

Sydney Philp

**Interviewed by Jack Tolson at home in Thornbury on 21.02.13. BAS Archives AD6
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[0:00:00] Philp: [Looking at photos] Those mountains and rocks and the snow. Lovely really, really lovely. Grahams Land, yes. Marvellous. And that one is when we were guard ship in Bermuda and that is the winning yacht of the UK to Bermuda yacht race. We were on the finishing line. That's the union jack there or the white ensign. It's on *Burghead Bay's* mast, yes. My name is Syd Philp, Syd being short for Sydney obviously, with a 'y' I might add. I was born 26th of June 1929 in Portsmouth, or Southsea part of Portsmouth. Currently living in Thornbury, South Gloucestershire, and of course I live with my wife and children have departed and all living separately elsewhere.

[0:01:17] Tolson: Take me back to your own childhood and what you remember of the early days, Mum and Dad, what Dad did and

Philp: Yeah, my memories of early childhood are quite sparse, really. My mother and father, I was the eldest of three, my sister the middle one and then there was a younger son, i.e. my young brother. And we lived in a 'Coronation Street' type house in Portsmouth until I was about nine or ten and my father worked in a corset factory. He was a junior manager in Twilfit's Corset Company in Portsmouth. My mother came from Portsmouth but she hated it. She hated the Coronation Street environment and wanted nothing more but to get out, and it was to her effort really that persuaded my father to save a few pennies. They eventually moved from Portsmouth to their own house in Gosport and that's where we lived until we all scattered, went to various jobs. I joined the Navy from the age of 15 and a half and in those days, which is 1945, the War was still on and I joined the Navy in January '45, and the War was still on. And why did I join the Navy is a question I've asked myself many times. I've never really found a satisfactory answer except to say that when the War was on in Portsmouth, there were two opportunities really. One was the dockyard and the other was the Royal Navy and I chose the Navy because I didn't fancy going to work in the dockyard, riding a bike to work every day. That struck me a bit tedious to say the least. So I joined the Navy and there I stayed until I was 40.

[0:03:37] Tolson: Any particular division that you chose to go into or were you at that time just told what you were going to do?

Philp: No, amongst thousands of others throughout the country, we all took an entrance examination to join the Navy as an artificer, and there were various types of artificer. There was engine room, ordnance, electrical and aircraft. There was another category I think somewhere but I can't remember it at the moment. So we all took the entrance exam and I came 55th out of the country I think. I elected to join as an ordnance artificer. I didn't fancy going down in the bowels of the ship being an engineer and I never got on with electrics, so that was another one that I had no interest in. So ordnance to me at that time, upper deck in this fresh air doing whatever. It was a completely misnomer because you were stuck in a gun turret. You never saw the light of day for months on end really. But that was the of course when I joined the Navy I didn't have a clue what it was all about. Not a clue.

[0:05:06] Tolson: The Navy in 1945 must have been an extraordinary organisation, just as any of the other two armed services. You hadn't got a clue what you were going into. What did you find?

Philp: Harsh conditions. Bullying, downright cruelty at times. It would never be tolerated today. No way on earth would those conditions be allowed to be suffered by young boys, because that's what we were, 15. And I was a very small young boy, just over 5 foot and weighing less than 8 stones. I was a small boy. Others in my entry were twice my size, literally, not literally, there was one there who was six foot two at 15. Another one was 14 and a half stone at 15. So you can see the disparity between me as a young, very juvenile boy and others who were virtually mature men, physically. And so as I was one of the small ones, you were the mug. You know, you always got thumped and beaten and abused really.

[0:06:35] Tolson: By officers and ratings?

Philp: Not so much officers. Your own kith and kin really, other apprentices. Senior apprentices. If you'd been there two years or so, you were sort of strutting around as cock of the walk. You just joining were the victims.

[0:07:02] Tolson: And you went to sea immediately?

Philp: No, no, I did four and a half years as an apprentice. I was two areas. One was in Torpoint in Cornwall. That was HMS *Fishguard* and after about 18 months, maybe perhaps getting on towards two years, we left there and went to HMS *Caledonia* in Rosyth where we finished our apprenticeship. I was four and a half years and I left there as.... when you left your apprenticeship, you became a fifth class artificer. Fifth class ordnance artificer, fifth class engine room artificer and so on. You left then and became a fifth class which entitled you to wear an anchor on this arm and then you were drafted to a ship.

[0:08:00] Tolson: Just tell me for clarification, what does an artificer actually mean? You're not an officer, you're not a rating. You're ..?

Philp: It's the skilled tradesman, that's what you are and that's what we'd learned to be. We all did machine work, lathes, milling machines, shaping machines, grinding machines, any other machine that you can use to work metal. So that's what you were. You could turn your hand to anything in the metal world. We did supplementary training as a coppersmith or an engine smith, so you were then able to do to a lesser degree other activities - welding, copper smithing, pipe work and so on.

[0:08:56] Tolson: This was all for working aboard ship at sea.

Philp: At sea, yes.

[0:09:05] Tolson: So training is over, I guess you're off to sea then, are you, four years later?

Philp: You go off to sea as a fifth class and you did normally a year as a young apprentice on board a working functional ship. That was a bit of a shock when you find what living on board a ship is like. You didn't do that for the first four and a half years. You were in a shore establishment, a barracks if you like. But once you've joined the ship you find that you don't know anything about ships, naval life at all. The first thing of course is how do you sleep and the answer is in a hammock. How do you put a hammock up? Not a clue. So you are reliant on people who are much senior to you. We were living in a mess, which is a living space on a ship, whereby people were up to the age of nigh on 40. They were elderly, senior people and they knew the ropes. They'd been in there for donkeys years and you had to rely on them to help you along. Some of them were very willing with their advice and others, you know, looked down upon you because you were always considered to be something which they weren't.

[0:11:11] The other trades, if you like, the other disciplines. Given the opportunity, they would take the mick out of artificers because they were jealous, envious of our capabilities. And I'm not being boastful but we were normally better educated, better trained than many of the other disciplines in the ship. So given the opportunity, they would take the rise out of you if they could. So that was a culture shock when you're first living on the ship, because it's cramped and hot and noisy. Fans running day and night in the mess. If they didn't run you'd choke anyhow. So you had to tolerate all these noises. Very strange, but you soon learned.

[0:11:43] Tolson: I guess we're now about 1950, are we, 1949?

Philp: Yes, because '45, January '45, four and a half years or ... yes.

[0:11:58] Tolson: And your first trip to sea is on which ship?

Philp: I joined my first ship was *HMS St James*, named after a battle, the battle of St James and St James actually is the patron saint of Spain, so perhaps you might argue it's a funny name for a British naval ship, patron saint St James. It was called a battle class destroyer. There were quite a number of them, I'd guess about 40 battle class destroyers, they were all built during the War. They were originally designed to fight the Japanese but I don't think any of them ever did get out to Japan. But nevertheless that's what their function was supposed to be for.

[0:12:57] Tolson: How many in total on board it?

Philp: On the *St James*? I'd be guessing, I haven't got a clue at the moment. Probably in the order of 220 perhaps, something like that. We joined the *St James* in Plymouth and off we went and the first port of call we made to a foreign destination, 'foreign' loosely, away from the United Kingdom, was to Gibraltar. That was my first experience of a naval run ashore if you like, in a 'foreign' country. It was good fun in Gibraltar in those day, full of bars, dancers and young girls all tarted up flogging nuts and raisins and hard boiled eggs and all sorts of weird things. But there was very little of any real intimate contact between the bar girls and Jolly Jack. It didn't exist in Gibraltar. They were far too religious. Close knit community, island. Not physically an island but an island outlook. Only a little isthmus there connecting Gibraltar to Spain which prevented them being an island. But to all intents and purposes they were an island. But we had a lot of fun there, a lot of fun in Gib.

[0:14:51] Tolson: So, as a young lad who's just having his first trip ashore, on his own, what's he think of the Navy now?

Philp: Oh, I've no real idea what the Navy is like today, not at all, except that I can imagine it being...

[0:15:14] Tolson: But for you at that age, 19-20, what was it like being free of England and family?

Philp: Oh, well I mean it was a release because for four and a half years as an apprentice we were confined very closely. We were not allowed out every day and we could only go out at weekends by and large. So it was freedom to be able to be on this ship, to go in to Gib and stay there all night if you felt like it . Oh yes, it was very liberating and it was quite interesting. Apart from Gibraltar, we then went along the south of France to Cairns, St Tropez, San ... can't

remember it. Like Michael, but it's not Michael, similar to Michael, it doesn't matter. But that was St Tropez, we went there before St Tropez became famous. The tourist industry (was) not yet developed in the south of France. It might have been elsewhere, but I doubt that. Certainly in the south of France there was no tourist industry in those days. But it was very interesting and when later we heard about Brigitte Bardot and her antics in St Tropez, well we were there before she was. Yeah.

[0:17:00] Tolson: The ship now, this is a few years past the War, were you doing courtesy visits or what was..?

Philp: Yeah, showing the flag, that's basically what the ... that's one of the prime functions of the Navy, or it was and it still is today, is to go around various ports in different countries showing the flag. There's the Union Jack, the British flag and we are the representatives. Sometimes our representatives misbehaved [laughs]. But, generally speaking, we were well behaved, well respected I think, as is only our right because, you know, we do endeavour in this country to try and do, or we did, try to do the best thing, what is right at the time. And I think that's the principle which guides us.

[0:18:08] Tolson: So this was a short trip, was it?

Philp: I think I was on board the *St James* for about a year but that particular trip it was only two or three months perhaps in Gibraltar, along the south of France and then back. And the first place we went to after we got back was where I'd finished my training, in Rosyth and that's where I became ..., I regained contact with an ex-girlfriend. So we had a nice week up there, but that was all those years ago. I've never seen her since, I've no idea what happened to her. It was strange going back to Rosyth as a liberated man rather than a boy apprentice.

[0:19:10] Tolson: As we're talking about girlfriends, your present wife you met at some stage around this period because you were going to be off leaving her for a very long time before getting married after the *Burghead Bay* .

Philp: Yes. We met on a weekend visit I paid with a friend of mine to Weston-super-Mare to visit his mother and on the Sunday of that said weekend we went to Worle. That's a little village that's now swallowed up by Weston-super-Mare of course, as most villages have been all over the country. I met Margaret there that weekend and slowly but surely things developed and eventually we got engaged. Almost immediately afterwards I joined my second ship HMS *Burghead Bay* and departed to the West Indies, South America, Falklands for 13 months.

[0:20:27] Tolson: Did you know at this point that you were going to be away for such a long time? Was this normal?

Philp: I think we do, yes, because the itinerary was such that we were going to Bermuda, to the West Indies, South America, down to the Falklands and so on. So you knew that it would be a pretty lengthy experience. So basically our whole engagement period we were separated by umpteen thousand miles. Eventually, coming back from the *Burghead Bay* we got married the week after I returned to these shores.

[0:21:14] Tolson: And of course the *Burghead Bay* is a significant part of your time at seas, particularly for this Antarctic section of the interview. You left England in '51, didn't you, you left Plymouth in '51?

Philp: Yes, in October sometime, yes, October '51.

[0:21:36] Tolson: And you first set off as you've already described a flag waving exercise. Where did you go initially?

Philp: On the *Burghead Bay*?

[0:21:48] Tolson: Yes.

Philp: Our first port of call was Bermuda. We left England, Devonport, to sail to Bermuda and in so doing we were scheduled to adopt a specific point on the route over because Princess Elizabeth, as she then was, was flying to Canada and in those days we used to station naval ships at strategic points across the Atlantic in case her plane fell out of the sky and there would we be waiting to catch her. All very foolish, but that was how it went. On this particular station the weather deteriorated and the aircraft was diverted to fly about another 700 miles further north and we in our little frigate had to plough through this raging gale to get to the new location and it was very, very rough. Fortunately the Princess didn't require our assistance, she managed safely in Halifax or wherever it was. But we got battered. We had to go to Halifax, that's why we were in Halifax, to get repaired. We had some severe damage and we had to go into dock into Halifax and get repaired. And whilst we were there we were requested, or maybe even ordered, I'm not sure, to line the streets as Princess Elizabeth went by in a big Cadillac, illuminated inside. I'd never seen before. She was a lovely looking lady, she really was, beautiful. But we stood there in the pouring rain with our rifles [laughs], the guard of honour.

[0:24:04] Tolson: So were there many Canadians out for the event?

Philp: There were quite a few, yes, it's surprising. Canadians are quite..., well they were quite keen royalists, maybe surprisingly, but I always find them pretty good. So we were there in the rain, cursing the Princess Elizabeth but when we saw her go by it really was she was lovely.

[0:24:33] Tolson: Was there within a ship a universal sort of feeling of camaraderie for something like this when you are representing and you're lucky enough to actually be there when there's royalty, or do people sort of poo-poo it, laugh at it?

Philp: I think it's probably fifty-fifty. If you're a keen royalist you would be a supporter but there are others of course who are not royalists and do exactly the opposite. But I think it's probably even-stevens. Some go along with it and others... I was always quite keen, I'm a keen supporter of the Royal Family. Not all of them, not all of the personalities but fundamental principle I think it's by far the better way of having a head of state.

[0:25:30] Tolson: I suppose after a few days you moved southward, did you, towards the Caribbean?

Philp: Well we went back to Bermuda and then, you're not going to believe this one, but we went aground! [laughs] We had to go back, not to Halifax but we went to St Johns and had the necessary repairs done. We'd damaged what we'd call now a sonar dome, but in those days it was called an asdic dome, which was the word which was quite often used in wartime movies about the Navy, the asdic pingng away. So this was encased in a dome which projected through the hull and we damaged that and had to go and have a new one. There was no facility to do that in Bermuda.

[0:26:25] Tolson: So you visited one of the other outposts of Britain, Newfoundland.

Philp: Yes, Newfoundland, yeah. But there's very little I could say about Newfoundland really. We were in the dock, they took the dome out, put the new one in and back we went. So it was very, very short. I can't really tell you very much about it.

[0:26:48] Tolson: And then you headed south again for the Caribbean.

Philp: Yeah, a couple of places in the Caribbean and we left Trinidad about the 17th of December, '51, heading south and we crossed the line Christmas Eve. Crossing the line we engaged in the usual frivolities of Father Neptune and all the rest of his gang, cut-throat razors and so on and so forth. It was quite a bit of fun and our Captain, a man called J.A. Ivers, that was his name, and he was a very remote individual. He kept himself very much on his own in his little enclave upstairs somewhere. Very, very remote man, but he did deign to take us into the

harbour off of Rio on New Year's Eve. We could see all the fireworks and every indication of everybody having a wonderful time in Rio. We had a quick look and then we went off again. Continued down to Argentina where we went to La Plata. I think I'm right there, La Plata, yes. We stayed there for four or five days maybe. Quite pleasant. The Argentinians were hospitable, we had a nice time there.

[0: 28:37] Tolson: Of course this was only a short period before your turn of events which of course you didn't know anything about at the time. The Argentinians to you were delightful people.

Philp: They were fine.

[0: 28:50] Tolson: No animosities?

Philp: No, no, they were excellent, you couldn't have wished for a better reception from perfect strangers. They were fine. So we stayed there and then we went to the other side of the river, to Montevideo where we picked up a team of Fids, is that the right expression? Falkland Islands...

[0: 29:22] Tolson: Dependencies Survey .

Philp: Dependencies Survey team. We picked up some people from Montevideo, we refuelled and took on stores and all that sort of stuff and then headed for the Falklands. We got the Falklands about the first week of January '52.

[0: 29:46] Tolson: What did you make of the Falklands? [laughs].

Philp: Well, the first impression of course is how bleak it seemed. I can't recall seeing any trees, I'm sure there aren't any, I never saw any. And it was windswept but I've subsequently found out that it resembles our northern islands here, like the Orkneys and the Shetlands. They're quite similar to the Falklands and the other islands down there. So we went to Port Stanley. I think they just call it Stanley these days, but it was Port Stanley to us in those days and I don't know what the population was, about 1,500 maybe, something of that order in Port Stanley.

[0: 30:44] Tolson: Did you see or were you told about, maybe people weren't particularly aware of the SS *Great Britain*, the ship that was finally towed back to here in Bristol?

Philp: Yes, yes. I remember seeing the *Great Britain* down there. She was a rotting hulk. There was another ship down there which was very similar. Now I can't tell you what the name is

because I've forgotten, but I thought at the time that it was the SS *Great Britain* but it wasn't, although I did see the *Great Britain* further away. I have somewhere a photograph of this other ship and I took it into the SS *Great Britain* museum in Bristol and said: 'Here's a photograph of the SS *Great Britain* in the Falklands, would you like to have it?' So they took it off me and said, 'Well, we'll examine it', and they came back and said 'Sorry, but it's not the *Great Britain*, it's some other ship'. That was a bit of a disappointment really but I did see her. And of course some years later she was towed up the river into Bristol, where she still is of course.

[0: 32:11] Tolson: Another very important, but wartime, ship of course you saw in the River Plate was the *Graf Spee*.

Philp: Yes, when we went to Montevideo at that time, I believe she's now gone, but you could see through part of the superstructure of the *Graf Spee* was still visible, because she was scuttled as she was leaving Montevideo to get her fate sealed outside the three Royal Navy cruisers who were there, the *Achilles*, *Ajax* and *Exeter*. And the *Cumberland*, a later ship of mine, was coming up from the Falklands because that was where she had been stationed. The Captain of the *Graf Spee* decided that discretion was the better part of valour and they pulled the plugs and she scuttled in the River Plate.

[0: 33:17] Tolson: In the Falklands you, I guess you were at anchor, anyhow you probably got an opportunity to get ashore and have a bit of a look around?

Philp: Oh yes, yes we did, yes. We had somewhere ... I can't remember whether they were pubs or bars or whatever, there was certainly somewhere where you could go and get a drink. I can't recall what type of facility it was, but it was very reasonable - tuppence for a gin or something. That was the good bit about the Falklands really.

[0: 33:52] Tolson: Had the ship in any way bonded by this time? The camaraderie or..

Philp: What, on the ship? No, it was a very, very unhappy ship. Very unhappy.

[0: 34:05] Tolson: Why ? Where do you think that emanates from?

Philp: Well, it started at the top. The Captain was very aloof, as I already said. He took no interest in running the ship at all. He was an ex-pilot, Fleet Air Arm pilot, full Captain, four-ringed Captain, and he was on that ship as a method of getting command of a ship because he was a pilot. But because he was a full Captain his next promotion would be to a Rear-Admiral, so he had to have command experience. So they said: 'Go away. Take this ship out to the West Indies and when you come back, we'll make you an admiral'. So he just did his

little job, kept himself to himself, left the running of the ship to his first Lieutenant, David D.O' Sullivan by name, a name which I will never forget. He was an absolute madman.

[0: 35:18] Tolson: How did you see that madness developing?

Philp: Well, because of his crazy behaviour. One example, as I've already said, I was an ordnance artificer and our responsibility was to maintain and repair the weapons, and one occasion we, we being me and my mate, were stripping down a bofors gun to do our routine maintenance on the mechanisms and we were using a bench to put our pieces on. This bench had been painted grey. But we put cloth down so that when we put our pieces of the breach onto the cloth it didn't in any way affect the paintwork. Mr David D.O'Sullivan came along and said, 'What are you doing?'

(We) said 'We're just...'

He said: 'Well, get it off!'

'What for?'

He said: 'Because it's damaging the paintwork'.

We, in our little way, said 'No, it isn't'.

So he picked it all up and threw it over the ship's side. Further down, when we got down to Hope Bay, which we'll talk about in a moment, I guess, he introduced tropical routine working hours on the ship. Up at five, carrying on until whatever, one o'clock and call it a day. You don't get up in the Antarctic at five o'clock in the morning unless you've really got a good reason for it, and there was no reason at all.

[0:37:16] Other examples, getting the ratings to polish steel decks with 'Zebo' grate polish whereby of course they became like skating rinks. Those were just a few of his eccentric behaviour and he made a very, very unhappy ship. Very unhappy. Which was a shame because there's nothing worse than an unhappy ship.

[0:37:45] Tolson: And of course he, under the Captain who was taking no interest, was running the whole show.

Philp: Indeed, that was the whole point, he ran everything and because he was slightly barmy it affected everybody's life on board the ship.

[0:38:02] Tolson: Did the engineering department and the hierarchy not have a means to buffer that or were they subjected to it equally?

Philp: I think everybody was subjected to his crazy behaviour.

[0:38:17] Tolson: And the Captain just was oblivious?

Philp: Just didn't take any notice of it at all. He was just a figurehead, had no connection with anybody on the ship whatsoever.

[0:38:34] Tolson: So in the Falklands now, you are suddenly alerted to the fact that you've got to head off rather rapidly to some trouble spot in Antarctica and you take on board with you the Governor.

Philp: Yes, yes, yes. When we were posted to the Falklands, I mentioned earlier about one of the features of naval ships showing the flag. In a sense we were not really doing that in the Falklands because we were there primarily as a guard ship to look after the interests of the whole group of British Dependencies in that area. So although we did go round various ports in the Falklands, Port Stevens, San Carlos, one or two others, I can't remember them all. So it was slightly different. We were prepared mentally that we were there as a guard ship. Not that we had any idea of what was coming, not that I did anyhow. But it was a slightly different atmosphere.

[0:40:00] Tolson: So everybody knew the situation about the Falklands, you were there as a guard ship. Did you perceive who you were guarding it potentially or possibly against?

Philp: No. I had no idea. Having just been to the Argentine a few weeks prior, there was no indication whatsoever as far as we were concerned. As I've already said, we'd enjoyed La Plata, we had a welcome, there was no hostile banners or protests. It was a complete shock to me and probably was to most other people.

[0:40:45] Tolson: So how did this come about? Presumably it was a sudden departure from the Falklands to head south?

Philp: Well we were alerted and we were told 'Make ready to leave harbour in a very short space of time ,' and off we went. And we travelled down from Stanley down to Hope Bay. Part of the trip was done overnight and we were hurtling along at our maximum 19 knots into this area where icebergs were prolific. I had never dreamt that you would see so many and so huge. The only other experience of icebergs is the *Titanic* and that was just sheer misfortune that she

happened to hit that one berg that was in that particular place. But in the Antarctic there were hundreds of them. It's impossible to imagine how many there were and how big they were. And going down overnight we could see on the radar all these blips. Very uncomfortable night, going down there.

[0:42:11] Tolson: It's the little blips that you can't see on the radar that really should be worrying you.

Philp: Yes, because they're hidden, aren't they?

[0:42:18] Tolson: The bergy bits, yes, and the growlers.

Philp: But they are so huge. Staggering sight.

[0:42:22] Tolson: Who was saying 'We've got to go at 19 knots?' The Captain, or was he out of that too? Did the Captain take any interest?

Philp: Oh, I've no idea, I don't know. I've no idea what his views were at all. But, anyhow, that's what we did.

[0:42:39] Tolson: The Governor was Sir Miles Clifford.

Philp: Yes.

[0:42:42] Tolson: Did you encounter him?

Philp: No, I didn't meet him or know of him really, was just there, up th etop somewhere. Anyhow, we went down to Hope Bay and that's where there was this standoff, if you like, between the *John Biscoe* and her crew and the Argentinians, because there was three Argentinian ships in Hope Bay. We were told - how truthful this is I still don't know - they were two troopships and a supply ship and it was alleged that there were 500 ski troops on board these troopships. But whether that's true or not, I have no idea but there certainly were three ships and they had impeded the *John Biscoe* from landing and setting up their base. And that was why we went down, and we went down with our main armament loaded because we didn't know what to expect. We might have been fired at ourselves.

[0:43:57] Tolson: You'd been doing a bit of practice yourself against icebergs, hadn't you?

Philp: Yes, we had a go at some icebergs. A futile experience that is, believe you me. They just ricochet off, disappear, waste of time. If you think about it, this massive block of ice, no wonder the *Titanic* went down. The force, you just cannot comprehend how immobile that force is in the centre if you are trying to move it or divert it. You can't do anything about it. Anyhow, the Argentinians after a day or two decided that they'd be best off in La Plata or wherever they came from. We stayed there for a little while and helped the *John Biscoe* team erect huts and do various odd jobs, I can't remember too much about that part of it but it was very, very interesting. It was all completely new to me, this rugged ice, snow, mountains and it was so desolate. There was no other contact at all. There were a few people on the *John Biscoe* and us and the rest of the world could have been, and were, thousands of miles apart. Very strange but it's wonderfully invigorating in a way. So unusual. It's rare, it's got to be preserved. It was a lovely experience and very, very beautiful in my view.

[0:45:53] Tolson: When you were heading down there and you realise to some extent at least that you were heading for a potential problem, what did you think then. Gunboat diplomacy or...?

Philp: Well that's what it was in a way because we were there and I suspect that somehow or other the Argentinians knew that we would confront them should the need arise. Yes, I'm sure that was the case.

[0:46:23] Tolson: What was getting through to London about what was going on? Are you aware of any news getting through?

Philp: Not really, no, no. We had little contact with the outside world. We being the crew. We had no television, no radios, no telephones, no mobiles, nothing whatsoever. You were completely remote down there and even the question of getting letters from home, that was often delayed, held up, sent to the wrong place. Communication home was very difficult.

[0:47:11] Tolson: In the light of communications today, it's difficult to make a judgement, but how did you feel at that time? You were a young man and many of you, and in your case you were engaged, you would have loved family and letters and contacts. By not getting it, how was that affecting you and others?

Philp: Well it became very frustrating and you were constantly worried because you didn't know what was going on. You'd be a month without any mail whatsoever. You'd go to another port expecting mail and it wouldn't be there. It had gone somewhere else. The organisation of distribution of mail was poor, very poor. And that was the only way of communicating. There was no other source.

[0:48:06] Tolson: You said that you were helping the Fids, the scientists, with their setting up their base. That must have been rather fun. It was different and it was invigorating.

Philp: Yes, we did have some fun there. Apart from anything else there was a whole lot of malarkeying going around in the snow. And it wasn't that cold. People get the impression that it's always minus fifty or something down there but it's not. We coped very well really. The only thing that I found, I working on one of the guns and my spanner slipped and I grazed my knuckles and it took weeks and weeks and weeks to heal. I've never understood the reason for that. Normally I heal, or I did do as a young man, heal quite quickly but, because of the cold, it seemed to impede any healing process. Whether there was any truth in that I've never really found out. But that was the case, it took weeks to heal.

[0:49:21] Tolson: You were working side by side with the scientists. I mean you were by day hauling stuff up the beach, building huts. That's correct, is it? You were really working alongside them.

Philp: Yes, yes. Well, we in fact had an extra shipwright onboard. He joined us in Trinidad I think, or it may have been Bermuda, I'm not sure now, and his function was to be on board and, when we got to the Falklands or Hope Bay, to help set up these huts and other facilities, and that's why he was on board the ship. An extra shipwright, carpenter if you like, in other words. So that was his reason for being on the *Burghead Bay*.

[0:50:18] Tolson: It seems that in this period, the early fifties, that the Royal Navy ships were doing very much the role the present-day Antarctic Survey employs with their own two ships - i.e. of taking people and stores down there and helping out. Was this a period when a lot was going on with British Royal Naval ships?

Philp: I think there were, yes, because once we were there and we had taken over from some other ship, I don't know which one that was, probably the *Bigbury*, and then the *Veryan Bay* replaced us, when we were at our time. So there was a constant, always at least one ship there and quite frequently two because the relieving ship we stayed together for a week or so before one departed. Yes, there was always a constant presence, if you like, of a naval ship.

[0:51:21] Tolson: Tell me a little bit about the delicacy of having to sometimes worm your way through loose ice, because the hulls of the ship were not particularly thick, were they?

Philp: No, a sardine can comes to mind in a way. They were very, very fragile. Naval ships of that size don't carry any armour. They've very thin steel plates, quite easily punctured and quite easily damaged. We had experience of going aground, we had the experience of the storm going

across the Atlantic, both of which gave rise to repair work being necessary. So they are fragile, yes, and I don't think they're any different today. All warships today don't have portholes. They've solid sides, slabs of steel. In the *Burghead Bay* day we always had portholes. Oddly enough, they were probably stronger with having portholes than not because they riveted where the porthole was fitted and the glass in the porthole was probably stronger than the thin metal of the hull.

[0:52:55] Tolson: 'Cos at Hope Bay when you arrived the *John Biscoe* was actually aground.

Philp: Yes, yes. I don't know whether she was severely damaged or not, I don't think so. Yes, we actually went aground down there on the *Burghead Bay*. Now my memory doesn't tell me where that was . I have a feeling that it was in Deception Island but I'm not 100% certain, but I think it was because there was a very, very rough period of weather, storms, and we were anchored in inner harbour of Deception Island and the wind was ferocious. We were at anchor but we had to use the engines to maintain our position, dragging the anchor. But, despite everybody's best efforts we did actually go aground and caused, once again, damage. We had to live with that damage for the rest of our trip down there. But I'm pretty certain it was in Deception Island.

[0:54:24] Tolson: The few days that you were in Hope Bay working with the Fids, something occurred that made you have to actually rather suddenly depart. The death of the King.

Philp: Well we were already under way on our way back from Hope Bay to Stanley and we heard the news that the King had died. February the 6th, 1952, and as a result of his death, in accordance with naval policy, we fired a 56-gun salute, one round for every year of his life, at one minute intervals. At the very least that took 56 minutes [laughs] and following that we did a 21 royal salute for the succession of Queen Elizabeth and those two events took well over an hour, an hour in which we were up on the upper deck in a howling gale, firing these salutes. We were thousands of miles from anywhere. In fact we were at that time the furthestmost outpost of British Empire away from London, where the King had passed away. I've never understood why we did that. Another one of our crazy First Lieutenant's ideas I suspect. But it was cold and that was the first time that I, following standing behind the gun for well over an hour and all these rounds being fired, 70-odd, I must have had some concussion in my eardrums and I've suffered from tinnitus ever since. So I never forget February the sixth, 1952. Yeah. We went back to Stanley and then from there we went to various other island groups . Signy Island we went to, Elephant Island I think, one or two others, I can't recall them all. Maybe I could jog my memory here. I can't tell you any more, but there were a number of small islands we visited, but on the way to South Georgia.

[0:57:44] Tolson: Now I suppose you were going to South Georgia because it was a whaling outpost, part of the ...

Philp: Yes, that was very interesting, the whaling. Quite emotional in a way because... this is me looking back now... the whales were there by the dozens being hauled up off the slipway having been brought in by the whaling ships themselves. We just accepted the slaughter of these huge creatures without any thought of what was going on. Why were we doing it? Just to make margarine, it just doesn't make sense now. But in those days it was considered to be a lawful, sensible way of getting oil for cooking and other activities. But of course after another probably, what, 12 years, the whole lot disappeared. whaling became outlawed and the whole structure just fell into disuse. Quite astonishing really because there was a large number of buildings to cater for all the processing of this whale industry. Quite astonishing.

[0:59:21] Tolson: When you went ashore, you presumably tied up against one of the wharves and you were able to freely ...

Philp: Oh yes, we were there walking around on the slipways watching the guys doing their flensing with these flensing knives. They made cuts all the way through the blubber and then using a winch they'd peel off the blubber just like a banana skin. It was quite incredible how thick the blubber is and how it peels off. But the stench was something which you'd never forget and the birds, the seagulls all coming around having their pickings. But they'd all disappeared. When we were there there was probably 1500 employees working on these whaling industries. Something of that order I would have thought.

[1:00:36] Tolson: And of course there was quite a community in another sense. You had the church, the grave.

Philp: Yes, that was to me... I've always been a fan, if that's the right word, of Sir Ernest Shackleton. His feats of endurance, leadership have always been of foremost interest to me. In fact I have a book about Shackleton beside my armchair in the other room. It was rather sad to see his grave there. You tend to think of your heroes being able to live forever. He always was a hero of mine and when you see what he actually did to go across South Georgia, apart from the boat which must have been hazardous in itself, to travel and climb that mountain range and down the other side to get to Grytviken, it's quite incredible, it really is. Amazing, utterly amazing. And when you think that their equipment was so primitive in those days, it's staggering just to know that that man did that with his mates and didn't lose a life. Unbelievable.

[1:02:13] Tolson: What did your mates and other people around you think of this industry, this factory in this isolated, beautiful community?

Philp: Well I don't think they thought anything other than it's there and that's how life is, there's no harm in it. None of us in those days, this is 60 years ago, there weren't very many of us, and I

probably wasn't in that field either, realising what the destruction of wildlife meant. What could we do about it? Nobody thought about it, quite frankly, it was just there. Whales were there for our benefit, end of story. And I think that was the generally accepted view until a few people started the business of preservation of the environment. 60 years ago it wasn't there.

[1:03:22] Tolson: So you left South Georgia. Was that you leaving Antarctica for good?

Philp: Well we went back to Stanley and, just before we left, there was a tragedy. One of our officers was killed. Killed, he died as a result of a accident playing rugby. He was kicked in the head and suffered severe brain damage and died after maybe two or three days. And he is now buried in the Falklands. That was very sad. One of the more pleasant officers on that ship.

[1:04:14] Tolson: Did it seem very sad to be leaving the Antarctic or was it just another place?

Philp: Not really, but a lot of my thoughts are in hindsight over many years. When we left there I was glad to go, I wanted to get home. I hadn't been home for months and months. You miss your friends, you miss your family, your life goes on without you or life does go on without you, but it's difficult for a long time. When we left Stanley we went to Punta Arenas in Chile, allegedly the furthestmost southern city in the world, so I believe, and that was where we had a memorial service for Lieutenant Kavanagh [phonetic]. We had a memorial service in the English church in Punta Arenas. We didn't stay there very long, a few days. Where did we go after that? We went a long haul up to San Salvador in Brazil, sometimes known as Bahia and that was where, having travelled from Punta Arenas up there to San Salvador, which was quite a considerable distance , I don't know how long it took him, days, but it must have been a week or so, and when we got to San Salvador there was once again no mail. We later found out that it had gone to another San Salvador in Central America, 5,000 feet up in the central highlands of Central America. You couldn't make it up, could you?

[1:06:26] Tolson: Did people just accept this or were people now beginning to get?

Philp: Well we were now getting quite het up because we had so many things over the place. Where are we now? We're probably now in about June, so we'd been away since the previous October, so we were getting on for eight months. You get a bit fed up with it. It's possible to forgive one incidence of lost mail but when it happens time and time again it becomes very tedious. Very frustrating and very worrying because you just don't know what's happening at home.

[1:07:13] Tolson: Was the end in sight of this trip or did you still have many places to get..?

Philp: Well we left San Salvador and went into the Caribbean and we did a round of trips to many of the islands, Barbados, Trinidad, Tobago, Curacao, Venezuela, not an island I know, but in the Caracas. St Kitts, Antigua and probably another half a dozen more somewhere. But that was hopping around from one to the other. You go there, have a day or two and then push off, go to the next one. It didn't appeal to me, West Indies. If you're a sand, sea and sun merchant, West Indies is lovely. If you're of the other ilk and you find sun not the best of friends, it's not much good. There's not much culture there, well the sort of culture that I'm interested in, it's not there. Modern day people seem to like it as a holiday resort or resorts. They go there all the time but it's not for me.

[1:08:45] Tolson: And your Captain in his ivory tower was still in his ivory tower.

Philp: He's still in there, he could still be there now, if I didn't know any different. He did get promoted. Absolute ruined what should have been a very enjoyable 12 months. Because we went to some nice places. People pay a lot of money to go to Antigua and St Kitts and Bermuda and all these other places today and although they were much more backward and primitive that they are today, but nevertheless they would have been nice places to go on holiday, if you like that type of scenery.

[1:09:34] Tolson: So finally, finally anyhow you headed back to the UK.

Philp: Yes, I'm not quite sure, I think Bermuda was probably our last port of call on the way back. I can't recall, quite frankly, I was only interested in getting back by that time and we got back in end of October, first of November maybe, and we got married on the eighth of November.

[1:10:06] Tolson: Ah, but did you know before you got back that your fiancee would still be your fiancee? [Laughs].

Philp: [Laughs] Well I did, yes. I did get a letter sooner rather than later. Yes, it's surprising really. The whole point of being engaged, if you're 10,000 miles apart, it's pointless, there's no sense in it really when you think about it. But that was the way of the world.

[1:10:42] Tolson: Well there must have been quite a few of you on the ship who were in a similar position who were no longer engaged by the time they got home.

Philp: Oh yes, there were a number of course who had the inevitable 'Dear John, I've met somebody' or ' I'm sorry to tell you, Bill, that I can no longer be a naval man's wife'. They've gone off and married Fred the butcher or something. There were all sorts.

[1:11:12] Tolson: Anyhow, yours was a great success and you say a week later you got ...?

Philp: Yes, we got married a week later and we're still at it, being married I mean. We've had 60 years in October, November. Yes and in October we went to Malta which is the scene of our early married life. Having got married in October... I'm going to get shot for this... when we got married in November '52, in early '53 we were posted to Malta. I posted to Malta and my wife was able to come with me and we were there for two years, which was marvelous really because, apart from being there together, it was financially rewarding. It was a lovely life for my wife more than me because she was living in a situation being able to afford somebody to come in and do the cleaning and the ironing and all the rest of it. Our son was born there. And so last year we went to Malta, my wife, myself, my son, three daughters, all their partners and two grandchildren. We all went and had a villa in Mellieha Bay. We were there for a week, it was restricted because of various people's employment, holidays and all the rest of it, so it was limited to a week really. My son and I went by train from Bristol to Malta. Almost by train, we had a ferry in the end, but we went all the way down to Sicily by train, he and I. Great fun. It was very, very good. The weather was perfect, we had no family quarrels or arguments or.... it was lovely, everything was perfect. Then we came back and then my wife and I went on a cruise to... where did we go? Spain mainly, Portugal and Spain. We came back just before Christmas. That was very nice. Yeah, we're still soldiering on.

[1:14:15] Tolson: You spent a couple of years in Malta on base, land base there, had your naval career at sea ended or what was the progression for the last years that you were in the Navy?

Philp: We had two years in Malta with my wife. It was not really land-based, it was a ship stationed in Malta for part of the time. The rest of the time we were wandering around the Mediterranean doing good deeds, like waving the flag and going to the aid, twice, for Greek earthquakes where we took on board generators, tents, water, water bottles, blankets, all sorts of survival equipment to go to stricken earthquake areas. That's an amazing experience, earthquakes are terrible experiences for people who had the misfortune to suffer them. It was a great sense of shock amongst the survivors. They can't really comprehend what has happened and what is going to happen to them in the future. We did that a couple of times. But once we left Malta it was back again really to a spell at sea, a spell at base, another spell at sea and that went on for the rest of my naval career really. My last ship was HMS *Relentless* and I was on her in 1969, which is the year that I left. So right up to virtually the last few months I was still actively sea-going.

[1:16:23] Tolson: But from a young 15-year old lad who's joined the Navy right at the end of World War II and gone on through to 1970, you have seen, been a part of an enormous change in technology. How did that affect you?

Philp: You're right, enormous strides in naval technology as well as any other sort. It meant that the ordnance division became a weapons division or branch. So instead of just guns, we undertook to maintain and operate all weapons systems. Apart from guns, there'd be small arms , and by guns I mean big armour and 60 inches and above, small arms, radar, sonar, submarine detection, guided missiles, their launching systems and their guidance systems and their fire control systems. All those became part and parcel of the weapons department or branch and later on it even got much more diverse because we all became what we term cross trained whereby we all became ordnance electrical artificers. Not ordnance but electrical so we were also then responsible for power generation on ships, main power - turbines, diesels, generators and all of its ancillary bits and pieces all over the ship. So it became a huge department and that was quite late in my naval career really, I was probably well into my mid-thirties before I went on a cross training course with HMS *Collingwood* to become an ordnance electrical artificer.

[1:18:34] Tolson: Could you readily make these enormous jumps?

Philp: Not really, it was very difficult the last bit, the electrical distribution. I managed quite well with the theory and passed all the relevant courses and things, exams, but I was never really terribly confident of handling high power generating systems.

[1:19:07] Tolson: At sea your whole department grew and grew. Did the respect, because earlier on you were talking about how you get the mickey taken out of you, your department? Did that respect grow?

Philp: I think it probably did because, bearing in mind we're now so much older and so much more mature about things like that, I think the answer is probably 'Yes'.

[1:19:36] Tolson: And did you see also a lessening of the bullying in the Navy, a change of... ?

Philp: Oh, it's completely changed over my time and today it's ... I would say it's probably gone too far the other way. ' Don't shout at me , Chief, I'll cry!' But it was hard when we were apprentices.

[1:20:05] Tolson: You were a Petty Officer, a P.O.....

Philp: At that time in the Falklands, yes.

[1:20:12] Tolson: You were to some extent, in a practical sense, running operations. Did the officers get involved much?

Philp: Not on that particular ship. As I said to you earlier, it was a very unhappy ship and people tended to keep themselves to themselves wherever they could. They didn't want to be involved with these other people. It was a very unhappy ship. Fortunately that was the only one in my naval career, that one terrible ship.

[1:20:58] Tolson: So your end of time was coming, 1969, 1970, about the period when you were to leave the Navy. Was that because you had a contract period?

Philp: Yes, I had signed an engagement to end when I was 40, yes. I could have stayed on for a further five years but to me that was staving off the inevitable. I'd sooner or later, I'd have to leave and I thought it would be better if I left at 40 rather than 45 or 50. Possibly in hindsight that might have been a mistake, one never knows. But anyhow I soldiered on and I left when I was 40, yes.

[1:21:49] Tolson: Was civvy street in 1970 open arms for you?

Philp: No, no, not in Plymouth. I think we as individuals in the Navy had, if you like, a misconception of being better than we were. I think that we had the opinion that we were, you know, the bees' knees when civilian employers probably didn't think so. But we were not very welcome really because they knew exactly what we could do, what we couldn't do and there were too many of us in Plymouth and jobs were very hard, decent jobs were very hard to come by in Plymouth and a vast number of people left Plymouth and took a chance of getting employment somewhere else. I came to Bristol and got the job at British Aerospace.

[1:22:50] Tolson: Tell me how you got that job and what it entailed.

Philp: Well how I got it is a mystery. Because I wrote to them saying who I was and what my capabilities were, can they have any jobs? But before I had a response to my letter I came to Bristol on an interview with another company. I thought whilst I was here in Bristol, I would go and knock on the door at British Aerospace and said ' Well I wrote to you last week and I haven't heard anything, how's about ?' So I went and got to the Personnel and they said: 'Oh, there's nothing available.'

I said: 'How do you know? You don't know what I can do.'

'Oh, we'll give Mr Smith a ring.'

So they phoned Gerry Smith, he said 'Come and see me' and off I went and he said:

'Don't worry, you'll be alright.'

I got back to Plymouth and a day or two later I had a letter saying 'Sorry, there's no job for you.' But that was in response to my early letter which at the time I didn't appreciate because there was no cross reference to anything and then, out of the blue, another two days went by and I had another letter saying: 'We're pleased to offer you this position, would you like to join us next month?' Which is what I did.

[1:24:30] Tolson: A happy transition?

Philp: What from civilian life to ...?

[1:24:41] Tolson: To civilian....

Philp: Not really, no, I found it very difficult to get myself in the frame of mind of a civilian. I'd been a serviceman from 15 to 40 and I found things very difficult. I couldn't understand the way they worked in civilian life and I missed, well we all missed our friends in our social circle in Plymouth, most of whom were service people so we were alike. In Bristol we were unlike and it took me in particular a long time to get settled and we had the worries of course of the children's education. There were four, all at different standards of school, different age groups. That was not easy to find an area where that could be catered for and Thornbury happened to be one such place as the schools were here. So that was one of the major reasons for coming to Thornbury. We've been here now 43 years. Oh dear, where have they gone?

[1:25:57] Tolson: Tell me about the early sort of stages of working in British Aerospace. You went along presumably expecting to be told your job and....

Philp: Well exactly. I got there and my boss was the man who interviewed me in the first instance, Gerry Smith. A very pleasant man but totally and completely hopeless at delegation. He did not have a clue. I said, 'What am I going to do?'

He said: 'Well, I can't.. go away and find something, find a job, you'll be alright.'

And that was basically how I started at BAE, going and finding a job. And you can do it, or you could, in that type of organisation. If you wanted to do something all you had to do is say 'I'll do that,' they'd say 'Oh, yeah, go ahead and do it.' Because they were so used to people saying 'I don't want to do it' that somebody who said 'I want to do something' was a rarity, let's treasure him.

[1:27:09] Tolson: What did you think you might be doing? 'I'm going into British Aerospace' conjures up building aeroplanes and engines and I don't know what else, but what did you ...?

Philp: Well, the original concept was that I was to go to British Aerospace, BAC it was then, British Aircraft Corporation, my job title was an Engineer in the Naval Project Office. That was my job offer. When I got there to start, this job of the Naval Project Office had disappeared because the Government or the MoD, in their wisdom, decided that they didn't want this project that I was going to go and work on. They'd cancelled it. So basically I was left without a post to go to. So then, having had this directive 'go find yourself a job', I found one in Rapier, the guided weapons system which was Army and Airforce, nothing to do with the Navy. Having been signed on to do a naval job, I never did, didn't do a naval job in BAC all the time I was there. I did work on army projects and RAF, I never had anything to do with any naval aspect whatsoever, which was rather strange having spent 25 years on weapons, we were a weapons company, and they never took any advantage of it on that type of thing. I spent a long time doing Rapier.

[1:29:01] Tolson: Tell me a little bit about what Rapier is.

Philp: Rapier was a guided missile system developed largely by British Aircraft Corporation with assistance from subcontractors like Decca Radar, STC, Cotter Electronics,. All that type of sophisticated design work was done by companies with its own specific interest within radar or communications or whatever. But we were the major contractors and they all worked for BAC. It was a portable anti-aircraft weapons systems, you could tow it behind a landrover or any other such vehicle, set it up anywhere more or less and you'd be into action within minutes. It was a very effective defence system and in fact it was deployed in the Falklands in 1982. It was there given its baptism in action. It was fired here all over the place in trial sites down in Wales or up in Scotland, but that was its first test in action conditions, in the Falkland Islands against the Argentinians. And in fact it failed its first challenge because it didn't work under the circumstances in the Falklands because the weapons systems were deployed on a higher ground level than the aircraft could fly. The aircraft came flying up the sounds here and the missile system was up there, pointing up there. It could not get down far enough, so we had to rush out urgent modifications to get it to do that. You wouldn't believe that that would be possible to get in a situation where it won't work because it can't get there.

[1:31:25] Tolson: And yet within the duration of the Falklands war you sorted it.

Philp: Oh yes, yeah, we sorted it more or less overnight. We were told what the problem was and our designers came up with the answer within a day or so. It goes to show that all the clever

guys in the world writing out specifications for missile systems to do that and this or the other, you can't cover it all under those circumstances.

[1:31:58] Tolson: Was it a jolly good bit of kit when it was altered?

Philp: Oh yes, it's been in service all over the world, Australia, Iran, I can't recall where else now, other places. It sold quite well. And it will be in service for donkeys.

[1:32:23] Tolson: Will it?

Philp: Yeah.

[1:32:25] Tolson: Is that because it's because it's so simple, relatively simple, so maneuverable?

Philp: I can't answer that. I really wouldn't like to hazard a guess.

[1:32:40] Tolson: You must feel pretty proud then to have been involved in ..

Philp: It does give a degree of satisfaction that having worked on something in the end of the day we got it to work successfully because there were places in Falklands which we visited when we were there on the *Burghead Bay*, San Carlos I think was one which was a particular place where there was a battle in the Falklands, wasn't there?

[1:33:13] Tolson: Yep, that's right. Slightly ironic for you too that those years later you should be ...

Philp: Yes, indeed, you hear these names. I mean there was, what, '52 to '82, there's 30 years whereby a large number of these places which we had visited in the Falklands had never been heard of again until '82. They were places which I'd once been to but had more or less they were small, little villages around the coast of the Falklands. They get lost in the history of time, don't they?

[1:34:00] Tolson: They do. You never had the opportunity to go out to the Falklands again in the context of work?

Philp: No, no, no but I have, I don't know about going back to the Falklands, but if there was anywhere that I would like to go back, it would be to the Antarctic. I can see there being it always attracted me because of its remoteness, wildness, all those features which you don't see

here. Everything here is built up, urbanised and that to me was the attraction of Antarctica, its remoteness, its wildness, yes.

[1:34:57] Tolson: Being in a tight warship community as it was, was that a view that was held by many, do you think? Being there, being in this isolated place.

Philp: I don't think so, no, I would say that the majority of them would say, 'Well, thank god I'm going to go out of here and go back somewhere else. But it's difficult to explain why you want to feel about that to a country which is so primitive in the literal sense of the word. It really is primitive, so down to earth if you like. Down to rock or down to ice. [laughs] Down to earth, there isn't much there.

[1:35:47] Tolson: So after the Falklands war period dropped and the Rapier had been a proven success, did you have to dream up another project to get your hands into?

Philp: No, no, no. I would have well left British Aerospace by then I think, had I? When did I leave? I've forgotten.

[1:36:15] Tolson: I'm thinking now the Falklands '82 war and your involvement in British Aerospace with the Rapier system, I mean you were still working in British Aerospace after that period. You didn't retire, did you ?

Philp: I'm trying to work out when I did, I can't remember. You caught me on the hop.[laughs]

[1:36:46] Tolson: Or perhaps you're not permitted to talk about other projects you were involved in?

Philp: No, not at all, it's just that I can't remember when I packed up British Aerospace. You've thrown me in total and utter confusion. [laughs] Oh dear, '89 it would be about it, yeah. So the answer to the question is really once the Rapier system had established itself in '82 in the Falklands there was very little necessity to do any further work or improvements to Rapier because we'd proven that it did work. There was always with any weapons system like that, which is quite complex and very sophisticated in its manufacture, you could always find modifications to do to the system which might give you that much improvement. We always had the philosophy at BAC to get that extra little bit, you'd spend this much money and you'd have to balance out whether that little bit of improvement is worth that amount of money. In many cases of course it isn't and that's why people tend to leave things alone because the little bit extra is always prohibitive in cost.

[1:38:30] Tolson: As you look back on your working life in the Navy, you expressed a love of having seen the Antarctic, does Hope Bay actually mean very much to you or are you bewildered by all the fuss that we make about the Hope Bay incident?

Philp: I'm not quite sure what you're asking here.

[1:39:02] Tolson: Do you feel that your trip to Hope Bay on the *Burghead Bay* was that really a non-event to you personally? I mean, it was just another day's work?

Philp: No, I don't think it was just another day's work because it was a significant day's work or period of time. It wasn't a fleeting thing for me. I did honestly feel that this was a unique place, Antarctica. It is, we've got to realise that it's unique and try to do our best. I didn't really think about that all those years ago because we were not conscious or trained enough to realise what havoc we were wreaking by trying to exterminate half the world's wildlife and so on, but we do now. But to me it's perfectly unique and I just loved all of its majesty, if you like.

[1:40:20] Tolson: Would you love to go back to Antarctica?

Philp: I would but my problem is I don't like flying. It's too far for my wife to go by boat. That's my drawback, that's why earlier I think I mentioned my son and I went to Malta by train and that was because I have this aversion to flying, so we went by train. Wonderful experience actually, good fun. I'm afraid I doubt if I'll ever go back to Antarctica.

[1:40:59] Tolson: A wonderful Navy life? Was it a wonderful Navy life?

Philp: Well there were aspects of it which were great and there were others of course which we've been into, bullying apprentices, madmen in charge of ships, that type of thing gives Navy life a bad bill of health. But, on the whole, it was pretty good to me and we did have two years in Malta to experience, so that was great. I wouldn't have done that elsewhere. Maybe down in the Antarctic somewhere [laughs]. Not many places.

[1:41:55] Tolson: I think it would be a wholly unfair questions to ask you because I don't think you can have any concept of the modern day living, a modern day navy life, comparing it to your 1950's way of life. Ships have evolved so much, perhaps for the better, perhaps not so much better in other areas.

Philp: Well I'm in no position to put forward a case for or against. I have had very little contact with the Navy. As I said earlier, I had hoped to be a Naval Project Engineer but it didn't work out that way. I've seen very little of naval ships and I've basically lost contact with the modern

Navy. I still keep in touch with my naval colleagues and we have a reunion planned for the 12th of April, I think, this year. So it's only a couple of months away and about 20 of us will be gathering in Poole in Dorset for what will probably be the last, last final, penultimate or ultimate reunion. We haven't had one for a couple of years and one or two have disappeared. There should be about 20 of us, which is not bad going. We all joined on the same day in 1945, January the 10th, and there was 72, I think, of us in our entry. 20 or thereabouts will be turning up in April and considering we're all 80+, that's not too bad.

[1:43:54] Tolson: Pretty good, yes, pretty good. When you say all the same entry, were you all same type of work or was this ?

Philp: No, we were all artificers. Some were, of those who are left, yeah, there were some ordnance, there were some engine room and some electrical, yes, yeah. They were all a number of each.

[1:44:25] Tolson: Well Syd, I think that's been a very interesting interview. Thank you very much indeed.

Philp: You're very welcome. Hopefully it'll turn out to be reasonable, we can only hope.

[1:44:39] Tolson: Thank you.

Philp: OK, thank you for coming.

ENDS.

Items of possible interest:

[05:06] - Bullying and personal abuse in the Navy.

[34:05] - Unhappy ship with a remote Captain and crazy First Lieutenant.

[37:00] - Tropical working hours in the Antarctic.

[40:45] - Steaming through ice fields at night at 19 knots.

[42:00] - Standoff with Argentinian ships, with rumoured 500 ski troops aboard, blocking *John Biscoe* at Hope Bay.

[44:00] - Using icebergs for firing practice.

[55:00] - 56-gun salute for death of the King in a gale and thousands of miles from anywhere.

[58:00] - Witnessing the whaling industry at South Georgia - approximately 1500 employees.