IAN WILLEY

Edited transcript of a recording of Ian Willey interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 27th October 2012. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/197. Transcribed by Andy Smith, 20th November 2018.

Part One

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Ian Willey, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee, on the 27th of October 2012. Ian Willey, Part 1.

Willey: Ian Willey. I was born in North Shields in Northumberland on the 9th of June 1942.

[Part 1 0:00:16] Lee: So how old are you now?

Willey: Seventy.

[Part 1 0:00:19] Lee: Exactly seventy?

Willey: I was seventy gone June, yes.

[Part 1 0:00:22] Lee: What was your first awareness that there might be somewhere on this planet called the Antarctic?

Willey: Probably seriously when my brother got involved. You obviously know from school, where the continent is and what was going on in the continent. We touched on Scott, Shackleton and I remember from school it was quite balanced because they talked about Nansen and Amundsen as well, in the same sort of context. But never heavily involved; never got gripped from an early age that said it was something I wanted to do. Basically what happened: the brother went South.

[Part 1 0:01:04] Lee: This is Lewis?

Willey: Lew.

[Part 1 0:01:07] Lee: He is your older brother Lawrence?

Willey: Lawrence. His initials are LEW and he had LEW on top of his sea trunk, and he became Lew for the rest of the Fids. Typical Fids' exercise. I went down with him to see him off in Southampton, met some of the BAS people, met some of the Fids going South and I thought 'Bingo; this is something I want to do.' I pursued it and I got down the next year, which was good because I could meet him down there and do my thing.

[Part 1 0:01:44] Lee: When you applied to BAS, do you think the fact that your brother was already a Fid was influential or did it not matter?

Willey: Negatively.

[Part 1 0:01:53] Lee: Negatively?

Willey: I think so, yes. I had a struggle, yes.

[Part 1 0:01:57] Lee: Really?

Willey: Because: well completely different. I had left school at 15. Most of the guys they were recruiting were virtually straight out of university, and I didn't want to go South as a mech of any sort. I had studied engineering. I had done an apprenticeship, but I was useless with my hands. I was never a good engineer in terms of practically doing things and knew to be down there and people relying on you, with motors and generators and things like that, that I wasn't the man to keep them going for them. I wanted to get on as a GA but, like a lot of people, there was a tremendous demand for GAs. Eventually I got offered the Met man's job, and that in fact worked out very well. But no, so Lawrence wasn't a positive.

[Part 1 0:02:59] Lee: I would hazard a guess you knew not much about meteorology?

Willey: Oh zero, but they sent us to RAF Stanmore and they met us, a bunch of guys all going South, virtually all out of university they said, but we had a lawyer, we had a doctor, we had physicists – all sorts of different guys – and it just fitted. There was three of us sharing a place in Stanmore, the whole course and everything, and I got into it very quickly. It worked out well.

[Part 1 0:03:44] Lee: So you took to meteorology, did you? Was it straightforward?

Willey: I found the subject very interesting. I didn't find the concepts or the processes difficult. The instrumentation involved was very simple. I was able to understand and that side of it: I could service things when I was down South. But no, meteorology became very interesting and I have always been interested in it since.

[Part 1 0:04:13] Lee: How exciting was Stanmore?

Willey: RAF Stanmore? It was so interesting that we never did anything there. We used to go back into town for the odd night out, to do something as a group, because right from the beginning we stuck together as a group. It was very good and there was a few guys from London and a few guys had been to university in London, so we used to go into town. Stanmore zero, as far as I am concerned, yes.

[Part 1 0:04:46] Lee: Did you know, when you set sail, where you were going to end up?

Willey: The base? Oh yes.

[Part 1 0:04:52] Lee: You did?

Willey: What you don't know when you set sail was how long you were going to spend on the boat. You know, some people get to their base virtually straight away. We dropped some guys at Deception on the first run in and they never got anywhere. I was very fortunate. I was on the two boats, travelled round all of the bases that were

operating at that time, plus bases that weren't operating, so I was very fortunate. I went everywhere.

[Part 1 0:05:23] Lee: So when you got to Adelaide, having seen what else was on offer, were you happy with your destination?

Willey: Oh yes, very happy. I suppose deep down I would have preferred Stonners, right. I knew I didn't want to go to Halley, but apart from any of the other bases …

[Part 1 0:05:39] Lee: You saw Halley, didn't you?

Willey: Oh yes, we were at Halley.

[Part 1 0:05:41] Lee: What put you off?

Willey: Because when we were there, they were rebuilding the base, right, and they put us down in the old IGY huts.

[Part 1 0:05:50] Lee: Underground?

Willey: Underground, and it was pretty cold, pretty miserable and it talked to you all the time. Halley was on the move. And we were only perhaps maybe a week down underground there but I couldn't see me living long there. Troglodytes wasn't for me but the guys there seemed to love it. And I certainly feel the Peninsula's probably the most interesting place in Antarctica, to winter I mean. But any of the other bases: Signy, Grytviken, Deception – I would have taken any of them because they all have things to offer. The Peninsula had the dogs, it had the travel, it had a different world, more like what we call the myth, whereas some of the other bases were doing quite different things. I'm sure it we'd gone to Signy, we would have got involved with the programmes that were going on there. But no, I am very happy with where we ended up. But I think you find none of the Fids, wherever they wintered, didn't make it happen where they went. There's a few guys who changed after one year, moved somewhere else, but I think most of us were pretty happy where we ended up.

[Part 1 0:07:26] Lee: Talk me through Adelaide. What's it like to arrive at Adelaide and what was the hut like?

Willey: I went in first to Adelaide very briefly and didn't spend a night ashore. Adelaide was very different in that you come onto a quite formalised jetty. It was a very organised jetty which a lot of the bases didn't have, and then you have got almost what we call the High Street. You have got a series of buildings that were built up over the years. You get off the boat and on the left hand side you have got the genny shed sitting there and you've got Stevenson and Rymill, the two ancient … One dates back to BGLE, late thirties. And then the base was starting to build, or partially started the Hampton House and that was a big … one of the modern plastic jobs. And there was a couple of other … There was a tractor shed and a whole lot … So there was a whole lot of buildings, much more than most of the bases had. But actually, when you think about it, a lot of the bases had old places that you didn't particularly see when you did the unloading, and obviously at Adelaide you take a lot more notice.

[Part 1 0:09:00] Lee: This was 1967 wasn't it?

Willey: '67. It was actually '68. It was March '68 when I got off the boat because we'd had the whole trip round.

[Part 1 0:09:11] Lee: So going inside to the accommodation hut, what was that like for you?

Willey: I don't have any great first impressions. The thing I was impressed …, because the building scheme that was going on, we found out very quickly, we going to end up with, rather than a lot of us sharing one place, we had wide modules with four beds. So there was a degree of privacy similar to the boat, which was not true at a lot of the bases, Most of the bases, the older bases, all had the standard common room area where the beds and everything were all just scattered round the one room. So that, certainly at the beginning, seemed advantageous.

[Part 1 0:10:05] Lee: You appreciated it did you, all the time you were there?

Willey: I think there's advantages and disadvantages. I think definitely in the winter there's disadvantages of putting people in single accommodation for sure. I think in the winters, if you put on the isolation of the winter, and the isolation of the base, and then allow people to be isolated all day, I think that is a very dangerous exercise. And I think having people around with you, sleeping in the same room, I think that is much better for the wintering parties. I've been back South three times and if I look at what they have done now, where they have put a lot of people in a room with television and internet and everything like that, I think that is a dangerous environment to put people in long term.

[Part 1 0:11:04] Lee: You think the isolation is greater now?

Willey: I think the people create it for themselves. By giving people opportunities to live on their own, talking to people on base, people can become very isolated in the winter. While not easy looking after one another, you know, when the sun has gone, winter can get tough, and I think they take a risk. That's all I would think, but maybe I am wrong.

[Part 1 0:11:42] Lee: OK. You got involved in bird work which was not something you were expecting.

Willey: I was very happy and actively searched it out. I had done bird ringing in the UK.

[Part 1 0:11:55] Lee: Oh yes?

Willey: So I was already involved, and I met up with Jim Conroy who was running a giant petrel programme out of Signy, and I knew there was giant petrels at Adelaide. Well it's actually at Avian, one of the offshore islands. And Jim was very happy to provide me with the gear, show me how to handle a GP and I eventually ended up doing giant petrels and Wilson's petrels, and expanded that onto the penguins and

anything that added a dimension to the job. I was very fortunate to go out to the emperor penguins as well.

[Part 1 0:12:42] Lee: Where?

Willey: There's an emperor penguin colony on the Dion Islands. I managed both winters to get out there and do checks, count the colony and what was going on.

[Part 1 0:12:56] Lee: Were you watching them hatching eggs, then, the emperor penguins?

Willey: No. They were on eggs or with young when we went out. No, you couldn't spend a long time out there because the sea ice out there is not good, so you wait for the opportunity and take a trip out and it is only a day trip and back.

[Part 1 0:13:24] Lee: There had been a loss of life, hadn't there, on a similar exercise a few years previously?

Willey: Yes. There were three guys lost from Horseshoe, and Headquarters was very tough on travel on sea ice, that hadn't really any of the Survey specific scientific research on. And quite honestly, visiting an emperor colony once, and just checking that it is there, and counting the birds, it has very limited scientific value. But for somebody to get the opportunity to go and visit it, that was fantastic. But it wasn't the sort of thing that BAS was going to write a report about, so I understand why the Survey were very careful about people going and making trips like that. So it worked out.

[Part 1 0:14:16] Lee: You have mentioned GPs. I am not quite sure what …

Willey: Giant Petrels, the largest of the petrel family. They are just interesting if you don't know; you maybe have seen them. Giant Petrels are regurgitators, a defence mechanism. All petrels do and it is another set of gear you have got to keep separate. If you are working with something like giant petrels, you have got to keep yourself, with the windproof system, that nobody else has to live with because it stinks, it really stinks.

[Part 1 0:14:51] Lee: So what is your advice to people?

Willey: Oh it's very easy. Wear a complete set of clothing, hang it somewhere where there's … where it's nice and cold so it doesn't smell, and don't upset anybody else because they are a terrible smell – terrible smell.

[Part 1 0:15:12] Lee: There's a mention here of the Adelaide-Avian Penguin Express service. What's this?

Willey: Oh that was much later on. In the second year I delegated some of the work. I was working as the base commander, so I couldn't do all the routine work during the nesting season on Avian because I had a lot of species, a lot of nest sites that I had marked up and ringed the birds the first year. So some of the guys decided that helping out, right. So there was a party of them went over there when the penguins are

coming in and there was a lot of nesting going on. And as luck would have it, we picked on … They got together: there was three guys who actually smoked. Avian is not far from the base and it can either be accessed on the sea ice, or when the sea ice was out, we had a little rubber dinghy with an outboard on the back, a Seagull engine on. But they got hit with a half-way house. They got in and they got installed.

[Part 1 0:16:30] Willey: They did a couple of weeks and they were getting towards the end of their time, and the sea ice started to melt but it hadn't gone out enough that we could get the boat across, and they couldn't travel on it. They had no problem with food or anything like that. They had work to do and everything like that. They had radio contact with us and they ran out of cigarettes, and this is doom. So every day on the sched, the radio sched, talking to them, all I would get at the end was this plea. They couldn't smoke and they were going crazy there: drying tea leaves and doing all sorts of strange things. Typical Fids. So somebody came up with a bright idea. Penguins migrate. The Adelie penguins migrate on a quite predetermined path.

[Part 1 0:17:26] Willey: In fact there was a bunch of them used to walk down what we called the High Street – walked right through the middle of the base, go to the jetty, hop onto the ice or hop into the water (whichever way it was) and waddle across. So they decided we might be able to send some cigarettes to them. In those days, BAS provided cigarettes. It was before all the concerns became to light, and it was part of the … BAS was based a lot on Naval traditions because the bases first expedition was done by Naval personnel. So there was things like a rum issue and a tobacco issue and that sort of thing. So anyhow we got these 50-cans of sealed – fifty cigarettes in a sealed can, a round sealed can, and we harnessed them to the back of the penguins.

[Part 1 0:18:28] Lee: An Emperor penguin?

Willey: No no. Adelie penguins. No, emperor penguins are much farther out. They never come near. No, the Adelies were on the island, very small penguins. We had radio contact so strap it on, send it off and the birds travelled across the ice because there was enough ice for them. There wasn't enough water for them to swim. And these guys were able to watch them on binoculars as they came the short trip across and catch them at the other end and solve their habit.

[Part 1 0:19:07] Lee: It worked?

Willey: Oh it worked. It worked very well.

[Part 1 0:19:10] Lee: How do you strap a tin to the back of a …?

Willey: Yes, basically: if you can imagine the two flippers of the penguin, right. So there was a harness created out of the same material used for the dog harnesses that went under the flippers, round the can and onto their back. Strapped it on, fastened it round the front just like we put a harness on a dog, and they took it off at the other end.

[Part 1 0:19:43] Lee: Did the penguin not object?

Willey: A penguin always objects when they get picked up and poked, but actually travelling with it didn't seem to bother them at all. Presumably if you hadn't have caught them, then in retrospect, and they'd got stuck with them, there would be a while before they could dislodge them. The penguin would get rid of them eventually. Penguins are quite creative. But they caught them and they got their cigarettes and everybody was happy. It's an amusing incident.

[Part 1 0:20:19] Lee: They didn't smell too fishy at the other end?

Willey: No. Well I didn't smoke them but the cans were sealed. No they wouldn't smell at all. And the guys were past worrying about that.

[Part 1 0:20:31] Lee: Can you remember whose idea that was? Was that your idea?

Willey: No, it wasn't mine I don't think. I think it was one of the guys on the island.

[Part 1 0:20:39] Lee: They were that desperate?

Willey: When you get round to smoking dried tea leaves, I think you are pretty desperate then.

[Part 1 0:20:48] Lee: OK.

Willey: There was one thing going in that might be of interest. We hit the first eruption of Deception exactly.

[Part 1 0:21:01] Lee: Which ship were you on? The *Shackleton*?

Willey: On the *Shack* at that stage. We had been in and dropped people off and we had headed away. This must have been … It was before Christmas. It was early December. I think the first eruption was on the 4th and we eventually got in about the 7th of December. Anyhow we were out towards Signy Island or somewhere like that when we got the shout that Deception had erupted. Captain Turnbull at the time, he loved this. This was an opportunity to really go to the rescue and hammer the ship. The ship never went so fast in the whole time I was on it. But the reality was the *Pilato Pardo* got there first and they pulled the people off. So we eventually travelled over, as I say about the 7th and we could see, as we approached the island, there was still activity. There were still things going on but there wasn't anything massive or major at that stage.

[Part 1 0:22:07] Willey: We took the base staff off the *Pilato Pardo* back onto the *Shack* and then we went back in through the Bellows into … Deception Island in theory for us was an extinct volcano and there is a fantastic deep water port in the middle of it, where the old volcano had erupted at some stage in the past. Anyhow so we drive in through the Bellows and suddenly, relatively close, there was this massive eruption started. A cloud of steam, pumice, the whole thing. I was on the bridge so I recognised the reaction of the captain.

[Part 1 0:22:57] Willey: The boat started to get bombarded with the pumice and we got bits a cricket ball and bigger, bouncing around on the ship, right, much to the

amusement of the Fids. Everybody was out taking photographs. And then it started to be quite musical. It was 'boyng, boyng, dong, dong' on cans. And I think Turnbull was ahead of everybody else. What we had, we had aviation spirit, in 40-gallon oil drums stored on the front of the boat, on the deck, and yet here's these hot embers from a volcanic eruption bouncing off them. So we did a quick U-turn and retreated to the … He didn't want to risk anything going wrong. But it was the start of an interesting period in living in Antarctica, a different world.

[Part 1 0:24:06] Lee: If you had already got the men from the other ship, why did you go through the Bellows?

Willey: He was going in because BAS wanted the … When the boys had left, the base was still habitable. Perhaps we have got to go back a little in history. Deception was an important part of the support structure for the scientific work. We had already offloaded a whole lot of new steelwork to build a bigger hangar for the new aircraft. We were getting in the Twin Otter which was much bigger than the Single Otter and Pilatus Porters we had before, and there was a huge investment there. And historically we had used Deception as the base for the aircraft and the aircrew, to support the summer programmes, so they didn't want to lose that. So we had to go in, make sure the base was going to be habitable again, because there was a clear belief that that this was a once off deal that wouldn't happen for hundreds of years. Check that the material was still there, basically check out what was going on, and to that end we had actually already got a boat in the water to go in and check everything. So the boat got left, the people went in to check, but the *Shack* adjourned from the bay.

[Part 1 0:25:50] Lee: Leaving the small boat behind?

Willey: Yes. We went back for them but we didn't hang around in the … between where the boat was and the base, the people who had gone ashore weren't in any problems. The wind direction and everything meant all this debris from the eruption was coming onto our ship. They didn't have a problem. Then we went back and picked them up.

[Part 1 0:26:18] Lee: Did you fear for your life at all?

Willey: Not at all. I think this was something entirely new for a lot of us, but none of the quite serious incidents – I don't know whether we ever didn't take them seriously enough or we just knew there was no point in being … you know, running around crazy like headless chickens. That if anything was going to be solved, with any of the incidents, it was up to yourselves to do it. Nobody was going to rush in with a charging white horse and rescue you, so no, there wasn't any, certainly that I perceived and certainly not in me, great fears of any of the … Quite major things went on though, went wrong in that sort of environment: people falling through sea ice, falling through holes. And I have never ever seen any panic or massive fear in the people who are doing it. Strange.

[Part 1 0:27:24] Lee: How confident were you about Captain Turnbull? Was he a good captain?

Willey: Oh fantastic. As part of the structure, you are signing on as supernumeries, so you get to know the officers and the crew quite well. You do a lot of the routine of the ship's … You steer the ship; some of the engineers would work downstairs in the engine rooms and we would be doing Met and everything. So you meet everybody and then you very quickly know the professionality of the team. Having made a couple of trips South, and North, the professionality of the people working the BAS ships were way way ahead of what's going to Antarctica now, in terms of ships' captains. Most have been going a lot of time; a lot of knowledge had been handed on from one captain to the other: weighed anchor, ice states, what can happen, what can't happen.

[Part 1 0:28:28] Willey: On a couple of trips with the tourist boats, I think there was people taking frightening risks. On one trip we put some people ashore, just beside Argentine Island, with the barometer going through the bottom. Clearly good weather when they put them ashore but anybody who had any nowse about them knew that they were going to get into bad trouble. Within hours they were in trouble and it took them 20-odd hours to get them off. They had virtually nothing with them: what they stood up in. So no, I think the tourist boats take a lot of risks down South, but they probably don't have any fear either.

[Part 1 0:29:26] Lee: Well they are on a twenty day turn-round, aren't they?

Willey: Yes.

[Part 1 0:29:28] Lee: Yes, OK. Where were you when the second Deception eruption took place?

Willey: We were on base. The eruption: most of us were around the radio shack that night, because: not waiting for the eruption, because obviously we didn't know that was going to happen. There was an airlift out of Halley that night. John Brotherhood had broken his leg and was being evacuated by the Americans. They were in one of their huge aeroplanes with jet-assisted take-off to pull him out and it was – entertainment is the wrong word – but of high interest, to listen to the communication between Stanley and Halley, coordinating the aircraft coming in and getting the guy out. The first thing we knew about Deception was the poor radio op up at Deception Island tried to butt in on this communication between the two, and being told by both to shut up and get off it. He had to get quite upset at the end. I remember them shouting 'SOS SOS. People are going to die.'

[Part 1 0:30:55] Lee: What, Deception were shouting that?

Willey: Yes, because at that stage, having talked to the people afterwards, it was completely different. The eruption came out at another place, and actually it was the base being bombarded on this occasion. There was a huge build-up of ash, big lumps of cinder hammering on the base, little fires starting and all sorts of things, and that was very serious. I don't think the guys in the first eruption were ever seriously in danger of loss of life, but the second one definitely was. But there again, typically of Fids, they were very creative. They equipped themselves with sheets of corrugated iron, which were there to rebuild parts of the aircraft hangar, and I don't know whether there was two under one or whatever, but anyhow they paraded up the island

over towards the Bellows, away from where everything was dropping, to find themselves a place, holding these sheets of corrugated iron over their heads. And again nobody was hurt, and again it was actually the Chilean *Pilato Pardo* got them off as well. But no, we listened to that from base.

[Part 1 0:32:20] Lee: Were you listening to Morse signals or to voice?

Willey: That was voice.

[Part 1 0:32:24] Lee: Oh, so it was pretty dramatic then?

Willey: Aye, it was voice. Most communication was in voice but the serious stuff was always sent in Morse because voice was still at that stage …; it was very poor reception but you could hear enough to work out what was going on, especially if you put earphones on. But anything that was transmitted in terms of data or information, that still had to be done with Morse.

[Part 1 0:32:58] Lee: Let's talk about the incident on the Larsen Ice Shelf, if you don't mind, Ian.

Willey: Sure.

[Part 1 0:33:04] Lee: Whereabouts was this and how did it arise?

Willey: I have got to go back to the end of the season before. There was an air crash right at the end of the season. The Pilatus Porter crunched at the top end of the Sound. Pilot and air mech, Graham Smith the geologist and his GA, they couldn't get anywhere. It was right at the end of the season and they couldn't get anything in to pick them up, and luckily Fossil Bluff had built up in terms of supplies for a wintering, not that year but there was a wintering planned or proposed down there. So there was plenty of grub there. And at base we still had … Maybe there was only three people on the aeroplane. Martin Bramwell that couldn't come South with me, he was one of the Met men from Adelaide. He was in doing the Met at Fossil Bluff because when you are flying you need a Met man at both ends. And I think the diesel mech John? … (it's gone), John was still there.

[Part 1 0:34:36] Willey: So there was probably only three of them in the aircraft. So it was decided by HQ and Stanley Office that the best bet was them to manhaul into Fossil Bluff and winter. So we had a pilot and four others wintering at Fossil Bluff[1]. When the aircrew came in the next summer, obviously Deception was no longer available to them so Adelaide had been decided to be the … Quite a good runway at Adelaide. Adelaide would be the centre of the aircraft operations. The two planes came in, one of them the new Twin Otter and the aircrew was with us maybe two or three days before it was decided there was a serious attempt to evacuate the base in Fossil Bluff, certainly get the people out who weren't supposed to be in Antarctica at all, and that was the pilot and the air mech, and change over the personnel who had stayed down there for the winter.

[1] According to Keith Holmes' List of Fid winterers, the 1968 Fossil Bluff winterers were: Ayers, J.R. (Pilot); Bramwell, M.J. (Meteorologist); Ledingham, R.B. (OIC, Meteorologist); Smith, C.G. (Geologist); Walsh, J.C. (Air Fitter).

[Part 1 0:35:54] Willey: It was a tough winter because that was a four-man base. It was in terms of food, fuel and everything equipped but it wasn't a natural wintering base. So we wanted to pull the guys out. Anyhow flight-wise we set off; we made a shot on the 9th which was a no-go right from the start. We got airborne, started off. The mank[2] was terrible; we turned back and landed on Adelaide. But the next day, the Chief Pilot Derek Smith was determined that we were going to have a go. So there was six of us on the aeroplane: three of us to do the relief in terms of … I was there as a Met man. There was Dave Ridding there as the diesel mech and Bugs McKeith who was the General Assistant who would go and help the geologist, plus the whole aircrew: the two pilots and the air mech were on board. We attempted twice to take off from Adelaide and the temperature was too high and the runway was too soft.

[Part 1 0:37:23] Willey: The three Fids were in the back of the aircraft so we didn't know totally what was going on but what was happening: reducing the load every time so that they could get off. Eventually we got up, off, really in weather that wasn't suitable. Normally, especially on the first trip, the base commander would work with the aircrew. You go line-of-sight underneath the weather because you are flying over the water most of the time, and many trips, certainly the two trips I made later down to the Bluff, from taking off at Adelaide I could see the Bluff because quite often in Antarctica at that time of year you can see more than a hundred miles, no problem at all. And although you are not seeing it, it is actually miraged up. You can see exactly where you are going to.

[Part 1 0:38:21] Willey: Anyhow we went up in the cloud and the plane droned its way down. It was quite high up because I remember in the plane we were a bit short of breath sitting in the back, and eventually we went down. And because I had been before, they called me up to the cockpit to try and sort out where they were. And the pilot was asking me what elevation the Sound was, which where Fossil Bluff was, which was a strange question. They had the maps. I didn't have the maps. Anyhow basically the Sound is at sea level. The problem was that finding a base as they went down to look where to land at three thousand, three and a half thousand feet, something like that. So clearly we weren't anywhere near the Sound. We couldn't see the Sound and we had two possibilities.

[Part 1 0:39:18] Willey: We could have gone east or west in terms of drifting in the winds and we could have been over Alexander Island or we could have been over the Peninsula. I felt we were probably over the Peninsula because the west was the common wind, but anyhow they couldn't find where they were going to and they decided … They were in contact with the base by radio, the Fossil Bluff, and the weather had turned much worse there, so the decision was to return to base. The decision had been left kind of marginal. The weather degenerated even further. We did fly relatively low that time. We didn't go back up into the cloud. We tried to find the water but we couldn't always find the water because there was too much blowing snow and really bad weather.

[Part 1 0:40:14] Willey: Eventually we were running low on fuel and there was a decision to make a landing. It is an interesting thing to say 'We are going to make a

[2] Fid slang for overcast weather.

landing.' And you don't know where you are and you can't see where you are going. Anyhow basically that's what we did. The Squadron Leader put the aircraft into a landing position. We all assumed the position and for a long period continued in a slow descent. In retrospect, how we got through where we got through was unbelievable, because we actually crossed the Peninsula during this landing exercise and landed on the Larsen Ice Shelf with no way we could see anything and no idea where we were going. And to find a place flat enough to land an aircraft without any ground support information about wind speed or direction, and where you could put your skis down or anything like that, was quite miraculous. So I am very very fortunate. We landed there and overall we were there something like … it must have been just about ten days.

[Part 1 0:41:43] Willey: We made one move. Well it took us a couple of days to find out exactly where we were, work out where we were and get messages back to base. Even that was a nightmare because the communication between the aircraft radio and base radio was voice normally but where we were, on the other side of a mountain range, there was no communication of any value. We had a guy very good on Morse but the aircrew wanted to know what we were telling the base. They wanted to be relatively in control and we ended up answering questions by simply on and off on the radio, as a yes/no exercise.

[Part 1 0:42:39] Willey: Eventually the base was informed correctly where we were and what we were doing. We didn't get to know a lot about what they were making in terms of efforts to get us out, and we were basically trying to make plans and everything to do an evacuation if we wanted, because the distances weren't great. We were looking probably 60 or 70 miles originally and after four days we moved much closer. BAS found an old depot at a place called Three Slice Nunatak and we flew to that. The reality was that the depot wasn't there anymore and many years after, at the Antarctic Club, I met the guy who put the depot in. The depot had been taken out the next year. The books, that we call the Depot Book in Stonington had been corrected but somehow the data had never got back to base.

[Part 1 0:43:35] Lee: So you had done a flight hop. You had hopped in the plane to this …?

Willey: Hopped in the plane, still on the Larsen Ice Shelf, to a place where we thought we could get more food and fuel.

[Part 1 0:43:44] Lee: How did you actually work out where you were in the first place?

Willey: We worked it out. Well firstly, almost straight away, the Fids were able to ascertain we weren't on land. We weren't on sea ice. So you can only be on a shelf, right? And it was only the Wordie or the Larsen and that we couldn't tell at that stage. But once you are on shelf ice, it's so different. It's so stable compared to sea ice; it's so much thicker; it's very flat. So I knew basically we were on shelf. The weather cleared up and I think it was Dave Ridding again who were able to identify looking back to the west, because to the east we could see nothing. It was just ice and snow as far as the eye could see. We could see mountains; we eventually studied the maps, studied the mountains, until we were able to identify some clear landmarks. There

was a thing called Cape Agassiz and Table Top Nunatak that we were able to get bearings off, and feed back to base where we felt we were. And they did some work with the aerials to try and detect where the aircraft was.

[Part 1 0:45:03] Willey: And between Adelaide and Stonington, the radio ops were trying to do some direction finding to tie us down. So we had quite a good fix where we were. Certainly when we got to Three Slice Nunatak, then we actually had a complete fix on where we were. And what BAS had organised: the *Endurance* had been about a thousand miles away and they got them involved, and *Endurance* had steamed down the Peninsula, come as far south as it could but that early in the season, there was no way *Endurance* was coming down to Marguerite Bay because there was still permanent sea ice. They got in close enough to make attempts with helicopters to fly in. I don't know exactly how many attempts they made before they got to us, but those guys were heroes.

[Part 1 0:46:09] Lee: Why do you say that?

Willey: They came in very close to the limits of their fuel and also probably over their altitude limits, to get the helicopters from the ship to us, drop fuel off to us to get back. They did very well, very well. So we got fuel, refuelled the aircraft, and after ten days we got out again. It was a pretty grim time because part of the unloading that had gone on, it had involved the aircrew dumping their, what we call P-bags, personal bags, equipment that they had been issued for the cold weather, the sleeping bags, a lot of their warm stuff had been jettisoned from the aircraft.

[Part 1 0:47:08] Lee: At what point? When you were trying to take off in the first place?

Willey: When we were trying to take off in the first place.

[Part 1 0:47:12] Lee: Because you were overweight?

Willey: Because we were overweight. I don't know whether they knew what they were throwing off or felt they didn't need it, but they had also jettisoned the tent which then made the idea of walking out, man-hauling out, very difficult. Some of the food that would have been much more sensible to eat, in terms of sledging rations, things like that, emergency rations that we routinely carried on a plane with us, had been jettisoned. The spare skis had been jettisoned. We actually ended up with only one pair of skis. So walking out would have been a bit of a nightmare in retrospect. Even the primus stove was thrown out.

[Part 1 0:47:59] Lee: So how did you cope in those ten days?

Willey: For the ten days, very badly. We split the sleeping bags up but one guy ended up every night just sleeping in the outer, just a canvas outside of the bag, which is basically just a protection cover, so very cold. As we had no primus, when the air mech built a primus, the squadron leader wouldn't allow him to use it in terms of taking fuel from the aircraft. We were melting water simply either initially by squeezing it in our hands until the ice melted, or we got one of these black plastic dustbins, filled that with ice and stuck it up in the cockpit, because you have got long

daylight at that period, so it got relatively warm. So we were always short of water and by the end of ten days we weren't in tremendous shape at all, but it worked out fine. We got back and it was a good experience for BAS.

[Part 1 0:49:33] Lee: Were you hallucinating towards the end of those ten days?

Willey: I don't think so. I have got a journal and it looked … There's stress in the journal but not hallucination for sure, but also a little bit of understanding that you were at a high risk. I remember we were short of food in terms of: we had some very basic stuff, but we had one Dundee cake in a tin and Dave Ridding was the only Scotsman and his task, towards the end, was to recite what was in this Dundee cake, every evening, because we were going to have to have Christmas Day. When we actually got to Christmas Day, we forgot about the Dundee cake. No, I think a lot came out of that because BAS changed the way they operated.

[Part 1 0:50:49] Lee: In what way?

Willey: There was less autonomy to the Chief Pilot and much more involvement of the local base commander for the future, and they moved away from the historic RAF pilots and went to civilian pilots who probably were much more comfortable in small planes. And if you look at what the pilots in Arctic Canada and other places in the world were doing at that stage in terms of civilian pilots in small short take-off and landing aircraft, they were probably a better source of recruitment, in my opinion. And the policy was changed and I think virtually from then onwards, certainly in the next year, we had civilian pilots, pilots with much more understanding and relationship of working with the base commander in terms of the people on the ground. They always understood that the base commander always had the responsibility of deciding where depots would be laid, who would be moved and that sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:52:13] Lee: Was this one of those classic situations where it was a man who wasn't there, i.e. the Chief Pilot back in Cambridge, telling those people who were there what to do?

Willey: No, because there was no pilot back in Cambridge.

[Part 1 0:52:57] Lee: So where was the Chief Pilot?

Willey: He was flying the aeroplane.

[Part 1 0:52:31] Lee: He was actually your pilot?

Willey: The squadron leader was the pilot, yes. He was down for a season.

[Part 1 0:52:38] Lee: This is Smith, is it?

Willey: That was Smith, yes. Smith was RAF squadron leader and Sergeant Green was the other pilot; he was much more used to small aircraft. He came from the Army.

[Part 1 0:52:51] Lee: Was there a sense that RAF pilots might be a bit more gung ho than civilian pilots, a bit more risk taking?

Willey: I can't say that I know it for sure, but I got the feeling that this was an adventure for them, outside the normal day-to-day working environment that they had within the discipline of the Forces, So this was an opportunity to do something different in aeroplanes, whereas the more bush pilot type of people, that's their bread and butter; that's the way they live every day. So you have a different mental attitude, in my opinion, to it, but there was also a lot of pressure on Smith to get Ayers out because Ayers was another RAF pilot, sitting at Fossil Bluff for a year, his career going nowhere while he sits there, to get him out – a fellow pilot – to get him out and get him back in the system. There was also a lot of pressure on him because for a poor guy to sit down there totally unexpected, with as far as I remember a wife and family back in the UK, that wasn't a good state of mind either.

[Part 1 0:54:19] Lee: So there was, in your view, some poor decision making going on, in retrospect? Hindsight is wonderful of course, but …

Willey: Yes, I think there was some poor decision making in terms of understanding … They had been very successful ferry??? [incomprehensible] the aircraft all the way from Canada and getting to Antarctica in the first place. It was no mean task at all. There was a lack of understanding and a lack of preparedness to understand the patience required to fly in Antarctica. You have got to sit on your backside a lot of time, waiting for the weather to be right and then fly every day, every hour, backwards and forwards, changing pilots, doing what you needed to do in the brief periods of good weather. To force the issue in terms of pushing aircraft to do jobs on a schedule that 'we must go today' is impossible in Antarctica.

[Part 1 0:55:30] Willey: It's not an aircraft schedule; it's completely driven by the weather and by the weather at take-off and destination, because if you don't have both ends right, it doesn't work. They are doing marvellous down there now. The other thing that changed and compared today – you can do a lot more today – we had no real system of navigation. Without line of sight, the aircraft weren't going to get where they wanted to go. In the next year the whole aerial system, the whole radio system at Adelaide was revamped to suit the aircraft operation, so we were able to put up beacons and things like that. And if I look at what they are doing at Rothera today, they can fly in very marginal weather. They have got state-of-the-art navigation systems. It's a different world.

[Part 1 0:56:30] Lee: Do you feel that the changes that took place the year after your escapade, were they already in train, or were they introduced …?

Willey: For sure the radio systems were in train. I do not know but I assume the change of personnel and the change of the Stanley operating procedures came about because of this problem.

[Part 1 0:56:54] Lee: Was anybody censured for what happened?

Willey: Not to my knowledge, not to my knowledge. The Press did get hold of it and obviously Fuchs and BAS Headquarters would be bombarded with questions, but we weren't there, so we don't know what went on.

[Part 1 0:57:10] Lee: I didn't spot any mention of it in Fuchs's book *Of Ice and Men*.

Willey: No.

[Part 1 0:57:14] Lee: Why do you think it wasn't in there?

Willey: Who can tell why something isn't put into it. I think it is something that Fuchs must have made a deliberate decision not to put in, because most of the incidents were in. Probably of all the incidents, it did get a more critical press than a lot of things that went on. When there is a volcanic eruption or something else goes wrong, the Press is not nasty, but when it appears that you have got a problem and some of it can be laid on management, it is always the Press's job, game, the way they operate, that they pressurise it.

[Part 1 0:58:09] Lee: You must be in a bit of a cleft stick, Ian, because the problem started out: it was Squadron Leader Smith who appears to have been the source of the problem, yet it was his skills as a pilot that saved your lives.

Willey: Absolutely. Without the landing, we were all dead. How skilled was it? I don't know.

[Part 1 0:58:40] Lee: More luck perhaps?

Willey: A huge amount of luck. To put an aeroplane with zero visibility into a landing when you don't know where you are and you don't know where you are going to land, it's got a hell of a lot of luck. It was probably more influence than the pilot or anybody else involved.

[Part 1 0:59:02] Lee: Did you, at any time, feel like you were a dead man waiting to … any moment now?

Willey: No. I remember the Fids in the back: we shook hands before we assumed our position. Interesting: immediately after (and we talked about it afterwards), once we had landed and we switched of motors and everything, there was no great discussion, no urge to run around and do things. We all actually fell asleep, so there was certainly a great amount of nervous tension in everybody on the aircraft, and even in very cold temperatures, we slept quite a long time before we actually got our act together and started doing things.

[Part 1 0:59:57] Lee: Do you remember any friction amongst the party during that ten days?

Willey: The party handled itself pretty good. Obviously there was friction but none of it was allowed to erupt. But that was also interesting about Fid bases in general. When you put a lot of young guys together at that sort of age group, you will get conflicts. You will get … They didn't blow up. They stayed within bounds and everybody knew

that both together. They knew there was going to be no outside intervention. I don't know about other bases, but certainly the experiences I had, and intimately known what was going on in Adelaide and Stonington … I think the Survey did a pretty good job in sorting people's mentalities, getting the right people down South. I think they were very skilled at doing that. Some of the people were very skilled at doing that.

[Part 1 1:01:04] Willey: But also I think the guys were the right sort of people to put into those sorts of environments. I am not sure how we would have done in Scott and Shackleton's period because I believe the type of experience we had, we were certainly not as tough as those people. But most of the guys I met down South at that stage were very self-reliant, very independent and they had their heads on pretty straight. They knew the limitations of what you could do in making trouble between one another. I don't know how they do it today with women on base That might be a nightmare.

[Part 1 1:02:00] Lee: I think they cope. The decision of the *Endurance* to send its helicopters up, were you expecting that or did that come as a surprise?

Willey: It came as a surprise to us.

[Part 1 1:02:10] Lee: So you actually didn't have an escape route? There was no escape plan until that helicopter landed?

Willey: No, its back-up …We knew, we were informed that was Plan A: that they are coming down. I am pretty sure the day … We were looking for them the day before. We'd had reasonable weather that side but they'd had bad weather on the other side. We didn't actually know they were coming when they came. They came out of the blue. If we did, we only knew it very shortly before they arrived. In terms of getting out, there was still the back-up plan that there was an exercise called Bill's Gulch that was a known way off the Larsen Ice Shelf, that took us up onto the Peninsula, and at that stage it was less than 50 miles, and there was a plan that a party would come out from Stonington with sledge dogs and would walk out. In hindsight, after ten days we weren't in fantastic shape, and given that all the party weren't properly equipped, that would have been a dangerous evacuation.

[Part 1 1:03:40] Willey: Once we realised among ourselves that there was a chance of another rescue, and everybody didn't have what they needed, staying with the plane was clearly the biggest option of getting out because apart from our Navy ship, there was US icebreakers as well as Argie icebreakers. There was always a good chance that you would get something in because most of the icebreakers were carrying helicopters as well. But I am not sure we thought it that well through on the ground. To a large extent the rescue was being driven from the outside and that was probably the best place for it. They had the communications; they knew what was available, so we were basically being instructed to sit tight, and it worked.

[Part 1 1:04:43] Lee: So once the *Endurance*'s helicopters had supplied you with fuel and I guess food and other …

Willey: No no, just fuel.

[Part 1 1:04:50] Lee: Just fuel?

Willey: Oh no, these guys were at their limit. I think we only got two 40-gallon oil drums of fuel, maybe four, I am not sure. But no, that was absolutely all they could bring.

[Part 1 1:05:12] Lee: But you flew yourselves out, did you?

Willey: We flew ourselves out. The intent was, in the communication with everybody was that we were going to land at Stonington and refuel because Stonington … was between Stonington and Adelaide. Again a decision was made that everybody wasn't all that happy on the aeroplane. We actually flew on to Adelaide and landed back at Adelaide safely, but again virtually out of fuel. So we continued to take too many risks in the whole process for me. When there was an aircraft fuel depot halfway on our trip, and a landing strip, common sense would have said 'Land, refuel, get a full load on and make the final trip to base'. But no, we flew straight through in one hop and we got there.

[Part 1 1:06:06] Lee: Was there a party?

Willey: No, I don't think so. There was an inquest I think, more than a party. No, there was no party. There was no great euphoria celebration. Obviously everybody was very happy to see us back and we were happy to get back, but I think it was heads into making sure you got your reports done and making sure that everything was properly documented, to get back to the Survey what had gone on.

[Part 1 1:06:39] [End of Part One]

Part Two

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: This is Ian Willey, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee, on the 27th of October 2012. Ian Willey, Part 2.

[Part 2 0:00:12] Lee: You were appointed base leader in the second year?

Willey: Yep.

[Part 2 0:00:16] Lee: What was your approach to being a base leader?

Willey: I was very happy to take on the task. BAS for me had been a virtual coming of age. From being in a lifestyle: 9-5 work, working in a drawing office, going to work, coming home … I worked in an office with over a hundred draughtsmen, sitting at a board a standard eight hours a day. I was, certainly workwise, in a tremendous rut. BAS for me personally was a huge opportunity and generated, long-term, a complete change in direction of career, of lifestyle, of the way I operated. No, the base commander's job I recognised straight away as a challenge, but actually something that I really wanted, because running an operation like that has so many parameters to it and so much to learn, and so much to have just that opportunity to make things happen, And there was such a lot of things that the base commander can make happen or not make happen.

[Part 2 0:01:55] Willey: You can run an Antarctic base in a very conservative manner. You can do most of what you are supposed to be doing, take zero risk, hunker down through the winter. But what I had seen from my first year and from what was going on, that if you don't challenge the environment you are working in, and challenge the people who are there, you get very little done. The whole thrust of the Survey is to get scientists out into the field, work at their disciplines, produce the scientific data that justifies their existence. BAS in those days, for me, had two functionalities: scientific research – discovery in Antarctica – and also the Foreign Office job of showing the flag and ensuring that even though the Antarctic Treaty went through, you had a presence there of containing the presence for the country of permanent bases in Antarctica, was important for the territorial claims. But without the scientific research, … The two were necessary to get finance to make it continue to make it work.

[Part 2 0:03:23] Willey: So to support young scientists and get their programmes working, is the role of the base leader, especially given that I wasn't a scientist and I didn't have a programme of my own to do. What is dangerous is when you get a BC who is a scientist and we are only human. You have got to be able to share out the assets, the time, everything available, to give all the scientists an opportunity to do their job. And if I am a geologist, Nature says I am going to be supporting the geology. So I was probably in an ideal situation in the second year. In the first year, because of the party at Fossil Bluff, we actually only had one serious scientist at Adelaide. The second year we had a full programme going. We even had a full-time doc who was doing a physiological programme. So virtually everybody had a scientific role to play. So you have really got to share out, work out the logistics and support the different programmes and I found that a real challenge.

[Part 2 0:04:46] Lee: Did you work on a kind of democratic basis? Did you discuss situations and make a group decision, or did you tend to lead from the front?

Willey: I tended to lead from the front. I would discuss … We knew what the programmes were, and I would sit down with individuals and discuss their needs, because any of the scientists could have used 100% of the logistic support available. So you have got to listen to them, talk to them, compromise with them, work out ways to do what we need to do and share the support well. And again we were very fortunate; the scientists worked well together. There wasn't any great …

[Part 2 0:05:38] Lee: Arguments?

Willey: No. No fights, no. Lots of strong discussions because these guys are relying on it to get a PhD out of. They want to get their work done, But no, it worked very well and we were fortunate: the air support in the second year … The air support is key to getting a lot of the fieldwork in because without you get the depots out by aircraft, you can spend all your time and effort putting the depots in using the dogs and you are just depot-laying. If you look at attempts to the Pole, you can spend a whole year depot laying to make one run and it was a bit like that with some of the scientific programmes. If you hadn't got the materials, the logistics in place, you can't do any science at all, or you can't get the fruits of the science out, you can't fly instrumentation back out; you can't fly your rocks back out, whatever. You can't bring your data back to base, so the … It worked. It was a shoestring type operation

but it worked and everybody … Lots of people had disciplines that they had no idea about.

[Part 2 0:06:57] Lee: How did you hear about your brother Lawrence's dilemma, up on Cape Jeremy?

Willey: Again on routine Squadcalls[3] between the field parties and base, which in that case was going to Stonington and then I heard from the radio op on base that we had a party down on the Sound in trouble. They had gone south as part of a programme. There was always travel from Stonington down to Fossil Bluff, down to the Sound, every year. There were two methods of getting down: you either go down the easy way or the hard way. If you've got good sea ice, you take a fast run down on the ice. If the ice is not good, you have to make a haul over the Plateau. You have to go out the back of Stonington, up onto the Plateau, haul gear up onto the top and make a sledge run that way. This year there was reasonable sea ice and they decided to make a run and a party of four of them had set off in not bad conditions from Stonners, to go down. They got well down, only a couple of days short of the Sound, and they crossed the lead one night and it turned out it wasn't a lead.

[Part 2 0:08:36] Willey: They had actually crossed onto a piece of floating ice as opposed to … Because you get huge rafts of floating ice in Antarctica and normally you can pick up whether you are just crossing a lead, but this was obviously a very big piece of ice they got onto. Anyway they got onto it, travelled on it, slept the night on it, to wake up the next day and find out that there was water between them and the shore, the fast ice. As I mentioned before, for ice to have gone out, it had to be an easterly wind or a katabatic wind or something like that, so it was relatively unusual where they were for ice to float out. They were out on the ice for a long time. Temperatures were going up and I was much more worried sitting back in base than I ever was sitting in the aircraft on the other side. I think I was more worried about going back home and facing the parents.

[Part 2 0:09:48] Lee: Would your parents have known about the problem?

Willey: Yes.

[Part 2 0:09:52] Lee: So BAS had told them?

Willey: Yes. I don't know whether they had to. I think BAS was pretty good; if there was anything serious going on in Antarctica that there was ever a chance of the Press getting hold of it, they always used to inform the parents. Or the next of kin, the wife or whoever it was.

[Part 2 0:10:12] Lee: So they told the parents before the papers did, basically?

Willey: Yes, and certainly that's how it was in that case.

[Part 2 0:10:18] Lee: There was nothing you could do, was there?

[3] A type of rugged portable radio set used by BAS for field party communications.

Willey: Oh zero, absolutely zero. In fact on that occasion there was very little anybody could have done for them. If you are out with two tents, four guys, three teams of dogs, on a piece of floating ice, very early in the season, there's no boats down in Antarctica at that time of year. You are right at the beginning of the season. There is no way people can fly aircraft in to you or anything like that. Maybe today somebody could do something but certainly in that era, there was no way anybody was going to get down there. No, they are own luck.

[Part 2 0:11:11] Lee: How did you hear about the change in his fortunes?

Willey: How he got out? What I knew was they were getting very close to the end. They were running short of fuel; they were running short of grub and there was decisions about letting the dogs go. At that stage they were in trouble. It was within a day or so of letting everything go that the wind turned round, the ice blew back. There was a party ran down from Stonington with more grub and they all met up again, and they were out. But those sort of things in our exploration happen. Sometimes it works and sometimes nobody comes back.

[Part 2 0:12:16] Lee: I will talk to Lew about that this afternoon. You had a surprise visitor one day?

Willey: You talk about crazy! There was an American pilot called Max Conrad, not a young guy, quite an elderly guy, who had done some amazing feats in small aircraft, but he was on one of these, not stunt, but on one of these challenges, where he was trying to fly Pole to Pole – circumnavigation. And he turned up at Adelaide. We had no idea this guy was coming. You have been months and months with no outside intervention, then there is an aircraft flying around the base. I don't even know that he had radio contact with us. He definitely didn't have radio contact. He hadn't the frequencies right, or something like that.

[Part 2 0:13:24] Willey: Because the runway runs virtually east-west along the top of the piedmont, southeast-northwest maybe, the guy flew around a few times and obviously decided … He had worked out where the landing strip was. What he had picked on: the dogs were spanned out going up the hill towards where the airstrip was, in two lines. The dogs, by being spanned out, stay in the snow and there's two lines from the air, and this poor guy took a crack at landing going up the hill, and it is quite steep. Anyhow he worked out he was wrong and we had an old abandoned aircraft at the back, so eventually, he is still up in the air. So we went up in a Muskeg to the aircraft and set up flares, and eventually got him down on the right strip. But this guy is in a mess. He is short of fuel. We had some fuel that would do but there's also contradictory messages from Headquarters. He told them he wanted to go. They said 'Don't go.' He told the Americans he wanted to go to Pole and they told him 'No.' And we had all this nightmare of how can he pay for fuel? How can he pay for lodgings and all things like that? Anyhow the guy ended up with us for at least a month I think.

[Part 2 0:15:30] Lee: Do you recall his name?

Willey: Max Conrad, and he was quite famous. We believed, the guys who were on base, that he was looking now at his longest leg. He was looking to fly from us to the

Pole. OK today they do it but with different aircraft altogether. His aircraft was completely ferry tanks: a pilot, a cockpit, an engine and the rest was full of fuel. The boys talked to him over their period of their … and eventually he changed his mind He decided he would go back, that he would opt out. The weather was extremely bad and I think he got worn down also by the restrictions especially by his own people who didn't want him there, didn't want tourists coming in, didn't want guys doing all sorts of things. If you look at what people do today, there's people skiing to the Pole and doing all sorts of things. It must drive them crazy because a lot of the scientific programmes benefit from the winter and benefit from the isolation. All the physiological programmes: if you start bringing people in during the winter, you lose that isolation. You lose that opportunity to do all the measurements. Anyhow Conrad left us eventually.

[Part 2 0:17:13] Lee: Headed north?

Willey: He headed north.

[Part 2 0:17:15] Lee: OK. One more question, Ian, if you don't mind. You were in the Antarctic in the sixties; you've been back three times in the last ten years or so.

Willey: Yes. I have been North and South.

[Part 2 0:17:27] Lee: Would you want to be a Fid today?

Willey: No, definitely not.

[Part 2 0:17:30] Lee: Why not?

Willey: A lot of what we did was based on, not schoolboy but adolescent belief in the myth: the travel, dog teams, challenging the environment. If I go in the base commander's office in Rothera, which I have been, he has wall-to-wall books of administration information, Health & Safety, all the rules and regulations of procedures for this, procedures for that. It is a very different … It is a purely administrative type role that these guys have to carry on now. And the science, although it has basically covering the same disciplines, has changed immensely. Most of the scientists don't winter. They go in and out. I may be wrong but I would be very uncomfortable with wintering women. If we look back to the early experiences at Stonners of when the American base and the British base were there, and we had two ladies on the American base, if you read the books, that was a nightmare. And I think it has got to be a nightmare bringing young men and young women together, single young men and single young women and putting them into that environment. I think the recruitment and the sorting out of staff has got to be a nightmare compared to what it was before.

[Part 2 0:19:33] Willey: But no, I don't think there's a place for guys like me there. The other thing that frightened the hell out of me: the short periods that people spend in Antarctica as scientists must put them at much more risk of something going wrong. You are doing science, getting round on things like skidoos, you get out into the field very quickly. You get long distances out in the field without a lot of experience of travelling in bad weather and understanding of what you are up to. I

don't think you can be properly acclimatised to the job. There's people going in there for a couple of months, in and out, relying on other people to keep them safe. All our scientists were capable of looking after themselves. No, there's no place for me down there now. But also, in life, if you listen to my kids, I was still much more comfortable living in the past than I am in the future. The change in the world: I see a lot wrong with it. There's a lot right with it but a tremendous amount wrong with it and the way we are doing everything in a hurry.

[Part 2 0:21:06] Willey: And I think the exploration, the scientific research that goes on in Antarctica can go on for a long time and I don't know why we are rushing things. It appears to be a function of the world we live in, that everything has to be done urgently. I think when you are dealing with environments like Antarctica, you have got to work with the environment rather than trying to force the issues too much. If you force the issues too much, … I am very very concerned about a tourist ship getting in trouble. I think running people of my age down on tourist ships is fraught with difficulties and somebody is going to come unstuck and there is going to be a major disaster, both North and South.

[Part 2 0:22:12] Lee: Now we must leave it, Ian. Thank you very very much indeed.

Willey: A pleasure. I appreciate your time. I appreciate the way you pull out the answers.

[Part 2 0:22:23] [End of Part Two]

ENDS

Possible extracts:

- [Part 1 0:05:50] Didn't want to go to Halley.
- [Part 1 0:07:26] Layout of Adelaide.
- [Part 1 0:15:12] The Adelaide-Avian Penguin Express.
- [Part 1 0:22:07] Deception Island eruption debris falls on ship.
- [Part 1 0:29:28] Deception second eruption clashes with Halley medivac.
- [Part 1 0:38:21] Aircraft crew and passengers stranded on Larsen Ice Shelf.
- [Part 1 0:38:21] No tent, no primus, no skis, nothing at depot.
- [Part 1 0:45:03] Rescue by Endurance's helicopters.
- [Part 1 0:49:33] Tinned Dundee cake saved for Christmas.
- [Part 2 0:03:23] Base Commander should not be scientist.
- [Part 2 0:06:57] Brother Lew in danger on ice floe.
- [Part 2 0:12:16] Max Conrad flies in on his way to South Pole.
- [Part 2 0:17:30] Views on women wintering.