

TED_CLAPP

Edited transcript of a recording of Ted Clapp interviewed at his home in Cambridgeshire by Chris Eldon Lee on the 11th January 2005. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/19 Transcribed by Andy Smith, 18th April 2016.

[0:00:00] Lee: This is Ted Clapp, interviewed at his home in Cambridgeshire by Chris Eldon Lee on the 11th of January 2005. Ted Clapp Part One.

Clapp: I was Navy. I joined the Navy as a Boy from Southern Rhodesia because my father was in the RAF and at the end of the war, the last year of the war he was posted out to Gwelo (RAF Thornhill) in Rhodesia. And my mother, my sister and myself followed on on the *MV Georgic* out to South Africa, and then up to Gwelo in Rhodesia and I joined the Navy from there, much to my father's disgust (him being a long-term RAF man). But I had always been attracted to the sea. During the war I served a short period in the Merchant Navy as a Boy of 14. So anyway I went out to Rhodesia and then joined the Navy from there, travelled down to Cape Town, brought back to UK, went to the Boys Training Establishment in Portsmouth, *HMS St Vincent*, then to *HMS Ganges* down in Ipswich and from there, on to various parts of the fleet and various ships. I served on aircraft carriers; I served in submarines; I did stupid things or silly things. I did more land battles than I did sea battles.

[0:01:39] Lee: How do you mean?

Clapp: Well I did just some jungle ... I was attached to, I suppose, Combined Operations at various times because I had certain radio techniques that were useful. So I did two jungle patrols during the Communist upsurge there. I was on Suez and I spent quite a good period wandering around North Korea during the Korean War in a jeep and another couple of men, doing spotting for artillery.

[0:02:22] Lee: You don't look old enough for all this. What's your date of birth, Ted?

Clapp: 2nd of the 11th, 1930.

[0:02:26] Lee: Oh right.

Clapp: So I am 74 / 75 now. Yes, I also tried to enjoy myself in the Navy. I am a firm believer in that if you don't ask you don't get anywhere. If you don't push, you don't get anywhere, and if you found something quite interesting, it was perfectly all right to volunteer. So I wasn't worried about volunteering for various things. It paid off and I had a marvellous time.

[0:03:00] Lee: Tell me about your radio background. How did that happen?

Clapp: Well I was a Boy Telegraphist.

[0:03:04] Lee: How do you mean?

Clapp: Well when I joined the ... Rather funny: when I went down to Cape Town for the joining procedure into the Navy as a Boy, we were given an examination by the

padre at Simonstown Naval Base and it was one Long Addition, one Long Multiplication and a short essay. There was myself and two South Africans in this small group and we did this exam and the padre came back and he said 'Well, I don't know what you are going to do when you get to England where people have been educated.' So anyway I came back to UK, went to Boys in *St Vincent*, did further examinations and they decided that I was suitable to become a Radio Operator, which in those days was classified as being: you were perhaps a little more intelligent than the gunner or someone like that, which I am not so sure that's true. So I progressed on though from Boy Telegraphist, did the Boys' training and the radio training at *HMS Ganges* in Ipswich and from there was put aboard a light fleet carrier in the Mediterranean and I gradually progressed up through the radio communication side in the Navy from Boy Telegraphist to Telegraphist, to Leading Telegraphist, to Petty Officer Telegraphist, to Chief Petty Officer Telegraphist.

[0:04:36] Lee: Was this all purely Morse or was there voice work as well?

Clapp: It was mostly Morse. There was voice work. During the latter parts of the various activities I did, it was mostly always voice work and everything like that. Yes, so that basically was that. Then one day in Plymouth, I heard about this expedition down in the Antarctic. I heard about it in the Long Bar in Plymouth actually.

[0:05:06] Lee: What's the Long Bar?

Clapp: That's quite a favourite pub, a famous pub in Plymouth. Anyway I made enquiries and I finished up being interviewed in London by Sir Vivian Fuchs.

[0:05:25] Lee: Sorry, just take it a bit step by step.

Clapp: Step by step?

[0:05:29] Lee: Did you fill in an application form?

Clapp: No, I just sort of made enquiries, took a couple of days' leave, went up to London, made an appointment by phone, to a number I had been given, went up there. Fuchs quizzed me about my background and everything like that and finished up by saying 'Well we would like you to join us. Are you all right with that?' I said 'Yes, but of course you will have to ask the Navy.' There was a bit of a hitch then for some reason or other. I didn't get into trouble but it was expressed to me that perhaps I shouldn't have done things on my own bat like that. But Fuchs was very well- ... Fuchs at that time could go and have tea with the Prime Minister and various other things there. He referred the little problem he had, trying to get hold of me, to Philip Mountbatten. Anyway, Philip Mountbatten got on the act and then I was seconded to the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey.

[0:06:32] Lee: So you hadn't told the Navy you were going for your little chat?

Clapp: I hadn't told the Navy about that.

[0:06:38] Lee: Was that an oversight or just ...?

Clapp: No, it was deliberate because I was well versed in Naval matters and various things like that, plus the fact I was of the rank at that time where I could ... I was a Leading Telegraphist at that time and I had done all my qualifications to become a Petty Officer Telegraphist. It's a bit different nowadays in the Navy, I gather, but in those times when you were a Leading hand, (a) you were expected to show initiative, but also you could take a few short cuts if you knew the short cuts. Anyway that's what happened. So I found myself ...

[0:07:17] Lee: So what did Mountbatten do. Did you find out?

Clapp: I didn't find out but, you see, I had been on board ship with him at one time.

[0:07:24] Lee: Ah, so he knew you?

Clapp: Well I don't know that he knew me personally but he knew what ship I had been on when he had been on it and it went on from there. So I never did find out. I know ... Fuchs told me at a later date that he'd had words with Mountbatten and then things were cleared. Then I found myself going down to Southampton to join the *RRS John Biscoe*.

[0:07:55] Lee: What do you recall of the interview? Was Fuchs the only man in the room?

Clapp: Fuchs was the only man in the room. He asked me about my independence. He was very keen on people being independent.

[0:08:10] Lee: No wife or girlfriend?

Clapp: No, independence of mind and determination, and he quizzed me quite a bit about that. He asked me about my cold-weather activities. Had I had any cold-weather activities. I said yes, I had. I had some training in Norway on snow and ice. So that had pleased him a bit and then he asked me about loneliness, was I worried by being alone, and everything like that. So that, basically, was it. And after about two hours, I think the interview was, he said 'Yes, we would like that.'

[0:08:53] Lee: Did you have to pass any telegraphy tests?

Clapp: Nope. No because if you were a Petty Officer Telegraphist, or a Leading Telegraphist, or even an ordinary Telegraphist in the Navy, in that time, nobody queried whether you knew your job. And in actual fact, at that time, if you wanted to become a radio ham (you know what a radio ham is, don't you? Amateur radio man) ... If you were a Telegraphist in the Navy, you didn't have to take the Post Office examination, whereas an ordinary civilian had to.

[0:09:28] Lee: Other people I have spoken to had remarkably little time between being told they were going South and actually leaving. What was your situation?

Clapp: I would say that I had about a month, because it had to time up with the *John Biscoe* going South. So yes, I had about a month. It was enough to clear the Naval routines and everything like that. The Navy passed me over to the Falkland Islands

Dependencies Survey and then when I got down to Stanley, they claimed me back again for a while.

[0:10:03] Lee: Tell me about the journey south. What do you recall of being on board the *Biscoe*?

Clapp: Yes, it was a small ship. There were a couple of interesting things that happened on board. The first thing was: we had as well as the Fids, the new Fid boys going down South, and myself ...

[0:10:19] Lee: This was in autumn '58?

Clapp: This was in the autumn of '57. This is where I say that sometimes BAS get their dates messed up. But we also had people for St Helena and for Tristan da Cunha on board and the ship called there on the way. I was in uniform when we were getting ready to leave and I was interviewed by a BBC reporter and also one or two other people there, and he said to me 'Oh I suppose you are quite used to the sea so we won't bother you with rough seas and everything like that.' I said 'Well I hope not.' And I think a day out from Southampton I was seasick as anything for a day or so. But then we went to St Helena which was quite interesting. I'd been to St Helena in the Navy. And we went to Tristan da Cunha. There it was quite interesting too because we young men on board the *John Biscoe* did not like the Administrator of Tristan da Cunha at that time, we did not like the way he treated the Tristan da Cunhese people. They were very nice and quite unique in their way.

[0:11:40] Clapp: Anyway we wanted to climb up to the top of the volcano. So we formally were told by the captain that we had to ask permission of the Administrator and he immediately pooh-poohed it and said 'No, I can't allow that. None of you will be experienced or anything like that.' Well on board we had three members of climbing clubs. We had one person who had been climbing in the Himalayas and we had other mountaineering club members and various things on there, so we told him were, and we did. Next day he made a complaint to the captain who gave us a sort of soft rollocking. Then the next day we found that he had made a request to the captain that we were to be used and employed in the fields, in the potato fields helping to pick the harvest. So we told him where to go, more or less. But we were upset with him because we came across notices pinned up on the noticeboard outside the small social hut they had there and it detailed all the individual members of the population who had to go to here, there, and build that wall and do this wall and do this work in the potato fields and everything like that. And it was couched in terms which sort of upset us to a certain extent. We don't think administrators, colonial administrators, should act in that way.

[0:13:09] Lee: There was a sense of colonial dictatorship?

Clapp: Oh yes, absolutely.

[0:13:13] Lee: Has somebody got his name?

Clapp: No, I can't remember his name¹.

[0:13:19] Lee: This was not just you and your ship, this was a general feeling amongst Fids travelling up and down the Atlantic, was it?

Clapp: I think we were the only ones that had been to Tristan da Cunha and as far as I know there was only one other ship for the next ten years went to Tristan da Cunha from the FIDS and that. But we were independent minded and young, to that extent. So we fell out with him and didn't take any notice of him. We told him and when we got to Stanley we made a representation to the Governor in Stanley about it and he passed it on to the Foreign Office. I don't know what happened there.

[0:14:01] Lee: You said when you got to Stanley you were re-requisitioned again.

Clapp: Yes. *HMS Protector* was in Stanley at the same time and on board they had a survey party with a Naval survey launch, to work independently in the Antarctic Peninsula. They were doing triangulation survey and echo-sounding, chart-makers they were, from the Navy chart-making divisions. As I understand it, the captain of *Protector* had been passed my details and my experience and one of my experiences in the Navy was that I was a qualified sailing coxswain, allowed single-handed sailing. And I was approached whilst in Stanley and asked would I mind coming back to the Navy for a while to act as coxswain of this launch, 25ft survey launch that they had, and also as radio operator as well because they were short of people.

[0:15:17] Clapp: And the other thing was that the commander of this small Naval expedition was ... I'd known him on board *HMS Ocean*. He was a pilot on *HMS Ocean*, John Wyn-Edwards was his name. They were going down to the Peninsula on board the *John Biscoe* anyway, their boat was loaded on the *John Biscoe* and we went down to the Peninsula and we were offloaded just at the Argentine Islands and took over a small hut on Wordie Island², BGLE hut, and were based there, and sorted ourselves out. And then for the next month we moved southwards. We were the smallest independent boat that had operated south of the Antarctic Circle.

[0:16:13] Lee: This was not the *Biscoe*?

Clapp: This was a small 25ft survey launch, compete with echo-sounders, depth sounders, all the survey gear and everything like that. We worked our way; first of all we surveyed the Lemaire Channel and my job was to drop the ... We had on board three seamen who also acted as assistant surveyors, and this Lieutenant who was a Naval surveyor, and we had a stoker and another seaman on board who did the echo-sounding and charts and looked after everything like that.

[0:16:53] Lee: All Navy?

Clapp: All Navy, and myself.

[0:16:55] Lee: Do you remember any names?

¹ The Administrator 1957-1959 was Godfrey Harris (source: Tristan da Cunha website)

² He means the Wordie Hut on Winter Island.

Clapp: Yes. One was Cheta, Vince Blore, John Wyn-Edwards was the Lieutenant, myself and I can't remember the name of the stoker.

[0:17:14] Lee: And would the launch have a name?

Clapp: *Anvers Kate*.

[0:17:23] Lee: That was unexpected?

Clapp: Yes, and that was quite good. It suited me down to the ground because I knew I was going to the Argentine Islands and that it was a static scientific base. So some independent work was quite suitable and my job was: I coxswained the launch. I used to go up to where the Lieutenant wanted to, drop the survey party off, go up somewhere else, drop another survey party off and they would take the triangulations across. When they had finished all that, we would then echo-sound up and down whichever it was. There was a funny experience there, if I may tell it. We were working the Lemaire Channel, which all the Fid personnel will know and BAS personnel will know and we were surveying up there and I was dropping the survey parties at various points, picking them up and dropping them further up.

[0:18:17] Clapp: And while they were working, we used to go up to the head of the Lemaire Channel, which is about six miles long, I suppose, and then gradually drift down and then go back up again, wasting time that way: drifting down with the current, go back up again. Of course the toilet facilities on board such a thing were non-existent and the way we used to do our toilets, if I may, it had a cabin and about a 2ft walkway above the freeboard. You sort of dropped your trousers, put your rear end out over the side of the boat, hanging on to the guard rails on top of the cabin and you did your business there, if that was the business that you wanted. Anyway the stoker and myself, we both at this time, we had gone up and were gradually drifting down the Lemaire Channel and the stoker and myself both wanted to go at the same time.

[0:19:16] Clapp: So there we were, both with our rear ends out over the side of the boat, trousers down, and chatting over the top of the thing while this was carrying on, when all of a sudden: 'Whoop, whoop' and around the bend came the Chilean tug *Diego* and she came up and caught us *in flagrante* I suppose it was. But she was very good about it because when we pulled ourselves together, had a little conversation and before she left us, she passed us over about four loaves of bread and about six rolls of toilet paper. So that was quite embarrassing but quite amusing in a way. But yes, and then we carried on south and we did that type of work all the way south.

[0:20:05] Lee: This was original pioneering surveying, was it? Looking for channels?

Clapp: Well the channels had been known. It was doing more detailed echo-sounding over known channels and between islands and various things like that, because at that time, or even now, that coast of the Peninsula was, whilst the channels might have been known, the depths were only known by the ship that first went through. It was only single-line sounding, so we did soundings all over the place and that was quite good because that involved going to an island and setting up camp there for a day and night and then moving south to another island and setting up camp there for a day and

a night. It was quite good and it was a good introduction to the Antarctic in many many ways.

[0:20:54] Lee: That was mainly summer work, I imagine?

Clapp: Oh yes. At one stage we went about twenty miles out to sea to meet up with *HMS Protector* and this was after we had been doing this job for about four weeks I think. The captain of the *Protector* met us as we came alongside. Went up the gangplank. He shook hands with us all and then stood back and said rather pointedly 'Well I expect you all will be very glad of a shower' and guided us down there. So that was quite good.

[0:21:25] Lee: So what happened when that part of your job finished.

Clapp: Then I went to Argentine Islands as the wireless operator there and stayed there for a year. That was quite interesting too. It was a static scientific base. Our base commander was Joe Farman who is now Sir Joe Farman³, who was one of the earlier discoverers of the ozone layer, the hole in the ozone layer.

[0:21:55] Lee: Oh right. A good man?

Clapp: Yes, a very good man. He got a knighthood for that, Joe Farman, and he was good in the fact that he introduced me to classical music. He was a classical man. There were twelve of us on base and he introduced me to classics and we used to have sessions. He had all the scores of all the music down and the records, and I had a thoroughly good time there, a very good sounding in the type of classics that I liked.

[0:22:27] Lee: Was there any instrument or was it just simply the record player?

Clapp: Record player. We had our session times. The others had theirs with their jazz and everything like that. That was quite good, very good. Tight-knit community and my job was: I used to send the weather out. We had meteorologists; we had physicists, radio-sonde sounding and my job sending out the weathers every four hours and also all the various other scientific data that was required and to keep the sort of admin contacts with the radio station in Stanley.

[0:23:03] Lee: Was it always routine work or were there unexpected episodes?

Clapp: At the static base, it was virtually routine work, if you could call it routine work. The other episodes were: we had to build an engine shed, a new power plant shed, so we had to do all that ourselves. And we also had to build a new seismic station, out in one end of the island, so I had to do all that. All that had to be done with special bricks and special cement and special levels. We were skiing but no special events in that way. During that period, I spent some time ... I spent about four weeks recording on the penguin island, just out in the main channel, recording the activities of penguins and various things like that. So I lived with the penguins for about four or six weeks.

³ Farman was awarded OBE but was never knighted.

[0:24:18] Lee: Recording in terms of taking ...?

Clapp: Recording movements, recording the number that came back off the sea ice, back to the rookery for nesting and breeding. In actual fact I believe I have been engaged to a couple of penguins because at that time it was, I understand, as far as my knowledge was, a penguin could not recognise whether another penguin was female or male. I think that has been disproved now by the modern methods, but that was the time when it was felt that the only way another penguin knew a female penguin was when they picked a stone up and dropped it at the feet of a female penguin, or another penguin standing around. If the penguin kicked the stone away, it was a male and if it picked it up and put it down at the feet and this other bird brought another on and it was accepted, that's how they built their nests. And that's how they picked their mates, so to speak. My job involved a lot of time just sitting and recording and writing details, and quite often a penguin would come up and drop a stone at my feet. I used to look at it and say 'I think you are trusting your luck, mate' and kick the stone away. But I always reckon I have been engaged in my lifetime to a couple of penguins.

[0:25:48] Lee: Was that base, ,was Argentine base in ...? This would be '58/'59.

Clapp: '58, yeah.

[0:25:57] Lee: '58 into '59? Were they doing survey work as well?

Clapp: No.

[0:26:01] Lee: Just observations?

Clapp: No that was just truly observations there.

[0:26:06] Lee: And you were relaying information back to Stanley, by Morse?

Clapp: Back to Stanley by Morse.

[0:26:10] Lee: What was your equipment like? Was it sophisticated, or ...?

Clapp: No, it was ex-Naval equipment which was good for me because when it went wrong, I knew what to do. It was a Q89 which was a transmitter of about 750 watts. We had an emergency small-range radio, battery driven radio which was about 500 / 600 watts and that could reach up quite well. But that came out of a Lancaster aircraft. It was the type of set that was put in Lancaster aircraft (big bombers). And then we had a couple of small ex-Army T18 sets there for if somebody wanted to go across to the other end of the island or something like that. It was sophisticated for that time in a way. The Q89 was worldwide if we wanted to do, and that's the set I used to most of my amateur radio work on there, and that was one way of keeping contact. We used to have contact all over the world.

[0:27:16] Lee: So you had your own sign?

Clapp: VP8DK was my ...

[0:27:22] Lee: And did you keep logs of the conversations you had?

Clapp: Well we kept our logs as we were required but it was mainly you exchanged what they called QSL cards in those days, and the idea was: you collected as many QSL cards as you could do. And of course being a VP8, which was South Atlantic DK and Antarctica, they were queuing up to try and get into you and you would have perhaps a couple of minutes conversation (because we used to do voice as well as the Morse), and really they were only interested in making a contact and getting your QSL card sent on through there. But we used to have conversations with people in UK who used to then ring up parents and things like that and say 'Oh I have just spoken to so-and-so down there.' An embarrassing time was: I was in contact with a female up on the American DEW line. She was a female Army person up on the American DEW line in the Arctic, way out there. A lot of the chaps were there in the shed with me, or the radio shack with me, and 'Oh we haven't seen a female for so many years.' That type of chat was going on. We said 'It's pretty cold down here at the moment. We are down to -30 in midwinter. Down to -30. Pretty cold.' Swinging the lead a bit on that and she came back and she said 'Ya. I know about that. It's -70 up here at the moment.' So we didn't bother bull working any more.

[0:29:06] Lee: This was informal communication?

Clapp: This was informal communication.

[0:29:11] Lee: Was it sanctioned?

Clapp: Oh yes, yes, because the powers to be realised that you needed some sort of diversion. It was good psychology. So yes, it was quite good.

[0:29:26] Lee: So there were no restrictions by this time about what you could and couldn't say? Where you were and ...

Clapp: Not really and also too, when the ships came down, there was another, night-time schedule that everybody got to, which was called the Goon Show. You've heard about the Goon Show?

[0:29:42] Lee: I have indeed, yes.

Clapp: That was the frequency where all the ships, and all the sledge parties that could get within range, and all the bases got together and chatted amongst themselves and passed information, asked questions and various things like that, and also too, it was listened to a lot in Stanley. The Governor used listen in a lot to it.

[0:30:08] Lee: So it was a kind of open circuit?

Clapp: It was an open circuit, yes. It was a general discussion show through everybody who could get in, and everybody listened in and it was quite good because (a) it gave the sledge parties that were in the field it did manage to contact, because they normally only had a small Army T18 very low wattage set there, and if they were on high ground, they could come into the Goon Show. And also too, the bases that had sledge parties out used to try and contact them then outside the normal contacting

times. So it was a good get together all the way on through, but lots of things got talked about. I remember one incident in that the captain of ..., was it the *Shackleton*? I think it was, had got himself in a little bit of trouble. *Shackleton* went aground and hit a rock and was hobbled and had to repair to South Georgia. There was conversation going on between two base commanders, and a person in Argentine Islands about 'Oh yes, we understand that there's resignation certificates being passed out left right and centre.' And the general chit-chat continued in that line, rather 'Everybody had better watch it; otherwise we will all be kicked out.'

[0:31:47] Clapp: Next thing, we had a message from the Governor, came down, and he said 'If I hear any more discussions like that, the least people will be looking for will be a farm on retirement.' That caused us to think, so I did some little queries back to the operator in Stanley, who did some queries back for me. And that's when we found out that during the evenings, the Governor, whatever was going on, if there was a dinner party or whatever it was, things stopped at 10 o'clock and they tuned in to the Goon Show and the Governor was listening in to everything because you had to watch your language on there as well because the Governor and his guests were listening in, it was realised, which was very bad. We didn't particularly like that.

[0:32:43] Lee: Did that change the nature of the Goon Show, once you knew that?

Clapp: No it didn't. But the other thing, talking about the Governor, and I'm not giving any names away, because the Governor concerned has passed on to a better world now. I had to transmit a birthday greetings telegram or a message to be passed on as a telegram, to our station in Stanley, and it was wishing Princess Margaret many happy returns of the day. Next thing, we got a message from the Governor who said that he had stopped this telegram to Princess Margaret. 'The only person in this part of the world that's allowed to send a personal birthday greetings message to any member of the Royal Family, is me, as Governor of the Falkland Islands and I don't intend to take any further action.'

[0:33:45] Clapp: The reply from the originator of the message went back and it said 'I am a personal friend of Princess Margaret and you will release my telegram immediately or else members of the Royal Family will know.' And his message was released and the personal greetings went on to Princess Margaret. But that's the type of people that we had down there at that time. We had people who were quite well up in the academic world, well up in the scientific world, well up in the social world as well, because we went down there for £250 a year. We went down for the love of Antarctica, not as it was later on where the large amount of salary did shift the emphasis of the people who wanted to go down there. And you went down for £250 if you spent one year; and your salary went up to £350 if you spent two years. So virtually all the people that were down there were there for the love of it and for wanting to do something in the Antarctic and for the experience of the Antarctic, and that attracted a lot of people that it doesn't seem to attract nowadays.

[0:35:00] Lee: So that was in '58, Princess Margaret's birthday?

Clapp: That was '58, yes, that incident happened.

[0:35:09] Lee: If they have got this right, and I hope they have, you then went to Hope Bay, Base D, the following year?

Clapp: Yes.

[0:35:15] Lee: How did that come about? Did you choose that or was that a posting?

Clapp: It was me wanting to ... It was actually FIDS carrying out a promise to me, in the fact that I had said that I was a little bit upset that I went to a static base, what was classified as a static base, I had found that was what it was, whereas I wanted to get out in the field. They said 'Go to Argentine Islands for the first year and we will put you to somewhere else, where there is more activity in the way that you want.' And they were very good; they did and I went to Hope Bay and was sledging out of Hope Bay from there. But in between times I went to Hope Bay because after Argentine Islands, the promise was to go to a sledging base and I was sent down to Base W which was further down, below the Antarctic Circle, Base W, and that was a sledging base. I was there for sledging, mountaineering, doing ice and snow work up to the Detroit Plateau. I went down by *John Biscoe* and the sea ice was 20-odd miles out from base, so the ship couldn't get in.

[0:36:37] Clapp: But those of us who were going into Base W, went into Base W by dog sledge. They came out and we went into Base W by dog sledge and the expectation was that the *Biscoe* would wait out there, the ice would break up and she would be able to come in and load us up with stores and everything like that. That didn't happen. So there was a US Coast Guard icebreaker, the *Edisto*, in the area at that time with another US Coast Guard smaller icebreaker called the *Northwind* and they offered to help get the *John Biscoe* into Base W. They came up and full-charged the ice and came to an abrupt halt and after about a week both the captain of the *Biscoe* and captain of the *Edisto* and the *Northwind* said 'We are not going to get in. The ice is too thick.' It was too solid; it was getting late in the season so obviously the ice wasn't going to break up. It was 20 miles and they couldn't do it. So the decision was taken that we would abandon Base W for the year and we would come out.

[0:37:57] Lee: Because you couldn't get the stores in?

Clapp: Because we couldn't get the stores in. Some of us volunteered to stay. We had enough stores I would say, for short rations for a year, but there were other bits and pieces that the base commander said no we can't do without. We are all going to abandon them. Captain Kelly Johnson of the *John Biscoe*, he agreed on that, because the captain of the ship, when he was in the area, superseded the base commander; he made the final decision. So anyway we then sledged out to meet the *Edisto* and the *Northwind* and the *John Biscoe* at the ice edge. We set out and it was a long slow journey. We arrived alongside the ship, or coming up to the ship, and it was dark by the time ... I can't remember the actual time, but it was dark. But we had made this long journey; we had been in radio contact and we could see the lights of the ships ahead of us when we got near enough.

[0:39:12] Clapp: Then somebody on board the *Edisto* decided he would be very helpful to us and he got all the big searchlights and he shone them straight towards where he understood we were, because every now and again they wanted us to put up

a flare, just to assure that we were all right. So he shone this straight towards us. Even the dogs were going like that; it just blinded us completely.

[0:39:41] Clapp: Anyway when we were coming up to the ship, and we were picketing our dogs on the sea ice, ready to go on board the *Biscoe* or the *Edisto* or whatever. The captain of the *Edisto* came on; we heard him come on the Tannoy saying, it was words like 'Now hear this; now hear this. The British sledge party have arrived alongside. Now these guys are real guys and they are real heroes and I want everybody on upper deck to come up and give them a cheer and everything like that.' And he got all the American crew on the upper deck clapping and cheering, as the Americans do, and waving to welcome us back. So the end shot of that was: we picketed all the dogs out and they hauled us aboard the *Edisto*, for coffee and ... and we lost everything. We lost our mukluks. We took our anoraks off and put them down, and our mukluks and hats and put them down. By the time we'd had coffee, they had all gone.

[0:40:43] Lee: Souvenir hunters?

Clapp: Souvenir hunters. The whole lot had gone. So anyway we then repaired aboard the *John Biscoe* and the three ships set off.

[0:40:54] Lee: What happened?

Clapp: We then went to Hope Bay.

[0:40:58] Lee: And the dogs? Left behind?

Clapp: No, the dogs were taken to Hope, but one dog was left behind. One of our dogs slipped the trace on the way out, about 10-15 miles out from base, he slipped the trace and he just turned round and went back again. We yelled and hauled and everything like that but he didn't join us. If a dog slips a trace like that, you don't worry too much because normally after a while he gets fed up and he just follows the smell of the dogs and the tracks back and he catches up with you eventually. But this one never did. We weren't terribly worried. He would go back. There was seal meat at the base and when he finished that up, he would peg off there, but he didn't; he turned up in Marguerite Bay. He turned up at Base E about two months later, and he weighed more when he arrived at Marguerite Bay base. I think he weighed 3 lbs more than the last time we had weighed him at Base W.

[0:42:00] Lee: When you say Marguerite, you mean Stonington?

Clapp: Stonington.

[0:42:02] Lee: Can you recall the name of the dog? [Clapp pauses] He will be in the diaries.

Clapp: He will be in the diaries. Bowser, I think it was.

[0:42:13] Lee: Bowser?

Clapp: Bowser I think it was and apparently he had made that journey once before, and they had gone down through the Gullet, into Stonington that way, from Base W, and we reckoned that this instinct must have taken him down there. And he would have had to have crossed the glacier to get down there and we reckon that he hit the Gullet at the right time. We decided he lived on penguins and things like that before he turned up at Base E, Stonington. Good story, but true, as they say.

[0:42:47] Lee: So we are now off to Hope Bay.

Clapp: Yes, up to Hope Bay, and there I did sledge journeys.

[0:42:56] Lee: No radio work?

Clapp: I had John Cheek ... was the second radio operator there. He took over all the radio work for there. I did my share when I was on base, but he took over all the radio work and I then concentrated on dog teams and supporting. We took three months doing store running and then we did another three months down on the Detroit Glacier, Detroit Plateau, surveying.

[0:43:35] Lee: I was reading over Christmas the diaries of Victor Russell, who was Base Leader about four or five years before you, maybe ten years before you. Did they not name two glaciers after him, the Russell Glaciers?

Clapp: The Russell Glacier.

[0:43:51] Lee: Did you get anywhere near there?

Clapp: I can't remember, to tell you the truth. Must have been because we were right down, virtually above Marguerite Bay. We eventually finished down through there. We wanted to go down to Marguerite Bay but it proved a bit too difficult back down.

[0:44:11] Lee: But the work generally was to improve ... to work on ...?

Clapp: The work generally was to fit the ground triangulation into the Huntingdon Aerial Survey⁴. About two years before I went down South, the Huntingdon Aerial Survey aircraft had been operating from Deception and they had photo-mapped all the Antarctic Peninsula. They did verticals and obliques of the whole of the Antarctic Peninsula. They spent three summers doing that and our job, and the main thrust of the job there, was to triangulate all the mountains and everything like that, to fit into the obliques and the photographs and produce the proper maps of the Antarctic Peninsula.

[0:45:02] Clapp: Also too of course the opportunity was taken to do geological surveys on the mountains that we had to visit, and to do that. That was the main task. My particular task in that one was (I had my own team) dog sledge driver. Also mountain work and snow and ice work to help climbing up the peaks, which was nothing terribly great, but the beauty of it was, for my mind, was that whereas I had no first ascents to my name, which a climber likes. After I left the Antarctic I had six

⁴ He means Hunting Aerial Survey.

first ascents to my name which was no great thing because nobody had ever done anything like it before and most of it was just dull work: just walking up snow, up high mountains; there was no real rock climbing or anything like that.

[0:45:59] Lee: Fossil work?

Clapp: Fossil work? Well there's Hope Bay there and this mountain here [moves away from the microphone, presumably to point to a map] behind there is all full of fossils, plant fossils. But one of our geologists was also a palaeontologist as well. The two go together in many ways. So he would have taken the rocks mainly for the magnetic north and south that was embedded in the rocks, scientific work. I cannot remember us coming across any fossils of any great interest, apart from the normal shell fossils and things like that, in some of the rocks; certainly nothing as much as you found up in Mount Flora, which is why it was named Mount Flora.

[0:46:56] Lee: Was it a good base to be at? Was it a happy base?

Clapp: Hope Bay? It was a good base. It was a very good base. There was the comradeship there which was slightly different from Argentine Island base. There was a good comradeship at Argentine Island base because you all had to work in together. You all stuck in together with very little diversions apart from work, whereas in Hope Bay, your work included diversionary work, what I call dog sledging, looking after the dogs, feeding the dogs, sledging, mountain work and various things like that. That brought a comradeship of a different type. You relied on each other a lot, there's no doubt about that.

[0:47:44] Lee: Where there any characters in that posting that come to mind?

Clapp: Well the characters we had were the Argentines because just down below us was an Argentine base, an Army base, and we got on quite well with them and it was in the days of Peron. I think it was not so very long before that there had been trouble down there, at the Peron base. They were all military and some didn't like what they were doing or what was being done. There had been a court martial and various things like that. So they weren't a happy base in many many ways but we were. But their great attraction to us was that they had a hangar down there which was a cold store and it was full of about 3ft squares of prime Argentine beef steaks and beef cuts. We, in our turn, had jars of Naval rum, because we had Naval rum as well as bottles of gin, as our issue.

[0:48:59] Clapp: So we came to a happy agreement and every Saturday you would see an Argentine crew manhauling a sledge up the hill towards our base. On board was this great big chunk of prime Argentine beef and they would go back down with a bottle of rum for the base down there. We had social interchange with the base. We would go down there and spend an evening, sing-songs, drinking and they would come up to our base. I do remember, in conversation with the base commander at one time ... We both of us got a bit in our cups and I think I made some remark about: I didn't know very much about Peron. What was he like? 'Great man, great man' he said 'but he doesn't like you people, and believe me, if he ordered me to shoot you, I would have to shoot you.' But you got the feeling that there was a bit of truth about that.

[0:49:57] Lee: So you were communicating in English, I presume?

Clapp: Oh yes, yes.

[0:50:02] Lee: Was this the era of the Formal Protest.

Clapp: Oh yes. The Formal Protest came on when I was base commander after Hope Bay. My job if an Argentine or a Chilean ship came into the area was to go out to it and hand over a Formal Protest, protesting at them being there on British Crown land, and he would protest back to me, and then we would get down to the serious business of getting to know each other and having a few drinks, having done the official side of it. Oh yes, the Protests ... and all of our bases had a big notice with 'British Crown Land'. So yes, that went on for quite a while.

[0:50:50] Lee: But there were two tiers: the Formal Protest tier and the social interaction?

Clapp: You got the Formal Protest over first and then the social interaction went on.

[0:50:58] Lee: The social interaction, as far as the British were concerned, was tolerated by the top brass, was it?

Clapp: Oh yes, because you see people in the Foreign Office knew very little about us, didn't know the men or anything like that. As far as the Foreign Office were concerned, you made your protest, you did your duty and that was that, and I don't think they gave much thought as to what went on afterwards. So no, we never got any orders not to talk to them or anything like that. In fact we were useful to them; they were useful to us. At Hope Bay they used to do patrols, the Argentines. They would do dog patrols with a lieutenant, a corporal and perhaps a private, and the lieutenant did a little bit of surveying, but the main thing was, it was a military patrol. They were equipped with rifles and various things like that and their dogs were all the trappings of the Buenos Aires compounds and you'd find a dog team ... Whereas our dog teams were Greenland dogs, Spitzbergen dogs, their dogs were not so much huskies but some St Bernards, Alsatians.

[0:52:09] Clapp: Big dogs and they only really lasted a year but they used to do some quite good journeys with those poor hounds. I got quite friendly with them down in the Argentine base, with the cook, and with the doctor and with a couple of the corporals. When I was out in the field one time ... They used to follow us as much as they could do, to keep an eye on us more or less, and I suppose they were reporting our progress, but that was only when we would be about a week out from base, working around there. And I do remember one time that we met up with this Argentine patrol and the sergeant in charge said 'I've been looking for you.' He had got a parcel for me and it was myself and a surveyor and a couple of others, and in it was a Viennese schnitzel which I like very much there, and a bottle of Advocaat. All I drank down there was Advocaat, I used to love it, and eat their Viennese schnitzels as well, and I got that off that patrol there.

[0:53:26] Lee: What do you make of these stories about how that whole point of FIDS was to keep an eye on the Argies, to keep them out of the Falklands, keep them out of the Antarctic?

Clapp: No. The early history of FIDS was the BGLE and then the wartime years when a presence was down in the Antarctic to thwart German ambitions down that way.

[0:53:58] Lee: You think that is a genuine ...?

Clapp: Oh yes it is, yes, because it was known that the Germans were after the whaling fleet. That's why a lot of naval work went on in the South Atlantic. But also to thwart their establishment of bases down there. Our bases were established and that was the early history of FIDS and it went on. But I think even in those days there was no question of 'We are down here to keep an eye on the Argentines' because most of the time it was the International Geophysical Year and it was built up from that, and all those things were supposed to be put aside. Where we got into trouble, where the British got into trouble quite often down there, they were helped out by an Argentine icebreaker or an Argentine aircraft or Argentine medical teams or something like that along the way there. Whilst there might have been (and there wasn't as far as I know) that feeling up in our top headquarters, Fuchs side, whilst there might have been in the Foreign Office side, it certainly never went down to our level.

[0:55:17] Lee: You did one more year on a base back at Argentine Islands in 1960?

Clapp: At Wordie Hut. After I left Argentine Islands, I took my team and three or four other teams and various personnel and we were going to try and establish a base on Adelaide Island, south Adelaide Island. And the idea was that we would be taken by the *John Biscoe* down to Adelaide Island, dropped there, establish a hut, a small refuge hut there where we would live, survey Adelaide Island, and what we were interested in at that time was to go down onto the Square Bay Peninsula, where Rothera is now and to survey that. We failed in that. The ship couldn't get in so we came back and established ourselves at Wordie Hut on Argentine Islands. Now Wordie Hut was the old British Grahamland Expedition hut⁵ and when I was at Argentine Islands it was used as a sort of weekend holiday refuge. And also too I was there with the Naval Survey Party. So anyway we established ourselves there; there were six of us and three dog teams.

[0:56:52] Clapp: We established ourselves there and the idea was that we would be then flown with the BAS aircraft into Deception. We would then be flown. They would come down from Deception, land on the sea ice, then take us and land us onto Adelaide Island. No hut or anything like that. We would do a couple of stores runs and then we would be left there to do whatever we had to do, to survey as much as we could and to find the route down onto the Square Bay Peninsula, and that's what happened. But the interesting thing about doing that was: it was my third year down there and I was only supposed to go down for two years; I was only seconded from the Navy for two years. So anyway they asked me from Stanley, which was the headquarters then (there was an Operations Officer up there), would I stay another

⁵ According to the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust website, the old British Grahamland Expedition hut was destroyed, possibly by a tsunami, in 1946. A new hut was built on the site in 1947.

year because the alternative of not doing anything on Adelaide Island was to go back to the Detroit Plateau and do something there.

[0:58:00] Clapp: I was the only one left that knew certain of the sledging routes from the sea up to the top of the Detroit Plateau, so would I stay another year? So I said to them 'Yes, as far as I am concerned but you will have to ask the Navy because I still belong to them.' So anyway I stayed another year and, just to complete this particular story, when I came out eventually, and got back to Stanley, I said to the authorities there 'By the way, what did the Navy say when you asked them if I could stay another year?' They said 'Well we asked them but we didn't get any reply so we assumed it was all right.' So when I came out and before I went back down to the Falklands again, I came back to Plymouth. Of course they wanted to know where I had been for the last three years. So a little hiatus, but that was sorted out.

[0:58:55] Lee: Who was actually making that kind of decision down there? Was it Fuchs or ...?

Clapp: Yes. Eventually yes, because what happened was: they had what they now call Forward Headquarters in Stanley and Stanley at that time used to hold all the stores, all the clothing, and everything like that for the Antarctic bases and the Antarctic personnel, and it was the communications centre as well, and there was a person in charge of that by the name of Johnny Green. He was responsible to Fuchs who had a Scientific Office just behind Victoria station in the UK, and they used to work out the scientific programme and the stores procurement and everything like that. So yes, it would be the office back in the UK, which Fuchs was in charge of, Sloman and people like that. They made that decision of applying to the Navy again. But, as I say, they didn't get a reply, so they assumed it was all right, and when I got back to *HMS Drake*, they wanted to know where the hell I had been. But it was soon smoothed over.

[1:00:06] Lee: What was Johnny Green like, to get on with?

Clapp: You've been hearing rumours, haven't you? Johnny Green was a very ambitious man. He was very much aware of himself but he was very good in his way. I got on with him all right because you have to get on with people to work. I didn't have very much to do with him while I was on the Antarctic bases because the communication was purely radio, but when I came to Stanley for the first time, I took over from Johnny Green in Stanley and he blotted his copybook then. He had allowed his ambition to give him an attitude towards his future which perhaps wasn't warranted. That didn't go down well in certain quarters and he didn't have a future eventually. But I got on all right with him because I got married out there, at that period, and we lived in a BAS house out there. But Johnny Green used to listen to his wife a lot, who was very nice in a way but also she was the boss's wife and perhaps Jean would have an instruction sent down to her, that when she washed the kitchen floor, she wasn't to use any wire wool; she was to use soap and scrubber and various things like that.

[1:01:31] Clapp: Then I got to say to Johnny Green 'Tell your wife to keep out of my life.' Workwise he was difficult but quite fair to work with, in a way, but eventually everybody fell out with him including myself, but we put up with it, myself and my

colleague Clem in the stores. He came back to the UK expecting to take up a senior post within FIDS (as it was then) but it didn't work out that way. Then he went independent and went beachcombing and eventually died rowing ashore. Well he disappeared rowing ashore after a party in Spain or Portugal, wherever it was.

[1:02:18] Lee: We've leapt ahead slightly. So you did your three winters in the Antarctic?

Clapp: I did my three winters.

[1:02:26] Lee: And then the journey back to Plymouth?

Clapp: In the Antarctic and then came out to Stanley. But coming out to Stanley was, again, rather like Hope Bay out to the *Edisto*. The *Biscoe* couldn't get in, couldn't get in to the Argentine Islands, so I had to sledge out virtually to the Lemaire Channel with dog teams and various other people who came out with me. And I just turned my dog team over on the sea ice and we just sailed away. So that was a bit heart wrenching for me because I'd had that team for two years and one of them had saved my life during the period. I could see them looking up to me as much as to say 'Where's that silly old bugger off to now?' Saved my life? Yes. There are some cardinal rules when you are out sledging and certainly in 'funny country' that (a) you do not move away from the sledge unless you are attached to a rope harness or whatever. It was bad weather and we were half way across a bit of holey ground. It was ravines or crevasses and things like that around, but not too many. We knew that on the other side of this there was flat ground and safe ground for setting up camp for the night.

[1:03:54] Clapp: The front of my dogs, the leader got himself all tangled up and I went forward to ... [rumbling noises] Is that me or is that you? It must be me. Anyway I went forward to untangle them but I wasn't attached to the sledge. Stupid, but these things happen. But I did go forward because I was grasping hold of the dog traces to sort out the snarl that the two dogs, the lead dogs had gone through to. And I had hold of my lead dog Beds. My lead dog was Lancs, and Beds and Herts were the two front dogs, big dogs they were. And I had hold of his harness and I went through a crevasse and I was left dangling just holding on to Beds. Beds sort of hunched himself up on the lip of the crevasse – luckily it was hard ground – and he just stayed there. He didn't move. Dogs normally get a bit panicky when anything like that happens and he did not move at all. I was holding onto his harness and he held me there until I was able to get up and get off there. He did not move; he acted as an anchor. So that dog saved my life, possibly. He certainly saved me from going down the hole anyway.

[1:05:15] Lee: When would that have been, roughly?

Clapp: That was about towards the latter end of the last sledge journey before we came back. That would be about November, I suppose.

[1:05:32] Lee: November 19 ...?

Clapp: '59 at Hope Bay, whilst at Hope Bay, yes. So I have fond memories of that team and I had to leave them on the sea ice.

[1:05:44] Lee: The policy was just to leave the dogs loose, was it?

Clapp: No, oh no. When you were at base, we had spans.

[1:05:55] Lee: No, I mean when you were leaving them behind for the last time. Did they fend for themselves?

Clapp: No, they were just turned over to another driver.

[1:06:02] Lee: Oh, I beg your pardon. Right.

Clapp: Oh no, I didn't just leave them, not like the Americans. No, just turned them over to another driver, and he They were his team then.

[1:06:13] Lee: My mistake; I do apologise.

Clapp: Where they had been my team for two years, they were his team then. We got to know each other very well.

[1:06:19] Lee: So you had gone back? That was your first time in Stanley for three years, then? You spent all those three years down South? Then back to Stanley and then back to Plymouth?

Clapp: Back to Stanley and then back to Plymouth. Whilst I was in Stanley, I was asked: would I come back to Stanley again, to take over and revamp the Survey's communications centre?

[1:06:42] Lee: Was that Johnny Green asked you to do that?

Clapp: That was Johnny Green and the London Office asking that. So I said yes, I would do and that's what I planned to do because at that time I was over my time of discharge from the Navy. I had done my Boy's time and I had done my twelve years Man time, which turned out to be 13 and a half years Man time. If I had gone back to the UK I would have signed on again with the Navy for the whole 22 years, but this offer that I got attracted me more. Plus by that time I had grown so very attached to Antarctica, Antarctic business and things like that, so anything like that was quite enticing. So I went back to Plymouth, sorted out my being absent without leave for over a year, and then took my discharge, and then signed on with the Foreign Office and came back out to Stanley. I came back out to Stanley as the Radio Communications Supervisor. Stanley was a mother base for all our Antarctic bases.

[1:08:07] Clapp: In the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, all the Antarctic bases were classified as daughter bases within the radio stations. It was an American type of thing, and Stanley was a mother base. The mother bases all communicated to each other; the mother bases then communicated towards their daughter bases and that's the way all the information in the Antarctic in the IGY was passed around to here, there and everywhere, all the other nations. That meant some reorganisation because it

meant extra schedules; it meant schedules from Stanley to the American base McMurdo, to the Argentine bases, to the Chilean bases, which we had never had before. So that was my task, to set that up and to strengthen the communications and increase the communications between our Antarctic base and the ships.

[1:09:05] Lee: Would that mean commissioning new gear to make it more secure?

Clapp: Well at that time my instructions were to do it with as little expense as possible and we didn't really need it because our transmitters in Stanley at that time, although oldish, were still amongst the most powerful there were in the radio world for that type of work, because we used to send out all the weather forecasts to the whaling fleets in the South Atlantic. And also too I carried out tests with UK on voice communications, for radio-telephone tests between the Falklands and UK. That proved to be a commercial basis. So we had the gear but we were bordering on a new era; we were bordering on the coming in of teleprinter. I was quite keen to get teleprinters in.

[1:09:58] Clapp: So that was my task and I sorted out teleprinter communication between the mother stations that we had to work in through onto that. So that was about the only new equipment brought in, and the only equipment for the bases was just replacement equipment as it came along. And during that time, Johnny Green was going to be transferred back to UK, and the idea was that he would be transferred back to UK and become the operations manager for the whole of the organisation from UK. Well that didn't work out and I was appointed to replace him in Stanley and so the bases and Stanley became my responsibility, the day-to-day administration.

[1:10:52] Lee: This is Ted Clapp, interviewed at his home in Cambridgeshire by Chris Eldon Lee on the 11th of January 2005. Ted Clapp Part Two.

[1:11:03] Lee: Well how did you meet Jean then?

Clapp: I met Jean as I passed through Stanley. It was quite a quick love-at-first-sight romance.

[1:11:10] Lee: Jean's a Falkland Islander?

Clapp: Jean's a Falkland Islander, yes. She was one of the largest ... She was married into two of the largest ... well not married but her roots were two of the largest families in the Falklands: that's the Summers and the Campbells.

[1:11:24] Lee: And she was a ...? What was her maiden name?

Clapp: Campbell. She was a Campbell.

[1:11:30] Lee: How did you meet Jean, then?

Clapp: Parties. Stanley was a good place for parties when Fids were passing through. So yes, it was quite good. She worked in the Post Office. We met through the Post Office, met through various other parties, because I was a month in Stanley before I went back to the UK.

[1:11:48] Lee: So you were a quick worker, Ted?

Clapp: Didn't need to be. We just clicked just like that.

[1:11:54] Lee: Then you had the heart-wrench of going back to Plymouth?

Clapp: Then I had the heart-wrench of going back to Plymouth but knowing that I was coming back out, and when I got back out, then we got married.

[1:12:04] Lee: Almost straight away?

Clapp: Yes, the end of '61.

[1:12:10] Lee: Right, so you had two reasons for going South.

Clapp: I had two reasons for going back South, yes. One was the job and one was Jean. So anyway I took over and we progressed from then on for the next fourteen years.

[1:12:24] Lee: Fourteen years?

Clapp: In the Falklands, I was Officer-in-Charge, Stanley.

[1:12:29] Lee: Without a return?

Clapp: Oh no no. Because I was classified as a Colonial Officer in the Foreign Office, I was entitled to a day and a half's leave, overseas leave or home leave, for every month spent in the Falklands. But because I was head of a department, I couldn't take leave very often, only about every three and a half years. So by the time a UK leave came up, I would have amassed six or seven months UK leave. So every three and a half years, I came back to UK for leave. I brought Jean and the family with me.

[1:13:14] Lee: Had Jean been to the UK prior to that?

Clapp: She had been to UK once before, yes. She had to come over for medical reasons before that.

[1:13:22] Lee: Right, and there were some children by that time, were there?

Clapp: By the time our first leave came up, there were no children, but by the time our second leave came up, we had two children. And I used to come back to UK; I used to put my Landrover on the BAS ship and pick it up in Southampton. I would have spent a fortnight in UK. It all worked out because we went back to UK either by boat from Montevideo or by aircraft. And I used to work it so that the *Biscoe* arrived in Southampton soon after I arrived and I would pick up the Landrover. I'd work for a couple of weeks in the office, sorting out various things, both at the beginning and the end of the leave. And then we packed camping gear, purchased all camping gear, and we would then go across to the Continent and drive with the Landrover right the way around as far as we went for the next five months. And we used to do something like

7½ thousand miles from Calais back to Calais in those months, and we got down as far as ... We were down past ... over the Bosphorus and down towards the Persian border, was the furthest south towards that way that we got. So even our leaves were expeditions in a way. So yes, it was quite good.

[1:15:02] Lee: Let me then ask you a little bit about your time in Stanley. You are described here as being Officer in Command. That was ...?

Clapp: Officer in Command.

[1:15:10] Lee: Of Stanley as a whole?

Clapp: Stanley as a whole, and Administration Officer for the bases, Forward Administration Officer for the bases.

[1:15:17] Lee: So you were top dog, really.

Clapp: In that area, yes. It was quite interesting because as well as being, as you term it, top dog, also I found it personally interesting because I was No. 2 on the Naval ships' captains' calling list. He'd first of all call to the Governor, make his number to the Governor, then he would call across and make his number to me because I was Naval Officer in Charge of South Atlantic as well. That was one of my other duties, that was passed on to me through being through BAS. I was also the similar for the Army and similar for the Air Force because BAS at that time had a couple of Army personnel seconded down. And also in Stanley, in the Falklands, there were some Air Force personnel who used to help out with the scientific research station there. I became keeper of their QRs (Queen's Rules and Regulations) and also for the Army as well, but I got personal interest and satisfaction out of the captains of the Naval ships had to come and call on me. [Laughs] Bad of me but it was all good because perhaps I had met a couple of them before.

[1:16:33] Lee: So did you have a second best house in Stanley?

Clapp: I wouldn't say it was second best house. We had a nice house which used to be called Buckingham Palace sometimes but that's gone to somewhere else now down there. No, it was a very nice built quite good house.

[1:16:48] Lee: So let's talk a bit about what you had to do, then, because you were there for 14 years, so your role must have evolved over those 14 years. What was it like at the beginning and what was it like at the end? How did the two compare?

Clapp: At the beginning it was quite basic as far as I was concerned. There were lots of things I wasn't happy with. In the communication-wise, I had always felt that there had not been the cover between the Stanley and the Antarctic bases and their sledging programmes and their out-of-the-bases programmes that I would have liked if I had been responsible for them to that extent. So one of the first things I inaugurated, apart from the improvement in the communication systems between the mother stations, which what I was commissioned to do because of the International Geophysical Year, was: I introduced a system whereby there was more communication between the base commander and myself, if

and when necessary, because when I was a base commander down there: fine. It was good making the decisions that you wanted to do. Field decisions were fine but decisions about the base and everything like that, I felt that you were left unfortunately on your own too much and I wanted to do that, to overcome that, which I did. Which really was trying to make more of a rapport with the base commanders that were down there, who were all independent people.

[1:18:24] Lee: Greater support?

Clapp: Give them the support. Let them know that you were there when it happened, but also too what I did introduce, which was unique at that time, was I introduced a system whereby the sledge parties reported their position in to their base much more than they did before, and the bases then reported that on to me, much more than ... Well they never used to. In my office I had one wall which was covered with the map, a lay-down of the Antarctic, so every day I would receive the previous night's report of the sledge parties' positions and they were flagged and so I knew exactly where all the sledge parties were last time they reported in on that.

[1:19:13] Lee: So like a War Room map?

Clapp: It was like a War Room map, so perhaps that was my Naval upbringing but it was very useful because (a) I was able to answer any queries that came in. If anything happened, then the queries would come from London down to us about what happened, this and that, and I was able to answer quite a lot of queries straight away. And we had some interesting sequences down there. We had the ... During my time we had Deception erupting. I was involved in that. We had the accidents at Halley Bay, and we had the aircraft loss over the other side of the Peninsula, and we were involved in all that.

[1:19:52] Lee: In monitoring what was going on, or issuing instructions? How were you involved?

Clapp: Arranging support. Arranging advice if it was required, but monitoring was the main task for us. But in the Deception situation, that was initiating direct support.

[1:20:01] Lee: You actually organised a rescue?

Clapp: Yeah. Well I initiated the events that led up to what you could classify as that. It was quite interesting if I carry on, but I was in the Radio Room, as I often was, during the time of the collection of the weather reporting from the bases, and also the first contacts for admin purposes. I was there and the wireless operator in the corner (we only had one on duty at the time), he kept saying 'Oh go off; push off, you silly old bugger.' I said 'What's happened?' He said 'It's this stupid fellow at Deception, he keeps breaking in and saying "Eruption! Eruption! SOS! SOS!"' So I said 'Christ, you stupid thing. Break every contact and answer him. Get in contact.' So we got in contact and the base commander told me that there was an eruption going on and he was getting a bit worried and that things seemed to be getting bad.

[1:21:20] Clapp: So before I had spoken to the base commander, I had seen what the radio operator had said to our radio operator and it was obvious to me that something

was bad. So I immediately initiated a Long Term Repeated Broadcast to *RRS Shackleton* that I knew was not so very far away. 'Return to Deception. Return to Deception straight away. Eruption. Return ...' And I had that going out constantly for the next hour, which covered all the frequencies and all the contact times that I knew *Shackleton* was going to make with various people.

[1:22:00] Lee: So *Shackleton* wasn't listening all the time? They were just tuning up on a timetable?

Clapp: No, they were just tuning on a timetable, and at the same time, I broadcast to *HMS Protector* what was going on, and again I said 'Contact me and but head for Deception' on a continuous broadcast. Eventually *Protector* got hold of me and the *Shackleton* got hold of me. I put them in the picture and they went to Deception and eventually picked the people up.

[1:22:31] Lee: So the one radio operator had to sit there, repeating this phrase live?

Clapp: No. We put it out on automatic broadcast. Do you remember the Morse? Do you remember the tapes, that you typed out on the tapes? We put them in a continuous loop and it just goes around the transmitter head and is transmitted out. And they eventually contacted me by voice and I put them more in the picture, but by that time they were, both of them, *Protector* and the *Shackleton*, heading for Deception Island, and they got the people out. We kept communications with the base up to the time that they left the base and then went out to the Peninsula at the end, where they were eventually picked up by the *Shackleton* and the *Protector*. But they had to go out carrying sheets of tin over their heads and things like that, because there was the danger of the bombs coming down, and they had to abandon the base.

[1:23:29] Lee: Were they picked up at Neptune's Bellows?

Clapp: The other side if I remember correctly. The other side of Neptune's Bellows.

[1:23:40] Lee: The opposite side?

Clapp: You've been to Deception?

[1:23:41] Lee: Yes.

Clapp: You know as you are looking from the base, or where the base was, looking out towards Neptune's Bellows, over the penguin rookery, onto the other side, was where they came in. Also by that time the Chileans had contacted their ship and she came along as well and the three of them got them, the Chileans, the Argentines and everybody off.

[1:24:00] Lee: So they all gathered at the same collection point?

Clapp: They all headed for the same place. It was quite interesting. Then the other time, we had with the Brotherhood incident was ...

[1:24:11] Lee: Sorry, the Brotherhood is the ...?

Clapp: Is where the doctor⁶ and a sledging companion went over the ice cliff at Halley Bay and was injured down below there. They recovered them and we monitored ... That got a bit more of an international situation, and Britain requested help from America and America sent a plane from McMurdo to Halley Bay to pick them up. And we monitored the plane from McMurdo right the way down through to Halley Bay. We had contact and everything like that. But that was happening at the same time as the Deception incident. So it was quite a hectic day, that day. So we had our little moments. Also too we ushered and kept in communication with Chichester, and Rose, when they did their single-handed sailing around Cape Horn. We kept in contact and I didn't think it was right for my staff to have to come in at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning to maintain contact with them so I did. I used to go in and maintain contact, with Chichester.

[1:25:28] Lee: Was that a Navy function, or just something you did because you wanted to?

Clapp: We were asked, BAS were asked by the *Daily Telegraph*, who sponsored both of them, if we could provide ice reports for them, as there was no other way they could get them. So that's what we did. We provided all the ice reports that we knew. I got hold of Chichester every night, because he went well south of Cape Horn, and told him that there was no ice in his way as far as we knew and there were three or four bergs that we knew from reports from the Argentines and the Chileans, and what we got from the American satellite photographs from the Americans, because he didn't have ...

[1:26:13] Lee: Was there time for more than the passing of information? Did you have a conversation with him?

Clapp: Chichester wouldn't talk because he was very suspicious. When I first contacted him he wouldn't speak to me. He wanted to know what I was doing contacting him, who gave me the frequency and everything like that, and it wasn't until I told him that we had been asked by the *Daily Telegraph* who were his sponsors, and given the frequencies by the *Daily Telegraph*, to contact him and give him ice reports, he would speak to us then. He would not tell us how it was going on or anything like that. That was for the *Daily Telegraph*, not for us. I didn't like him. We were bending over backwards to give him all this information and he accepted it very curtly as though it was his right. I particularly didn't like him very much.

[1:27:07] Lee: And Alec Rose?

Clapp: Alec Rose was much better. He was quite nicer about it all and quite appreciative of what was going on. We didn't have all that much to do with Alec Rose for some reason or other. I think his communication with his home base was much better, but we gave him what ice information we could do.

[1:27:24] Lee: You mentioned the third incident which broke the routine, was this disappearing of an aircraft. Can you elaborate on that for me?

⁶ Dr John Brotherhood

Clapp: Yes. It not so much disappeared but it got lost and had to land. It was working out of ... It had been down from Deception to Stonington and the idea was: it was ferrying stores over the Peninsula to the other side of the Peninsula for a Stonington party to work. And it had engine problems and went down amongst the mountains. Landed all right, OK. There were people there just on the other side of the Plateau and they didn't quite know where they were. We had communications and the communications were quite basic. They could see all the mountains. Was there one large mountain? I can't remember the actual details but it was: Was there one large mountain and three small ones to one side? 'Make two dits if yes and three dits if no.' We carried on with that way, when eventually it was pinpointed where they were. What happened eventually was *HMS Endurance* got down in the area and then she flew helicopters with more fuel and ... I think they had water in the fuel, or something like that and she got back that way. But we were monitoring all that and offering advice and making suggestions as to how we could ??? [inaudible]

[1:29:04] Lee: Your primary role was to try and work out where they were?

Clapp: Prime role was to find out where they were. They weren't in any danger really but just we didn't know where they were. They didn't know where they were.

[1:29:13] Lee: Can you remember the name of the plane?

Clapp: Well the plane was an Otter, one of our Otters.

[1:29:21] Lee: I asked you what it was like at the beginning of your time there. How much had things evolved by the time you stepped away?

Clapp: OK. Well when I first went down, you either manhailed or you dog-sledged. Then we introduced aircraft. We introduced a Sea Otter and a Beaver, which both went corrupt, and I was involved in that. So we progressed from manual, from foot working to aircraft working, to Muskegs eventually. So we did progress all the way on as well. We progressed in the communication: the old hand Morse to voice to teleprinter, and now to satellite communication. We progressed in personal communications from only being allowed to send, or for the wireless operators to send out a hundred-word message from each personnel per month to Stanley for them to be typed out ... This is what Jean did, typed out on the blue airmail forms and posted off to parents and girlfriends back in UK. They could send 200 words in. That used to arrive in Stanley who then used to type it up on the Morse tape and send it down to bases. The operator would receive that and pass it on to the person down there. Now it's satellite communication all the way, so there has been a gradual progression as it should be. That's quite right.

[1:30:58] Lee: Did you feel that you were driving all that forward yourself?

Clapp: I felt I did my little bit towards it, yes. There's no doubt about it.

[1:31:05] Lee: So you were seeing opportunities to improve and making demands to London?

Clapp: Seeing an opportunity to improve. Making demands to London but also too, being thwarted to a certain extent by the lack of funds. I think everybody has lack of funds but also too there was a change went on because London grew. London eventually took over the stores side of it and everything like that. The BAS personnel were issued with the stores in the UK before they came out. London did a lot of the ordering of stuff. London did more of the schedule, scientific schedule detailing than was done before. London grew. My task was: they would send down, whilst I was in Stanley, all the list of personnel and the bases they were due to go to and everything like that, and a basic routine for the ships, a basic itinerary for the ships.

[1:32:10] Clapp: My task was then to enlarge on that itinerary, talk to the captains about it, adjust it as necessary as they wanted to, allocate all the Fids personnel, where they were going, what base they were going to. And also too, pass that information on to the bases, which never used to be done until the ships were in the area before, so the bases, before the ships got to Stanley and after they left Stanley, knew exactly when the ships would come, what personnel were coming in, what personnel could come out. And that was quite good. I used to work out the itineraries.

[1:32:45] Clapp: Then whilst I was there I was also the Accountant for the British Antarctic Territory. I helped in the creation of the British Antarctic Territory from the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. I helped towards the creation of the British Antarctic Territory but I was made the Accountant of the British Antarctic Territory and I used to have to look after all the Post Offices and magistrates in the Antarctic Territory. So that was another side of it which was quite good. That was more Foreign Office side than BAS side, and that was quite good and interesting.

[1:33:23] Lee: Who was the Governor whilst you were there?

Clapp: Oh, first of all it was Arrowsmith. Then there was ... the names have gone but the last governor there was Parker⁷. I will ask my better half. She is better at knowing the names than me.

[1:33:45] Lee: Don't worry, we can look that up. Was it always a harmonious situation?

Clapp: Yes, you had to be; you worked with ... Arrowsmith was very good. He was an old-time governor, a colonial governor, and half my time I would be called across to the office in Government House. When I got across there, it was because he wanted to play a game of billiards or snooker or something like that, so it was really keeping him up. None of the other governors got very much involved in ... They were the nominal heading of the Antarctic Survey, and any activities in the Antarctica, but not very many of them got involved up to there. After I left more of the governors got involved themselves and did a lot of journeys down there but up to mine ...

[1:34:39] Lee: And relations the other way, to London, was that harmonious or were you banging your head against a brick wall?

⁷ Arrowsmith, Haskard, Lewis, French, Parker.

Clapp: No, that was quite harmonious. I didn't really allow banging the heads against the wall because it was always counter-productive for myself personally and I got a reputation as a man who used to finish off If ever I had any sort of altercations with London, it was always by telegram and I used to finish off with Biblical quotations, which is something I had learned in the Navy. The Navy is very good at passing on Biblical quotations in certain circumstances, and I'd pass on a Biblical quotation which after maybe after a little bit of tense exchange about something with London, about something that went on one of the bases maybe or something like that, with a Biblical quotation which says 'Oh woe is me; I hold my head in my hands; think of me between the two of thee, and that type of thing,

[1:35:44] Lee: Let's just pick up, Ted, on this Governor that you mentioned, Toby Lewis, who was a bit of a character apparently.

Clapp: Yes, he was a breath of fresh air in a way. I don't think he had been a proper governor beforehand. A lot of the governors that came out had been colonial officers in Africa and various things like that, or a minor governor somewhere. But he had come from the Foreign Office Press. He had been a Foreign Office press attaché at various embassies and he was quite a breath of fresh air. He brought an up-to-date attitude of talking and life, and he made his mark when he gave his first cocktail party and he had a coloured dress shirt on, which was 'Good Lord ...!', and also his shoes, which were normally the sort of evening type, polishy type of shoes, with golden buckles on. That had never been seen before. But he also had quite a few odd ideas. He liked the people; he liked the area but he got quite serious about the possibility of bringing a 'cruising casino' over from the coast, and anchoring it outside during the summer season, anchoring it outside of Stanley.

[1:37:06] Lee: Outside the limits?

Clapp: Outside the 10-mile limit, the shallow water limit, for tourists, as a tourist attraction, and he got quite serious about that and the way he put it over was 'You could make some money out of this.' But that never came about, but he was quite good in that way.

[1:37:26] Lee: You mentioned whilst we were having lunch, the potential altercations with HQ.

Clapp: Yes, I had two altercations.

[1:37:36] Lee: This is the real HQ we are talking about?

Clapp: This is the HQ back in London, and one was: there was a lot of what I classify as 'knee-jerk reaction' went on. The people at Halley Bay – well you know what Halley Bay is. It's stuck under the ice most of the time; all the building accommodation is under the ice. Anyway they all went out over the Christmas period; they all went out for a jolly in their Muskegs, they all had a 'banyan' out in the middle of the snow and a lot of them got frostbite, which can be quite serious, and they had to return back to base and London reacted quite strongly and said 'This is terrible. This is disgusting.' And they banned all such activity. Anyway I told the base what had happened, but I said 'I am going to see what I can do about this.'

[1:38:36] Clapp: I had a series of communications with Sir Vivian back in UK, saying that you can't really stop people from going out and you can't really cut them down to the effect that they don't place themselves ... If they get frostbite, that's their own lookout. They'll not get frostbite again, but you can't cut out in a place like that, this type of activity. Anyway eventually after about three weeks, he sort of relaxed and they were able to do what they had to do, because virtually it would have banned all their relaxation on the surface to a certain extent. The other time I got embroiled with him was: I was in UK at the time, on leave, and I was hurriedly summoned back to the office and Sir Vivian was quite annoyed at something that had gone on. We had lost a fellow at Signy Island and he had gone over the edge of a cliff. He was a bird ...

[1:39:47] Lee: Ornithologist?

Clapp: Ornithologist, and he had been along the cliffs, and he had gone over the cliff and was killed, and it came out in the papers two days later, the UK papers two days later. Fuchs was extremely annoyed about this and he called me into the office and he said that this must have been as a result of the bases, the amateur radio operators on the bases, giving this information away and giving this information to the papers. And he banned all amateur radio activities from all bases, which from my own personal point of view was wrong because I knew it was another side of the base activity and it was one that was much loved, plus the fact that I couldn't believe that the responsible people that I knew were radio amateurs down there would do this.

[1:40:41] Clapp: So I had an altercation with him about that and I said 'I can't accept this. Let me look into it more.' And I looked into it more and yes, the papers had got hold of it two days later but I then checked up a bit more. I went and saw the police involved and what it was, was the officer had received the information of this address of this accident, tried to get hold of the parents but couldn't get hold of the parents and informed the local police in Wales it was; informed the local police. The police sent a policeman round to the house, couldn't get to the house, couldn't get any response at the house, so they went to the person's sister and told the sister that they were trying to get hold of her sister because the son had been killed down in the Antarctic and wanted to know how they could get hold of her.

[1:41:43] Clapp: Anyway through them the sister was told, the parents were told that the boy had been killed. But what happened afterwards was that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]; very very unfortunate. So anyway that order was withdrawn as well.

[1:42:43] Lee: What year that have been, Ted?

Clapp: That would have been '68⁸.

⁸ Roger Filer was killed at Signy Island 13th February 1961 (source British Antarctic Monument Trust).

[1:42:31] Lee: And the other thing was this hostage situation in '66.

Clapp: Oh yes. It in actual fact was the first hostage, the first hijack. There was a plane on its way to Ushuaia from Buenos Aires, and after they had left Buenos Aires, it was taken over by a group of terrorists and forced to fly to Stanley. The first we knew about this was when this large DC-4 four-engine aeroplane ... and you must remember that in those days you didn't see planes like that; you didn't see contrails in the sky. Every now and again you might see a higher contrail but it would be single one and everybody would say, would be on the phone 'Did you see the contrail going over?' It was something entirely new. Anyway this plane zoomed over Stanley and then circled around, put its wheels down and then went to our racecourse and was obviously going to land in our racecourse.

[1:43:34] Clapp: So my colleague and I, Clem – Clem was our Stores Officer – we went up there in our Landrovers. We were the first there, got up there because our office was quite close to the racecourse. And this big plane came in, landed on our racecourse, churned it up terribly, came to a stop and Clem and I arrived up there and we were confronted ... The doors opened up and out jumped all these people, about 20-odd, 26 people, with guns. Before I really knew what was happening, I had a Winchester rifle in my stomach and something else in the other side of the stomach, and a gun underneath there, and I remember my colleague saying 'Hang on, hang on' as somebody was jabbing him in the ribs with another gun. And we were taken hostage. What it was, was a group of Argentine terrorists called the Condor Group, had highjacked the plane and were coming to 'liberate the Falkland Islands from their colonial yoke masters' and everything like that.

[1:44:45] Clapp: They were a nasty group because they had fallen out with the utterances of a teacher in some interior place in Argentina, only about three weeks beforehand, and they killed him by throwing a hand grenade through the classroom window. They killed him but they killed about 15 children as well, at the same time. They were that type of group as well. Anyway they sort of surrounded the plane and kept us and a couple more people that had come up out of interest to see if they could help, they were taken hostage as well. There were about 19 students and six really nasty hard core people, and the leader, his eyes were fanatical. You hear of people saying fanatical eyes; his was. He had his girlfriend with him. I, being quite used to firearms, didn't argue at all. So we were held hostage for all of that day and quite late into the evening.

[1:45:55] Lee: What, in the plane or ...?

Clapp: No, outside the plane, and the plane was gradually sinking because it was sinking in the peat, because the racecourse was on the peat. It was soft underneath and the plane was gradually sinking like that. They had a pile of people on board, which included women and children. They had no food because it was only a short flight, relatively short flight to where they were going, and we were held there and they were obviously waiting for something else to happen, because we'd had a bad gale. But anyway, after a while, they were inveigled into surrendering. Obviously what else was going to happen, was going to happen. They weren't received with open arms and cheering crowds that they thought they were going to be received by, and they

surrendered and were taken into custody. That was on my son's first birthday. So it was quite interesting.

[1:46:49] Lee: So you can remember the date then.

Clapp: Yes, I can remember that date because I think Jean was down preparing for the son's birthday party in the Town Hall and someone came in and said something like 'There's been an incident and Ted has been captured by some Argentines.' And I think Jean said 'Trust him!' or something like that. And they got the word back in London and they were quite concerned that we had been captured. Well I think the attitude back in London was 'Well, that's typical of those two' or something like that.

[1:47:22] Lee: What was the date, then?

Clapp: It was the 26th of September 1966.

[1:47:31] Lee: OK. They have asked me for details of any technological problems with communications to bases and to London. Was it all fairly smooth, or were there long periods when you couldn't get through? This is from Port Stanley.

Clapp: Well, whilst I was in Stanley, one of the beauties to my mind in Stanley was that communication between Stanley and London, was by telegram, commercial telegram, and once a month, or once every six weeks, the ship came in and brought the written ...

[1:48:04] Lee: The paper?

Clapp: The paper, the written ..., which was fine because by the time you got it, what they had written about was over a month old and by the time they got the reply back, it was ... Because the ship used to come and then go round all the islands, pick up wool and everything like that, before it went back up and did a mail run and a passenger run to Montevideo. So you either answered by commercial telegram or you answered by letter and whichever way, everything was wrong. So the beauty of that was the independence to me in Stanley, because the main bulk of the communications was between Stanley and myself, and then prefaced by myself back to London where necessary, and I only used to bother where it was really necessary. Problems were things like I told you, were just lack of communication and lack of information. But I don't think there were any problems between the bases and Stanley except where perhaps they weren't doing what one wanted them to do.

[1:49:11] Clapp: But communications were quite good, because there were constant communications for the weather information coming out, and the scientific information coming out. And the social ... the letters from parents being sent by radio and things sent out by radio. And their orders; they used to buy all their goods in Stanley. If the person there wanted ..., my staff, the girls used to go out and buy ... they wanted sent down on the next ship, which might be three or four months' time. Radios, records and various things like that. So communications were quite good, often of necessity because they wanted it to be good. So there was no great problem there. There were problems with the mother stations, talking to Americans and to the Russians and to the Argentines and the Australians, on the rings around Antarctica.

They were mother station for their own Antarctic stations. But we virtually had very little problems as such.

[1:50:15] Clapp: We had problems with the Argentines, but that was political more than anything else, even though that type of thing was to be cut down in the IGY. But I always remember that I had to go to Buenos Aires for an international Antarctic communications conference, and the American station was complaining that he could never contact the Argentines; he could never contact the Russians decently, of their McMurdo base. They didn't have decent communication even though half of it was landline with the Australian and New Zealand Antarctic authorities. He said 'But we never have any problem at all with Stanley' which I was quite pleased about. Then I said 'There is one reason for that. Most of my teleprinter operators are females and your operators in McMurdo know that.' He fell about laughing. 'That's the answer!' he says 'That's the answer!'

[1:51:18] Lee: Was there a sprinkling of truth in that?

Clapp: Yes, there was, because one of the things that I did soon after I got to Stanley ... We used to employ our radio operators out from UK. We used to employ them in UK, bring them out to the Falklands and they would serve a year out there and then go back again. I thought that was quite expensive and also sometimes I wasn't involved in choosing these people (couldn't be) and we got duds. I had to put up with that. So what I did after I had been there and sussed out the situation for a couple of years, I started to introduce an apprenticeship and I employed the local youngsters, taught them Morse and taught them communications as much as possible. And also too, they served us quite well and they were a basis for the Falkland Islands Government Communications Service as well, who didn't run such a scheme.

[1:52:14] Clapp: The other thing that I did was, when we got teleprinters, bought teleprinters for the mother and daughter stations, and eventually to the bases, I employed young girls, taught them the teleprinter and they did all the teleprinting work, typist work and everything like that. So that was an innovation and we didn't have to then employ people from UK, the expense of sending them out and everything like that. The attraction was that one eventually had a pool of people one could call upon and rely upon at any time, but the other attraction was that wages out in the Falklands were about half of what wages were in UK, so there was that in that way. But I felt that was good for the organisation; it was also good for Stanley as well. It was good for the people of Stanley as well.

[1:53:00] Lee: How about the management and the ordering of stores, either from London or from Montevideo? Was that all smooth or was that a perpetual headache?

Clapp: No it was ... By the time, by those days it was very smooth and very good because back in UK they had a professional system going, whereas beforehand, it was all done from Stanley through the Crown Agents, and the Crown Agents, although good in lots of things, sometimes fell by the board. And being in Stanley, the Stores Officer in Stanley couldn't just nip over to the Crown Agents and say 'You have done this wrong.' We had to rely on them. It was apparent during my first two years in the Antarctic in the fact that on base, Argentine Islands, we had 69 years supply of

pickled onions, because you had a set format for ordering. You had to have on base at least two and a half years supply, OK?

[1:54:10] Clapp: Really it was three years supply: two years for active supply and one year; if anything went wrong you could cut down to half a year and exist the whole base for a year, a year and a half on half rations, no problems. But what used to happen was that when you filled in ... There was a set formula so when you filled in the stores for next year, like you wanted shall we say, ten cases of butter or something like that, you were automatically ordering 15 cases of butter to cater for that extra year. Things like that and if you cut out, like this base had, it did not want any more pickled onion because it had amassed up some pickled onions in the past and it didn't want any more pickled onions. So they were cut out; no pickled onions. Back in UK they didn't believe that and used to fill in the normal requirement of pickled onions. So at that base we had 69 years of supply of pickled onions.

[1:55:08] Lee: Which base?

Clapp: This was Argentine Islands. Luckily we had a person down there who loved pickled onions, but he still didn't get through 69 years of pickled onions. But that type of thing used to happen.

[1:55:20] Lee: But no serious consequences?

Clapp: No serious consequences. The only serious consequence that did happen was when BAS was taken over by the Natural Environment Research Council as opposed to the Foreign Office. It was Foreign Office and moved to the quango Natural Environment Research Council (can't remember what year⁹), but I'm told, Fuchs told me, that one of the first things NERC did was looked at all their resources and everything like that and said 'Oh God, each of your bases in the Antarctic has got three years supply of food. That's not necessary. Cut that down. Give them one and a half years supply of food.' Fuchs had to say 'All right, I will cut it down as long as you take the responsibility of perhaps losing all the men on the base because they haven't got enough food, because you can't get a ship in for two years or something like that.' So that was just pure ignorance. That was the only hitch, I gather, but no, the stores situation was quite good. Very good.

[1:56:18] Lee: Was that resolved in Fuchs's favour?

Clapp: Oh yes, oh yes.

[1:56:23] Lee: Were you aware of personalities at the other end of all this, at the other end of the process?

Clapp: You mean back in London?

[1:56:29] Lee: Back in London, despatching things to you.

⁹ 1967

Clapp: No, I don't think there was. When I came over there I found out virtually that there wasn't. There were strong personalities because back in the UK you had, I think it was three people who had been in the Antarctic bases, and another three people that hadn't. The three people that hadn't were quite high up, and if there had been any clash of personalities, it was the lack of appreciation of what went on on an Antarctic base between those who knew what went on on an Antarctic base ... But as far as I know, apart from the Johnny Green incident, that did not impede anything that happened there. I know that one or two people had their own personality and their own strong mind and their own sense of humour that perhaps wasn't appreciated, but no, it went on quite well, to my understanding.

[1:57:37] Lee: Again some more practical points, how things changed over the years you were there, in particular Health & Safety, and managing the environment and also managing your waste. Was there a growing Health & Safety consciousness?

Clapp: No, that didn't really come in until after we set up the headquarters in UK, the proper headquarters in UK at Madingley¹⁰, and then those things became more aware and it also too became with the Natural Environment Research Council who were very much into that type of the thing. The practices that went on in the past, like: we used to ditch our gash at sea, where it was all eaten up and chomped up by seals and fish. You might float over a bed of tin cans, and things like that, but that was the way it was. But now they keep all their ... Eventually it got to be that they couldn't do that. They had to keep their trash for a year and it was taken away by the ships, which has caused its problems I would think, certainly in the beginning. And they had to establish a furnace down in Stanley for burning a lot of it; they had to bring some stuff back to the UK, which causes problems I would have thought with ship space and everything like that. But that's one of the penalties of, or one of the requirements of the present trend towards environmental waste and modern living.

[1:59:08] Lee: So when it was decided ... How why and when was it decided to start scaling down the operation at Stanley? I mean you were there when they were beginning to start ...

Clapp: Yes. It started first of all with the communications. I forget what year it was but it would be about '73/'74 and what happened was: Cable & Wireless who were 50% owned by Government at that time, they wanted a foot into Argentina and the way it was felt that they could have a foot into Argentina was through the Falklands. So first of all they entered into negotiations, or the British Government entered into negotiations with the Falkland Islands Government, for Cable & Wireless to take over the responsibilities for the Falkland Islands communications. In other words, all the government communication links between UK which was run as a Falkland Islands entity, would become a Cable & Wireless entity.

[2:00:28] Clapp: That happened and it was quite successful. It improved communications to a way, placed it on a more commercialised view. There were some moans because people had to pay for telephone calls and various things like that. Then it became to BAS and eventually I was told that Cable & Wireless would take over all the BAS communications. They wouldn't be responsible for recruiting people

¹⁰ Madingley Road, Cambridge.

for the bases or anything like that, but they would take over the communications from Stanley down to the bases and everywhere else along the line. So on one day I had to sack all my people, all my communications people, and an hour later they were engaged by Cable & Wireless. Same job, different name.

[2:01:17] Clapp: Their idea was that eventually there would be better communications with Argentina, and from the Falklands they would have a link into the Argentine and South American communications. It didn't work. They didn't get such a link anyway. The war came along eventually, and that put a scupper to it, but the tensions between the Falkland Islands, Foreign Office and Argentina scuppered that anyway in the link, so they weren't able to get into Cable & Wireless, certainly in the manner that they wanted to and expected to. So that was the first stage of it all. Then the second stage was they wanted to build this big place, new headquarters just outside of Cambridge.

[2:02:09] Lee: At Madingley?

Clapp: At Madingley, High Cross, just outside of Cambridge. In the meantime, what they wanted to do was they ... I think there had always been a little bit of: I won't say envy but casting the eyes down South because here we were a fairly independent setup from the main body of decision making, and an influential independent body, and they wanted to bring all that back and have it all under one roof in UK, under the terms of efficiency. Efficiency for ordering, efficiency for communications (which they had conveniently forgotten they had got rid of anyway), but of efficiency of stuff for the bases and everything like that, and I could see their point, in a certain way. So eventually I was warned that my job would finish out there. 'Goodbye. Thank you very much.' I thought about this and I thought 'This is not on, really.'

[2:03:12] Clapp: There wasn't an equivalent job that I could just automatically slot into out there. I couldn't be automatically transferred to the Falkland Islands Government side of things because I was a head of department out there of a Foreign Office organisation, or NERC as it was by then, and I couldn't go into an equivalent state and equivalent rankage, into any Falkland Islands Government organisation. So I said 'I don't think this is right.' And it so happened that one of the senior personnel people came out with the ship at that time and the Director was there as well and I collared him and this other person, and the Director said 'I know nothing about this.' And it had been done by the team back in the UK. So anyway that was all sorted out and I was told I would be brought back to the UK to set up the headquarters at Madingley when it was built and that's what happened.

[2:04:20] Lee: How did your heart feel about all this?

Clapp: I was very reluctant to leave because this had been my home, my only home really, for 14 years.

[2:04:29] Lee: Do you approve of it now?

Clapp: I approved of the rationale. I didn't approve of the way it was going but that was really on the personal side. All my staff out there were fine because most of them had been taken over by Cable & Wireless. The staff that were left were only about four or five in the Stores and the Maintenance Department, maintaining our houses

and that, which had been taken over by Government when we leave. And Clem, my Stores Officer, Ray Clements, and they would be left behind. Have you met him?

[2:05:01] Lee: No. He was my favourite goalkeeper¹¹.

Clapp: Oh right. With a T instead of a C. But it was leaving the Falklands. I just did not want to do it but I couldn't place myself on the beach out there, especially with a wife and kiddy. I tried to buy the house that we were in, because it was a BAS house, but BAS said 'No, sorry. We have already promised that to Government when you leave.'

[2:05:36] Lee: So you had no capital?

Clapp: I had whatever capital I had, my own personal capital.

[2:05:41] Lee: But you hadn't got a house to sell?

Clapp: But I hadn't got a house to sell, no, because we had been living in that one for so long. I had to pay a certain percentage of my salary for the rent, for living in it. So I was brought back to UK and BAS were very good to me when I got back to UK. I said to them in the beginning 'Right, I have heard that there are schemes whereby if essential people are being moved from one part of the UK to another part of UK, you can get preferential treatment in council housing and everything like that.' They went into that and they got it so that when we arrived in UK, we went straight into a council house. But I'd made it plain that I only wanted it until I could look for a house of my own, but when we got there, we went into this council house. We could have lived there for evermore and they looked after it in that way. When I did arrive and reported in to the office, they told me to go away and not come back for a month.

[2:06:37] Clapp: I said 'Well OK, I am ready to work' and they said to me 'You have just brought your wife and family over to a new country. You yourself haven't been in this country for any length of time for 14/15 years. Go away for a month and get yourself sorted in.' Which was fine and by that time it worked out OK because the building was going on. By that time the building was practically finished so I entered into the final stages of that building there. Then I was made what was called Office Manager and it was my task to get personnel into the building and also to bring all our outlying scientific establishments like we had physics at Slough; we had geology in Birmingham. We had more physics and more geology in Edinburgh and places like that, to bring them from their present locations, move them lock stock and barrel into the new building in Madingley and also to furnish the new building.

[2:07:44] Lee: That was also your responsibility?

Clapp: That was also my responsibility, and to create a core staff of people for admin and various things like that, which was quite interesting because I had never dealt with people that provisioned offices. I hadn't travelled on a train really for a while, so it was quite interesting for a good six months until it got sorted out.

¹¹ Referring to Ray Clemence, goalkeeper for Liverpool FC, 1967–1981.

[2:08:11] Lee: So really you arrived here when most of the forward planning for the new building had taken place?

Clapp: The forward planning to the effect that that's what the building was meant to be built for, the type of building it was built for, and also that all the various scientific units and the admin units would be under that one building, but nothing had been done about actually physically moving them, and doing this and doing that.

[2:08:38] Lee: So you took over the logistics, did you?

Clapp: I took over the logistics at that time.

[2:08:41] Lee: Ordering removal vans?

Clapp: Ordering removal vans, and costing and ordering and arranging the removal of people from Birmingham, Slough, Edinburgh, into Madingley. Furnishing all the offices, the telephones and everything like that, and also at the last, before the building was actually finished, working out what rooms should be this and what rooms should be the Director's rooms, what rooms should be the admin room, treasury room, filing room and everything like that.

[2:09:13] Lee: You had been in the Falklands for 14 or 15 years and had no idea how the rest of BAS worked, had you? How did you do that.

Clapp: No idea. I had no idea how the BAS worked but I certainly had no idea of how to order 90 desks and this and that at the most economical stage. I had some help from three people who knew me from the past. I had a lot of advice on that. But the practical side of it, I had no idea whatsoever. I learned on the hoof, so to speak, and it was really good. It was quite interesting. I enjoyed it. And then when it was set up, I was Office Manager for a while, or I became Office Manager and I created various routines.

[2:10:00] Clapp: I was Health & Safety man. I was the anti-terrorist man so we would have to come it, so I went away and did anti-terrorist courses at the Home Office and learned how to make bombs, on the grounds that when you know how to make a bomb, that's one way in which you can stop bombs being made and being planted, and it was very interesting. Anyway the office was commissioned. I came out of it quite well. I was then promoted and when you were promoted, you were moved to a sister organisation on the grounds that you spread your expertise, whatever it was. And I was moved to the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology where I stayed until I retired.

[2:10:44] Lee: Where is that based?

Clapp: That was based at Monkswood, just up the road, more or less, just outside of Huntingdon. So they were very good to me there. They didn't want me to move away because of the fact that I hadn't been in UK, theoretically, all that long from after that long time out there.

[2:11:04] Lee: So as far as moving everything from various places in this country to one place, to High Cross, did that require streamlining of the organisation? Were you involved in the kind of thinking of how to streamline things?

Clapp: No.

[2:11:17] Lee: Tighten things up? You didn't orchestrate changes to the organisation?

Clapp: I didn't orchestrate any great changes to the organisation at all, apart perhaps changes in some admin practices, and embarkation upon things that hadn't been bothered before, like Health & Safety, anti-terrorism and transport and all that type of thing.

[2:11:42] Lee: All right. OK.. Now to the area you don't want to talk about too much which is the Fuchs Medal. I am obliged to ask you and you are obliged to answer. How did you feel about the Fuchs Medal?

Clapp: I think when I was presented with the Fuchs Medal, the ceremony in Cambridge, I think I said that I felt this was a very precious award to me, because it was made by my peers. It was made after, I understand, a round about the bases 'Who should we have for the Fuchs Medal this year?' And it came back that it was for me. So it is a very precious thing to me because, as I understand it, it was a choice of my peers that I should get a Fuchs Medal. Plus the fact that it was a medal for my services both in Antarctica and in Stanley, I think mainly in Stanley, and it was a worthwhile thing for me. It had all been a worthwhile job to an area that I loved, and still do.

[2:13:02] Lee: Do you have it somewhere safe?

Clapp: Yes, yes. Do you want to see it? Have you ever seen it?

[2:13:07] Lee: What I mean it how highly do you treasure it?

Clapp: I treasure it; I bring it out on special occasions. I look at it now and again. It is tucked away safely so that nobody else can come in of a night-time and pinch it. Yes, it's rather like that one. That is for a similar type of thing.

[2:13:22] Lee: Well the one on the wall is the MBE which I presume came later.

Clapp: Yes, that came for the work that I did for the community out in Stanley during my period out in the Falklands, and also the work I did for the Falkland Islands Association after I got back to UK, and the political work, the political lobbying, and again the organisation of the Association.

[2:13:49] Lee: Were you surprised when the envelope, the brown envelope arrived?

Clapp: I was. I was and I learned ... I was surprised and later on I learned it was ... I was extremely pleased and felt it again worthwhile because I understand it originated in the Falklands, the nomination for the MBE.

[2:14:10] Lee: And neither award is for a specific incident? They are just for longevity of service at a particular level of quality and patience?

Clapp: Yes, I am not so sure it is the longevity of the service but for the contribution and dedication within the service, Because although I was in BAS in Stanley, I was theoretically married into half the community out there and so one had an 'in' in there. And also too some of us buried ourselves in the community. I was a recorder out there, an interviewer and a broadcaster; I used to also do the Legislative Council account broadcasting. I acted as secretary to the constitution. There was a new constitution involved out there and I was secretary to the constitutional committee. I was chairman of the cricket club. I was chairman of the opera society, I was chairman of the dramatic society, this, that and goodness knows what, prison visitor and everything like that, but that was my way of ... but it didn't feel like it at the time. It was just involvement at the time.

[2:15:30] Lee: And unknown to you, all these things were adding up to these two awards?

Clapp: Yes they were, yes. I founded the youth club out in Stanley, and it was all very beneficial. It filled my life out in Stanley whereas a lot of people, it didn't.

[2:15:46] Lee: So the wrench to move must have been ...?

Clapp: It was great.

[2:15:52] Lee: How was that achieved?

Clapp: It was great for her as well but Jean is like a lot of Falkland Islanders when they marry. Their home is where their husband is, so her home was wherever I was and it was a very very great wrench for me and it was a wrench for Jean because she was leaving her mother and father and our dog, but we knew that after a while mother and father would most likely come over here, and that is what happened. But it was a wrench for her as well because she was leaving her homeland. She was leaving the long-term family, cousins and everybody like that out there (she had no brothers or sisters), her long-term family over there, and it was a wrench but in a different way to me. That was also a wrench to me because by being married to Jean, they were my family as well. But it was wrench for her.

[2:16:51] Lee: So on balance, did you ... did the attraction of coming back here and being involved in something new, outweigh the sadness of leaving, or would you rather have stayed? You have hindsight now of course, to help.

Clapp: I do have hindsight to help. I would have been very tempted to have stayed if there was a job out there for me equal to what I was doing for BAS.

[2:17:21] Lee: Right, so that was a priority?

Clapp: Which gave also the security for my family as well, but there wasn't. Coming back here and doing what I understood was to be done, was a great attraction as well. Bringing Jean to UK and the youngsters to UK was also another phase in their life

which could prove attractive, and we knew that we wouldn't be forever away. We knew that some time we would come back for a holiday, or I promised them that some time we would come back for a holiday, and that has happened. But now in hindsight, now that we are over here, we both think it was a good move because, as I told you, we like travelling, we like moving around. There is far more to do over here. The education is better for our kiddies. I have a daughter in the Foreign Office which she would never have been if we had been out there. The son has gone back. He is not very academically – he's like me. He is quite happy out there. I have often said to Jean 'Would you like to move back to the Falklands to live?' Because I get fed up with living over here sometimes, and she says no.

[2:18:36] Lee: And just a final few thoughts about the time you were at BAS, before you moved on to NERC, were there people who became quite key personalities in your early time here, either assisting in the operation or making you feel at home, or people to whom you owe a debt of gratitude for something significant?

Clapp: Yes. A significant person is Bill Sloman who was very very considerate in the ways ... He was the sort of chief executive officer, and he was very considerate towards me when we first came over. He helped with the accommodation. It was at his instigation that I was sent home to get used to UK before I came back to work, and he helped me with advice, and the problems that cropped up in doing the job that I was supposed to do. For instance, if I may digress just a moment, I went into all the pros and cons of getting the desks, the chairs, the seating arrangements and everything like that for the actual office furniture, and I came into decision that the best quality for the price that we wanted to pay was ... oh Crumbs, the name has gone, but they were the people that did employ disabled people and they turned out furniture and everything like that¹².

[2:20:07] Clapp: A very large organisation but they employed disabled servicemen and various people like that. It wasn't Rehab, I forget what it was but something like that. I went out to their factory and I looked at everything that was done, had a good show around and other places as well, and decided 'That's it'. All of a sudden I got a directive from the Government saying 'You can't do that. You have got to go through the Ministry of Supply.' So I went and had conversation with the Ministry of Supply. I wasn't quite happy about that and I discovered that they said 'All Government buildings have got to be provisioned by us. We provision them with the quality and site that we want and you pay for it.' But I also learned that on top of the price we paid, we also had to pay a third of the price to the Ministry as well.

[2:20:59] Clapp: So that immediately pushed our costs up by a third of the price for types of equipment and desks and things like that, that I had no control over. After looking at their stores and stocks, I wasn't very happy because it looked as though if there was a Government department that had closed down, we would have been getting all the stock from there and paying for it. I went back to Bill Sloman and to the Director and pointed all this out and they backed me to the hilt, and we didn't do it through the Ministry. They got a lot of flak but we didn't do it through the Ministry and it turned out quite right.

¹² Remploy

[2:21:43] Clapp: Yes, personalities like that: Dick Laws. You see I had known Dick Laws while he was South. Jean had known him when he passed through Stanley. She used to type out all the messages to his wife, and his girlfriend before they were married and he was very good. He appreciated more on Jean's side. He appreciated what Jean had to leave behind, so he was very good and very supportive. And some of the other departmental people, that eventually turned out to be departmental managers, who were ex-BAS boys and who I had known down South when they passed through on their way to the bases from Stanley. They were all very good and very supportive, yes those people.

[2:22:25] Lee: Was the key to success at Madingley still the case that if you had done time down South, you knew what it was all about really.

Clapp: Yes, that was the key to Madingley when we first started up. All the people who ran the situation there were all people who had been down South. To my mind, BAS's problems started when they grew. They grew out of ... to what they were. They lost the spirit, they lost the *corps d'esprit* that was there when Madingley was first set up, because it was the same spirit that they had on the bases and most of the people there were ex-base personnel. When they started bringing people in like ex-wing commanders and people like that to run certain sections of it, it started to get cold. More of the rat race came in. I was lucky; I was out of it by then but I still kept my interest and still kept a watch from afar and I could see that they were strengthening their core base but with that they were losing the spirit that was there before that.

[2:23:43] Lee: And the personal knowledge?

Clapp: And the personal knowledge to a certain extent; personal knowledge changes as techniques change, but they became quite cold, personnel-wise I felt, and I felt that a lot of people there that I talked to were quite upset with the way the situation was, mainly because they felt they weren't appreciated. There seemed to be rules and regulations which perhaps a lot of people didn't think were necessary. They might have been; I don't know, but they lost the backing of a lot of people. That I felt was the worst thing, and of course they got commercialised,

[2:24:28] [End]

ENDS

Possible extracts:

- Help from Mountbatten to get the job [0:05:29]
- Climbing the peak in Tristan da Cunha [0:11:40]
- Naval Surveying in the Lemaire Channel [0:17:23]
- An embarrassing moment [0:18:17]
- Studying penguins [0:24:18]
- Ham radio to the Arctic [0:27:22]
- The Goon Show [0:29:42]
- Birthday greetings Princess Margaret blocked [0:32:43]
- Unwelcome light from the souvenir hunting Americans [0:39:12]
- Bowser's solo journey to Stonington [0:40:58]
- Trading beef for rum [0:47:44]
- Advocaat and Viennese schnitzels [0:52:09]
- Johnny Green and his wife [1:00:06]
- Life possibly saved by a dog [1:02:26]
- Eruption at Deception [1:20:01]
- Contacts with Round the World yachtsmen [1:25:28]
- A lost aeroplane [1:27:24]
- High-jacked aircraft lands on Stanley racecourse [1:42:31]
- Reason for good communications with Stanley [1:50:15]
- 69 years of pickled onions [1:54:10]
- Bypassing the Ministry of Supply [2:20:07]