

ANDY SPEAREY

Edited transcript of a recording of Andy Spearey interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on 29th January 2013. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/205. Transcribed by Andy Smith, 9th September 2014.

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Andy Spearey, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 29th of January 2013. Andy Spearey, Part One.

Spearey: Andrew George Spearey, and I was born in Chippenham on the 11th of January 1954.

[Part 1 0:00:19] Lee: So you are now 58?

Spearey: 59. I was 59 the other day.

[Part 1 0:00:24] Lee: 59? You are now 59? OK. Did you come from an educated family? Was your father a professional man or ...?

Spearey: My father was an engineer. He was actually a fellow of the Institute of Plant Engineers, and he'd had considerable steam experience, and particularly steam generating experience. He worked for many years for Nestlé as chief engineer at their factories and other things as well. But yes, he was a professional engineer and he had his sea-going chief engineer's ticket.

[Part 1 0:01:12] Lee: Oh right. Did he ever go to sea?

Spearey: Oh yes. He spent all the war years in the Navy and worked his way up to, I think, the position of chief engine-room artificer, which was basically the bloke that ran the engine room. In those days you couldn't make the leap from being an artificer to being an officer. You couldn't go there. So because the Navy was so short of engineers at the end of the war, they ...; certain engineers they approached and wanted them to stay on, and part of the deal was that my father sat his chief engineer's ticket and became an officer, which he duly did.

[Part 1 0:02:01] Lee: What was his name?

Spearey: Martin.

[Part 1 0:02:03] Lee: OK. Did any of that come back into the home? Did he have model engines at home or ...?

Spearey: Oh yes, my father was a very very keen model engineer but also restored ... He knew a lot about steam cars and he restored steam cars for people, all manner of things. Anything to do with steam really, my father was keen. At one time in my teenage years we had a traction engine which we used to rally. Going back from that, my grandfather and my great grandfather were agricultural engineers, agricultural and general engineers, so it's a bit of a genetic problem, really.

[Part 1 0:02:53] Lee: My next question was 'Did any of this rub off on you?'

Spearey: Unfortunately it did.

[Part 1 0:02:59] Lee: In quite a big way?

Spearey: Well, I suppose so, I don't really know. It's difficult to be objective about it yourself, isn't it? But I have never done anything else, and I can't really conceive ever doing anything else, so I suppose it has, yes.

[Part 1 0:03:14] Lee: Did you serve an apprenticeship anywhere?

Spearey: I did, yes. I actually served an apprenticeship at the company that my grandfather sold in 1947. My grandfather retired in 1947, partly due to ill health, sold it to some people and I did my apprenticeship there. I started there in, I believe it was August the 3rd 1970.

[Part 1 0:03:39] Lee: What was the name of the company?

Spearey: Maundrells.

[Part 1 0:03:41] Lee: Maundrells?

Spearey: Yes, and my mother was a Maundrell. So they kept the name of the business because the company had such a good name that they kept the name.

[Part 1 0:03:55] Lee: Did they specialise?

Spearey: Not really. In my grandfather's day, they called themselves 'Engineers, Ironfounders and Millwrights' which pretty much encompasses anything you want to do, really. But by the time I went along they were basically agricultural engineers and tractor dealers, and I served my apprenticeship as a tractor mechanic.

[Part 1 0:04:20] Lee: What happened at the end of the apprenticeship?

Spearey: I left because we couldn't agree on the money. The chap who had been the tractor mechanic had left. I had carried on in my late apprenticeship. I just carried on, picked it up and done everything that this other chap had ever done and I wanted paying for it and they didn't want to pay me for it so an agricultural contractor heard through a friend of mine that I might be interested in having a change. I think Maundrells paid me £24 a week in 1974. Michael Bell, the contractor, offered me £40 so not a lot of thinking needed to go into that.

[Part 1 0:05:07] Lee: [Laughs] That was in this country though?

Spearey: Oh yeah.

[Part 1 0:05:11] Lee: But you went abroad at some point?

Spearey: Yeah. I worked for Michael for a few years and then went to New Zealand travelling, working on farms, repairing machinery, all sorts of things and had a great

time. In many respects I probably should have stayed there but didn't. I came home in April or May of '78 and decided while I was looking for something else, I wasn't ready to settle down so I was just looking for something else.

[Part 1 0:05:53] Lee: If you work on the land, or on equipment that manages the land, did you find yourself forming a kind of relationship with the land? If you come from a long line of agriculturally minded people?

Spearey: Well I come from a very long line on both sides of the family of principally farmers.

[Part 1 0:06:15] Lee: You are mentioned in the Domesday Book – well not you personally.

Spearey: No [laughs]. On my mother's side, the Maundrell side, they are mentioned in the Domesday Book as farming at Calstone.

[Part 1 0:06:27] Lee: Which is where?

Spearey: Calstone is over on the Downs closer to Calne, and they are still there.

[Part 1 0:06:33] Lee: Here in Wiltshire?

Spearey: Still in Calstone which is remarkable really. There can't be many families that are in the same place now as they were in the Domesday Book. They just haven't moved.

[Part 1 0:06:45] Lee: It's nearly a thousand years?

Spearey: Yes, a long long time. A long long time. So yes, I suppose you are right. Yes it does, it makes a difference to me.

[Part 1 0:06:56] Lee: Can you put your finger on that?

Spearey: That's hard really.

[Part 1 0:06:59] Lee: Give me an idea.

Spearey: Very hard. I suppose you could best say, really, I am a man of open spaces. I like open spaces. I love the Wiltshire Downs, Salisbury Plain. I love the chalk and wouldn't ever want to live away from it. Living down in the Vale here is about as close as you can get to living in the chalk. But yes, I don't know, I just like the rolling hills and the open spaces.

[Part 1 0:07:33] Lee: How do you feel about deserts?

Spearey: Well I have worked down a few of them. Very similar really, very similar. Just at the moment with all the rain we have had, I just think living in a desert could be really great, but yes a similar feel. You've space; it's a question of space.

[Part 1 0:08:05] Lee: OK. Now the Antarctic fits into that description, doesn't it, rather neatly?

Spearey: Halley fits into it extremely well.

[Part 1 0:08:12] Lee: Yes. What's your first ...? Can you remember your first awareness that there might be a place on this planet called the Antarctic?

Spearey: I was always good at geography at school. I have always been interested in geography, in places, in people. One of the few subjects that I was actually any bloody good at really but ... So yes I had a reasonable awareness of things, from a schoolboy really. Probably my first real awareness of the existence of British Antarctic Survey was: Maundrells were dealers for International Harvester tractors and machinery, and from time to time International used to send round a company newspaper. I've got a copy upstairs of a 1967 one, of when International Harvesters, through Cripps at Leeds, sold BAS three crawlers.

[Part 1 0:09:29] Spearey: So I knew that BAS operated International crawlers. Then in about 1972 or '73¹ or so, something like that, they lost one of the crawlers down a crevasse at Halley and it was recovered and then subsequently they just put a pair of batteries on it, started it up and drove it home. It was a great story and International Harvester, for the Smithfield Show that year, made a big play of this: that you could leave this thing in a deep freeze for three years and put a battery on it and it would start and drive. And I remember thinking 'That's quite impressive really.' But I never really thought more about it until a friend of mine happened to spot an advert in one of the newspapers.

[Part 1 0:10:23] Lee: For BAS?

Spearey: For BAS, looking for tractor mechanics.

[Part 1 0:10:27] Lee: But had you read about the heroes at all? Scott ... ?

Spearey: Not at that time, no. That came later. I mean I was obviously aware of Scott.

[Part 1 0:10:43] Lee: There was that black and white film, wasn't there, that you probably saw as a teenager on a Sunday afternoon when you should have been doing your homework.

Spearey: Yes that's right. No I was aware of Scott; probably less so of Shackleton, but definitely aware of Scott, yes. Every schoolboy really has been taught about Scott, haven't they?

[Part 1 0:11:03] Lee: Yes, absolutely. So what made you respond to this advert rather than just put it to one side?

Spearey: I wanted to travel. I wanted to do things and a friend of mine, a farmer over near Calne, he was the same. He had been in Australia and wasn't ready to settle

¹ Dropped in crevasse 1969; recovered 1972.

down and he jokingly said one day, he showed me the newspaper and said 'Go on. You want to have a go at that.' So anyway I did. I wrote to them and duly received a reply, saying acknowledgement, but nothing really happened and Rob was also looking around for something to do. And we both ...

[Part 1 0:11:49] Lee: Rob ...?

Spearey: My friend Rob Hislop, the chap who showed me the advert. To cut a long story short, we both applied to Massey Ferguson as overseas technicians supporting MF principally in Africa. Funnily enough we both went for interview at the same time the same day, so we went up to London together to Massey Ferguson's international offices and were duly interviewed. Both of us were offered a job and anyway Rob took his. Rob went to Mozambique for a while. That will I think probably have been before the civil war, and then duly got shipped off to Nigeria.

[Part 1 0:12:49] Spearey: Massey Ferguson were somewhat indistinct about where they wanted to send me. It could have been Libya; it could have been Lesotho, or Saudi Arabia. They weren't offering fantastic money; in fact the money was pretty rubbish really but it was the fact of going somewhere. That's what it was all about and they knew that so they priced the job accordingly. Anyway I said 'Look, I'll go to Saudi for the money and I will go to Lesotho for the money. But if you think I am going to Libya for what you are offering, the answer was No.'

[Part 1 0:13:33] Lee: What was your reasoning there?

Spearey: Libya is bloody unsafe. In those days Gaddafi was in his prime and you just had to watch yourself. So I sort of vacillated a bit about it and during the vacillation Carys Williams rang me up (and we are getting into October now), so she rang me up and said 'We have got a little bit behind with the interviewing. Are you still interested?' I said 'Yes I am still interested.' 'Oh,' she said 'can you pop up next Tuesday?' Or whenever it was. It was just a few days' notice. I said 'Yes, that will be all right.' I went up there and I remember distinctly being interviewed by Eric Salmon, Dad ...

[Part 1 0:14:28] Lee: That was Alan Etchells?

Spearey: and John Hall. And well it was a very very fleeting arrangement really. I don't think Dad said more than about half a dozen words, but nothing new there. Most of the time it was either Eric or John Hall talking and asking questions. Anyway the interview came to an end. It didn't seem to take five minutes but it came to an end and John took me out of the room and said 'Look, go and sit over there. One of the ladies will bring you a cup of tea, and we will come back and talk.' So literally, by the time the tea came, John Hall came back out again: 'Right,' he said. 'If you want it, the job's yours.'

[Part 1 0:15:17] Lee: Right, so there are several factors at play here, I suspect. Were you the only candidate that day?

Spearey: Yes.

[Part 1 0:15:22] Lee: Do you think that something had gone wrong somewhere?

Spearey: I think I know what happened but I am not absolutely sure.

[Part 1 0:15:29] Lee: What do you suspect?

Spearey: Well no, I don't really know. I think somebody that was going to go down in that capacity probably went in another one. I don't really want to go into names and details because I don't actually know, so rather than speculate Yes I think there was a change around. I think that there were factors that weren't immediately obvious, now thinking back on it, 30 years ago or more; yes you could probably see a pattern. But at that time I didn't know. So John Hall said 'Right,' he said, 'we will give you five minutes to think about it.' I said 'I don't really need five minutes John, you know. That's fine. I will take the job.' 'Right,' he said 'we had better come and kit you out.' *Bransfield* had long sailed. She had gone, and I remember he took me down to the clothing store, issued all my kit in two bloody great kitbags.

[Part 1 0:16:31] Lee: There and then?

Spearey: Oh there and then, there and then.

[Part 1 0:16:34] Lee: Sorry, just to interrupt briefly. This also suggests that the job was yours unless you fouled it up, isn't it?

Spearey: That's right [laughs]. Well I suppose, probably. In some respects for them it was heaven-sent because there was an International Harvester trained and experienced mechanic going to look after their bulldozers. It was probably a chance that they probably couldn't turn down. I don't know if anybody else was being interviewed that day. Oh I do know: Tony Escott the electrician; Tony I think went for interview the same day I think. I think Tony went the same day. So it was all running very very late. But of course Tony went Rothera and that was much easier to get in and out of.

[Part 1 0:17:24] Lee: So you went downstairs to the stores to be kitted up.

Spearey: And was kitted out with all this gear.

[Part 1 0:17:31] Lee: Did they give it you to take away or did they just arrange to have it sent South for you? [Pause] You don't have to remember.

Spearey: I obviously can't remember that but do you know I've got an idea that I might have taken it with me. I think I probably did. I had a big old Bedford van in those days. I think we just flung it all in the back, and I think they said 'See you at Heathrow in five weeks' time.' and off I went. I had a trip to Ely. They did squeeze in a trip to Ely. I had to go up again because there was about ... This was October, probably mid to late October time, and we didn't fly to the Falklands until just before Christmas.

[Part 1 0:18:29] Lee: What happens at Ely?

Spearey: Ah well RAF Ely had a very sophisticated and up-to-the-mark dental section, a hospital, an RAF hospital, and I got all my teeth fixed up by the local dentist and then I had to go to Ely to get the teeth checked off. Bizarre operation really but anyway they said ...

[Part 1 0:19:05] Lee: What was bizarre about it?

Spearey: Well because they just whisked me in and they had this huge scanner which They could take a whole scan of your head. So they did this and of course this was something that the normal dentist at that time couldn't possibly dream about, and it showed that in one place in my jaw I had a gap in my teeth and there was a tooth sat down in the jaw. And it also showed that I had wisdom teeth in the top but not in the bottom. So this RAF surgeon said 'Oh,' he said, 'we will whip them out in a minute.' I said 'Whoa, hang on. No you're not. We are not whipping anything out unless I know it's going to be fairly painless.'

[Part 1 0:19:52] Spearey: At any rate we did a degree of bartering about it, and he said 'We will leave the tooth that is down in the jaw. We will leave that one. That could be tricky. We will leave that but we will pull your wisdom teeth out.' He said 'They will come out dead easy.' He said 'The only reason for taking them out, because there's no lower ones; there's nothing for them to work on. It's a waste of time. They will get ... They may suffer from decay or whatever so we will just whip them out.' It was part of the 'if you don't need it, whip it out' syndrome that BAS used to have in those days. They nearly would take your appendix out, if they thought there was half a chance². So they took these wisdom teeth out, kicked me out the door and said 'There you are. You'll be all right.' And I can remember thinking 'Bloody hell, my face is a bit numb.' But anyway I had made arrangements to go and visit a friend of mine who lived in North London for the night, so I drove back down the A11, back down towards London. Somewhere in Hertfordshire I thought 'I had better get some petrol.'

[Part 1 0:21:02] Spearey: So I drove into this little old petrol station, which was actually served. An old lady came out, tottered out, asked me what I wanted and when I went to speak, it was just 'Blerr-urrrh, blerr.' She must have thought I was simple because I couldn't speak properly. Anyway we duly sorted it out. By the time I got to London I had regained the power of speech. Yes, that was quite a thing. Actually the RAF dentist, who was really a character, first of all he complimented my dentist, my local dentist, on the standard of work he had done. He had obviously made a very good job of things because here we are, nearly thirty years later and the work has never been touched. It has remained so he did a very good job. The RAF dentist said that, and also the RAF dentist had a mouth full of fillings. 'Physician, heal thyself.'

[Part 1 0:22:14] Lee: It didn't hurt when the anaesthetic wore off? Was there any other medical testing?

Spearey: No.

[Part 1 0:22:20] Lee: You didn't have a medical generally?

² Following a number of appendectomies on base in the late 1960s, BAS in the early 1970s was advising recruits to have their appendix out before going South.

Spearey: Not that I recall but I suspect that they probably did, and I suspect that they probably also drew blood. BAS have a long and fine tradition in drawing blood.

[Part 1 0:22:35] Lee: But you got the job before the medical which is interesting.

Spearey: Yes. Obviously they thought that as long as I could walk up the stairs and get into the office, that was good enough.

[Part 1 0:22:43] Lee: And crawl under a tractor?

Spearey: Exactly.

[Part 1 0:22:48] Lee: What was the money like? Was it better than Libya?

Spearey: No. No but the advantage was that you didn't pay UK income tax. I didn't actually do the BAS job for the money.

[Part 1 0:23:05] Lee: No. Very few people do.

Spearey: No. It was useful at the end, but I didn't do it for the money. The MF job, because of ... (now I have to be careful what I say) because of shall we say the Arab world, it needs to be a bit more than just interesting, whereas the BAS job: I can't even remember what it was now. It might have been no more than a couple of thousand a year, I can't remember, but it wasn't very much money.

[Part 1 0:23:41] Lee: So you had about four weeks then, to put your life in order?

Spearey: Yes, not long, but it didn't really matter in those days, you see, because (somewhat of a simplification) I could nearly carry my worldly possessions on my back. I didn't really have anything much, and the bits and pieces I did have ...

[Part 1 0:24:02] Lee: No wife?

Spearey: No, no. God, no. I didn't really have very much, and the bits that I had were stored away either (one or two of the bigger things were stored at friends' farms) and the rest of the stuff was at my parents' house. So there really wasn't anything very much.

[Part 1 0:24:23] Lee: But was there any training? Did you do the crevasse training or the health and safety stuff?

Spearey: No. People didn't in those days, not much. I mean they did ... I missed obviously Cambridge Conference, had been weeks and weeks before, back in September time. I arrived on the scene long after all that, and even then, I think Cambridge Conference in those days was a fairly simplistic affair. You basically sat in a room watching slides and listening to people talk at you.

[Part 1 0:24:58] Lee: It's a bit more serious now?

Spearey: Far more serious now, yes. There's much more finger waving now.

[Part 1 0:25:07] Lee: This all happened very suddenly, and presumably you are signing up for two and a half years?

Spearey: No, I didn't. They would like me to have done but they accepted that because it all happened so quickly, that they would allow me a one-winter contract, which was pretty unusual. But I was able to go South with practically no possessions of my own because these bloody great kitbags took up all the weight. There really wasn't ... I had a backpack and that was my personal goods. So no, I went for one winter, to Halley, and then midway through they asked me if I wanted to do a second one there but that's somewhat jumping the gun. But no, I went for 18 months.

[Part 1 0:26:10] Lee: OK. So in that period between passing the medical and getting the job and arriving at Heathrow, what sort of things were you doing? Were you just having a holiday?

Spearey: No. Wherever I've been ... I just kept working. I worked for a John Deere dealer in Devizes then and I had a number of things of my own to sort out. I can't remember how long I worked with them for, but certainly by the time October came round I had given my notice in and it was time to clear off and sort some of my own stuff out.

[Part 1 0:27:01] Lee: Where did you fly to?

Spearey: Buenos Aires.

[Part 1 0:27:05] Lee: And did you pick up the boat there?

Spearey: No no. We then flew down ... In the old days you used to have to have what they called a 'white card' which is issued by the Argentine consulate in London, and you had to have this white card to fly to the Falklands. So we flew from Heathrow to Buenos Aires and we had a night in Buenos Aires, and then we flew down to Comodoro Rivadavia which is in Southern Argentina, Golfo San Jorge. And then the following day we flew across on an F-27 to the Falklands. I can remember being absolutely bowled over by Buenos Aires. It was something different. I had never never experienced anything like it. It was anarchic and great fun. They put us up in the City Hotel and there was quite a number of us.

[Part 1 0:28:13] Spearey: They had obviously had some sort of catastrophic problem with recruitment because I flew South with three people that I wintered with: Andy Green the radio operator, who was seconded from the RAF; Pat Cooper who was an electronics guy (he was seconded from the Army); and the other guy, I am desperately trying to think of his name³. He lives in Andover; he was seconded from the RAF as well and he was: they were beastie⁴ men. We all flew down together, along with one or two others and it was huge fun really, huge fun. We probably don't want to go into too many of the details of the Argentinian side of the trip but it was a lot of fun.

³ This would probably have been Mick Roscoe.

⁴ Fids' slang for the ionosonde.

[Part 1 0:29:18] Lee: Beyond the scope of this interview?

Spearey: I think it is probably well beyond the scope of it, yes, but it was a lot of fun, huge fun. And the Argentinians were absolutely paranoid that we may see any of their oil installations that were in Comodoro. They didn't, but they practically blindfolded us to get on the aircraft. The security was absurd, and they made us pull all the window shutters down in this aircraft before it took off, and it was in such a ropey condition that when it actually was going down the runway, these blackouts were falling out of the windows. So we could look across and see it all anyway. I can remember it was a 3-hour flight from Comodoro across to Stanley; it was three/ three and a half hours and the pilot never managed to synchronise the engines in the entire distance. All you could hear was 'Wharr, wharr, wharr' as the engines were out of sync. It was just awful. And then Stanley – what a difference! Stanley was a funny place in 1978.

[Part 1 0:30:38] Lee: It still is, apparently.

Spearey: Nothing like it was.

[Part 1 0:30:41] Lee: What was funny about it from your point of view?

Spearey: Well it was ... You had England, Britain, 8000 miles away and you just didn't expect it.

[Part 1 0:30:58] Lee: 8000 miles and two or three decades away?

Spearey: Mm. Two or three decades for sure, and it was a very insular place in those days. BAS people were given a large amount of tolerance really because BAS was seen as an important part not just of the Falklands but of that whole area. The ships were registered in the Falklands and the whole thing was very very pro-BAS. So you could be a naughty boy and still pretty much get away with it. But it was quite an experience. In those days there was no road out of Stanley. Once you got to the edge of Stanley, that was pretty much it. It was just tracks. We had about two weeks there I think, waiting for the ship, waiting for *Bransfield* and we walked all over the place and explored and it was great. We stayed in the Upland Goose Hotel which was unusual, but there was nowhere else I suppose.

[Part 1 0:32:20] Spearey: I can remember being in the bar one night, just before Christmas (it might have been Christmas Eve even), and this drunk burst through the doors and 'Have a drink, boys.' So we had a drink. 'Have another drink, boys,' This went on for some while and eventually he collapsed in a heap. But we noticed he had these Falkland Island banknotes and he was pointing at them but he was so incoherent we didn't understand what he was saying. He kept pointing at these notes, you see, and eventually he collapsed and Des King, that ran the Upland Goose in those days, Des came out, dragged him round the back and the evening carried on. I said to Des 'Who was that, Des? He kept pointing at the banknotes.' 'Oh yeah, yeah, he would do.' he said. 'He is the Treasurer of the Falkland Islands.' He said 'He only comes out a couple of times a year. He does like to enjoy himself.' [Laughs] Fascinating place!

[Part 1 0:33:22] Lee: So you were drinking Government beer?

Spearey: Yes. I suppose indirectly, we were. Everything was tinned in those days. McEwan's Extra I think was the main drink – 'Mucky Jock'.

[Part 1 0:33:37] Lee: You were only three years before the Falklands War, when you were passing through the Falklands. Was there any sense of antagonism with the Argentinians?

Spearey: No, not really. Not at that time because ... The Argentinians were making life as difficult as possible for the Falklanders, all this white card nonsense, all this restriction on travel. Yes, they were making it as difficult as they reasonably could, but there was no real sign of any aggression at that point, no.

[Part 1 0:34:21] Lee: Right. You had obviously been told you were going to Halley. Did you have any concept of what Halley was and where it was like?

Spearey: No.

[Part 1 0:34:28] Lee: Did you know you were going to be living underground?

Spearey: I think I did know that, but the details were very sketchy. I had seen virtually no photographs of it. I knew practically nothing about it really, other than that there was a lot of snow everywhere and they had International bulldozers and you lived underground. But apart from that, no not much really.

[Part 1 0:34:53] Lee: So what were your early impressions of the place, when you finally got there?

Spearey: Well I don't know. It wasn't that straightforward because first of all you see we went via South Georgia and my first recollection really of the Antarctic or sub Antarctic was waking up on a Sunday morning. It was flat calm which is bloody unusual for that part of the world, and looking out of the porthole and seeing South Georgia in sunshine with no clouds – a cloudless sky. And you do a double take because you just cannot believe what it looks like. So it's a progressive thing really. And then of course you have the sea ice, crashing through the sea ice. Well I remember seeing that.

[Part 1 0:35:59] Spearey: Actually that reminds me. I saw, when I was at junior school, a story about the supply ship *Magga Dan*. I have just remembered. I can remember seeing ... there was film footage of the *Magga Dan* crashing through the sea ice and I just remembered this. So it was a progressive thing really and the day we got to Halley it had mank⁵; it was overcast so there was no real depth of feeling. There was no ... It was very difficult to tell what was up and what was down really, so it was a progressive thing really. And there was so much going on because the ship in those days dumped the cargo, took the people that were going home on and that was it. It was done, and if they could do it in three days, they did it in three days, so it was a very very frantic few days and you just think 'What the hell is going on? What is it

⁵ Fid slang for overcast weather.

all about?' So it took a while to sink in really. There was so much going on really. It was only probably once the ship had left that you actually started to look around and think 'Well, there's a lot of space here!'

[Part 1 0:37:37] Lee: Was there enough space for you?

Spearey: Oh yes, more than enough. Yep, great fun.

[Part 1 0:37:43] Lee: You have a gleam in your eye about the landscape at Halley.

Spearey: Yes, it never bothered me. I'm not a mountaineer or a mountain climber. I don't need, necessarily, to have mountains around me, and like I say, Halley actually, people think Halley is flat but it isn't. It rolls. It's rolling country, rolling ice, so there is ups and downs; it's just that you don't necessarily always see them. Because of the weather conditions, you are not aware that they are actually going up and down. But no, I don't have a problem with the view.

[Part 1 0:38:27] Lee: What were your living conditions like?

Spearey: Grim.

[Part 1 0:38:30] Lee: Which hut? Which one were you in?

Spearey: I was in Halley III, the Armco one. By the time I got there ... I think I'm right in saying that Halley III was built in 1972⁶. By the time I got there it was 30 odd feet down so getting in and out of the place was becoming quite difficult. It was also starting to suffer badly from distortion and sinking in some parts. So it was pretty crude really, in fact it was bloody crude and I suppose that's what probably came as a bit of a shock. But not having actually known any different, you just took it as this is what it was like and it didn't really bother me. No it didn't bother me really. Almost it's what you expected in a way, although some of it was perhaps a tad on the extreme side. In those days BAS had no money at that time and everything was done on a shoestring, a real shoestring.

[Part 1 0:40:00] Spearey: There was only two generators when there should really have been three, so blackouts at Halley III were a regular occurrence. The generators were running very very close to their maximum loads and it only needed somebody with a ..., just to put one light extra on and that was it: it tripped it all out. So consequently of course, none of the pit rooms were heated; the whole pit room block was unheated. So you would record -12 degrees in the winter months in your pit room. You didn't mess around in your pit room; you certainly didn't spend any time in there. The lounge was only heated from Friday night to Sunday night; it wasn't heated the rest of the time so that got cold as well, though because it was in the living block with the kitchen, it did get some heat from the kitchen so it didn't get really really cold, but you wouldn't want to go and sit in there. So it was a fairly austere sort of a place.

⁶ Actually it was built in early 1973.

[Part 1 0:41:10] Lee: If you couldn't sit in your bunkroom (or pit room) and you couldn't sit in the lounge Monday to Thursday, what did you do with yourself?

Spearey: Actually we did put the heating on on Wednesdays because we had a film show on Wednesdays. Oh well either dining room or I had a little office in the workshop (tractor shop) and I was lucky that I actually had a heater in there. But quite a lot of the place was unheated because all the power was needed to keep the WF2 radar heated. To enable the met balloons to be followed. So we were slaves to the radar really.

[Part 1 0:42:00] Lee: One of the drawbacks of how the base was decaying was the voids between the huts and the Armco structure.

Spearey: Yes, they had been neglected for some years.

[Part 1 0:42:12] Lee: So what was the problem there?

Spearey: Well essentially condensation. The ice built up principally due to condensation I suppose and the ice was building up between the Armco steel tube and the wooden buildings and it was starting to push the buildings in. And also the floor of the Armco was starting to come up in the centre. The pressure on it was so much, it was starting to come up in the centre, so the buildings were all on a tilt and all over the place. Pete Witty decided (and rightly so) that this ice had to be cleared out and everybody was involved in it and there was hundreds of tons of ice removed from around the timber buildings.

[Part 1 0:43:09] Spearey: And Jack Scotcher, who was our carpenter, – no Jack was much much more than a carpenter, he was a true ... He was a joiner; he had, before he came South, made wheels for wagons and restored carriages and all sorts of things; a very very clever man. And he re-jacked and re-jigged all the buildings within the Armco. He spent a long time doing it but the effect of it was dramatic. Then once he had got them back on a level keel again, we then pretty much re-decorated the place. The following year when *Bransfield* came back, when Eric Salmon and Dad came down, they couldn't believe the difference; it was like a different base. A huge amount of work went into it but it extended the life of Halley III by probably 5 years.

[Part 1 0:44:19] Lee: Just talk a bit about the process of getting the ice out of the voids.

Spearey: It was chipped out by hand.

[Part 1 0:44:24] Lee: Coal mining was it?

Spearey: Coal mining, ice mining. It was chipped out with mattocks and loaded into drums. The drums were wheeled round to the gash shaft and then lifted out and taken away to the dump and got rid of. I can't remember exactly but we certainly took a sledge load of ice out every week and probably two.

[Part 1 0:44:58] Lee: Unpopular work?

Spearey: No, I don't know that it was unpopular because everybody realised that it had to be done, so we just did it. The main area that was done was the actual living area. Jack did a bit of work in the pit room block but that was beyond redemption really; that was starting to get past the point of being able to do anything with it at all.

[Part 1 0:45:27] Lee: For somebody who likes wide open spaces and views of the countryside from your windows, how was it living underground? Does it feel claustrophobic at all? Were you worried about the creaks and the groans?

Spearey: No, no, it didn't bother me much. No you don't actually ... well I never really made a connection with it particularly. And one of the advantages of it in some respects is: when you went down your hole, then you left the Antarctic behind. That's not actually right. That's not quite right but you had this difference where, when you were up on the top you were in the wind and the weathers and you knew what was going on. But when you were downstairs, you didn't really.

[Part 1 0:46:20] Lee: Different country?

Spearey: Mm.

[Part 1 0:46:21] Lee: Tell me a bit about Pete Witty. He was your base commander and I wonder what your relationship with Pete was like?

Spearey: Pete had been at Halley before. He had been involved in the vehicle side of things with "Honk" Davies the winter before or two winters before I went in⁷, and I think Pete thought that he was just going to carry on as he was. But I had some fairly – I wouldn't say strong – views about things but certainly I was my own man (I always have been) and the first few months it took us a little while to sort out that I actually knew as much about any of the vehicles as he did and probably more, because that had been my background. So yes, there was a certain – I wouldn't say treading on toes – but it took us a little while to get ourselves organised (mutually organised) which we did do and then we got on quite well, but it took a little while. It did take a little while.

[Part 1 0:47:45] Lee: What sort of problems did the technology, the mechanical technology, present you with? I mean it's one thing servicing an International Harvester in a garage in Wiltshire, and another possibly in the temperatures of the Antarctic.

Spearey: Yes, dramatically different. It did pose some interesting problems but generally I have always risen to a challenge; I try to anyway, and I enjoyed it really because it was ... There were two aspects to it really. One: the job out there was what you made it. If you wanted to make a job of it, then there was huge scope, and I loved the freedom of it. I loved the freedom to make my own mind up about how I was going to do something or what I was going to do and the way that I would do it. It was great and fortunately my background, certainly with the agricultural contractor was: I wouldn't say 'make do and mend' but you engineered your way out of things. You had to make a decision. You are in a field or you are miles from anywhere or

⁷ 1977.

whatever and you do the best you can and you made it work, and that's really what BAS wanted and I enjoyed that aspect of it, I really did. That was one of the big plusses of the job really, that 'It's yours, boy. Get on with it.'

[Part 1 0:49:37] Lee: So were you solving problems with 'Fid's bodge' or were you machining perfect parts in your workshop?

Spearey: Well a combination really. Yes, both. We didn't ... We had a lot of spare parts for the bulldozer but Sno-cat spares were relatively few and far between and you have to do the best you can. So sometimes you did a Fid bodge but if you could do something a bit better or you had the ability to do something a bit better, then you did it a bit better. Horses for courses really.

[Part 1 0:50:20] Lee: So you had the resources: you had the workshop; you had metal parts; you had raw materials to makes things?

Spearey: Yep, quite good really. In those days there was a few important items lacking, and probably also I had ... I wanted to do more than probably the job had previously had done. For instance all this ice mining meant that we had to lift an awful lot of stuff up the shafts and the problem with the shafts at that time was they had a very rickety gantry affair on the edge of them which was bloody deadly. It required somebody to operate this gantry, standing on the top of an open shaft and then pulling the rope up with either a Muskeg or the International dozer.

[Part 1 0:51:23] Spearey: Well if the visibility was poor, by the time you got to the end of the piece of rope, you couldn't see what the bloke at the top of the shaft was telling you (if it was snowy or blowy). So bloody dangerous really and Pete rightly said 'We have got to improve on this.' So I made a very rudimentary crane to go on the back of the Muskeg and use the Muskeg winch, and we pulled tons and tons and dozens and dozens of drums out with this thing. Because the guy that was operating the winch, the crane, stood beside the machine and he could see everything that was going on. so it reduced the risk of not so much dropping drums of ice back down the shaft, but dropping the 'honey buckets'⁸ back down the shaft (which was pretty much a mortal sin).

[Part 1 0:52:20] Lee: Right, and you made it out of spare parts, this crane?

Spearey: No. I made it out of bits and pieces that we picked up at South Georgia. Me and Pete Witty went on the lurk at South Georgia and picked up all sorts of bits of steel tubes and plates and ...

[Part 1 0:52:36] Lee: On the way in?

Spearey: Yeah, yeah.

[Part 1 0:52:38] Lee: So this was already a plan?

⁸ Drums used as toilets.

Spearey: I don't know that I would go so far as to say a plan but Pete knew I think probably that there was not too much in the way of materials at Halley and wanted to do something about it. So we lurked all sorts of stuff out.

[Part 1 0:52:57] Lee: What kind of problems did the International Harvesters present you with then? Anything out of the ordinary?

Spearey: Well the principal difficulty of course it was getting the things to start, but I did develop a process and I did generally get it to go, down to -30. After -30, then it got incredibly difficult and extremely time consuming. To get it to go at -30 probably took the better part of a day, but actually no, I got it better than that, but there was a process that you had to adhere to, and organisation. You had to be prepared. When you shut the machine down, when you had been using it, you had to shut it down and then leave it in a position where it was ready to go. If you didn't do that, it wouldn't go. So yes, getting it to go was the first problem really. Once you got it going and warmed through and useable, the second problem really was actually seeing what you were doing. It had cabs that had been made by ... I think they were either made by Cabcraft or Retford Sheet Metal - one or the other - and they had tiny windows in. The visibility was absolutely awful and in those old crawlers, they were completely manually operated.

[Part 1 0:54:43] Spearey: There wasn't a power shift, there was no automatic transmission or anything like that, and you were like a one-arm paper hanger actually driving it because you needed both hands for steering for the clutch and brakes: both feet for steering on the brakes; both hands to steer the clutches. But you also had to have another arm to operate the blade, so you were pretty busy inside, and in poor weather it was difficult to see out of it, partly because the windows froze over because there was no heater in the cab. Well I say there was no heater - there was no heater connected to the engine cooling system. There was a Webasto kerosene-burning heater but they were bloody useless and unreliable. So you got used to driving it looking through a 6-inch hole in the windscreen.

[Part 1 0:55:40] Lee: Was there anything you could do about that?

Spearey: Well we tried a number of things: about getting copper tubing and making vents in the top to blow air up on the screen. But they would work when ... Frankly they would work when you didn't need them because they weren't powerful enough to actually have any real heating effect when the wind was up. In 20 knots/ 30 knots of wind it would just whisk all the heat out of the cab immediately. So if we had to keep the garage ramp open for a particular reason and it blew, then it was quite a demanding job really, especially if it was dark with limited lights, limited vision because of the ice in the cab. It was quite difficult, really quite a challenge.

[Part 1 0:56:38] Lee: So whilst you were watching all this struggle, were you forming a plan or recommendation for future years?

Spearey: Oh absolutely. I have never been short of ideas.

[Part 1 0:56:48] Lee: [Laughs] So what were your recommendations to BAS about these Harvesters?

Spearey: Well I have to go back and look in my annual report that I did, which I haven't done.

[Part 1 0:57:05] Lee: Off the top of your head?

Spearey: Well I knew that it was the last year for that old machine because I knew that there was a new machine coming in the next relief, which had a power shift transmission, which was just a forward and reverse shuttle. So you would have one hand, just fingers really, to make it go backwards and forwards, which was a huge improvement. So I knew that improvement was on the way. I think probably I had ideas about heating them up, pre-heating them to get them to start, but that was probably about all. Like I say, I knew that a new machine was in the offing.

[Part 1 0:57:48] Lee: So you were just seeing the old machine out, basically, as best you could?

Spearey: Yes.

[Part 1 0:57:52] Lee: And was there a temptation, once you got it started, to just leave it running overnight?

Spearey: No. I did do that on some occasions but I didn't like doing it because to leave an engine running unattended is not good policy. We did *in extremis* we used to do it, and it was part of the night watchman's duties to go out there every hour and make sure it was still running. But no, I only did that *in extremis*. It's a good way of ruining them.

[Part 1 0:58:33] Lee: What would be an extreme enough situation to make you want to keep it running unattended?

Spearey: If we had to do ... All the food in those days, except for some of the meat, was all out on dumps. It was all outside, all out on dumps. So if we had a run the following day planned to go and get food off dumps, then that would have been a good reason.

[Part 1 0:58:59] Lee: Right. OK. What about the Sno-cats and the skidoos? Were they also troublesome, or were they fairly reliable?

Spearey: The Sno-cats had their problems. We had two. We had a large one which was actually pretty good and then we had a smaller one which was really too small to be of any use. Both had problems. Both we had to basically manufacture parts for, but they were good. We didn't use them hugely because we had the old Muskeg. The Muskeg was fairly bomb-proof really, certainly fairly Fid-proof, whereas the Sno-cats were not quite so accommodating. Snowmobiles were a nightmare. They were all pretty much worn out or unsuitable and were the bane of my life.

[Part 1 1:00:04] Spearey: When I first got there I was doing a recoil starter – because they didn't have electric starters in those days – I was doing a rope in a recoil starter every day. We had about six or eight snowmobiles that were used all the time. One or

two of the lads, they just didn't understand that when you came to the end of the rope you had to stop, and there would be these snowmobiles, skidoos, abandoned all over the bondu with no bloody recoil starter in them. So I put up with it for a while and then I can remember probably February/March time I think, March probably, I'd had enough of this, and I made a decree in the dining room one day. I said 'I am only going to do recoil starters every other week, so if you break one this week, it will be the end of next week before I get round to it.' I never did any more after that, or rarely ever. So it did work. But snowmobiles in those days were, frankly, rubbish.

[Part 1 1:01:18] Lee: Snowmobile is another word for skidoo is it?

Spearey: Skidoo is a brand name. We had Skidoos and we had some Mercury snowmobiles. The Mercs were made by the same people that make Mercury outboards. Beautifully made, wonderfully designed but completely unsuitable. I don't know why BAS bought them really. One of the great mysteries. They were fantastic and huge fun, and I kept them under lock and key most of the time because people could have seriously injured themselves with them. 70 miles an hour was not a problem.

[Part 1 1:02:06] Lee: Rumour has it that you used to hide all the keys on New Year's Eve as well?

Spearey: No, I never did that. I don't think so, anyway. I would like to think that I had sufficient respect that they wouldn't go doing that anyway. I don't think I ever did it.

[Part 1 1:02:25] Lee: There is something about a blow-up summer garage?

Spearey: Oh yes!

[Part 1 1:02:28] Lee: And a collision with Al Smith, 'Big Al' Smith?

Spearey: When we built Halley V, it was a major undertaking, an absolutely massive undertaking, and I felt that we had to have somewhere to keep the vehicle spares and to be able to work on the vehicles during the course of the building project. I hummed and hahed about all sorts of things, but I spoke with a guy, I think he was up in Nottinghamshire, about this inflatable tent. To cut a very long story short, he said that he could make an inflatable tent that would work during the summer season at Halley. We had a few modifications done to it, we had some big tie-downs sewn into it, but it was a big structure. We could put one of the Nodwell crawler machines in it.

[Part 1 1:03:44] Spearey: It stood out; you could see it for miles. It was red and white striped. Again, I wanted it to stand out so that you could see it. So we had it red and white striped and it was a huge thing and it had a fan that ran continuously to keep it inflated. And the difference it made for the mechanics was ... It didn't have any wind in it; it was calm. It even warmed up inside because the sun used to warm the thing up. In fact one of the problems we suffered from with it was that it used to ablate the floor inside it, so gradually as the summer went on the floor got lower and lower. But it was a great thing, but its down side was: it needed this fan to run all the time, and also rolling it up, letting it down and rolling it up was quite a procedure because it

weighed well over a ton. When it was all rolled up and put in its box, it weighed over a ton, and Smithy was ...

[Part 1 1:05:00] Spearey: Smithy had a pre-production Bombardier Skidoo, an Alpine-2, and it was a huge thing, a great great big skidoo, painted black. And Smithy had a black weather suit, snow-suit, and he had a black helmet as well. He looked like Darth Vader sat on this thing; it was great. But Al's not terribly nimble really – nimble is not one of Al's strong points – and one day he went to start this skidoo up. It fired up and somehow he fell over, opened the throttle up, and this thing shot across the bondu straight through the side of this tent. It made a huge hole in the side of it. And of course it just collapsed around it. We brought it home that year and had it sewn back up again but it didn't do much damage. But of course as soon as the air had gone, down it came, but it was a great tent, a brilliant idea.

[Part 1 1:06:19] Lee: Did it survive many seasons?

Spearey: Mmm. We used it for ... We used it all the time, every season, until we actually built the movable garage. So it did three or four seasons.

[Part 1 1:06:37] Lee: On a much smaller scale, there is a story about a Weatherhaven tent, pitched or being used under the snow.

Spearey: Yes. They weren't quite so robust. They were OK but they were pretty flimsy really, and one of them did collapse. We let the snow get too far up it. I think the winter snow did for it and collapsed it.

[Part 1 1:07:05] Lee: Anybody inside?

Spearey: No, no, but getting the stuff out ... It was a food tent and getting all the stuff out from inside, it was a bloody nightmare.

[Part 1 1:07:16] Lee: Once one had collapsed, did that affect the way you viewed them in the future?

Spearey: No, not really.

[Part 1 1:07:21] Lee: So you still use them?

Spearey: They were being used outside of their working parameter really. They were never meant to be allowed to have snow build up around them to the extent that happened at Halley. What they should have done, but you couldn't because of logistical reasons, was to take them apart and store them again and put them together the following year but that wasn't going to work. So no, it wasn't the tent's fault, it was purely what they were being used for and the position they were being used.

[Part 1 1:08:03] Lee: And there was a snow blower that you had at Halley as well, I believe?

Spearey: Well we had two. The first one I didn't have anything to do with the purchase of. I think Paul Whiteman bought it from Rolba and that was on tracks. It

was a hugely complicated piece of equipment and had the ability to dig big trenches but unfortunately it didn't have the ability to get itself back out of them. And we dug these big trenches to put the foundations for Halley V in – bloody great holes – and it did that and it did it very well. But like I say, it couldn't really get itself about. The tracks had been made to work in Alpine passes so wet snow compacted, it was fine, and if it was on a road or whatever, it didn't carve the road up. But as soon as you broke through the crust at Halley, you were into this 'sugar', and it couldn't handle that. So it really struggled to get itself about really and it was also a very very fickle beast; it had some very very fine adjustments to make it work.

[Part 1 1:09:31] Spearey: The up side of it was that I got a trip to Switzerland to find out how to drive it, but it had problems so ... At that time, BAS was awash with money. Maggie Thatcher had poured money, or was pouring money into BAS, and because International Harvester were no longer in business, we bought Caterpillar D4H low ground-pressure bulldozers. We fitted them up with Webasto heating equipment so you could start them at -30C without any grief at all. I bought two snow blowers: one for Rothera which went on the front of the articulated loader that was at Rothera and the other one we took apart, took in half. We made a quick-hitch attachment that clipped over the top of the Caterpillar blade for the front cutting part, and then we made linkage for the rear part, for the power pack engine and pumps and what-have-you and that went on the back of the Caterpillar.

[Part 1 1:10:59] Spearey: So we fetched up with a tracked snow blower but in a completely different way. I suppose in terms of cost, I expect the machine cost something in the order of: somewhere between £150,000 and £170,000. It was a serious amount of money but it did what it said on the label and the third season into Halley V there were problems with the water melter. Basically the water melter didn't work and it had to come out, and they had to put a new one in. But by then it was 8 or 9 metres deep. So I sat on this snow blower that we'd built and I dug a hole 9 metres deep. But it wasn't just 9 metres deep; the size of the hole was just unbelievable.

[Part 1 1:12:05] Lee: A crater?

Spearey: Mmm, it was a crater. Fortunately we had about four or five weeks of perfect weather. It was a perfect weather season and I dug this massive hole and we managed to get this new water melter, which was a pretty sizeable affair, down into this hole and into the Armco or shaft of Halley V and got it all working again.

[Part 1 1:12:35] Lee: We have drifted into your period when you were working for BAS on a regular basis in the 1980s and beyond but one of the problems with snow blowers was that they didn't just blow snow; they blew anything they found in their path.

Spearey: Yes, you kept out of the way of them. I think BAS chippies have always had a tradition that you bang one nail in and you throw another nail on the floor, and you keep out of the way of them, yes. When they are working, you don't get anywhere near them at all.

[Part 1 1:13:06] Lee: But you were finding bigger things than nails? You were finding spades and kit caps.

Spearey: Yea, yea.

[Part 1 1:13:14] Lee: Tins of food?

Spearey: All sorts of things: shovels would go up the spout from time to time.

[Part 1 1:13:18] Lee: Hm. Let's pause and we will come back and talk some more.

Spearey: Yep.

[Part 1 1:13:25] [End of Part One]

Part 2

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: This is Andy Spearey, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 29th of January 2013. Andy Spearey, Part Two.

[Part 2 0:00:11] Lee: We are talking about that first year you did at Halley, your first experience with BAS. What was it about it which shaped your life, would you say?

Spearey: One of the great things about that winter, though probably I was not fully aware of it at the time, but was the sense of camaraderie amongst the people that wintered in '79. There was possibly one that was slightly off to one side, perhaps not mainstream, but by and large it was a first class bunch of blokes, it really was, and it was a lot of fun. The winter just seemed to disappear. It was a lot of fun. It had probably some of the best tradesmen that BAS could ever have fetched up with, in the right place at the right time.

[Part 2 0:01:17] Spearey: Mike Hood, the electrician, (we called him Abbo because he did look like he was an aborigine) was a wonderful electrician. He could make things and nothing was a problem. As I have mentioned before, Jack Scotcher the carpenter, a fine fellow of a man, a really great bloke and a first-class carpenter. And so on. John Williams who was the genny mech was also very very skilled. The scientific people were hugely effective, and the beastie men ran the beastie better than it had been run for many many years. So we had this camaraderie. Everybody pulled together; everybody gelled together and it really was just a great time.

[Part 2 0:02:09] Lee: Were you the only vehicle mechanic?

Spearey: Yes. We all had our areas of responsibility. For myself it was the vehicles. John Williams the genny mech gave me some assistance but he had sufficient problems of his own, just to keep the bloody generators going and keep them cool was a major undertaking. So we all had our areas of expertise.

[Part 2 0:02:34] Lee: [Laughs] The whole concept of trying to keep something cool in the Antarctic ...

Spearey: Yes, we had big problems with overheating, the generators overheating.

[Part 2 0:02:41] Lee: Were they underground?

Spearey: Oh yes, 40 foot down. There was a hundred foot of exhaust pipe on them and again John, with some assistance from myself, cut it all back. We collected all the oil drums. We changed the oil on everything because we had massive stocks of oil. There was oil down there that would have lasted for twenty years. It was huge amounts of oil so we changed the oil in everything to give us the maximum number of drums. We then cut the ends out of the drums and welded them together and made a big tube and we installed all that lot, all 60 feet of it or more, for generator exhausts, to make the generators exhaust properly, to breathe properly.

[Part 2 0:03:34] Spearey: And John did all sorts of other things as well. Abbo made him up a variable speed fan that would vary the amount of air going into the generator room, depending upon the temperature in there. All these sort of things, we made all manner of stuff, and it was a huge sense of achievement. At the end of that summer season, at the end of the '79 winter, we could look at what we had and think 'Well, we have done pretty well here.'

[Part 2 0:04:11] Lee: Just out of interest, was Abbo, was he black?

Spearey: No no, he came from Blandford.

[Part 2 0:04:19] Lee: You had a trip out to the Hinge Zone. Did you go out much in fact?

Spearey: We got out quite a bit. Pete Witty was very very keen on getting out and about and almost, I wouldn't say pushed us out the door, but certainly made sure that we got out and about. We did a trip out toward the end of the summer, before the winter set in too much. We took the old Muskeg out and I think on that occasion we took the Muskeg and the Sno-cat. I think Pete took the Sno-cat and I took the Muskeg and we renewed the line of drums that navigated you to the crossing point, before it got buried in the winter, because it would be more grief then.

[Part 2 0:05:11] Spearey: So we went out before the winter, raised them all up, had a look around, and got a feel for the place and then we went out again before ... We went out quite early in the season to put the drums back up again on the surface so you could see them. I think I went and did that with Tom Lachlan-Cope who was a metman and I think Abbo. I think there was three of us went out and did that job, and then we actually did a traverse of the whole shelf. Whether we were supposed to or not I can't really remember but we did, and we went from the Bob-Pi Crossing, we followed the Hinge right the way round to Low Shelf and then back to Halley, which was quite a long way. It would be much frowned upon now.

[Part 2 0:06:12] Lee: Were you taking risks then?

Spearey: Everything is a risk in the Antarctic isn't it?

[Part 2 0:06:17] Lee: Yes but some things are more risky than others.

Spearey: Indeed they are.

[Part 2 0:06:21] Lee: What happened then, because they offered you another year didn't they and everything you've said so far would make me think that you might accept it?

Spearey: Yes but at that time I had hardly got my foot in the door really. It was probably about March time I would think. They said 'We need to start looking at recruitment.' Perhaps it was April; it was certainly well before Midwinter, probably April. At that time Pete and myself hadn't really quite ...

[Part 2 0:06:55] Lee: Gelled?

Spearey: Well I wouldn't say gelled, but certainly I was still finding my feet and indeed he probably was as well. And I also had, as I said before, I had nothing of my own. I had half a dozen tapes, a little tiny tape deck and that was it really. I mean I had nothing so ... a few clothes, bits and pieces but really nothing very much, and I felt at that time that I probably couldn't commit to the second winter. And there was an upside because by coming out of Halley when I did, I managed to get a trip round the Peninsula on *Bransfield*. So I spent ... I got on *Bransfield* in January and didn't get off until May when it came back to Southampton. So I had a great trip around that time.

[Part 2 0:08:03] Lee: It was a good briefing for later in your career?

Spearey: Indeed and it was also of course the year that *Bransfield* ran aground off Killingbeck Island.

[Part 2 0:08:14] Lee: Were you on it?

Spearey: Yep. Fascinating. It was a Sunday morning and flat calm. It was quite sunny (sunny periods you know), six oktas or whatever of cloud, and sailing round the bottom of Killingbeck Island heading: Rothera was almost in sight and the ship leapt in the air. Well it didn't leap in the air but it certainly leapt and we thought 'Hum, wonder what's happened here.' And sure enough, it was aground. It was pure bad luck. Captain Cole had taken the same route that he had always taken and for some reason the gyro or the auto compass or whatever, was very very slightly out and there was a rock pinnacle sticking up and *Bransfield* went straight into it.

[Part 2 0:09:24] Spearey: There was no panic about the job because everybody ... I remember I was in the Fids' Mess and thinking 'Mmm well we are not going anywhere so we might as well have another cup of tea a minute.' We went round; the crew flew around and tried to get some idea some idea of what was going on but of course they put weights and ropes over the side because they couldn't find anything because it was a pinnacle. Eventually they went down into the forward hold and found a big bulge in the floor of the hold, and the ship wouldn't go anywhere – it was stuck. So they pumped all the ballast out; they pumped the ship tanks out. They did everything and eventually, after some while, about 11 hours, 12 hours or so, we floated and off we went.

[Part 2 0:10:28] Lee: It wasn't holed at all?

Spearey: Oh yes. They took a lump of rock, when it eventually went back to dry dock, they had a lump of rock in it more than the size of that sofa, a huge lump of rock embedded in the bow. *Bransfield* was double-hulled so it had the outer hull and the inner hull. Inside there were tanks: ballast tanks or fuel oil tanks or whatever, and it made holes in about six or eight of them I think. They thought at one time that *Bransfield* might not be able to get off because they tried everything to try and get it off but it firmly resisted for some while. Cambridge, in their infinite wisdom, contacted the Navy to send *HMS Endurance* down to assist. *Endurance* was in the Falklands at the time, in Stanley. The Navy then made a press release saying that *Endurance* was on the way to aid the *Bransfield* which had run aground in the Antarctic.

[Part 2 0:11:56] Spearey: The first thing my parents knew about it was the *Six o'clock News*: there it is right on the bloody news. Of course nobody told any of the parents or organised ..., so there was a bit of frantic activity there on the part of BAS to try and calm everybody down after the event. But as it turned out, the great upside of it was we went into Rothera, did the relief at Rothera. *Hero* came down. *Hero* was a little small, essentially a fishing boat operated by the Americans from Palmer Station and it came down with divers on board. They dived on it. They took a series of wonderful photographs of the hull of the ship showing all the damage. By the time *Endurance* got down, we had finished cargo work at Rothera and was hanging about waiting for it. So it then had to escort us back to the Falkland Islands.

[Part 2 0:13:02] Lee: Sorry, why wasn't the *Bransfield* sinking if it was letting in water?

Spearey: Because it was double hulled.

[Part 2 0:13:06] Lee: So it only let water into the first hull?

Spearey: Only damaged the first skin, not the second one. So it wasn't compromised really, in any way, shape or form, other than it had this great big gash on the outer hull. So eventually *Endurance* got down, we went back up to the Falklands, but we had to keep stopping or slowing down, waiting for *Endurance* to catch up, because the old *Endurance* was just an awful thing. Eventually we got in sight of Stanley, got in sight of the Falklands, and I can remember them just steaming round in huge circles, waiting for *Endurance* to catch up so that she could go through Port Stanley, through the entrance into Port Stanley, first. So eventually we have to go through all the protocol of this and then of course the Navy divers then wanted to dive on it and assess the situation.

[Part 2 0:14:12] Spearey: Well of course Port Stanley harbour is just full of mud and there is absolutely no chance of seeing your hand in front of your face. So they went through the motions but it was a complete waste of time really. Then they said ... It was supposed to go back to Signy and do other things and they cut all that short, and we sailed up to Rio. Lloyds of London then got ship repair assessors to decide whether *Bransfield* was sound to sail across the Atlantic. The great part about all this: it took a week, so we had a week in Rio. It was just fantastic. But Stuart Lawrence,

Stuart had taken over by then and Stuart said ‘Don’t come to me anymore. I haven’t got any more money. You’ve spent it all!’

[Part 2 0:15:10] Lee: He was captain of the *Bransfield* by then was he, Stuart?

Spearey: Stuart had taken over because ... John Cole had actually been in command when it ran aground but because they changed over, Stuart brought the ship home you see. In those days, one took it down, one brought it home.

[Part 2 0:15:27] Lee: So did the *Bransfield* get repaired before it headed off to ...?

Spearey: No.

[Part 2 0:15:31] Lee: So it crossed across the Atlantic in that condition, quite safely?

Spearey: Oh yes. For my sins I was made King Fid. From the time it left Halley, John Cole talked me into being King Fid. So I was King Fid all the way round and myself and a party of other Fids, we cleaned out Number One and Number Two forward holds so that they were clean. So if in the event it sprang a leak, we had diesel pumps and the diesel pumps could take water without blocking up from timber and rubbish and dirt that accumulates in the holds. So the Fids did that. But no, it went home and eventually it went to dry dock and they repaired it all.

[Part 2 0:16:23] Lee: And you were on it all the way home and your next epic journey was to the northern pole?

Spearey: Yes, I had been ... Kevin Gilbert (‘Smuggler’), while we were on *Bransfield*, there used to be an organisation known as Cambridge Spitzbergen Expedition and it was operated by Brian Harland who was Reader of Geology at Cambridge and Brian used to take parties of geology students up to Svalbard for fieldwork for two reasons: (1) so they had experience of fieldwork but also Brian was actually building up a pattern of geological history in the archipelago. But they had three motor boats, one of which had eaten its engine and the other two needed overhaul, and they wanted somebody to go up and assist. Any way me and Smuggler put our hands up quick as a flash. They took both of us on.

[Part 2 0:17:37] Spearey: We actually went for interview the same day. We went up together. He lived in Cornwall (hence the name Smuggler). He came up to Wiltshire and we went up together. It was a bit of a fix really but we both went up and it was a lot of fun. Again, pretty austere. I’ve got an idea Brian Harland might have been a Quaker⁹ but he certainly wasn’t into fun. Fortunately for us, Brian never appeared that year and it was just three of us working on these boats and a guy called Mike Chantrey (ex-BAS as well). We did the boats and we fraternised with the Polish and the Norwegians and we had a lovely time.

[Part 2 0:18:26] Lee: We are going to have to skip some of your life story, I’m afraid, because we still have a lot to do, with BAS, because you did return to BAS. You re-

⁹ According to Wikipedia, Harland was a Quaker most of his life.

applied in '83 and I am just wondering what it was that tipped the balance to make you want to re-apply?

Spearey: I just thought ..., I had seen Rothera and the Peninsula on my trip in *Bransfield* and I just thought 'I will have a bit more of that.' They were also in the throes of finishing Halley IV and I wanted to go and see that. So I thought 'Well, you know, I enjoyed the last lot. I will have some more.' So I went to Halley IV, assisted with the completion of it and then sailed round to Rothera and then did two winters at Rothera. The second winter, for my sins, I was Base Commander.

[Part 2 0:19:22] Lee: Getting back into BAS wasn't a struggle then? They opened their arms and took you back?

Spearey: Not aware they had a problem, no. I'm actually not even sure I had an interview the second time. No, I don't think I did. They knew me well enough by then. I had been King Fid, I had done my winter at Halley, and no, there wasn't a problem.

[Part 2 0:19:48] Lee: Was there a rescue job that had to take place at Halley IV in '83 when you were recovered from an ice floe by a ship's crane?

Spearey: Oh yes there was ... I am not actually sure which year that happened but I think it was probably about then. Unloading on sea ice is always a fraught exercise really. One year, bizarrely we had finished relief. Thinking about it, it must have been earlier than that because I think it was the year that the old International crawler went back. We had got it on board and then a few days later or a day later we were just putting the last of the stuff on ready to leave and all of a sudden the sea ice started to break up and it broke up into great big blocks. Well they weren't that big really and there was two or three of us still on these bloody blocks, just floating around. Stuart Lawrence, cool and calm as ever, said 'Stay where you are, chaps. We will pick you up in due course.' Then he took a few minutes to fire the engines up and get everything working on board, and eventually they swung round and with a crane and a basket they picked us up, picked us off.

[Part 2 0:21:20] Lee: So you were floating on an island briefly?

Spearey: Oh yeah, about the size of this room.

[Part 2 0:21:23] Lee: Oh really? That small? Did your life flash before your eyes, or were you completely relaxed about it?

Spearey: Oh no no.

[Part 2 0:21:34] Lee: So how did Rothera strike you? I know you'd had ...

Spearey: Completely different.

[Part 2 0:21:37] Lee: Yes. Everything is different from Halley, isn't it?

Spearey: The principal difference between Halley and Rothera in those days was that Rothera (and indeed I suppose it still is really) is a transit camp. People come, people go. For me, it lacked the camaraderie of Halley. Because its winter is so much shorter – the ship was still messing about in February/ March – because winters are so much shorter, I found it was ... It didn't require the (and I need to put this in the right way), it didn't require perhaps the same levels of commitment and the same levels of skills, and I wouldn't say that I was disappointed with Rothera because Rothera was an entirely different setup to Halley. But I found it somewhat less fulfilling.

[Part 2 0:22:51] Lee: Less demanding?

Spearey: Less demanding in some ways, yes, because it wasn't all floating around and getting buried all the time. You had a concrete floor in the workshop and it was more permanent, whereas Halley is always a temporary affair. No matter how you do it, it's a temporary affair. Rothera was demanding in some other respects, and certainly when the aircraft were about, it was far more demanding because aircraft ruled the roost and rightly so. But less coherent, less camaraderie.

[Part 2 0:23:44] Lee: Not quite such a close-knit beehive that Halley was?

Spearey: Nothing like, no.

[Part 2 0:23:48] Lee: The base commander your first season was Pete Creary?

Spearey: Pete Clearey¹⁰ [spells it out].

[Part 2 0:23:58] Lee: What did you make of him?

Spearey: I got on very well with Pete. I liked him but he was a New Zealander and Pete did have the ability to rub people up the wrong way sometimes. Never a problem for me: I did my job and I did more than my job, quite a lot more than my job required, and I always got on really well with him. But one or two didn't and they bated him mercilessly. Yes, unfortunately the position of Base Commander is one of complete isolation, as I later found out, and to manage that thing successfully, particularly at a station like Rothera, where at times there can be quite a lot going on. It's demanding, to be successful. You have got to put a lot into it.

[Part 2 0:25:04] Lee: What's this story about Pete Cleary and somebody called Ronnie Irons?

Spearey: Ronnie was a chippy. Ronnie was a chippy from Edinburgh, and mad, and Ronnie and Pete Foreman, the cook, were the Devil Incarnate, really, and they had this overwhelming desire to blow things up. I did it as well. We all did it at times, but they used to get an Avtur drum, stick three gallons of Avtur in it, pull the bungs down as tight as you possibly could and then light a fire underneath it. Eventually, after about 20 minutes or half an hour, the fuel inside would expand to the point where the drum just physically couldn't contain it any longer and there was a HUGE explosion and this drum would be launched 100/150 feet in the air. Huge fun. Yes you could do

¹⁰ Cleary (according to the database of winterers).

it once or twice but you didn't make a habit of doing it too often, but Pete Foreman and Ronnie just loved doing it.

[Part 2 0:26:16] Lee: This was recreation, was it?

Spearey: Recreation for them but it was bloody dangerous really you know. They don't do anything like that now I hasten to add. So Pete Cleary lived his life in fear of what these two might get up to. There came the day when the radio told us that the aircraft were on their way back to Rothera and that the drum line that delineated the skiway had to be raised and had to be ready for them. And Cleary was fraught between going up there and making sure it was done properly himself or staying on base to keep an eye on Ronnie and Pete.

[Part 2 0:27:07] Spearey: And in the end he had to go up to the skiway and by the time the Sno-cat (I took him up in the Sno-cat and a couple of other people as well) By the time we got to the end of the traverse, there was this enormous pall of black smoke over the base. Ronnie and Pete had exploded a drum in that brief period of time. We won't go into what Cleary said, but he was just ... Oh it was wonderful; it was cracking. They bated him. They bated him all the time and of course he rose to it every time you see.

[Part 2 0:27:46] Lee: So was he struggling a bit then, as a base commander, Cleary?

Spearey: I think he was quite effective but he took some of it too seriously. No I think he made a fair job of it really. I think he made a fair job of it.

[Part 2 0:28:07] Lee: Of course you were then asked to do it the following year. I'm just wondering whether by that time you planned how you were going to go about doing the job? Whether you had a philosophy of 'base commander-ship'?

Spearey: Well I have always been a firm believer in that you should lead by example. If you can't do a job, don't ask somebody else to do it for you, and that's really what I did. Also, if I had a beef with anybody, for instance we had one or two examples of [REDACTED] in particular doing things that he really shouldn't have done. I always addressed the problem when he was on his own. I never spoke about anything that he had been up to when there was other people about, and consequently I believe that he maintained a respect for me. I had a respect for him and we came through what actually was quite a difficult winter.

[Part 2 0:29:19] Lee: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

But we all came through. Nobody hit each other and everything was done ready for the aircraft, so I suppose it was tolerably successful but it was pretty difficult at times and was a real eye-opener for me.

[Part 2 0:30:14] Lee: That was in your first season at Rothera?

Spearey: Second.

[Part 2 0:30:16] Lee: Second season, with you as base commander?

Spearey: Yes.

[Part 2 0:30:19] Lee: Did you command by committee or were you a bit more 'Genghis Khan' about it?

Spearey: No. I have always said that democracy is finite. I am happy to be democratic, and where it was possible to be democratic, I was. But sooner or later somebody has to make a decision and democracy is probably in some respects the best of the worst way of doing it. So some things, yes. I can remember they wanted some base T-shirts done. This turned into an epic because we had all these different designs. We then voted on that lot and the ones that didn't get any points came out of it, and it went on for days and days, and I thought to myself then 'There are some things that you can do that with but there are others that you have to manage.' There are some things that I would allow to take their course; some things you don't.

[Part 2 0:31:29] Lee: Apart from the [REDACTED], did you meet any other minor crises in your commanding year?

Spearey: [REDACTED] was a nightmare as well and one used to feed on the other one. No nothing that you couldn't sort out, no.

[Part 2 0:31:50] Lee: I am interested that BAS didn't listen to your suggestion that these men did not winter but you were effectively overruled by Cambridge.

Spearey: Yes. I mean it wasn't just me that was saying it; others were saying it as well. It wasn't just me but sometimes we have to make a decision. Whether it is a right decision or a wrong decision, only time will tell and it is very easy to see things in hindsight but at the time there was a work programme to do at Rothera the following summer and they were still bringing people in through Damoy. Damoy was a nightmare to get people in and out through. So I suppose John Hall made the right decision that [REDACTED] – and I suppose John thought 'Well everybody has got a cross to bear of some sort. We need [REDACTED] for the coming building work for the following summer so he will have to stay.' And I can see that; I didn't have a problem with the decision and I don't have one with it now. It's operational and we don't live in a perfect world.

[Part 2 0:33:26] Lee: Part of the problem with Rothera, for those two years, was that the fact that the sea-ice wasn't terribly good and it was difficult to get people off base, wasn't it?

Spearey: Yes, it was, yes, and we had some foul weather. We had really two winters of foul weather. We had little snow on the Point. They had quite a lot of snow up in the Island and up on the piedmont but down on the Point we had rocks about for weeks. In fact really it was only late in the winter that we really got any snow on the

Point at all. We had practically no sea-ice. We had continuous gales. It was pretty rotten really.

[Part 2 0:34:11] Lee: Was it affecting morale?

Spearey: I think it probably did a bit, yes. The upside was that we had very few people doing their second winter. It wasn't actually a complete change but it was nearly a complete change. So we didn't have anybody saying 'Oh it wasn't like this last year.' We didn't miss what we didn't know, but it did have an effect, yeah. It was quite difficult to get away and even when people did get away, they just festered in the tent for eight days quite often and really didn't achieve very much. I got up to the end of the Island on one of my trips, but then I also had another trip where we got just past the end of the skiway and had 8 days sitting in a tent.

[Part 2 0:35:15] Lee: So did that generate kind of grumpiness and fractiousness? How did it manifest itself, this sense of being effectively ??? [inaudible] in?

Spearey: I don't know that it did particularly. I think people were disappointed that they didn't get sea ice and disappointed that they didn't manage to get to see Port Lockroy or some of the other things but I don't actually think anybody got seriously depressed about it, not that I am aware.

[Part 2 0:35:44] Lee: Your crane-building skills were ...?

Spearey: Paul Whiteman approached me at Rothera and asked two things really. One is would I be interested in going to Cambridge and finishing a crane that they were building or wanted to build for the construction of Rothera, or the rebuild part. And secondly, would I be interested in applying for Dad Etchells's job, because Dad was going to retire. So I said yes on both accounts and I duly went to Cambridge when I got home. Got home again in early May and I think in June I went to work in Cambridge. The crane had been started by another chap, Bob Bowler, but Bob had gone off. I think he had got a woman actually and had gone off doing other things.

[Part 2 0:36:40] Spearey: So it needed to be finished. So I finished it and we load tested it and got it all ready, and then I loaded in onto *Bransfield* and the rest of the vehicles. I went down, loaded it all on by which time we had had the interviews for Dad's job and I had been successful. No that's not right. I went down; I was still a Fid. I went to Rothera, flew into Rothera through Damoy, and assisted with getting ready for the building work. And then when the crane rocked up I operated the crane for the summer and put the building up. Then I went back (that's correct). The first summer Paul didn't approach me; it was the second summer, the rebuild summer, that Paul approached me about Dad's job. So yes, I built that and well it was still running, BAS were still using it, until a few years ago and they may still have it now (I don't know). But yes, that was that.

[Part 2 0:37:56] Lee: How did it feel flying to the Antarctic for the first time rather than sailing there?

Spearey: Well the Peninsula operation is all so different to the Halley one. They were chalk and cheese really. In all honesty (because I flew into and out of Rothera on the

Dash-7 a number of times), if I was absolutely honest with you I would say I probably didn't enjoy it very much. It was OK but you didn't get that transition period. You know, with the ship you joined in Stanley or Montevideo or Rio or wherever and you had that transition period. So it was much more really of an event, whereas with the air bridge you got on in Stanley and got off in Rothera and bang, there you were, and I didn't really enjoy it so much. Far more effective of course, cost-effective, but I didn't really enjoy it so much.

[Part 2 0:39:01] Lee: Do you think over the years that has changed the nature of Fids at Rothera, the fact that you can ...

Spearey: In my opinion there are two major changes that have made a huge difference. One is the ability to fly in and out of the place and the other one is the question of communications, satellite technology. During my time at Rothera, my winters at Rothera, one of the first things I did when I went to Rothera was erect, with the crane, the steel tower that the satcom sat on. And we put the satcom up there, Maurice O'Donnell plumbed it all up, wired it all in, and hey presto, telephone.

[Part 2 0:39:45] Spearey: I was distinctly of a Luddite nature and would have nothing to do with it. I did eventually relent and rang my mother a couple of days before I left Rothera, but I never made her aware that we actually had any means of communication other than fax. So I didn't much like it really. I felt that it could be distracting, and certainly the levels of communication they have got now are most definitely distracting for me, personally speaking. I like the Halley days when you could just click the radio off and go and do your own thing. So those are the things that have made a fundamental difference to the Antarctic, for me, in my opinion.

[Part 2 0:40:45] Lee: When you got Dad (Alan) Etchells' job, you were therefore needing to communicate a lot more between Cambridge and Rothera and all the other bases than you had done previously ...?

Spearey: Well I only communicated if I had to. You see I believe that 90% of communication is a complete waste of time. It's almost always done to watch your back. It's rarely done to inform, and I found, again ... I worked at Cambridge pre-email days and in those days, John Newman, myself and Al Smith and the others, we had offices up a corridor. When we wanted to discuss something we got up off our arse, walked up the corridor and we spoke about it, and we would have a discussion about it, a 2-way, 3-way, 4-way discussion sometimes. But you discussed it face to face, generally, you discussed it.

[Part 2 0:41:49] Spearey: With the advent of email, that started to slip away, not so much amongst the old gits like myself, John, and the others, but generally through the organisation you would get an email, and you would think 'This person is only down the other end of the corridor. Why has he sent me an email?' And the same goes with the bases. My opinion was that if you employed somebody to do the job, then you let them do the job; you let them get on with it. If they made a mess of it, or if they required assistance, then you went to their assistance and sorted you anything out.

[Part 2 0:42:28] Spearey: But I wasn't forever emailing people and I also ... I wasn't as terse as Dad was. I do remember sending a teleprinter message to Dad in my first

winter at Halley asking for a new windscreen for a Sno-cat, and Dad sent a telex back saying 'No.' Just one word 'No'. I wasn't that bad but I didn't waffle and I was always very very careful indeed, even with the teleprinters, or the fax or email, to make sure that my messages were not ambiguous. So I didn't live by email. I used it as and when it was required, if I needed information on something or if the guys down South needed it, then I happily did it, but I didn't do it just for the sake of doing it, and there was far too much of that in my opinion.

[Part 2 0:43:33] Lee: One of the perennial *cri de coeurs* that comes up from Fids is how the people on the bases don't think Cambridge quite understand what it is like, and haven't quite got the handle on things, and that does lead to terse emails between the two halves of the world. When you found yourself working in Cambridge, did you notice that?

Spearey: Well yes, there is always that cry: 'Oh they don't know what they are doing.' but there was in those days (and I'm not sure that it's the case now) I don't have anything to do with BAS now. I don't really know anything about BAS operations nowadays. But in the old days, as it were, most of the people, certainly like Dad Etchells, Paul Whiteman, Al Smith, they had all been there. They had all done it, and they did know what was going on to a greater extent than probably a lot of us Fids realised. It's all Mushroom Club stuff, isn't it really you know?

[Part 2 0:44:45] Spearey: And you have to understand as well that people on the bases have a fairly blinkered view of what's going on. It may be really important to them. They may not necessarily see the picture as a whole. And also, you know when you are sat thousands of miles away, twiddling your thumbs at times, you do think of things that maybe don't have as much importance as they should – rather more importance than they should. So again, it is just a matter of really, I wouldn't say giving them lip service (that's not fair) but certainly you took their complaints on board, or their points on board. If you could do something about it, you did. If you couldn't, well you just made the right noises.

[Part 2 0:45:38] Lee: When you got Alan Etchells' job, what was it called? What was your post, when you got it?

Spearey: Well I don't exactly know really. It changed over the years, but it was Vehicles Officer.

[Part 2 0:45:54] Lee: Right, OK, and you did 13 years?

Spearey: No, more than that; more like 15. Quite a long time; much longer than I intended to do it for. I never intended to work in Cambridge that long. But at that time there was always another project that was coming along that was interesting, and I just became really embroiled in it all. It was just one thing after another that had scope, had interest, that had the ability to use one's imagination, and I stayed far longer than I really intended to.

[Part 2 0:46:35] Lee: Which projects stand out in your memory as challenges that were managed?

Spearey: Well the construction of Halley V, being one, it probably being the main one. And the design and construction of the mobile workshop facility at Halley as well, was a big thing. Operation of the blue ice runway with the Dash-7 and the vehicle support for that. The list is endless really.

[Part 2 0:47:10] Lee: Well let's just pick on those two or three things then. The development of Halley V, which you have made a note about here, saying you were in from the very beginning. And of course this was now post Falklands, and therefore there was some money floating around BAS and you were able to get the kind of equipment you wanted.

Spearey: Mm. Lots and lots of money.

[Part 2 0:47:25] Lee: So what sort of things ... what stands out about that?

Spearey: There was ... In some respects BAS were hoodwinked. I am led to believe that the original remit to build Halley V stated that it was supposed to have been constructed with the existing equipment. Well the whole project got so grandiose and so massive, that that just wasn't going to be the case, so they had to start buying a lot of vehicles, which was good for me because it was huge fun buying lots and lots of very big toys. But the project itself, I always felt, was flawed and I also thought that Christiani & Nielsen, the company that supplied it, had BAS over a barrel and BAS came out of it very second-hand.

[Part 2 0:48:26] Spearey: I don't believe the Germans had a clue what they were up to – in fact I know they didn't – and made a pretty poor job really of the supply of Halley V. Huge amounts of materials missing, not ordered, incorrect stuff ordered. It was rubbish really and BAS had paid very good money for it. We hear a lot about German efficiency but I can tell you that the supply of Halley V wasn't German efficiency at all. It was awful, but in terms of vehicles it enabled me to put a lot of what I put in my previous reports into action. So it was fantastic.

[Part 2 0:49:20] Spearey: One of the first things I did ... When I was at Rothera, we spent hours and hours and hours shifting stuff by hand. Everything was shifted by hand: Fid power, and I thought that BAS, in the 1980s, ought to have moved on a bit. So the first thing I bought, and I had actually recommended it in my report there, was that they should have a rough terrain forklift, and the first thing I bought when I became permanent staff at BAS, was a rough terrain forklift and sent it to Rothera. And of course it transformed cargo handling at Rothera. All of a sudden they could not do without it and I knew that would be the case. And for Halley we updated all the Sno-cats, but we also bought the Caterpillar bulldozers and we modified those bulldozers to be able to start at -40° and they did, and the transformation!

[Part 2 0:50:29] Spearey: You just walk out, switch the heater on, go back, have a cup of tea. By the time you have finished your cup of tea, you could back out again, twist the key and the engine will burst into life. You left it for an hour to stabilise its temperatures, its oil flows and what have you, and then you can use it. The difference is just unbelievable. So we made real real progress. In the 1970s BAS were using 1960s equipment. In the 1990s it was bang up to date. It was absolutely (I think) the

best that you could buy, and certainly what we did with that equipment I think pretty much proved that.

[Part 2 0:51:17] Lee: So did it improve the work rate?

Spearey: Oh everything. It just transformed the whole thing. Again the manual side of things diminished. Whereas in my days at Halley, if we wanted water, we had to go up there and shovel it. We shovelled the damn stuff down a tube made of drums, and irrespective of whatever the weather was doing, we went and did it. Whereas now (I don't know about now but certainly at Halley IV) they used a bulldozer, pushed it all up with a bulldozer and if it was crap weather the following day, not a problem. You just waited until the wind blew down and came down and did it then.

[Part 2 0:51:57] Lee: So those mechanical improvements were actually also a contribution to the change of culture for FIDS, wasn't it?

Spearey: Oh yes, considerably. There is always a lot of hand work at Halley. There is always going to be but the amount of mechanical handling at both Halley and Rothera has transformed it. People don't do the manual work that they once did. There is more manual work at Halley because you have to use a shovel, but it transformed it, yes.

[Part 2 0:52:28] Lee: So was the Falklands money 5 shillings a bucketful? Did you have more money available to you than you could possibly ...

Spearey: No, no, it wasn't like that, but as long as you had ... If you did your ground work, if you did your homework and you presented a good case, then you stood a fair chance of getting what you wanted. But you had to make a case for it. It didn't come just because it was there.

[Part 2 0:52:58] Lee: Tell me about this moveable garage. Where did that concept come from, at Halley?

Spearey: Again, the Germans really were tasked with providing an Antarctic station, but paid no reference to the vehicles that actually supported that station. So some while after the place was built and running, there was still no workshop, there was nowhere to repair even a snowmobile. So we had discussions about it all and originally there was a very sketchy plan about building a jackable structure that could accommodate the vehicles. But I remember talking with Al Smith and Paul Whiteman about this and I said 'Look. This is a non-starter.' I said, 'You are never going to make a platform, with all the dynamic loads of being able to drive a vehicle on it.' I said 'You are never going to do it. This is just not going to work.' I said, 'But you have also got to do something about the vehicle servicing and repair issue. It has got to be addressed.' I had a little bit of a think about it and I suggested that we came up with essentially a great big sledge which had a building put on the top of it. I think probably the original concept of it was mine, certainly the original sketches of it were mine and John Newman also got involved with it and Al, but most of it was myself and John.

[Part 2 0:54:54] Spearey: We wrote down a list of parameters, what we wanted the building to do, and I'd long had this beef with the workshops, the tractor workshops

that had been at Halley because they all had flat floors, so when you brought a vehicle in, it melted and then you were working on all this water and it's bloody cold. You get cold; you get wet; it's thoroughly unpleasant. So I wanted the workshop floor to be tapered, and it tapered down into the centre and the vehicles sat on wooden runners, up inside, off of the floor, so that when they melted out, the water would run to the centre and then go away. John Newman said 'Yes, that's fine. but we are going to get oil coming out of these machines.' So John then said 'We will have to have an oily water separator.' So all the water went through an oily water separator. The oil was taken off (it was a marine piece of equipment) and the water went off down a drain, and so it went on.

[Part 2 0:56:14] Spearey: Then it had huge doors on it; to get a one-ten Nodwell in and out you need big doors, and it was obvious that we couldn't operate those doors manually, so the doors were hydraulically operated. John came up with a plan for hydraulically operating the doors. So it was a joint venture really. We also wanted a roof that could carry a load of 3 tons so that if we wanted to take an engine and transmission out of a Nodwell or something like that, we could hang it on the roof and the roof would support that weight. So we had this list of parameters. They put it out to tender and we were hoping and praying that Christiani & Nielsen wouldn't get their fingers in it.

[Part 2 0:57:09] Spearey: Fortunately a company up in Holmfirth in Yorkshire came back and, as ever with BAS, the discussion and the budgeting and the whole thing takes an enormously long time and we were left with a period essentially of twelve weeks and this company in Holmfirth whose name escapes me now, they were in Victoria Mills (I do remember that), they said 'Yes, we can build that.' And they did – fantastic! They fabricated the whole thing from sheet steel. They pressed it, they bent it, they did whatever they needed to and they built this enormous sledge base. I originally wanted Teflon runners on it, but for some reason, I think either to do with time or the discussion about how we were going to hold the Teflon on it, it didn't get done but it did get painted in the same low friction paint that the ice-breaking ships are painted with. So it had this low friction paint.

[Part 2 0:58:27] Spearey: A section of it was trial erected at Holmfirth and we went and had a look at it and it was huge. Jesus Christ it was huge and we said 'Yes, fine. Box it up.' Absolutely brilliant service; they built it, they painted it, they trial erected it, they took it apart, they put it in boxes, they got it to Grimsby and it was all put on the ship and off we went. And by and large it all fitted together. It all went together and it all worked and as far as I am aware, it is still working now. The tapered floor means that the mechanic always works in the dry. The heating inside will keep it at about: if it's -40° outside, it's about 10° inside.

[Part 2 0:59:30] Lee: Ten degrees above?

Spearey: Yes, so it's a good working temperature. The only downside with it is the way it's cladded inside. At the end of the winter you get quite a lot of ice build-up, and for a day or so, when the sun starts beaming down on this big red box, it rains inside but you can live with that. It's only for a day or two.

[Part 2 0:59:59] Lee: What stops it from sinking?

Spearey: Nothing; it's pure size, pure size. We think it weighs about 60 tons and the first time we moved it was a nightmare because we didn't know how to do it. We didn't know how to go about winching it around. We subsequently found out, after having a few aborted trial runs, that you have to tow it from the light end, from the door end. If you tow it from the door end, you can go anywhere you want with it. If you try and tow it the other way, it just digs a huge hole and you go nowhere, because one end has got the stores and office, generator and all that sort of stuff so one end is heavy and the other end is light. That led to a huge loss of sleep because I was told repeatedly by various worthies within the organisation this would not work and I stuck to my corner and I said 'No, I believe it will work. It will work.'

[Part 2 1:01:08] Lee: You went down with it presumably.

Spearey: Oh yes, and we were dangerously close ... One of the most vociferous people happened to be on base at the same time as we wanted to move it, and was very vocal when we couldn't move it the first time, and I thought 'O God, this is the end of a promising career.' It was a very warm day so I said 'Right. Let's stop.' I said to the other mechanics and drivers that I had there, 'Let's just stop. Let me go away and think about this.' And we made secret arrangements to ... We got up at about 3 o'clock in the morning when it was at its coolest point. The sun was fairly low. We shot down there and Hey Presto, we moved it, and by breakfast time, when everybody had got up, there it was, in position. No photographs, no pundits, we just did it, and they have done it every year since.

[Part 2 1:02:15] Spearey: It's just a technique; it's a process. It will sink about 500mm over the course of the winter, on its skis. We had airbags. I bought four or six big airbags from a crash recovery company in Hertfordshire, and we just stick these airbags underneath it: dig the snow away, stick the airbags underneath it and at 9 psi of air in these bags, it lifts it up. And you can then free it, free the skis from the ice and then you just get the Caterpillars to winch it out of the way. It was such a success that they then went and built a second one as ... I think they call it the Drewry Building.

[Part 2 1:03:08] Spearey: But I said to Don Taylor, who was Head of Building by then (Al had retired), I said to Don 'Don, you don't want exactly the same as this. This building was designed for a purpose. It is very heavy duty. The top of it is very very heavy. There is a lot of steel in it and it was made to hang 3 tons off the middle of the roof.' I said 'You don't need that. For the accommodation building what you essentially want is a great big deep freeze working the opposite way round.' I said 'You don't need all this weight.' But they built this accommodation building which is bigger than the garage, so it probably weighs another 10 or 15 tons on the top, and it really has not (in my personal opinion) been that successful.

[Part 2 1:04:58] Spearey: It works OK and I think they have just re-hashed it now, but it could have been better. With a bit more thought it could have been so much better and so much lighter and easier to move. I also had an idea, but I was shouted down about it, which is a pity really. I had another idea: the next step with the workshop was to have a bolt-on skirt to go around it to turn it into a hovercraft, and then you could have had a big engine and a fan, blown air underneath it, lifted it up and you

could have just towed it around wherever you want and then pop it down. I always thought that was an opportunity missed, but by that time I was looking for something else to do, anyway.

[Part 2 1:04:49] [End of Part Two]

Part 3

[Part 3 0:00:00] Lee: This is Andy Spearey, interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 29th of January 2013. Andy Spearey, Part Three.

[Part 3 0:00:11] Lee: You mentioned the 'worthies'. Did you in your role at BAS actually have much to do with the worthies. Did you attend board meetings or have ...?

Spearey: Oh no, not that high up, to be actually on that.

[Part 3 0:00:24] Lee: But would you have access to Dick Laws?

Spearey: I was a very low life form really. But there were certain people within the scientific side of it who always had a lot to say. Sometimes things were done for ... Well people on the technical side of things, like myself, they were done for the kudos of 'beakers', not necessarily because it was the right thing to do. [Chuckles] Dangerous territory, isn't it?

[Part 3 0:01:01] Lee: You did get to know Dick Laws, didn't you? He was the Director when you first ...?

Spearey: I thought he was a marvellous chap.

[Part 3 0:01:06] Lee: Tell me a bit more about him.

Spearey: Dick was one of those guys that really had done the job. He knew what it was all about. He had lived in a hut at Signy with practically no mod cons. A hugely knowledgeable man, but also a very approachable man, but approachable – you always realised that Dick was the Director of the Survey and he always generated that air of respect. You called him Dr Laws but if you were quite clever, you could sort of bend his ear, but because he had been a Fid, he knew how a Fid mind worked. One classic occasion, we were on *Bransfield*; he was on *Bransfield*. I think it was his last trip, actually, with Eric¹¹. About three or four of us thought we would bend their ear about the wages, you see. We got invited up to the wardroom.

[Part 3 0:02:16] Spearey: In those days, three or four people an evening used to go up before dinner and you had a chance to chat to Eric and Dr Laws. We thought 'We will bend their ear about the money.' We had it all pre-planned, and Dick Laws was as cute as cute. He knew what it was all about. We kept trying to get the conversation to go our way, you see, but it wouldn't quite get there. Dick always just fended it off to one way and eventually we got the subject round to the question of money and we had

¹¹ Eric Salmon, presumably.

just started to talk about it and I remember Dick looked at his watch. 'Dear oh dear,' he said, 'the time has gone. It's time for dinner. We will have to go down now.' Very very cleverly done. I admired his whole politics, his whole abilities really and he was I think probably the best Director BAS ever had.

[Part 3 0:03:23] Lee: I have heard other stories about him operating at inter-governmental level and on overseas conferences using similar tactics.

Spearey: Clever man, yes. Really the sort of person ... I admired him. I just thought he was the business you know.

[Part 3 0:03:40] Lee: I have got some other things to ask about, if I may. You had problems in the late '90s with some of the reliefs, when things didn't really go quite as planned, and there was one Low Shelf relief, which I guess was at Halley.

Spearey: I did a couple of them, actually. Yes, they were quite challenging. They could be quite challenging. That one year *Bransfield* had suffered propulsion motor trouble and couldn't get into Halley when we wanted to. We were late getting in there. Then there was no sea ice in the creek. We couldn't unload in the normal creek. The ship had to go to the Low Shelf and the whole thing was just a bloody epic really. It was trying to manoeuvre on one motor, and then Stuart was very very concerned that the ship might possibly get stuck, get iced in alongside the Low Shelf. So he was in a hurry to throw everything off and get away and we had poor weather as well. We had days of indifferent weather, low drift, you know ground drift, and that was a challenge. That was a challenge, keeping those vehicles running and keeping a steady supply of stuff coming off the ship and stuff going back on as well, was a real challenge. That was difficult.

[Part 3 0:05:15] Lee: There's mention of some of your colleagues which we haven't really talked much about, somebody called Mel, somebody called Steve Eadie.

Spearey: Steve Eadie was (or is) an exceptional character. Steve was the AIS diesel mechanic when he first went to Halley.

[Part 3 0:05:37] Lee: AIS?

Spearey: Automatic Ionospheric Sounder¹². Because they kept dumping more and more scientific stuff at Halley, the generators couldn't cope with it so they bought a containerised pair of generators and shipped it all down there to run the AIS, and Steve was the mechanic that went with them. The generators and their container were profoundly unsuitable for the job because they were bought off the shelf, and Steve made some truly remarkable bits of equipment to make them work and he did make them work.

[Part 3 0:06:25] Spearey: He was hugely successful. A gifted mechanic, probably an engineer really. Steve is an engineer, a very reserved individual and very quiet but had the ability to be extremely amusing when the opportunity arose. I employed him as a mechanic for ages, until he went on to the ships. He eventually became a Fourth

¹² Actually it was the Advanced Ionospheric Sounder.

Engineer on *Bransfield*, but Steve was master of the one-liner. We had one young lad who we took as a mechanic/ driver, who turned out to be as dim as a Toc-H lamp.

[Part 3 0:07:17] Spearey: He really was dim and we were sat at smoko one morning and Steve said, out of the blue, we were talking about all sorts of other things, Steve just sat there and out of the blue he said 'I think Damien has reached his Nirvana.' We said 'What? What are you talking about? 'Damien has reached his Nirvana. He has cleansed his mind of all thought.' Cracking; real Fid stuff! And Steve was a real ... You could rely on Steve, absolutely, as long as you had got a supply of tea into him. He lived principally on tea and fags, and as long as you could get that into him, then he would perform. Mel was another good chap.

[Part 3 0:08:16] Lee: Mel, what's his second name, do you remember?

Spearey: B-b-b it will come to me in due course.

[Part 3 0:08:20] Lee: Don't worry.

Spearey: He was taken on as summer only, but he had a very very droll sense of humour and was a bit of a wind-up merchant. A good mechanic, a really great bloke. He had quite an interesting history: he had worked for Sheffield Corporation on bin lorries and all sorts of other things, and he wasn't averse to bit of dodgy motors you know. Mel knew all about dodgy motors, and interestingly, the last time I spoke to Mel, which was a while ago, he was actually a Ministry of Transport Vehicle Inspector, and a better man for the job I can't think of.

[Part 3 0:09:15] Lee: There was, Andy, a modification you made to a cherry ..., putting a cherry picker on the end of a Sno-cat.

Spearey: Yes, well when they built Halley V, Christiani & Nielsen designed it with these filler plates between the wall sections, that were held on with self-tapping screws. There were more self-tapping screws in Halley V than the *Titanic* had rivets. You couldn't believe it, I couldn't believe it and when I saw what was proposed, I said to Al 'Al, what you are proposing here with scaffolding is just never going to work.' I said 'There are thousands of these screws that had to be screwed in' and I said 'They are going to spend all their time moving scaffolding. This is just not going to work.'

[Part 3 0:10:04] Spearey: So I made some investigations and we had an old Sno-cat in the yard that was going to be disposed of, and I got in contact with a company called Nifty Lift in Milton Keynes and they agreed (they were the only company that did), they agreed to sell us the boom of a cherry picker with just a flat base on it. Nobody else would. Everybody else wanted to sell the whole package which I didn't want. So we bought this thing and we made a subframe to fit it up, in fact actually Steve Eadie helped make a subframe and we bolted this cherry picker on to the back of a Sno-cat and put outrigger legs on it and all this sort of thing. Stuck a generator on it and the chippies could then drive along the side of the building and put all these thousands of screws in, and when they wanted, they could go backwards and forwards to an extent without getting off and driving the machine. It speeded the job up. It enabled them to

do the job probably in under a week, whereas it was originally scheduled to take practically the whole season.

[Part 3 0:11:21] Lee: Was there ever any comeback on this company, Christiani & Nielsen?

Spearey: No.

[Part 3 0:11:27] Lee: There was never any inquiry or post mortem?

Spearey: No. John Newman is probably a better person to speak about it than I am, but I just felt that they used it as a guinea pig. The German Antarctic programme used it as a guinea pig to see what would work and what wouldn't. That's the feeling we have.

[Part 3 0:11:52] Lee: There was a Sno-cat that went down a tide crack at one point, which you had to try and rescue?

Spearey: Yes, that was years ... That was probably in the first year of Halley V and we had a contingent of Army people and I think some of us in BAS HQ were pretty ambivalent about the use of Army people, principally because most Army tradesman never ever get to practise as tradesmen. They do other things so there was a lack of hands-on knowledge but also there was a lack of hands-on sense. We kept telling these guys 'Stay on the route. Stay on the route. Don't deviate.' They got lackadaisical. They became accustomed to driving around in Sno-cats and they thought they would go wherever they wanted, and one of them, one day, just went in the wrong place and put the two tracks on one side of the Sno-cat into the tide crack. We had a hell of a job getting out of that. Six hundred foot of water though and there's the track swimming about in the water. We did recover it. We did get it out.

[Part 3 0:13:16] Lee: How?

Spearey: Well we managed to set some Tirlfors up and we managed to winch it sideways. We did a little bit of damage to the body but we winched it sideways, picked it up sideways so that the track was out of the crack. Then I got in it and drove it backwards, so we drove it in an arc so the wire ropes were still taut, and we drive it round in an arc until we got the four tracks back on the ice again, back on the sea ice, but it took a while to say the least.

[Part 3 0:14:01] Lee: And there was a skidoo incident at Rothera when a skidoo escaped, rolled down a slope?

Spearey: Oh yes, that was one of the field trips. The thing about GAs is: they ain't experts at anything. They are climbers or what have you and at that they are very good but they don't necessarily know all about the operation of vehicles and equipment. I was out with a bloke, a nice enough bloke. I said to him 'Before we go down this slope, we really should put both rope brakes on the sledge.' 'No no,' he said, 'it will be alright. We will just put one on. That will be alright. One will stop it.'

[Part 3 0:14:54] Spearey: I said 'Err, I'm not sure about it,' but anyway they are in charge of the job, they are taking you out; they are the boss. You go with it. We got halfway down this bloody slope and the sledge shot past and I thought 'I know what's coming next.' And sure enough, the back of the skidoo comes round and it all rolls down the bloody slope, a great big heap of bits at the bottom, and I said to him 'I told you you should have put two rope brakes on it.' It didn't do any harm. It didn't do any damage, only ego really. The only accidents I had in the Antarctic were induced by GAs.

[Part 3 0:15:33] Lee: [Laughs] OK. Some final details, before we come to a conclusion. I have got to ask you about John Newman eating raw bread apparently.

Spearey: Oh yes, we had a cook who should probably remain nameless, who had worked in a hospital in Surrey. His bread making skills left quite a bit to be desired and for the winter that I was with him, I didn't eat bread. It was just awful, inedible. And then in the summer season, one day John and myself were having a cup of tea in the afternoon and this cook brought out what looked to be this beautiful fruit loaf, and John said 'Bloody hell! He's done it at last. He's made a loaf of bread that looks as though you want to eat it,' So John's straight across, gets a knife, puts a knife down through it and this loaf was completely hollow inside. It just had goo in the middle of it. All he had done was cook the outside of it, and John's face was a picture.

[Part 3 0:16:45] Lee: Did you have much to do with dogs?

Spearey: No, not really.

[Part 3 0:16:51] Lee: They were using your machinery to feed them from.

Spearey: Yes. We had dogs at Halley of course. When I wintered at Halley, we had four dogs and we had ice caves at the back of the garage, between the garage and the base, we had ice caves that they were put in in the worst weather, and they could leave a stream of dog piss the entire length of the workshop, when you took them in and when you took them out. I didn't have much to do with them really. They needed a lot of time and time was something that I didn't really have sufficient of, and I suppose if I was perfectly honest, I had a lack of commitment to it as well, So I was sort of interested enough in the dogs but only at a very superficial level.

[Part 3 0:17:38] Spearey: At Rothera of course, there was a lot of dogs. I fed them. I did my share of the chores with them but I never went out with them, never ran them; that was just too much grief. I would drag them up the ramp; I would get a Sno-cat and drag it all up the ramp. I was happy enough to do that but I didn't ... Dogs were not my thing. They were fed with a De Lisser [phonetic] dumper which gave the mechanics endless amusement watching people start it. People never ever got to grips. You had to swing it by hand to get it to go and the idea was that you swung it as hard as you could and kept swinging it after you banged the decompressor over and it would start up and off it would go.

[Part 3 0:18:26] Spearey: And one evening in the early summer at Rothera, it was a perfect evening; it was still; the sun was quite low so a golden sun; it was just ... You could have heard a pin drop, And the radio operator and Peter Cleary (the BC) went to

feed dogs with Dilys. The radio operator swung the engine and Pete Cleary was sat on the seat, and they swung it like lunatics but when they put the decompressor over, they stopped swinging. So consequently the engine bounced on its compression and then went back the other way and started up backwards.

[Part 3 0:19:10] Spearey: So Cleary was sat on this dumper, and of course he puts it in first and it goes backwards. So he thought 'That's very strange.' so he puts it in second, and it goes backwards. And while Cleary is trying to sort out what is going on here, the air cleaner on the engine is starting to burn, you see. There's smoke and flames and all that coming out of the exhaust pipe and all the exhaust gas is going through the air filter and all you could hear was Maurice shouting at the top of his voice, above Cleary with this dumper 'Switch it off! Switch it off! Switch it off!' [Laughs] Cracking.

[Part 3 0:19:52] Lee: Phyllis was the name of the dumper truck, I presume?

Spearey: Dilys, yeah. Dilys.

[Part 3 0:19:56] Lee: Oh, Dilys?

Spearey: Dilys the dumper.

[Part 3 0:19:59] Lee: OK. You left in 2001. What was your thinking there?

Spearey: Get out!

[Part 3 0:20:08] Lee: Because ...?

Spearey: BAS was changing a great deal [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[Part 3 0:21:29] Spearey: [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

[Part 3 0:22:14] Spearey: Anyway, to cut a very long story short, I was looking for a way out because I was ceasing to enjoy the office politics of Cambridge, and two ex-BAS people who had a business wanted me to go and run their fleet of mine-clearing machines and I jumped at the chance and off I went. [REDACTED]

[Part 3 0:23:05] Lee: Regrets?

Spearey: I have done two really good things in my life. One is going to work for British Antarctic Survey and the other is leaving it.

[Part 3 0:23:16] Lee: You had done 16 Christmases in a row, hadn't you.

Spearey: Yes.

[Part 3 0:23:20] Lee: Was there also a sense of perhaps 'getting a life'?

Spearey: Oh yes, yes. I got married. I got married and I always said really that the Antarctic life is for single people. And repeatedly I went South. My wife was ever so good about it. My wife put no pressure on me, but I knew when I walked out of that door, as soon as I got on that aircraft at Brize Norton, I knew the central heating would go wrong, the dishwasher would pack up. Any one of a number of ... There would be heavy snow, the whole thing, and I just thought 'This is just not fair. This is not fair.' And I needed a break, I needed a change. Exploration Logistics gave me that change.

[Part 3 0:24:13] Lee: It has been a fantastic interview. Thank you so much, Andy.

Spearey: My pleasure, thank you.

[Part 3 0:24:18] [End of Part Three]

ENDS

