meat, skin and bone and the whole lot, and that was quite a job that, initially, one thought 'Ah, I don't want to do this'...

[Part 1 0:40:11] Lee: What killing seals?

Berry: Yes. But it's sad to say a person got used to it, because everybody sort of mucked in and there was never any thought of, 'Oh, I'm not going to do that' sort of thing, we all did what was required of us and occasionally we went out in the dinghy, or went out over the sea ice and killed a seal. And of course we had to build up a stock for the winter, which was when the great, frozen heap during the really cold mid-winter period, that could be quite an arduous job to pull the carcass out, saw it up with a great big double-handed saw, and then feed it to the dogs every other day.

[Part 1 0:40:55] Lee: So it was fed to the dogs frozen was it?

Berry: Yes. Yes.

[Part 1 0:40:59] Lee: The dogs had to gnaw away?

Berry: They loved it [laughter], they really looked forward to it. And of course the dogs were fantastic.

[Part 1 0:41:06] Lee: Well were you actually using them as a team of huskies or...?

Berry: No, just great pals, you always made a fuss of them, and went out and rolled around on the snow with them and stuff.

[Part 1 0:41:17] Lee: Really?

Berry: Yes, oh yes, they ??? [incomprehensible]. There was only one occasion when I heard that somebody had been bitten by a huskie, and that was when he was rolling around on the snow with this particular friendly huskie, and he playfully bit the huskie's ear [laughter], and the dog immediately bit his lip [laughter]. But that's the only occasion, they were absolutely harmless to human beings, but they would sort of fight to the death with each other, or any penguin that happened to stray too near, that would be a gonner immediately.

[Part 1 0:41:59] Lee: Was there any kind of organised breeding programme, or was it just mother nature?

Berry: Some of the bases I think they had, Hope Bay, I think they had breeding going on, and of course the reason we had huskies at the other bases was to store, to keep, somewhere to keep the spare huskies as they were, the spare teams, because they couldn't all be kept at Hope Bay. We must have had ten or twelve teams of dogs, so that they obviously they couldn't stay all at one base, even though at that time they were only needed at one base for sledge dogs. So they were shifted around during the summer months on the boat, as required, to Hope Bay for the mapping teams, mapping sledge journeys. So that was the, that was what was going on really with the dogs.

[Part 1 0:42:51] Lee: What was daily life on the base like were you, presumably you all had to muck in together, I forget how many there were of you eight or nine?

Berry: No seven.

[Part 1 0:42:57] Lee: Seven.

Berry: Yes. No we all had to live, we all did a week of cooking, which was a ...

[Part 1 0:43:04] Lee: How did you take to that, 'cos that was new to you wasn't it?

Berry: Yes, yes I'd never done it, but I loved it, I didn't mind it at all. It was a week when I could concentrate on one thing and really put my mind to it, and I produced rolls, cakes, buns, all sorts of things.

[Part 1 0:43:20] Lee: Baking things.

Berry: Yes, oh yes ??? [incomprehensible] you had to make a loaf, you had to make bread, no we had everything, all dried of course, but it was all eatable, passable,

especially in our hungry state. But no it was a challenge, which I quite liked. I mean occasionally somebody would hate it, but they would still do it, you didn't let anybody off their week, you had to do a week, week on cooking.

[Part 1 0:43:56] Lee: Was there any evidence of the volcanic nature of the island whilst you were there?

Berry: Yes. The hot springs were bubbling away on the beach all the time.

[Part 1 0:44:04] Lee: Did you take advantage of those.

Berry: You could say that, yes.

[Part 1 0:44:10] Lee: How could I say it?

Berry: Well, it seems an obvious thing to say if you don't mind my saying so, but I tried a paddle, I could see the hot water coming up out of the sand and I thought 'Right, I'll have a paddle round here', took me shoes and socks off, rolled up my trousers and strolled into the water, and of course I was immediately severely burnt in a tiny narrow band round my calf, and the rest of the water was freezing cold because the hot water that's bubbling up is settling out into a narrow layer on the top of the water, and it wasn't stirred up. So although it was hot...

[Part 1 0:44:49] Lee: So it was inverted though with hot water on the top?

Berry: Yes. You had a quarter of an inch of hot, very hot, and the rest was absolutely freezing [laughter], so it's 'Oh, I won't try that again!'

[Part 1 0:45:04] Lee: I think later bases kind of took a spade or something and mixed the water up first.

Berry: Yeah, quite possibly yeah, we never thought of it. It's quite surprising when you talk to people that have been to the same base as you have, either before or after, the different things that people thought of doing, you never thought of, other things we did think they never did, it's quite surprising how each year when the change took place although there would be people that stayed over from previous times you didn't exactly pick up where the previous people had left off. I later found out that on Deception there were tunnels that you could walk under the snow, under the ice where the snow was melted out, where it touched the ground, and I was over the top never saw them, never saw, never had no idea there was anything like that. Although, on the other hand we used to climb over the rim of the crater and go and get penguin eggs, other years they didn't do that. So it was quite surprising how clean cut the difference was between one year and another.

[Part 1 0:46:16] Lee: So you're not reading the previous year's base reports then...

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:46:18] Lee: You were?

Berry: Oh yes.

[Part 1 0:46:20] Lee: But I guess that kind of stuff that didn't get into the reports?

Berry: No.

[Part 1 0:46:22] Lee: That's why we're doing this interview now.

Berry: Oh, right.

[Part 1 0:46:26] Lee: Apart from the endless supply of Norwegian timber were there any other relics of the whaling industry that came in handy.

Berry: Yes, the gunpowder.

[Part 1 0:46:34] Lee: The gunpowder [chuckles], gunpowder, go on.

Berry: Anyway, we used to have wonderful explosions, and occasionally we'd load a sledge up with seven or eight boxes of gunpowder and push it around on the flat snow surface a mile or two up the beach from the base laying a long trail of gunpowder and then perhaps a diesel drum upended over two or three cases at the far end and then we'd retreat, I mean the trail of gunpowder to the explosives site was two hundred yards, three hundred yards long so we had plenty of time to retreat [laughter] to a safe point, and then we'd leg it up the nearest cliff and watch, and of course you get a curtain of fire tracking along through the snow from the trail, the curtain of fire would be about twelve, fifteen foot high roaring along, and then it would disappear and you'd think 'Oh, it's gone out' as it went under the drum, and then there'd be a pause and a great big bang, and a huge cloud of smoke and then the diesel drum would appear about two hundred foot, three hundred feet up sailing up out of the top of the cloud. It was all great fun, we'd all cheer like mad and go back to the base.

[Part 1 0:47:52] Lee: Is this November the 5th. or Midwinter?

Berry: Oh any time we felt cheering up. There must have been three or four tons of gunpowder on the beach in various scows, the various wooden barges that the Norwegians had left behind. There were other mysterious things in it, in these barges like detonators and things but we carefully steered clear of those, because we thought they might be dangerous.

[Part 1 0:48:19] Lee: Were there neighbours by this time, were there Argentinians on the island?

Berry: Yes they were about six, seven miles away.

[Part 1 0:48:26] Lee: What did they make of these sudden..?

Berry: Oh, we never heard.

[Part 1 0:48:29] Lee: Oh, right. Did you ever have anything to do with them?

Berry: Yes, [incomprehensible], on my second summer, just before I was changing bases the Norwegians [sic – meant Argentinians] appeared and built a little hut, a rescue hut, very, very close to the Biscoe House, about a hundred yards away, and we thought it was far too close so we radioed Port Stanley and told them what was going on, and as far as I was aware that was the end of it but a couple of, six weeks later a navy frigate appeared with a load of Marines on board, and they surrounded this little building at six in the morning, and they picked up a policeman from Port Stanley, the only policeman in Port Stanley, and he walked up the steps of this building and knocked on the door and said ‘I am arresting you in the name of Queen of England’ sort of thing, and we’ve arrested these three Argentinian Navy men inside, and the hut was knocked down and burnt by the Marines. And it was quite exciting and we had a little squad of Marines based in the hut with us for the rest of that summer.

[Part 1 0:49:40] Lee: What to protect you?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:49:41] Lee: Against any retaliation?

Berry: That’s right, and we used to have periodic visits by various frigates. The *Snipe* went off straight away with the three prisoners who were taken to South Georgia, and handed over to the Argentinian whaling station that was operating there then, and later on we had a visit from *Bigbury Bay* and various frigates, they’d come in and see how we’re getting on and see how the Marine squad that they left behind was getting on.

[Part 1 0:50:10] Lee: So if the three Argentinians in your observation hut were they part of the Argentinian base elsewhere in Deception?

Berry: I think they were navy personnel.

[Part 1 0:50:19] Lee: Ah, right. Ok, so they were just being cheeky really?

Berry: Yes, but Churchill was Prime Minister at the time so ??? [incomprehensible].

[Part 1 0:50:29] Lee: What about this poor policeman, he was a long way from his beat wasn’t he?

Berry: He was, yeah I mean he couldn’t have had any idea what his reception would be, waking these, I mean he could have been shot or anything if they’d have been trigger happy. It was quite a tricky moment. But the hut was surrounded by the Royal Marines all down on one knee with their rifles cocked and pointed, it was quite dramatic.

[Part 1 0:50:55] Lee: Like a circle of Airfix men.

Berry: Yes, yes exactly. And of course four days, three or four days later we were overflowed by a Lancaster bomber, of all things, with Argentinian markings on, to see what had gone on [laughter], and when we sort of all waved at it as it flew by, at about twenty feet, and then a few minutes later we looked at each other and thought

'Mmm, I wonder if we just avoided death by...' [laughter]. I mean anything could have happened.

[Part 1 0:51:26] Lee: How was it then to have a detachment of Marines disturbing your otherwise tranquil life, because the base becomes quite a unit doesn't it?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 1 0:51:35] Lee: Then suddenly about a dozen guys turn up with a different ethos.

Berry: Yes. They were great, actually. We use to go out in the dinghy and drop demolition charges over the side to see if we could bring up any fish, all sorts of things, they were up for anything. They were nice chaps, we got on well. And of course they were saved from square bashing and polishing and stuff.

[Part 1 0:51:57] Lee: They were happy to be there were they?

Berry: Oh ??? [incomprehensible], well happy, yes.

[Part 1 0:52:02] Lee: Ok. Let's just pause for a minute, Ray.

This is Ray Berry, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 8th of July, 2012. Ray Berry, part 2.

[Part 2 0:00:10] Lee: Did you have any dodgy moments at Deception, Ray?

Berry: Yes, I erm, during the second week, I think, I was there I was trying out my skis, 'cos they were monstrous great long wooden Norwegian skis, they measured right up to your palm of your hand held high over your head so they were really long on Alpine standards, and I sort of went out walking round the base and I struck out across the lake, the frozen lake, and somewhere near the middle the ice gave way on the front of my skis and I sort of launched very majestically under water, and I didn't sort of panic I was completely on my own, nobody knew where I was, or anything of that sort, and I sort of managed to get my shoulders and my elbows onto the ice at the side of the hole, and as luck would have it two tiny wavelets of water had frozen into little ridges as they'd fanned out over the ice surface, and I just managed to get enough purchase on those to steady myself and swing my legs up complete with skis up out of the water onto the ice alongside the hole I'd made. In retrospect how I did it I just don't know, but I just managed to get up, stand up and ski off the top of this lake, completely soaking from the breastbone downwards and my brand new camera, very expensive camera bought, it was under water [chuckles], but I was muttering about that of course, and I'd just a hundred yards back to base and I stripped off and, of course then looking at this perfectly new Contax camera, it had been under the water surface of a stinking volcano water, and eventually we decided we got to send it back to England for the winter and have it serviced at an opticians in Trafalgar Square, and I never saw that camera again till the next summer.

[Part 2 0:02:31] Lee: Mind you that sounds like a story could have ended very differently.

Berry: Oh it could. I was so near. If the ice had been just a little bit weaker, or there hadn't been those little ridges for me to get a grip on it could have been curtains.

[Part 2 0:02:45] Lee: Did that change your attitude towards doing things in the Antarctic.

Berry: It should have done but it didn't [laughter].

[Part 2 0:02:56] Lee: Any self respecting Base Commander would say 'No more of that'.

Berry: Yes.

[Part 2 0:03:00] Lee: Did he?

Berry: No, nothing like that.

[Part 2 0:03:02] Lee: So there was no lesson to be learned?

Berry: No, oh no. The Base Leader was David Stroud who was a retired off[icer], he'd injured himself in the Royal Marines funnily enough, he'd fallen off the arch over the entrance to Chatham Barracks.

[Part 2 0:03:24] Lee: Fine. So he was obviously a man who wasn't used to health and safety either?

Berry: No. No they'd had a merry night and during the night some people had put a wetsuit on the statue on the top of the gate, and he was ordered up by the Chatham commander, 'Get that suit off there before anybody sees it!' And of course he went up to get this suit off the statue over the gate and he'd fallen, and broke his legs and his back and he had to be invalided out of the Marines, but he was fit enough to be our Base Commander, and he was a wonderful guy, wonderful leader, he never led us anywhere, but you got on with it, then with our work and he got on with what he wanted to do, he was a keen photographer and er, it was great, you know it was fine, but you're quite right to, we should really have done a bit more, been a bit more cautious with the things we did, and I'm sure they did, they were later on.

[Part 2 0:04:22] Lee: They were later, but at that time they weren't...

Berry: No.

[Part 2 0:04:24] Lee: ...that was the culture of the day.

Berry: No.

[Part 2 0:04:26] Lee: So your crevasse moment was a bit dodgy as well, wasn't it?

Berry: That was almost a year later. I was leading a party across to show them the way to get penguin eggs, because we used to have a yearly expedition to the nearby, well nearby 4 miles away, penguin rookery, which is a huge rookery of half a million birds. Early in the spring we would take their first eggs in the knowledge of course that they would lay subsequent eggs, and put them down under flour for cooking throughout the winter, and of course, having fresh eggs, or relatively fresh eggs to cook with makes a huge difference to what you can produce in a cookhouse situation, you can do your cakes better, you can do, you can even have fried eggs with bacon and egg ??? [inaudible], the diet is so much easier and better to manage if you...

[Part 2 0:05:19] Lee: You could fry a penguin egg could you?

Berry: Oh yes, yeah. It's blue, the white is blue, clear transparent blue, but perfectly tasty, however you want it.

[Part 2 0:05:28] Lee: So there you were going to collect these penguin eggs then?

Berry: Yeah, and I, we just got over the top crest of the rim on the crater, and I was walking across what seemed a perfectly sound flat area of snow, and I just disappeared like a rocket down a one foot wide crevasse, so narrow my boots must have only just fitted it, and er, but I was wedged in about twelve foot down with my rucksack on my back, and the ice rubbing my nose and the back of my head at the same time, and it took me three quarters of an hour to get up, to get free of the rucksack, which was sent up to the surface.

[Part 2 0:06:10] Lee: You were on your own at this point?

Berry: No no, we had the base clothes line wrapped round us [laughter], because the one piece of equipment we weren't allowed to have on base was a climbing rope, because I s'pose they thought that would encourage too much climbing.

[Part 2 0:06:28] Lee: Right.

Berry: So we had to find our own.

[Part 2 0:06:30] Lee: So there were two of you, as I ...

Berry: There were four, four of us going across to get these eggs, but the three guys up on top were tugging on this very thin rope round my waist, but I was jammed in like a cork in a bottle, and a lot and lot of wriggling and jabbing, 'cos when you're down a crevasse I know that ??? [incomprehensible] you tried everything's slippery, you can't get a grip on anything, and you just have to wriggle wriggle wriggle on, and hope the cork will take you up, and of course I was up to my waist in ice melt water, which didn't feel cold I was so frightened, I'd get no sensation of cold or anything like that I was just completely panicked and full of adrenaline to get out.

[Part 2 0:07:19] Lee: So the other three guys couldn't get you out until you got out of your rucksack...

Berry: Yes, that's right ...

[Part 2 0:07:24] Lee: ...and therefore un-jammed yourself?

Berry: Yeah, that's right, and then they whisked me up to the top, very shaky.

[Part 2 0:07:31] Lee: The rucksack come with you?

Berry: Yes, that went up first [laughter].

[Part 2 0:07:35] Lee: 'Never mind Berry, just get his rucksack up!'

Berry: Yes, but I can't remember honestly whether I retreated straight away to base, I think possibly I did but, and I think the others went on and got the penguin eggs, but er, or whether they retreated as well I can't remember, so long ago but that certainly sticks in my mind as one of my risky moments.

[Part 2 0:07:58] Lee: And again there was no modification of procedure as a result of that close call?

Berry: No, not at all, no.

[Part 2 0:08:05] Lee: I'm always intrigued people often say they kept penguin eggs in flour.

Berry: Yes.

[Part 2 0:08:09] Lee: What was the benefit of the flour?

Berry: It stopped air getting to them, so they just didn't go rotten. They just stayed virtually the same as brand new fresh were. Great! And after a whole year of course.

[Part 2 0:08:23] Lee: Yes.

Berry: Yeah

[Part 2 0:08:25] Lee: There was a chap on Deception with you called Arthur Farrant.

Berry: That's right, yes.

[Part 2 0:08:33] Lee: Who later committed suicide.

Berry: That's right.

[Part 2 0:08:35] Lee: I just wondered what you made of that man?

Berry: Erm [pause], well the first thing to say really is that he was very much older than the rest of us, he was 35/40 I would think.

[Part 2 0:08:48] Lee: Twice your age then?

Berry: Yes, yes, and we were all just 19, 20, 21, and he was never part of the group because we became a really quite a tight knit group, we all knew what each other was thinking, and doing and wanting and hoping, you know, the reactions between us all were really quite remarkable, looking back on it we were a group, a group getting on well, but Arthur, sadly enough, wasn't one of that group, he was on his own. He was very conscientious in his job, and in the circumstances the generators always seemed to be going wrong, whether it was very frequently or not, but it was always difficult to get them going because the temperatures were so low, and perhaps the fuel would be a bit dirty or, they were tricky to keep going, and that was his entire object in life was to keep the generators going, and he didn't always manage it, so his job had a fair element of failure in it which didn't help him at all.

[Part 2 0:10:05] Lee: It was stress.

Berry: Yes, it's very stressful, very stressful, and I think he was taken up to another base to help get the generators going at that base, because he was a proper skilled diesel mechanic, and he came back to base. I was not on the base at the time that he actually committed suicide, and he came back to base, polished all the pipes and cleaned up his, painted the floor in the diesel room, and then went outside, and as the boat came in to relieve him, to take him back to England, he shot himself. So it's a tragic sort of mixed up story, but erm, what ??? [incomprehensible] can make of these things, what goes through people's minds who do commit suicide, it's very difficult to put yourself in their place isn't it? In fact I don't think you want to, do you?

[Part 2 0:10:59] Lee: Well no. There's a note which says you think he took, he drank quantities of ferrographic [phonetic] fluid first because...

Berry: Yes, yes.

[Part 2 0:11:07] Lee: Is that not alcohol?

Berry: No, that was to ??? [incomprehensible], I suppose he hoped it would kill him quite quickly, and obviously he felt it didn't, so he took the base four-five, which wasn't locked away or anything like that it was always avai[lable], all the weapons on base, we had a 303 rifle, a shotgun, and a four-five, with plenty of ammunition for all of them, they were all readily available to any and everybody, and he just took the four-five and walked round the back of the base and shot himself. And he's buried in the little whalers' cemetery at Deception, which was a tiny little cemetery with about six, seven crosses in it from whalers that had died in the twenties and thirties on the island.

[Part 2 0:11:56] Lee: With hindsight do you think it would have been possible to have seen this scenario coming?

Berry: Erm, I suppose so, yes, but on base one gets totally involved in what you've got to do yourself and what your co-operation and working with the other people on the base is, and that should have really included him, but he was outside the loop, there was age difference and his personality was totally different from the rest of us.

He wasn't what we call an outside man, he wasn't, somebody who wanted to go skiing or mountaineering or anything of that sort.

[Part 2 0:12:40] Lee: Do you know why he was there?

Berry: Well, we got the impression that some years, some posts were difficult to fill, and that occasionally people would get sent down that were perhaps on the borderline of whether they should, because of their skill. And that, in one respect that's always going to be so, isn't it, in a job that's not going to appeal to everybody, you always going to get people who are less or more suited to it aren't you? The outside life is a, life in Antarctica is so totally different from any life, any other setup, isn't it? You're going to get a perfect combination of skills quite rarely. You know I think that's one of the things the Shackleton expedition shows that he was an expert at choosing people to go with him especially in his last thing, the *Endurance*.

[Part 2 0:13:41] Lee: I mean FID's records are quite good at choosing the right people and there was always that safety valve of spotting a wrong 'un on the voyage south wasn't there I imagine in your day? So I wonder why they appointed somebody who was twice the age of everybody else?

Berry: Just don't know, just assumed that it was, there weren't enough applicants.

[Part 2 0:14:01] Lee: There was a shortage of diesel..

Berry: Diesel mechanics.

[Part 2 0:14:03] Lee: ..mechanics.

Berry: Yes.

[Part 2 0:14:04] Lee: Is that because of the re-building of Britain, or..?

Berry: Yeah, I suppose so, I mean at that time in Britain you could, any job you could get, whatever job you wanted you could do.

[Part 2 0:14:15] Lee: You could walk into it.

Berry: Yes, yes, and 'cos there was such a shortage of people and industry was booming and hospitals were being built, roads were being built.

[Part 2 0:14:26] Lee: A lot of men hadn't come back.

Berry: Yes, yes, and looking back on it I just get the feeling I could have done absolutely anything, but I had one object in mind at the time so I did that. So, yes, I mean you could get a job. I think that poor youngsters today, it's so sad for them isn't it?

[Part 2 0:14:48] Lee: So when you were I think elsewhere, you were at Signy weren't you, when the news broke, perhaps on the radio were you shocked or..

Berry: I was, I was quite shocked I really, I felt for them, I mean it didn't, the chaps left behind to deal with it, it must have been terrible for them, yes. Years later I met a chap that had been on a base where three people were killed, had died, and his view of Antarctica was totally changed by that, he was just didn't want to know about it, it's ruined the whole experience for him which is totally understandable, isn't it? Losing three people, and quite, I think two or three bases lost threes didn't they? It must have been devastating, it must have been terrible for them.

[Part 2 0:15:37] Lee: Was there any sign that Deception might blow up, or when you heard the news years later were you surprised?

Berry: I was, yes, because it just been hot spring activity, we'd never felt any shaking or rumbling or anything of that sort, and I heard it on Radio 4 actually they did an interview with the base leader who'd been chased off.

[Part 2 0:16:00] Lee: It would have been the Home Service in those days. [Laughter]

Berry: Home Service, yes. He said how during one night there was just banging and crashing and moaning and groaning and the ground was shaking, and in the middle of the night the chaps had walked round from the other base, from the Argentinian base, they'd walked round because their base had been entirely wrecked. So I think it was right to abandon Deception actually as a base, I think it would have been silly to spend a lot of money there. As it is they built a hangar, and quite a few things there, they flattened the aerodrome a bit. But I mean the, there had been a sort of runs of ash and stuff had come down near the base, and it was quite shaken up, quite ruined really, so it was a good thing to get out of there I think.

[Part 2 0:16:51] Lee: Ok. Well you moved on at the end of your first winter, you moved on to Signy and when you were there you volunteered for that?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 2 0:16:57] Lee: You did. Did you ask to be sent to Signy or..?

Berry: No, no, you were directed, but that was ok, I was quite happy to go there.

[Part 2 0:17:04] Lee: A bit further south?

Berry: No! It's the northernmost base.

[Part 2 0:17:07] Lee: Oh right, beg your pardon.

Berry: But funny enough it was one of the better ones. The two best bases were really from the weather point of view, were Argentine Islands, which was farther south, and Signy Islands which was the farthest north, because the Signy Islands were over the entrance to the Weddell Sea, and they used to get cold winds, cold different atmosphere coming up, different air masses coming up from the Weddell and they would get quite cold spells. We had actually the, while I was at Signy we had minus forty for about a fortnight, two weeks, and that was quite an experience.

[Part 2 0:17:47] Lee: What do you mean, what sort of effect did it have on daily life?

Berry: Oh, well, I mean minus forty is quite, things begin to feel really cold, I mean our breakfast cups used to freeze to the table in the morning, in the hut, and when we were writing up our report we'd have our feet in the oven, and the ink on top of the hotplate [laughter], 'cos we were in a very primitive hut, single skin hut, and it was really cold when it was minus forty, and a bit of a wind outside, but it was only for a fortnight so we soon got, that was soon a thing of the past.

[Part 2 0:18:23] Lee: Did the hut come as a bit of a shock after the palatial facilities at Deception?

Berry: It was really, yeah, because it was very small, just one big room with a little kitchen, what sort of all part of it, and the range, the sort of Aga cooker type thing on one side, and its great big cold water tank next to it, where we used to thaw out the snow blocks, and of course we would have to put snow blocks in it every day, or every other day at least, and skim the occasional penguin feather off the top of that, or worse [chuckles]. But, no it was very, very small hut, and of course the diesel engines were in a separate Nissen hut, which was absolutely like ice in there of course. But, no it was quite primitive at Signy, at that time.

[Part 2 0:19:13] Lee: So bit of a come down for you?

Berry: No, just different, just different.

[Part 2 0:19:19] Lee: The weather was different too, wasn't it? It's terribly manky at Signy.

Berry: It could be, yes, although of course when we had this cold snap it was beautiful blue sky, and Signy was blessed with the most fantastic layered cloud, over Coronation Island. You would get, (what are they called?), lenticular clouds forming over Coronation Island, and they'd be twelve layers thick, just going up and up and up, into the stratosphere, amazing cloud formations to look at. 'Cos it was right out in the ocean, so the air streams would just pop up over the top of it and cool down, and the cloud would form as the same layers. It's really, really very pretty, like a wedding cake sort of setup. Oh no it was, and the skiing was quite nice and the, of course we had elephant seals on Signy, which were a new departure, we hadn't seen these great big monsters, and actually we'd be eating, having our meals with the elephant seals belching a hundred yards away [laughter] accompanying them, accompanying our food. That was quite intriguing.

[Part 2 0:20:32] Lee: What else can you remember about Signy, was the weather pattern distinctly different?

Berry: Yes, yes, it was more oceanic of course, except as I say when we had this one burst of cold, but we'd get clouds blowing in with what we call trailing virga, which is sort of like a shower coming out of the tail end of it, that was quite striking. Lots of different atmospheric phenomena, and we didn't have, the year I was there we didn't have good sea ice, so although we went out skiing it was just strictly on the ice cap of the island. We used to mosey around, do a little bit of rock climbing, we had one

chap that was quite keen on rock climbing, and there was a little cliff near the base which we used to climb on. No it was quite good, a lot of birds of course on Signy, it's more, being warmer, being more oceanic we had different birds, prions and shag and all sorts of things, all sorts of birds.

[Part 2 0:21:28] Lee: Was there any science being done, apart from met work?

Berry: It came, there was a lot of science done at Signy, because they realised, pretty well round about the time I was there, they realised there was lots and lots of insects, and lichens and moss, areas of moss growing. It was all the beginnings of really global warming, that Signy was being, was one of the islands which has warmed up, sufficiently..

[Part 2 0:21:53] Lee: Already in the nineteen fifties?

Berry: Yes, to have its own little bits and pieces of green. That was quite interesting, and the science got into it very quickly and found there were insects and springtails and things living under the ice surface. So it became quite a research centre, and of course they built a very good hut there two or three years after I was there.

[Part 2 0:22:15] Lee: Did the words or the thought global warming cross your minds then?

Berry: No, not really.

[Part 2 0:22:20] Lee: At that point?

Berry: No, that wasn't currency, then. But, it was a year or two later that really notice was taken of how quickly glaciers were retreating.

[Part 2 0:22:34] Lee: So even in the mid to late fifties people were getting suspicious were they?

Berry: Beginning to, yes, beginning to. Somebody was measuring somewhere or another the CO₂ content and I think they were beginning to realise that the Industrial Revolution had had some effects that they should really get worried about.

[Part 2 0:22:54] Lee: I seem to ??? [incomprehensible] another thirty years before the paper appeared in *Nature* magazine.

Berry: Yes, yeah. But I was reading Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, whether that's just round about that time or just after. So, some people realised, oh of course that was mainly to do with DDT, wasn't it? But some people were realising that things were at risk, things were changing.

[Part 2 0:23:22] Lee: So again when thirty years later you picked up the newspapers and saw the story about the three BAS scientists who'd found the ozone hole..

Berry: Yes.

[Part 2 0:23:31] Lee: ...this wasn't a huge surprise?

Berry: Well, funnily enough at Deception we'd unpacked the, one of the first ozone measuring instruments, which was a Dobson's spectrometer. Unfortunately a crucial part of it wasn't sent down, so we didn't get it going the year I was there, but I was at Argentine for my last year with a top notch scientist, Ross Hesketh, and we unpacked, we got a lot of magnetic equipment working, measuring the magnetic force, all getting ready for the IGY, the International Geophysical Year, which was the next year, or two years ahead. But, he was a great base leader and I got on with him very well. He built the magnetic hut and got the radiosonde going measuring upper air temperatures and pressures.

[Part 2 0:24:25] Lee: So you were taking readings in fifty five at Argentine Islands which were the very beginnings of the records that the scientists used to establish the ozone problem.

Berry: Just at the very tip of that, yes, yeah.

[Part 2 0:24:38] Lee: So when you did see the story in the press, what was your feeling about it?

Berry: Well I was quite surprised and I was really bucked, it's a real - it's *the* thing that FIDS and BAS should sort of discovered and brought to the fore, and of course it all came to a very good result in that CFC's were banned, and the hole is repairing itself very slowly again, but it has got results. Sadly people have sort of pushed it to the back of their minds now haven't they? But it was a good result.

[Part 2 0:25:13] Lee: Oh there was an anniversary quite recently I think, 21 years or 25 years.

Berry: Yeah, that's right.

[Part 2 0:25:18] Lee: You know, it came back into popular consciousness again for a while.

Berry: Yes, yes.

[Part 2 0:25:24] Lee: When you came to the end of your year at Signy you had, well I guess you had to come home, you were...

Berry: That's right, yes.

[Part 2 0:25:31] Lee: Did you ask for an extension, or did they..?

Berry: Yes, yeah I wanted to go back for another two years, I loved it.

[Part 2 0:25:35] Lee: But did you ask to stay, or were you ordered to come home?

Berry: No. I had to come back to England have a sort of a bit of a holiday, and a break, and I went holidaying with my parents and bought a pair of proper skis in Switzerland, and took them back the next year of course. No, it was good idea I think to return to Britain, even though it meant such a lot of slogging up through the Atlantic. But, you know, the slow old *Biscoe*. But, I was really looking forward to another two years but unfortunately I didn't quite get the job that I was anticipating.

[Part 2 0:26:15] Lee: Well what happened? Tell me the story.

Berry: Well, I'd been trained in radio sonde while I was on holiday in Britain in that intervening year.

[Part 2 0:26:23] Lee: Was that the end of the element of the long game was it?

Berry: Yes, yes, it was sending up a balloon and measuring the upper winds and temperatures up to 70,000 feet, so it was quite a big thing, and ...

[Part 2 0:26:35] Lee: Had you trained yourself off your own bat?

Berry: No, that was all organised through the Met Office, yes.

[Part 2 0:26:41] Lee: So when you came back you had already established you were going to go down south again.

Berry: Yes, that's right.

[Part 2 0:26:48] Lee: And they sent you on this training course.

Berry: That's right, and to Argentine Islands where that equipment was going to be based.

[Part 2 0:26:55] Lee: Oh right, so part of the deal was you had to go somewhere that was like Switzerland.

Berry: Yes, absolutely, and of course the Argentines is fabulous. But, no, I did the year at Argentine Islands with Ross Hesketh setting up the equipment, but I was hoping to get a bit more money and be the head of the Met Office section at Argentine in my last year and unfortunately they didn't see it quite the same way [chuckles], and they didn't think I could head up the met so they sent somebody else down so I thought 'Oh, blow it, I'll go back to England.'

[Part 2 0:27:29] Lee: So you did one year rather than two?

Berry: One year, yes.

[Part 2 0:27:32] Lee: And, apart from looking a bit like Switzerland what was the Argentine Islands like?

Berry: Well it was very, very good position, really, it's really Antarctic. We'd been subsequently to McMurdo Sound and you can see the, it's once you get south of the

Circle by a long way, well of course the Argentines is not south of the Circle but it's pretty close to it, and you get the real Arctic weather here, perfectly calm, still winter's night, winter's days, and of course you get what they call diamond dust, you get this sprinkling of diamond like crystals falling out of a clear blue sky, and it is absolute magic. Everything becomes dusted in a sort of icing sugar, and it's just amazing sort of atmospheric trick that can really blow your mind, when it gets really cold. You get the last vestige of water vapour is frozen out of the air, we get down to minus ten, minus twenty and it's sprinkling out of, no cloud, just this diamond particles, diamond like particles falling out of the sky, it's just totally magic, really great. Of course you get that in Northern Canada, that happens there as well, and tremendous mirage, I mean we were seeing islands that were 200 miles away suddenly pop up over the horizon. Well we knew perfectly well there was no land for 200 miles, you'd suddenly see an island, bending of the light rays through the cold layers of air, just amazing, really blows your mind when you think 'Crumbs, I didn't know there was an island...' [Laughter] You get that crisp, cold day, one day after another, I mean we used to get cold days at the other bases but just they'd just be occasional, and be interspersed with, temperatures coming up to near freezing, not above freezing but near freezing, and then you'd get gales and dark, overcast days for a whole two weeks at a time you could get. Admiralty Bay especially was a very overcast, because the cold depressions are blowing in from the open sea there, but when you get really down close to the continent itself you get that more continental climate, which is so Antarctic like. It's just magic.

[Part 2 0:30:10] Lee: So how was it for you socially, at the end the fact you, had your nose been put out of joint slightly by not getting the top job, or, there was nothing wrong with your...?

Berry: Oh no, just ignore it, get on. I did notice though that for the first time I came across people that never went out of the hut.

[Part 2 0:30:27] Lee: No?

Berry: It sounds extraordinary doesn't it, but we had three people at Argentine Islands who never left the hut the whole year. It does seem absolutely amazing but, they just didn't. They weren't interested in going out in snow and the cold and skiing around and testing the sea ice and, everything that had made the whole thing attractive to me was certainly not attractive to them, they were just doing a job and collecting a year's money, and...

[Part 2 0:30:58] Lee: Were they scientists, or were they?

Berry: Yes, mainly technical people. It seems so sad, so sad I couldn't believe it.

[Part 2 0:31:07] Lee: So did you go out much to Argentine Island, I'm not quite sure about the sledging status of Argentine Islands.

Berry: Yes, actually for the first time I went out dog sledging, with four dogs, only a tiny, tiny bit really, over the sea ice and collecting, more collecting penguin eggs, and on that occasion we were collecting there we saw an Emperor penguin go by, which is quite rare, heading south, and occasionally we'd take out a tent to a nearby island and

pitch it up for two nights and do the proper Antarctic, you know we'd be in a pyramid tent like Scott used to have, and the Primus and having a crap in the corner of the tent and that sort of thing [Laughter], all the proper Antarctic stuff.

[Part 2 0:31:53] Lee: Did you go, I mean you only went just about 40 years after Scott weren't you, and it's within the generation, effectively. Did you feel close to him, because you were living your life similar to his and Shackleton's?

Berry: Not really, because... Scott has had an awful press, because one section of people make him to be the martinet and officer class, and in a way he was, because at McMurdo Sound where his, is Scott's hut, the loo is outside and it's in two distinct parts, officers and men [Laughter], and when you think of that you think 'What was he thinking of?', but that in total contrast to Shackleton, of course he was none of that officer and men business.

[Part 2 0:32:46] Lee: What I meant was I suppose, you were living in conditions that were not dissimilar from the heroic era.

Berry: No, no,

[Part 2 0:32:51] Lee: Things have changed dramatically since, whereas you actually were almost the same..

Berry: Yes, yes it was.

[Part 2 0:32:57] Lee: ..circumstances as the turn of the century guys.

Berry: You could say that, yes, but, and we were quite mad, the things we did and the freedom we had to do things, all the rubbish was dumped over the cliff, and things like that absolute horror now, aren't they? Everything has to be brought back, and killing things like seals and penguins to eat, you can't, nothing like that occurs now, no dogs. Cooks! Oh no! Fancy sending cooks! I mean how can you cook for a year for ten men, why that's an impossible job. How can you remain interested in your job? I don't know how they manage it. They were heroes I think, people who go down there and cook. But, no it's completely changed now, completely different thing, but it's changed for the better really because the results are better, the science is better. I mean yesterday we were looking at snow cores, ice cores rather.

[Part 2 0:34:00] Lee: At BAS HQ?

Berry: Yes, yes, and they are fabulous, it's just amazing what they can find out about past climate, which is so important to know how the climate changes, is changing, and of course that pins it down, that just shows you irrefutably what's been going on. So the science is streets ahead to what it was of course, even bearing in mind the high point of finding the ozone hole. The science is way ahead now.

[Part 2 0:34:32] Lee: I was fascinated yesterday they were talking about the drilling to the Ellesworth Lake, and actually reaching water that hasn't been exposed for millions of years.

Berry: Yeah. I mean that's going to be more than interesting they think it's going to be, what they'll find is just anybody's guess isn't it?

[Part 2 0:34:48] Lee: Meanwhile back on Argentine Island in 1955 Mr Berry was yet again causing a trail of havoc. [Laughter]. You were a danger to shipping at one point.

Berry: Oh, that's right, yes. The first day that the sea ice began to form, I thought 'Well this is too good a chance to miss, I'll sort of do an icebreaker act with the little wooden dinghy we had, and I sort of pushed the dinghy out for the last time that summer and motored around through this very, very thin ice, making pretty patterns in it, and figure-of-eights and circles and pushing lumps of ice hither and yon, but when I got back to shore I realised that I'd almost cut through the planking of the dinghy all round, and I had to very quickly put lots of copper patches on it for the next year so it could be used. That was a little bit of a no no, but no the dinghy, ??? [incomprehensible], was good fun in the dinghy in the summer, 'cos the water was flat calm always really in Argentine Islands, like a millpond, no swell, nothing of that sort, just that you could go out in the dinghy, motor round the icebergs and look at them, go through arches and all sorts of things with a dinghy, no problems at all.

[Part 2 0:36:06] Lee: So you were boating in the stretch of water between Argentine Island and the mainland were you?

Berry: Yes.

[Part 2 0:36:11] Lee: Sheltered area.

Berry: Yes. And of course it's all flat calm there.

[Part 2 0:36:17] Lee: And, what's this business about licking an anemometer?

Berry: [Sighs], dear! Yeah, one morning after a very, very intense period of hoar frost everything was frosted up like icing sugar, six or seven inches deep on all the metal surfaces, and I'd climbed up the anemometer to push the cups round just to make sure it was all free and it was pointing, and I was just sitting up there in the sun and lapping it all up looking round at the view and thinking 'What a wonderful place this is', and sort of quite absent mindedly I poked my tongue out at the south point of the, on the anemometer, and my tongue stuck to it, and I thought 'Crumbs, what am I going to do now?', 'cos it didn't feel particularly cold. I couldn't get my tongue back into my mouth, so I just had to pull and I left a little, about a quarter of an inch square end of my tongue on the metal on the anemometer. But so, it only took a couple of months to heal up. [Laughs].

[Part 2 0:37:25] Lee: Tell me a bit more about the radio sonde work, because you'd learnt it back in Britain, and then you specifically went to Argentine Islands so you could use your skills, and what were you having to do, how difficult was it?

Berry: It was a really interesting job, you had to blow up a balloon for a start so we used to make our own hydrogen, or use a cylinder that had been sent down just according to whether it was fine weather or a bad day, and you blow up this balloon

and it would blow up to about a six or seven foot across balloon, and then on the bottom of that you have a long cable, long thin string with a little radio transmitter on the bottom of that which would, on the side of this transmitter be like a windmill, so it would connect you to a temperature sensor, humidity sensor, pressure sensor in order, as the windmill rotated it would send, so you could get a signal from the radio transmitter, and the pitch of the signal would give you what the value was of the particular element you were measuring. So you would, if it's a calm day you just simply hold the balloon, hold the radio transmitter and let the balloon go and then a few seconds later you would let the transmitter go and it would sail up, and the balloon would go right up to 70,000 feet where it would burst and be lost, just plunge down I know not where. But during the ascent we'd be monitoring the radio signals coming in rotation from the transmitter, and we'd do that by measuring, er, on an oscilloscope by comparing a known frequency signal with the frequency coming down from the transmitter, and then you balance the two signals together, you get a still circle on your oscilloscope, and you got the two signals in balance, and then you read off from your vernier what the balance point is. And of course as the balloon goes up, and as it cools down as the temperature readings change the balance point changes and so you got a signal coming back from the transmitter which is something like, [imitates sounds], and each different note you'd have to tune in on your oscilloscope and get the figure to balance it, the frequency to balance it, and then you plot that on a graph. And then you'd compute the signals and the readings you're getting on a huge great slide rule which is about 3 feet 6 long, with six different cursors on it, and a lot of slippy slide work ruling would be done between each signal. It was a really skilled job, you had to be really slick with getting these readings, getting them down and computing as the balloon was going up, and after a lot of training it took you a couple of months to get to know how to handle these signals quickly. You'd be able to get a really good balloon trace with temperature, pressure, and humidity as the balloon went up.

[Part 2 0:40:36] Lee: So you're measuring the three things as it went up [overtalk]. And how useful is that, what would that tell you that you didn't otherwise know?

Berry: Well of course, when you do those sort of readings in Britain, you get inversions, you get graphs which can help you calculate the cloud cover, and the depth of cloud, and whether you're going to get a thunderstorm, or whether you're going to get cumulus clouds or stratus cloud, or cuniform cloud it all depends on the rate of temperature, the rate the air temperature falls off as you go up. If the air gets colder as you go up and you get cumulus cloud, and if you, oh no it's the other way round, [laughter].

[Part 2 0:41:23] Lee: Take 2!

Berry: I'm going back too far [laughter], but no the air temperature gradient is very, very important for cloud cover forecasting, that sort of thing.

[Part 2 0:41:33] Lee: Was that the cutting edge of weather measurements at that time?

Berry: It was, yes, that's a very important thing that had come in during war time it had been a big thing, and was carried on. And I think they're still doing it, but with automatic equipment now of course.

[Part 2 0:41:50] Lee: Most things have been automated since then haven't they? At the end of the third year then you're leaving Argentine Islands, choosing to come back because you hadn't got the coveted, the king job?

Berry: Yes, yeah really I thought 'Oh crumbs, three years is enough, and it's time to get on with life', get married, have children.

[Part 2 0:42:09] Lee: And did you do all those things?

Berry: Yes, oh yes, but I found that my parents had got quite a good house renovation business going when I got back, so I helped them for a period with that, and then got on to new house building with them, and then set up a little building company of my own, and I pressed on with that from then till today really.

[Part 2 0:42:35] Lee: Still?

Berry: Well not ??? [inaudible]. Four years ago I gave that up.

[Part 2 0:42:38] Lee: In your late seventies?

Berry: Yes! I did plan to go on to eighty but I didn't quite make it.

[Part 2 0:42:45] Lee: What do you feel that you learnt in the Antarctic that's been useful in later life, in your commercial or private life?

Berry: How to get on with people, it's really basic thing I think. I think I got rounded off a bit, anyway I was a bit of a jagged sort of person when I went, and obviously those sharp edges were a bit honed off I think through this three years, three periods there, and it was a good thing, a good thing.

[Part 2 0:43:16] Lee: And how do you rate the Antarctic in the context of a long life?

Berry: Right, it's, in my life it's crucial. I wouldn't be anything like I am now without that. Very important I think it's ...

[Part 2 0:43:30] Lee: Character forming?

Berry: Yes. When you come back to England from Antarctica the first thing that strikes you is everything's green. Then the next thing that strikes you is that the people are a bit green [Laughter]. People don't seem to appreciate there are other sorts of life from what we live here in England. Getting married having children getting a job then a pension, working away diligently one or two firms, and then retiring and on a bit of a pension. There are other lives to that, and Linda's, my wife is, she's sampled the lifestyles in Africa, and I've realised that, earlier on that there are other lifestyles in Antarctica, where you can be dedicated to a job or to an environment. You know, how our environment controls what we are, it's an unknown field isn't it, and we're English aren't we, we're British, this little checkerboard country with little fields and things, it's us isn't it, but it needn't be, life could be

completely different. It needn't be computers and Facebook an' Twitter, it can be something totally different and...

[Part 2 0:45:00] Lee: There can be adventure.

Berry: And the human being can adapt to it. If there's one quality that the human person has got it's total adaptability. It's with any circumstance. Linda's sampled it in Africa, with the Masai, can you imagine anything different from Masai life, but they're happy, and they live contented complete lives they might not live as long, not as many years, but, gosh, it's all life, isn't it? That's the thing that faces you when you come back from the Antarctic you suddenly realise 'I'm here with people that don't realise there's something else, or there can be something else. And of course if global warming runs its course we'll have to face up to something else won't we? It's daunting but encouraging in some way to realise how totally adaptable to circumstance the human being can be. Those men of Shackleton's living on Elephant Island waiting for him to return from South Georgia, if he ever did return, they'd adapted to their life under that little upturned boat hadn't they, and they were making a go of it, and that's human life isn't it? Well it should be. So to have that knowledge that you can adapt to anything that nature or the world throws at you, them men living in the trenches in the First World War, they adapted didn't they? Terrible.

[Part 2 0:46:38] Lee: One of the dilemmas facing old Fids is whether or not to go back. Some chaps are desperate to go back, others perhaps don't want to spoil the memories of their magic time in the Antarctic and, you kind of went back 'cos you went back to Antarctica but you went back to a different part.

Berry: Yes, yes.

[Part 2 0:46:56] Lee: When was that?

Berry: Yes, four years ago we went back to the Ross Sea in a little boat, which was very similar to the *Biscoe* really, relatively, just 40 passengers.

[Part 2 0:47:05] Lee: As tourists?

Berry: Yes, yes, and sampled the, it was minus 15 when we turned north again, and the sea ice was just beginning to form, just a like little porridge on the top of the sea when we turned round, and we saw Shackleton's hut and Scott's hut, and the conditions they lived in, and of course the Ross Sea is as beautiful or more beautiful than the Lemaire Channel for instance which is one of the top beauty spots in the Peninsula. I mean it is gorgeous when you go down the Lemaire, but so let us have a sample of what it's really like, a look in the hut, because I mean Scott's hut, Shackleton's hut is very similar but bigger than our Signy hut used to be, very primitive just boards nailed on a frame, and a bit of waterproof sheeting over.

[Part 2 0:48:01] Lee: Was it wall to wall magic or were there reservations?

Berry: No I loved it, I think it was wall to wall magic. Reservations, I can't think of any.

[Part 2 0:48:13] Lee: Cost!?! [Laughter]. That one aside.

Berry: Yeah.

[Part 2 0:48:16] Lee: It's been very entertaining and very erudite of you, Ray. Thank you very much indeed.

Berry: Sure!

[Part 2 0:48:22] Lee: Well done.

Possible extracts:

- At school during the War, school burns down [Part 1 0:00:58]
- A fateful school holiday trip to Switzerland [Part 1 0:05:47]
- The 'Long Game' [Part 1 0:07:35]
- Memories of the Festival of Britain [Part 1 0:15:02]
- The journey south – a 'douche of bathwater' while asleep on deck [Part 1 0:19:25]
- Off to Deception – not the image of Swiss mountains! [Part 1 0:29:46]
- The risks of paddling at Deception [Part 1 0:44:10]
- The gunpowder..... [Part 1 0:46:34]
- Argentinians move in rather too close – bring on the Royal Marines [Part 1 0:48:29]

- Dodgy moments at Deception 1: Going through the ice [Part 2 0:00:10]
- Dodgy moments at Deception 2: Going down a crevasse [Part 2 0:04:26]
- The tragedy of Arthur Farrant [Part 2 0:08:25]
- Sent to Signy [Part 2 0:16:57]
- Sent to Argentine Islands [Part 2 0:26:48]
- What happens when you try icebreaking with a dinghy... [Part 2 0:34:48]
- ... And when you lick cold metal [Part 2 0:36:17]
- Radio sonde work [Part 2 0:37:25]
- Influence of the Antarctic experience on subsequent life [Part 2 0:42:45]