JOHN KILLINGBECK

Edited transcript of a video recording of John Killingbeck interviewed by Joanna Rae at his home on the 17 November 2004. The cameraman was Peter Bucktrout. BAS Archives Ref AD6/24/1/21.

Transcribed by Joanna Rae, 25 March 2020

Transcriber's notes

This is a filmed interview, in 3 parts. The cameraman, Peter Bucktrout, is sometimes heard.

Superscript numbers refer to explanatory notes at the end of the transcript.

I have used … to indicate longer hesitations or a few disjointed words that I've omitted as John gets his thoughts together.

John, and the interviewer, often start a sentence with 'So' or 'And' – I have omitted many of these filler words.

Edited transcript

The first 36 minutes of Part 1 was filmed in the garden of John's home and features a replica 12-foot Nansen sledge built for him. Seated on the sledge, he shows various items of clothing as he talks about them.

[Part 1 00:00:00] Bucktrout: Just for the record, if you could just say who you are and where we are, for the tape, that would be great. If you could just do that now.

Killingbeck: OK. I'm John Killingbeck and we're speaking down at Lamerhooe, in Devon, in West Devon, about the sledging of the 1960s right through, and explaining a little about how the sledge works, how to drive a dog team, and a little bit about the clothing and the whole atmosphere of when you go out sledging. If I can just explain a little bit about the clothing, because everything on a trip, when you're away for, say, three months, 2-3 months, something like that, you are only as strong as the weakest part of your equipment so everything really has to be well-tried and works.

[Part 1 00:00:47] If I can just say a little bit about boots to begin with [picks up a seal-skin boot]. The boots that we used to love in the 1960s were the seal-skin boots. These were made up in the Arctic, we bought them from the Hudson Bay Company, hand-stitched, made of seal and then they would 'give' – this one has gone particularly hard now, 40-odd years afterwards, but lovely boots to wear. The modern one [picks up another boot], which is very good but much heavier, is the Mukluk. But inside them, which is the same as the seal-skin, [pulls items from inside the boot in turn] you have a pair of socks, then sometimes you've got two pairs of socks, a blanket, warm material, and then inside that a felt material and then finally a little plastic one on top. So all of that is used in the seal-skin boot just the same as in that one. And then at night when … in your tent, all of this comes out and goes up in the apex of the tent and it is all dried with your dog harnesses. Really, really important to make sure you start each day, if possible, with dry equipment. … But it just works. One of these boots [holds up a seal-skin boot] would last about three or four months. If you were doing a lot of work on rocks, going up on survey work, they tended to get worn out a bit more rapidly, so you'd carry a spare pair, they're very light, and so they're excellent. There really is nothing better than these when you're working with dogs. On very hard surfaces we might use this sort of boot in the summer [holds up another boot], which is the same principle, but just like a moccasin boot, like that one, particularly on hard surfaces in the summer.

[Part 1 00:02:40] Right, now the rest of the clothing … in the 1960s we were still so old-fashioned that we still wore woollen underwear and obviously now-a-days it's a very different world and a much better world from that point of view. And then we'd have a woollen shirt, a sweater, and these would just be taken off like layers, just the same as the modern day but slightly more old-fashioned, I suppose, but they worked. And the vital clothes, which are still being used to this day, are the anoraks [holds one up], made out of this wonderful material, Ventile[1]. I think it was in the War, when they needed a material to try to protect those who were on the Arctic routes, they asked the cotton industry in Manchester if they could design a material, and I think it was at the Shirley Institute, that they designed Ventile, which is a cotton and as it gets wet so the cotton warps and wefts expand and it becomes virtually waterproof. Not a hundred percent waterproof but certainly enough in a place like the Antarctic. So it's a wonderful material. These [shows fur-trimmed hood] were to protect our faces against rime ice. This, unfortunately, is a natural material, wolverine, and I remember again in the '60s we tried using nylon, bri-nylon, so we didn't have to use a natural material such as the wolverine, but they just didn't work and it was just like the washing up brush in your basins, they'd only last a certain amount of time and then they'd collapse, and so the only real material again, I think, sadly, has to be a natural material. And you'd be able to face that - it's got a wire going through it - so you can face it against the driving wind and obviously the rime ice collects on these hairs and it doesn't go on to your face, so again, great. … No things like zips - having said that there is one zip there [under a flap across the chest], other than that, no zips.

[Part 1 00:04:57] We were not up to date as they are today on the wonderful rescue facilities, so we had very basic things [removes thin rope and bells from the chest-pocket]. For crevasse rescue, we obviously had the climbing ropes on the sledge, and then we would use these prussic loops. It's just a rope like that [holds one up], which would tie into a prussic knot on to your climbing rope down the bottom of a crevasse. You'd be able to put your feet into that [the loop he is showing] and then you'd be able to have two of them and the knot would not slip going down and you'd be able to climb up. Now-a-days the jumar[2] stirrups are the replacements of the prussic loop but these were carried all the time. The bells [holds them up] were used for the dogs. At the end of a day's travelling, say on a fairly flat surface like the Fuchs Ice Piedmont, perhaps the last hour you want the dogs just to pull that extra bit to keep you going, so you'd put bells on the front of the dogs. Each dog driver would have a different technique, so that's not a standard technique. And the whistle is for … pulling up and pulling down on crevasses.

[Part 1 00:06:13] Rae: Why would the bells make the dogs run faster?

Killingbeck: Well, because for seven or eight hours of the day they've had no noise like that, and then if they had it for that last hour they knew they were going to get feed at the end of it. So it was the association, I'm sure, with being fed is why they had it. Right, so that's the basics of the clothing. Very simple, the whole lot can dry in the tent and you're just self-sufficient. Now, shall I say now a few words about the sledge perhaps?

[Part 1 00:06:51] Rae: Yes, please.

Bucktrout: Just give me a second to pan out so we can see the whole of the sledge. … OK, when you're ready.

[Brief pause in filming]

[Part 1 00:07:00] Killingbeck [now standing at rear of sledge, wearing anorak]: Obviously the clothing is one of the most essential things, but then we come to the dogs. [He picks up and displays lamp wick dog harnesses] … The thing that is the most amazing in the Antarctic is that the harnesses for the dogs are in many ways very different from what you find for dogs in the Arctic. In the Arctic, where you're able to use huts quite a lot you use mainly leather harnesses but in the Antarctic we use these, made out of lamp wick. [Holds up a roll of lamp wick] So it was designed, I think, by the British Graham Land Expedition, and it's such a wonderful idea. This is the normal lamp wick that that you would use in oil lamps. And so it came down in reels to the Antarctic and each sledging base would have reels of this with them and on a long trip we'd also take some of it with us. And then you'd measure the dogs up. So this dog was one called Dizzie [holds up one of the harnesses] and the harness was made for that particular dog. And then you can imagine how it goes on, like that. The advantage of this is that you could adjust it as the dog gained or lost weight. It's a bit unusual to say gained but occasionally in the field as they put on muscle a dog can actually gain weight and if, say, we had a lot of seals to feed, them they could gain weight. Although, obviously most of the time they tended to lose weight. So you would adjust it according to the weight of the dog. Essential that they were tight because if they fall down a crevasse – they are you're safety factor in front, fifty feet in front of you, or something like that – if they go down a crevasse they will hang on one of these and, providing it's tight, they won't come out.

[Part 1 00:08:44] At night, these are all brought into the tent, hung up above the primus stove, the old-fashioned primus stove, wonderful piece of equipment, and then they're dried as with your clothes. So that's probably one of the key factors of the success, I think, in the Antarctic of the husky dogs, was using these very good harnesses made of lamp wick. [He puts them down]

The actual feeding of the dogs – there's no better food than the seal meat, and I think it was Neil Orr and Dr Wyatt did a lot of work on the artificial food that we had [holds up a packet], this was the Nutrican made by Bob Martins in the '60s and basically we weren't really feeding the dogs enough. When you're on a long trip we would take the equivalent of a bar of this a day and dogs lost weight on that, you'd then increase it, if you could, to one and a half bars or even two bars and then they picked up on weight. But after, say, a couple of months, on this dehydrated food they definitely lost performance and so it was essential, if you could, to get down to the sea and to collect seal for them. And once you fed the dogs seal their whole performance and psychology suddenly improved again. So the best diet is the seal meat and everything of the seal was fed to the dogs. So that was feeding of them.

[Part 1 00:10:15] Right, perhaps I can say something about the sledge. These, as you can see, are wonderful, functional pieces of material. I think they're beautiful in their own sense. They're made out of ash, in America I think they would make them of hickory, but you want any wood that will give. So these are ash, they're all held together with leather thonging, on the pieces down here, with these what called the bridges, you've got the leather thonging here. So it's just leather thonging like that [holds up a strip of leather thong] which is used for the lashing. This is cod-line square lashing, which is tightened up with aircraft glue. They used to use it on the fabrics of aircraft to tighten them up – the same sort of glue was used on that. As the history of the Survey has developed so the sledges have developed, and if you've got something that really works, and it's got to work, then that seems to have been incorporated into the sledge. One example would be these bridges which are made, as you can see, of laminated … beech, and they replaced the old bridges which were made of oak and always caused quite a lot of trouble – these seem to be superb, so that's a modern development. On our runners – perhaps if I just take that off for a moment [removes box from the sledge and turns sledge on its side]. The runners again, over the history of sledging, have changed. So to begin with, up in the Arctic, they were just wood and then they used to put mud on them, obviously in earlier days the sledges were made out of reindeer and any bone, but in the Antarctic in the '60s we used a plastic called Tufnol[3], and then, in this period, I'm talking now about the 1980s, we were using polyethylene and so it has developed through that area.

[Part 1 00:12:28] And while I'm here, you see this slit here [points out a slit on the runner], if I bring the sledge back [turns the sledge upright], when you're travelling over slopes, you'll want to prevent the sledge from slipping, then we have these keels [demonstrates use of a metal piece that fits in the slit] which are really just the same as a keel in a dinghy, just like that. And you can put them down either together or on one side.

[Part 1 00:12:51] When I come to the back here [stands at handlebars], when you see the actual sledge [rocks it by the handlebars vigorously] – the whole thing twists, so if you imagine you're going over the ice and the bumps, you want the sledge to be able to twist and … the fact that you're using the leather thonging and the square lashings and things, no nails, no screws on it, is why it really lasts. Each winter these sledges would be taken to pieces, re-assembled before you go out on a long journey. I must admit that didn't always happen, sometimes we'd come back from being out for, say, perhaps a month, you had a couple of days back on base and then go out again, so they didn't always get checked right through like that.

[Part 1 00:13:43] Right, now what else about it? Actually, at the back here, to brake it, you've got studs which come down here [camera zooms in on a wooden pedal John is stepping on] – it's a bit difficult to see – but there are studs sitting down there [points to underside of pedal] and this is a piece of ash, which is held together again by your leather thonging and your lashings, and it can give so it brakes down on to the snow and ice. So that is your actual brake. If you're going down a really steep hill, then you need to put a rope brake on, and so on the front of the sledge [walks to front of sledge] you will have a piece of rope tied on here – I haven't got a rope brake on this one at the moment – and it will go underneath here [points to the runners, towards the front of sledge] and then it would provide that extra brake. So when going downhill you'd use a rope brake. I think if we were really, really experienced drivers, I've seen photographs and films of where the Inuit – because we learnt from the Inuit, and they are the real drivers of the dogs – they can sometimes get their dogs to go either side as a team and actually brake the sledge as it goes down a hill. We never ever achieved that, as far as I know.

[Part 1 00:15:06] So those are the basic sides of it. The sledge, the equipment, dog ones.

[Part 1 00:15:14] Rae: Can you just tell us what kind of a sledge it is and why it's called that.

Killingbeck: This is a 12-foot Nansen sledge. It really goes back thousands of years, not hundreds of year,s but it was the sledge that Nansen used. It's 12-foot which presumably works well for sledging, particularly in the Antarctic. If we're doing a lot of work on sea ice we might use a Greenland sledge, and if we're just manhauling a sledge we'd use a different sort of sledge, a much lighter sledge obviously. This is the classic 12-foot Nansen sledge. This particular one was built in the 1990s by Snowsled[4], a firm which has been developed by an ex-fid, Roger Daynes. The difference of this sledge to those of the 1960s, other than the modern little bits of equipment like the bridges and the runners, is that it's a little bit more beefed up, because it's also used on skidoos. This sledge could be used for dogs or for skidoos, and pieces like this [indicates the long wooden struts along the length of the sledge] are much thicker, they've been added on which makes it a little bit heavier but a bit stronger. This piece here, the cow-catcher, is a bamboo. Not only does it hold the sledge together, obviously, so it has a function like that, but also if you've got the dogs in front and if you're going downhill you can overrun your dogs and so there's a good chance that the dogs will be pushed to one side by the runner. If we had – and it sounds a bit cruel, but it isn't because we'd be very careful of the dogs – but if we had a lazy dog then we could bring the lazy dog back onto here [indicates cow-catcher] and obviously it would be knocked and soon it would start to be pulled forward and then it would go back into the team, so it was occasionally used for that purpose as well. So the cow catcher.

[Part 1 00:17:20] Right, to run a team of dogs – very easy. [John goes back to the rear of the sledge] Anyone really can run a team of dogs, it's not difficult. So if you could imagine that we're camping out in the ice with a thousand feet of snow or ice here, with a tent over there, and then we've got half our dogs on that side on a night trace [points behind him, to his right] the other half on that side [points ahead, to his left]. So we first of all pack up the tent, put everything on to our sledge, load the sledge up, make sure it's all tied down, it's all safe. We might also, incidentally, have a dog whip [picks one up] – this is a very old dog whip. I don't think anyone ever used one very seriously but you could lay them down on one side if you had an ice cliff or a crevasse. Most of the time you hit yourself with it on the back of the head, but it did lie fifty feet behind you so I suppose it was a safety factor if you slipped off the sledge you could grab hold of your whip. Now-a-days they use a fifty-foot rope behind so it's the same kind of thing, I think.

[Part 1 00:18:34] … Oh, just one other thing, if I may, about the dogs. [Picks up a dog collar.] Each dog has got its own collar, and its own name and its own number … on the dog cards and so particularly from a breeding point of view, we could tell the whole history of each dog. So this one was called Yap and I think Yap came from, if I can see that [studies lettering on collar] he came from Base - I think it's Base W, yeah Base W, Detaille Island. That was one of my really good dogs in that period. [Holds up a dog harness, which also has a name written on it.] This dog, Max, was the king dog, one of the king dogs.

[Part 1 00:19:20] Rae: What does that mean, John?

Killingbeck: Sorry?

[Part 1 00:19:22] Rae: What does king dog mean?

Killingbeck: King dog, right. In the team, if we were running on a twelve-foot sledge, which would be pulling somewhere about 600-800 pounds, we would run nine dogs. Each dog can pull its own weight, so a dog pulls a hundred pounds, a bitch about 75 pounds. And out of those nine dogs you yourself, as the leader, will choose your lead dog, who's usually the intelligent one, and then the dogs themselves will form their own king dog or alpha dog, and that dog will challenge all the other dogs to fight and it remains the king dog. Eventually you have that very interesting phase where the dog gets older, he's challenged by a younger dog and then he loses his confidence and usually that's the end of that dog. The king dog is the one that you tend to keep at the back of your team and the other dogs pull forward from it. But again, every dog driver will have different ideas of how to run dogs.

[Part 1 00:20:28] OK, so imagine everything is loaded up, we're nearly ready to go. We put the harnesses on our dogs, and then we bring the dogs up forward. So imagine we've got – this is Dizzy [holds up another harness], short names for the dogs – bring them forward [walks past the sledge to the trace laid out ahead of it], put them on the traces, so in the end you've got nine dogs about 50 feet in front, raring to go, really, really lively. May be … if you're just starting out you may have a dog fight, later on you'll hardly get any dog fights. The more you run the teams, they work out their relationships and you tend not to get the dog fights. So imagine them, lively to go. At the front here we have a picket, so we gently knock the picket out. Then you're on your own with your dogs, your friend has got his other team about 20 yards over there, ready to go, and the one thing that you don't want are the two teams to come together, else you'll have 18 dogs fighting, so that's quite fun.

[Part 1 00:21:35] [walks back to rear of sledge] Coming back to your sledge, everything's loaded up. Here at the back, and this is something different … this is a modern development [holds up a metal picket] of an aluminium pole but in the old days they were just steel so they're much quieter than in the 1960s. And now we're ready to go, so you quietly knock that out [taps picket with a hammer], hoping the dogs don't hear but of course they do hear, so they're getting more and more lively. And then you're holding it on your foot brake here, you're watching your friend - because often we used to start off together and have a race - and you've got everything ready to go. And then you're on the sledge and you say 'Up dogs!' [stands up on back runners, as he calls, holding the handle bars], 'Way you go!' and on the 'Up dogs' they go. At this stage you're just holding on for dear life, holding on to your sledge and sort of riding it, like a dinghy, I suppose, and you're away! If a dog wants to crap or have a pee, it doesn't matter, it just gets pulled along with the rest of the team. That goes on for about 10, I don't know, it seems like, 10 minutes non-stop and it's the most exhilarating thing that I've ever experienced! I've done a bit of flying and sailing, but that initial start with the dog teams is absolutely wonderful. And you just try to control them.

[Part 1 00:23:00] Then to get them to go faster, you say '*Wheet! Wheet! Wheet!*' To turn right, '*Awk! Awk! Awk!*', to turn left '*Irra! Irra! Irra!*', and if you're a Scotsman you can obviously drive dogs better because you can roll the Rs on the *irra*. And then to slow down, you say 'Ahhhh dogs', long, drawn out 'Ahhhhh dogs', then 'Down dogs'. And I think what is absolutely amazing, is that when these last dogs, in 1994, went back to their ancestors they were the same names that they'd used in 1945 when we brought the dogs down. So those words like '*wheet', 'awk awk', 'irra, irra*' are the Inuit words which have come down. We don't use the word '*mush*' with our dogs purely because the dogs came from Labrador, not from, say, French Canada and they're using the genuine Inuit word. I think I'm right in saying that anyway. So that's how you drive them.

[Part 1 00:24:06] So, just again, getting you're dogs ready, just holding them on that brake, then 'Are you ready, dogs! Up dogs! Way you go!' and off you go! Right, and then to get them to go faster, '*Wheet! Wheet! Wheet!*' To turn right, '*Awk! Awk! Awk!*', turn left '*Irra! Irra! Irra!*', to slow down 'Ahhhh now', 'Down dogs'.

[Part 1 00:24:34] You … get to know your dogs so well that you know exactly what dog is pulling, what isn't pulling, whether you need to chastise a dog, whether you need to encourage a dog. Most of the time, I think, it's encouragement, occasionally you've got to chastise. You're the king dog, obviously, really at the back here, and they know that and once you've got that relationship, it's wonderful. I mean, after long, long journeys you hardly ever say anything. '*Wheet! Wheet! Wheet!*' isn't used very much. Just one '*Awk!*', one '*Irra!* – a good lead dog will turn on just the one word and that develops over those weeks and months of driving them. But at the end of the day … one has to realise that we only drove those dogs for two years, most of us, some a little bit longer, but that isn't very long, and so we were still amateurs even at the end of our experience with them. But it was the most wonderful experience to drive dog teams on the virgin territory of the Antarctic and it's something that … any dog driver that's worked in the Antarctic, I don't think, will ever, ever forget, that experience. It was wonderful. So I hope that explains a little about it. … Are there any points perhaps?

[Part 1 00:26:01] Rae: Well, there's several things I'd like to talk about more. The training of the dogs and the training of the drivers, but it may be best to do that inside?

[Part 1 00:26:13] Killingbeck: OK, certainly. May I just say one thing [picks up bag]. In the 1960s we experimented in making dog packs. I don't know where my dog has gone, now that I could use him, but never mind. So … if you imagine … [arranges the pack bag over a box, as though on a dog's back] we would be going up to the mountains every day, the tops of the hills, for surveying purposes, and then we would see our dogs all lying down peacefully and happily and lazily up on base and we thought 'Why can't we use the dogs to carry our survey equipment up, and our pup tents and various bits of equipment?' There was an article in *'The Polar Record'* how they used these dog packs in the Arctic, so we made a couple, I think it was, and we used them and they were great. You needed an old dog, who was obviously friendly and wasn't going to run away, and each dog could carry about 30-35 pounds. The only problem is that, if you've got a lot of wildlife around, there's a danger than the dogs will go towards, say, penguins, so I don't think you could use it in the summer when you've got wildlife, but certainly when you're working on the mountains and going up to survey stations and things like that, I think we should have used them a lot more, the dog packs. But anyway, it was good fun, and when you've got an old dog, you think you'd like to try and let it last a little bit longer because eventually, sadly, you have to cull some of the dogs and this, I thought, might give them a little bit longer so earn their living.

[Part 1 00:27:58] Rae: Were the dogs on a leash when they were carrying packs?

Killingbeck: No, most of the time they were free. We did have a sort of rope leash but we didn't actually need to use it. They used to just come along behind us, amazing. It's a bit like a dog in your home, I've got a couple of dogs here, and they just walk behind you. Sometimes … dogs particularly, go about 10 yards in front of you, and these were just the same, the huskies. You couldn't use all dogs, obviously, younger dogs I don't think you could use, it was the older dogs.

[Part 1 00:28:30] Rae: Something else that occurs to me is … can you give us an idea of the size of a husky? You know, against you?

Killingbeck: Yes, well. A hundred-pound dog, a big husky, how can I say, it's much stockier than, say, an Alsatian, not quite as high and the Antarctic dogs over the years, in fact, seemed to be bred so they weren't a particularly high dog but they were very strong in their chest and their feet. They needed to be high enough to work through fairly deep soft snow … but I notice … ours were Inuit dogs, some Siberian huskies seem to be much, much taller than the ones we had. At the very end of the huskies in the Antarctic, some of those were much taller. I think they must have been bred into another type of dog as well – another husky.

[Part 1 00: 29:33] I think the ideal one was a slightly squatter one, rather stronger in the chest. How can I say what size they were? Well, they're not much different to what that would be [drops on to his hands and knees], really. Hundred pounds is quite a weight. When you've got a big fight, the ideal way to break a fight up is to try to lift the dogs up by their hind legs, get the blood to go down to their head and then, on here [touches handle bar] you'd have a rope thumper and then you'd just knock them on the head. It never actually hurt the dog. You would never ever use a piece of wood or anything like that, it was just a rope thumper but once you got the dogs up in the air with the blood going down, they would break their clench, you know, if they got it round someone's ear. We were often stitching dogs after fights, well, not often, but it happened. … You've got to have some aggression, I think, in husky dogs, you need some aggression because it is a hard life, pulling away all the time.

[Part 1 00:30:38] Rae: Did anyone get attacked by a dog?

Killingbeck: Not that I know of, no. If you went into the middle in a fight, I suppose, you had to be a bit careful and you might just get a minor nip on your hand but I never ever knew of anyone, in my experience, who actually got bitten by a dog. It is amazing. Occasionally if you fell down when you were learning to ski - I remember my first year at Deception, one of the pilots, Ron Lord, was skiing down from the slopes behind Mount Pond and he ended up in the middle of the dog line. He had one of these anoraks on, and he had big fluffy hair and it looked just as though he was a dog, so that was a bit tricky. But, no, it was amazing – they seemed to respect the human being and didn't attack the human being. It may also be, of course, that if we had a runt dog, that was put down and wasn't ever bred at all. The dogs were all bred for a purpose and their temperament and everything came into it.
[Dog barks. John laughs] That's the postman arriving.

[Part 1 00:31:50] Rae: We'd better pause there, maybe.

[Filming resumes, with a different shot of John at back of sledge. Cameraman has asked for a repeat of the dog team setting off to get some different wording from John.]

[Part 1 00:31:54] Killingbeck: Right, we're about to drive a dog team, a husky dog team. We've got nine dogs in front raring to go, just beginning at the start of the game. Imagine that. We've taken the picket out and we're ready to go. So we say 'Are you ready dogs!' Really big 'Are you ready dogs!'. You've got your break down on here [standing on back runners and working the brake] 'Are you ready dogs! Up dogs! Way you go!' and they just tear off. Enormous speed you feel, and you're riding the sledge [rocks sledge from side to side] and trying to hold it on as you go. And then to get them to go faster, '*Wheet! Wheet! Wheet!*' To turn right, '*Awk! Awk! Awk!*', to turn left '*Irra! Irra! Irra!*', to slow down, 'Ahhhh now', 'Down dogs'. And that's how it's done. So just go through that again: 'Are you ready dogs!', 'Up dogs! Way you go!', '*Wheet! Wheet! Wheet!*' to go faster, '*Awk! Awk! Awk!*' to go right, '*Irra! Irra! Irra!*' to go left. What was amazing, if I my just say so, was when the last dogs were taken back to Labrador and given back to the Inuit, they were so amazed that we were still using the words that they used and so those words like W*heet! Wheet! Wheet!* A*wk! Awk! Irra! Irra!* were the Inuit words. We don't use the word '*mush*' with the British Antarctic Survey because that's a French-Canadian word, I think, *marche* the French word to walk, and it's the Inuit *wheet* that we use.

[Part 1 00:31:34] [Tries to put a harness on one of his dogs] No, never mind. When you put the harness on the dog, the dog is in between your feet, like that, so you're actually holding it with your knees and so it's easy just to slip that [the harness] on and then to put its legs through like that. You know when you've got an old dog, because it's getting arthritic in its legs and it finds it difficult to bear putting its legs up through into here, so that's the sign I'm afraid. When a dog reaches about six years, seven years, that's usually the end of their working life. If you have a really good, intelligent dog, as a lead dog, then your dog will probably go on to eight or nine years. I had a lovely lead dog called Peppi, who was, I think, eight, yes about eight, or nine years.

[Part 1 00:34:44] Rae: How would you cull them?

Killingbeck: The culling. That was the saddest thing that one ever did in the Antarctic, because at the end of your period with your dog team you handed it over to someone else, and in, I think, the heyday of dog sledging … the person had worked with you as the assistant, so he knew your dog team and took it on. Later on, often you had to hand the dog team on to someone who'd just arrived, or fairly soon after, and it was your responsibility to decide, and to put down, dogs which you knew were not fit for another season. And so that was always done just before the ships arrived, if possible. It was a very sad thing. We obviously had revolvers, .45 revolvers, and normally the dogs were taken – at Adelaide Island, I remember – up to an ice cliff and were very painlessly shot behind the head and then the body fell into the sea. And I suppose, in a way, it was rather nice that that would then be picked up by the sea life and eaten and so it was a continuation of life. I suppose, in a way you have that feeling of the Inuit – they have that respect for the wildlife, like the seals, when they kill the seals, and it was the same with our dogs. It was a very sad thing to do but it had to be done. I think sometimes one had an incredibly long-serving dog, we would try and see if we could send it to an island base. When I first went to Deception Island, we had one dog called Spud, which had had a wonderful history at Hope Bay, and it was no longer fit to be a sledging dog at Hope Bay. And so it lived out its life at Deception, and I think it lived with us at Deception, probably for two or three years and so it was rather nice. It lived just outside the hut and was fine.

[Part 1 00:36:51] Rae: More like a pet?

Killingbeck: Yes. It was really a pet. Yes.

[Part 1 00:36:55] END of filming in the garden.

[Part 1 00:36:56] Filming starts again in a room in John's home.

[Part 1 00:37:02] Rae: OK, John. Can you tell us a bit about how you came to join FIDS originally?

Killingbeck: Yes. It was in the 1959-60 period, and I personally think I'm a bit of a romantic and I think we go back to that period, pre-war, of the Gino Watkins period, I've just been reading the book on James Wordie and there were those young people going from universities up to the Arctic, and I'd read a little bit about the Graham Land Expedition. Bill Sloman, who worked for BAS used to come round to the universities. I was at Bristol, and at Bristol I read geography, and we had quite a strong surveying component of the course, so it was training people to be land topographic surveyors. Frank Preston went down to the Antarctic a year before me and then in my year I went down with … Bob Metcalfe, who was a surveyor, so that was probably the background. We did have that sort of romantic feeling, we had been brought up on the stories of Scott and Shackleton, Scott's film, not entirely Scott but there was that background. But what we lacked at that period – we didn't have the skills that I know people have today, so we weren't mountaineers. Quite a lot of us had done national service and that, I suppose, in a way, had restricted us…. I have a sixteen year old son and he's learnt to roll a kayak, he goes up on Cairngorms and Dartmoor and things – we tended not to have quite that opportunity, I think.

[Part 1 00:38:54] Rae: Had you had any experience of …

Killingbeck: Yes, I had. I'd been up the Cairngorms, yes, I had. I'd done quite a bit of travelling. I had also been in national service, lived on a fighter station, been a fighter controller, up at Norfolk – Coltishall. I'd been taken up, a lot of flying, in the fighters and Venoms and Meteors and things, so I loved flying. And then I flew with the university air squadron and learnt to fly and went solo and so on, but I wasn't an accomplished pilot, it was just a beginning really. But I had that background. … I wanted to be a surveyor but there weren't any vacancies so you were quite willing to take any job to get to the Antarctic, so I was signed on as a met. man and then when I got to Cambridge, I think, Bunny Fuchs and Bill Sloman took me to one side and said would I be base leader at Deception. And the reason for that was that because I had some RAF experience, and the little RAF flight of two pilots, two mechanics, had lived on their own for the first year in the little hut on Deception, called the FIDASE Hut, it was thought really, and quite rightly, that they should link the two together, so they thought that I could perhaps be the link between the scientists and the RAF people. When I look back on it, I think it must have been terrible for the people down there to think that there was someone young - because I was about 23, 24 - coming down without any Antarctic experience to run the Base. But bases run on their own so it didn't, in the end, make any difference at all. It was a wonderful opportunity and it was great.

[Part 1 00:40:49] Rae: Were you interviewed, and who by?

Killingbeck: Yes. First of all, Bill Sloman used give a presentation of what the Antarctic was like with the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and then we were interviewed up in Gillingham Street, in London. Interviewed by Bunny Fuchs, Bill Sloman and one other – may be Clem[16] but three. There was no psychological testing or anything like that, it was just a straight forward interview. And then, after that … I went up to Birmingham, because I wanted to try to do a little bit of glaciology in the Antarctic, because I'd read geography. I worked there with Ray Adie and worked a small glaciological programme for Deception Island. Then we came together for the conference at Cambridge, but it was totally and utterly different to what it is today. The main advantage of that conference was that it was the first time, obviously, that we met. So we all met together and I think, if I remember rightly, we just had a series of lectures, we had no training in skills, say rescue techniques, or anything like that. There was no training like that, but we didn't probably expect it, we expected that we'd do that down in the Antarctic, I think. We didn't have any kitting out because that was all done in Stanley. So it was just coming together in Cambridge, we lived at Wolfson Hall, I remember, and we met particularly at the Scott Polar.

[Part 1 00:42:33] Rae: That was where the lectures were held?

Killingbeck: Yes, yes.

[Part 1 00:42:35] Rae: And what were the subjects that were covered?

Killingbeck: Mainly what was happening in the Antarctic at that time. So it was on the history, on the political situation, on the surveying work and the geology. And the thing I just really vividly remember, was the lecture by Sir Raymond Priestley using his 4 by 4 slides and talking about his period and the Northern Party, and that was a wonderful setting. I think Raymond

Priestley had been running FIDS for a year when Bunny Fuchs was on the TAE, so it was the sort of end of his period and where Bunny Fuchs was coming back to take over the Survey. But it was a very small organisation.

[Part 1 00:43:20] Rae: And how long did the conference last, how many people attended?

Killingbeck: It lasted 4 days and I think everyone who was going down were there, so there were probably about 40 people. I think everyone attended. They were expected to.

[Part 1 00:43:37] Rae: What was your impression of Sir Raymond?

[Brief break for camera technical issue]

[Part 1 00:43:52] Rae: So can you give us an impression of Sir Raymond?

Killingbeck: Oh, it's such a long time ago. He seemed to be tall, lively, I mean he was quite elderly then, obviously – this was 1960. Dignified. I remember he was telling us how he never finished a degree. He'd gone to Bristol but never even finished his geology degree. Became vice chancellor of Melbourne Birmingham University. Marvellous background, just the presence of someone.

[Part 1 00:44:31] Rae: Was Sir Vivian – well he wasn't Sir then – at the conference too?

Killingbeck: Yes, very much so, yes, and very friendly to us, to everyone. Spoke to everyone. We got to know him and then when we finally left on the Biscoe, I remember, he helped me carry my case on to the ship. He was that sort of man really. Very friendly.

[Part 1 00:44:53] Rae: You sailed from Southampton?

Killingbeck: Sailed from Southampton, 'the little red ship', always been hooted at when we went down Southampton Water. We hit a force 9 gale in the English Channel, sea water got into our water tanks, I remember, through the air vents, so we had salted water all the way down and we tried to persuade the ship, Captain Johnston it was, to go into Madeira but he wouldn't. So we drank probably a lot of beer and soft drinks on the way down.

[Part 1 00:45:27] Rae: Tell me something about Bill Johnston, can you?

Killingbeck: Bill Johnston? Oh, very much the captain of the ship, who only really appeared when it was necessary. He lived, at that period, a lot in his cabin. But again, very approachable when we used to speak to him. But the ship was run a lot, by that stage, by Tom Woodfield, who was his first officer and John Cole, who was the third officer in those days. So those two were very much involved with the day-to-day running of the ship, and Captain Johnston was… But when we were down in the Antarctic then he came into his own, but on the passage down we didn't see a lot of him.

[Part 1 00:46:18] Rae: What was your impression of him down in the Antarctic, with the navigation through sea ice and that kind of thing?

Killingbeck: Again, because we were absolutely brand new to everything, it was all new to us, but we had every faith and respect of his skills, and that seemed to be passed on from generation to generation. … Bill Johnston was a very, very experienced ice pilot, and he seemed to take the right decisions when they were there. So in that period, I think, he was a key factor in the success. It was a very busy period because little bases were being built and closed down and built and so on and they had to make those decisions on where to put the base and decisions were made, well, almost entirely, down there, on the positions of bases. Although you often did your homework, presumably in the UK, when you got there, ice conditions weren't right, and you had to make a very rapid decision.

[Part 1 00:47:24] Rae: Can you just describe the *John Bisoce* a little bit as it was that first journey down … to Deception … to give a picture for people who aren't familiar with the ship?

Killingbeck: Yes. She was a very tubby little ship really, and seemed very small, even to us, who weren't presumably that experienced of going on those ships. Very rounded, rolled incredibly. We obviously ran it, like I'm sure they do today, with the fids running everything in their own side of the ship. We helped with all the work on the ship, scrubbing the decks, holy-stoning the decks, painting the ship. We had all the ceremonies crossing the line, going down. We seemed to get on well with the crew. That period a lot of the crew were Falkland Islanders and so we started picking up ideas of the Falklands. Drinks on board, not excessive drinking I would say, at all. I think that ship journey, if someone had been appointed and they didn't fit in, it gave the chance for everyone to appreciate that may be that person wasn't going to fit in, because as I mentioned there was no psychological testing or anything like that, but you had that experience of working together on the ship. It took about six weeks, six to eight weeks.

[Part 1 00:48:54] Rae: And would anything have been done? Was it possible to do anything if you found someone wasn't going to fit in?

Killingbeck: Oh yes, I'm sure, yes. And occasionally even on base, and perhaps later on I can mention a little on that side. There was the odd person who realised that the Antarctic wasn't for them, and the Survey at that period, I think, quite understood that, and obviously they didn't want people to have to come back but occasionally it happened, yes.

[Part 1 00:49:26] Rae: OK, let's move on down to Stanley now. So 6-8 weeks after you left Britain you turned up in the Falkland Islands. Give us some impressions of what your time there was, what steps you went through while you were there.

Killingbeck: Well, I think, again, everyone that goes to Stanley has that marvellous approach coming through … Port William, isn't it, that outer harbour and then into Stanley, then you see the wonderful colourful roofs as you come in, and the cathedral and so on. We landed on the little jetty – the boat always tied up by the jetty so we were right into Stanley life. People knew each other, we were greeted by Falkland Islanders and other BAS who came on board – it was a very social occasion when we landed. And then immediately one was involved with that

community. We were playing football matches one day, cricket match the next day, dance in the evening, going out on horses. That period, we brought down a Muskeg, I think probably one of the first Muskegs. Johnny Green, who was based in Stanley took it out – we went on the road to Fitzroy, trying it out on the peat and things – that was good fun. We often used to try and hire a Land Rover. I remember a chap called Barnes – I've forgotten his Christian name now – we went up to Fitzroy on the Land Rover, 'cos there were no roads, so it was quite an experience going out.
[Part 1 00:51:07] We were kitted out at that period. The shed was just behind the Falkland Islands Company store, I remember. We got all out kit there. We all met the Governor. I don't know exactly why but we visited him and went to the house and met the Governor there. And then we bought any last-minute things we wanted. You'd be amazed to think that there was a request that we kept a pig at Deception, to eat all our kitchen refuse, so I remember going to see Des Peck, I think it was, and trying to see whether we could get a pig. Couldn't do it in time - but that was for later on, perhaps I'll tell you more about that.

[Part 1 00:51:57] Rae: Yes, yes, thank you. Who was in charge of the stores side of FIDS in Stanley?

Killingbeck: Clem and Sadie were very prominent but I don't think they were in charge of that side. Sorry, you've got me there! … It was a Falkland Islander who looked after the general stores. Clem and Sadie were just generally involved and with the radio side of things. That period we had a Falkland Islander came down as our radio operator, Chris Lane, and then later on Ted Clapp came out of the Antarctic, as we were going down, and then he was based in the Falkland Islands, at that period. John Green, was the - Secretary I think they called him then.

[Part 1 00:52:51] Rae: SecFids.

Killingbeck: That's right.

[Part 1 00:52:54] Rae: So what was he like. I've heard a lot of stories about him.

Killingbeck: He was a very interesting character. Impetuous, made decisions very suddenly, was great fun, parties every night, but was good value, I thought, very good value. I still have a message somewhere, which I'll have to find – down at Deception we had a Chilean boat in [loud noise of plane in background] – just wait till this plane goes over. The crew of the Chilean ship had got into the oil tanks where we kept our emergency food and stores and things, and they'd consumed – I think we had some whisky or gin or something there – and it wasn't too serious, but Johnny Green heard this and he thought, well, you know, this was a real diplomatic incident so he wanted a letter delivered to the ship. And really, it wasn't necessary, that letter. The ship disappeared and it never reached the ship. But … we got on well with Johnny Green, yeah.

[Part 1 00:53:57] Rae: You actually were made a magistrate as part of your base leader's duties, weren't you? Can you explain what happened in terms of being sworn in and things.

Killingbeck: Yes. I've got a slight hesitation - whether I was sworn in by the Governor when I went through the Falklands or whether I was sworn in by Bill Johnston, Captain Johnston, on the ship. … Initially I thought it was the Governor but I think actually it was Bill Johnston on the ship. I took over from Jade Jackson at Hope Bay and I think we both went on and saw Bill and then I was sworn in there. This rather on political thing of having magistrates, harbour masters – ‘cos Deception Island also had a harbour master plus the post office.

[Part 1 00:54:49] Rae: And were you all three?

Killingbeck: All three! [laughs] There’s a whole rigmarole of ordinances of the harbour which go back to the whaling days, of how much water you can take and all things like that.

[Part 1 00:55:04] Rae: Did you take that seriously or was it…?

Killingbeck: No. No not at all. I suppose one realised one did have that authority if it was ever needed but it was never taken seriously, no, not at all. I mean the post office – again, we met the post master in Stanley and went through how to keep the books and things like that - but everyone took part in all of that.

[Part 1 00:55:29] Rae: What did that involve? The postal side of things?

Killingbeck: The post office? We got a lot of philatelic mail coming in all through the season, from all over the world, and at Deception at that particular period we were so busy with building the hangar, the diesel shed etc that we just could not look after mail, so we just piled it up and then we did it in the winter and they got the mail the next year. Obviously, every day mail was done immediately and, because Deception in the summer, was busy we would send that mail back on all our ships plus HMS Protector. … We also occasionally used the Chileans and the Argentines for local mail. If they had a ship going back, they would take mail for us, unofficially and obviously we used Chilean stamps or Argentine stamps. But the Argentines had an idea in the winter at Deception that they would fly in an aircraft and they would drop mail in September, I think this was scheduled for. They put a great rope – well, a wire actually – across Port Foster, and the idea was that the plane would come down and with a hook would pick up the mail. And so they got very excited all about this, and we went over and helped them with the wire, I remember, and sent our mail to them. But in fact the aircraft could never come down – we heard it overhead, above the stratus cloud and it couldn’t come in so the poor Argies were very disappointed. Morale went right down. …

[Part 1 00:57:16] Rae: Let’s just step back a bit to your arrival at Deception Island.

[Part 1 00:57:21] END PART 1

START OF PART 2

[Part 2 00:00:06] Rae: So you’ve got a story about your work as a magistrate?

Killingbeck: Well, just one, yes. This period was 1960, so we had just finished the I.G.Y. 1959, and there was obviously a much happier relationship between everyone, but I think one must also remember that it wasn’t very far in the past where there had been the incidents of the little hut on the runway at Deception, the shooting above people's heads at Hope Bay, so that was in the background, and at that period we used to send protest notes to the ships' captains. Well, on the desk, the base leader's desk, in Deception were all these old protest notes and I remember going on to, I think it was the Chilean ship, or maybe it was the Argentine, *Punta Ninfas*, we had an invitation for them to come ashore and play us at soccer because we used to play these international soccer matches. I remember giving them a buff envelope like that [holds one up] and hurriedly the captain went to his office and gave me a buff coloured [one], and what he thought was happening was that I was giving him our protest notes. Now … I'm sure everyone has read these but I must just read you this because this, I think, fits into that political history. These had finished when I was there, but there was still that background to it. It says here: "From the magistrate", so perhaps one could say 'From the magistrate, Deception Island, to the captain of say *Punta Ninfas*', "You are hereby reminded that Deception Island is British territory, which was incorporated in the Falkland Islands and its Dependencies by letters patent bearing the date 21st of July 1908 and 28th of March 1917. The Governor of the Falkland Islands and his Dependencies is willing to facilitate activities of a strictly scientific character so long as no infringement of British sovereignty is attempted or implied but his assent to every such undertaking must be obtained through me by telegram, failing which it will be regarded as an act of trespass and will be so reported forthwith to Her Majesty's Government. Signed the Magistrate".

[Part 2 00:02:34] Well, obviously once he realised that this was an invitation to play soccer, then that was it and we enjoyed ourselves but it was interesting that there was that background. At Deception Island we had that amazing facility where the hot springs, the fumaroles, meant that you had a ground water, and right through the history of Deception Island, the old whaling ships, everything, they used to dig wells along the edge of the basin, and I remember we had all these wonderful little wooden sheds, which represented a whaling ship and their well. There was one particularly good well, which was called the Biscoe Well, and that water never ever froze and kept a temperature of about 15 all through the year and ships would come and take their water from it. We would take many, many hundreds of tons and all the Chilean ships and the Argentine ships would also take their water from it. But that was always a very difficult political situation, because if we were expecting our ships coming in, would we lower that well so they couldn't get the water. One used to go aboard and say to the captain, 'Don't take too much water because we've got a ship coming in and they'd sort of look at you and think 'Well, you know, it's as much our water as your water'.

[Part 2 00:04:02] But we were very proud at Deception, 'cos we had the best position. … As you came in that Bellows, there was the British Base, we controlled the well, we controlled that runway – the Wilkins runway - and then the Argentines, the Chileans were right up the far end. So there was that sort of superiority of the British.

[Part 2 00:04:20] Rae: Were the wells only around Port Foster?

Killingbeck: The whales?

[Part 2 00:04:26] Rae: The wells.

Killingbeck: The wells. Yes. Well, I'm hesitating. I don't see why they shouldn't have been anywhere else but from a ship point of view, it was only the wells in Whaler's Bay that I think were used, partly because … the land dropped very rapidly and you could bring a ship almost within, well, about 20 yards from the shore. Any ship could come right close in. You see the photographs where they're just putting their lines ashore with the tubes, with the water hoses, going direct to the ship. I don't think they use them today, I don't think?

[Part 2 00:05:06] Rae: I've never heard of that.

Killingbeck: No, I think because the desalinize water on the ships. But it was lovely water.

[Part 2 00:05:12] Rae: Fresh water.

Killingbeck: Beautiful water.

[Part 2 00:05:16] Rae: … The British Base was nearest the Bellows. And where were the other two bases?

Killingbeck: The other two bases were right up the far end of Port Foster, the Argentine Base on the south side, the Chilean Base at Pendulum Cove on the north side.

[Part 2 00:05:32] Rae: How far away from the British Base would they be?

Killingbeck: About seven to eight miles. The Chilean Base about, probably about five or six miles. I mean, we could visit any of those bases with our little outboard motors on the – we had clinker-built wooden boats with green-heart – they were made at Hinks's Yard in north Devon, not very far from where we are now. They were lovely boats, clinker-built boats, and the long shafted, old fashioned Seagull engines. Always carry an extra engine in the boats. We used to go across to the Argie Base, the Chilean Base.

[Part 2 00:06:09] Rae: Was there a lot of interaction?

Killingbeck: Yes. Not so much, in a way, in the summer because we were particularly busy with our projects, but in the winter they would come and have holidays with us, we would have holidays on their bases. The Chileans had sheep, so they'd give us mutton. Argentines, not quite so friendly but we got on perfectly well with them, yes. Remember again, that was a good period, the 1960s, after the I.G.Y..

[Part 2 00:06:43] Rae: So are you saying that the protest notes and assertion of sovereignty had actually stopped being performed by the time you got out there?

Killingbeck: Yes. Yes, completely stopped. And also, we were looking forward to the Antarctic Treaty coming into force. I mean, that didn't come into force until the next year, 'cos I'm talking about 1960, but one knew that was happening. So I think … from my point of view, it was a wonderful period to be at Deception because we could have that friendly relationship with them. There were still signs of sovereignty though, because when we were there, I remember, there was a secret visit of President Frondizi[6], who was president of Argentina, and I think he was the first head of state to come to the Antarctic, and we were only notified of that on a secret telegram, that he was coming. We welcomed him by climbing up to Cathedral [Crags] and waving flags [laughs]. He came in with the *San Martin*, icebreaker, and one or two other ships. So I suppose, from the Argentine point of view, it was quite a big event.

[Part 2 00:07:51] Rae: Were you given instructions about how to receive him or anything?

Killingbeck: No, I don't think so. … Just to be cordial, I think. Yeah.

[Part 2 00:08:04] Rae: It might be a good time to talk about – you mentioned there was a party to celebrate the Antarctic Treaty coming into force?

Killingbeck: Yes. This was something which certainly I will never, ever forget. Yes. In January 1962, I think I'm right, the Antarctic Treaty came into force, and we were invited to the Argentine Base – maybe we should have had the party at the British Base! – but anyway we were still quite busy there. And so we were invited across, and I think three of us went: Bob Bond who was one of the pilots, myself and I think a chap called Graham Kite. And we went across and the Chileans came across as well, the Chilean base leader and another man called Ramon. We arrived there and then they had a formal dinner, with a top table and all that sort of thing. And it was very nice. But what was particularly, was that we were toasting the future of the Antarctic and of the future relationships between the countries. It was a very, very moving and happy occasion and I remember at the end of it there was a microphone, and we had a direct link to the Argentine people. And so, as you can well appreciate, the relationships sometimes with Chile and Argentina are not always so good, so both the Chilean base commander and myself spoke direct to the Argentine people on this radio linkup. And obviously, it was just wishing that the Antarctic should be for peace for ever and ever and not used for political or other purposes.

[Part 2 00:09:45] Rae: Did you keep in touch with any of those people?

Killingbeck: Yes. On our way back I travelled through Argentina and Chile with a friend, Alan Wright, and we stayed with the Chilean base commander and his family in Santiago. And I kept up with him until a few years ago and sadly, whether it's just died or whether he was affected by the Pinochet problems in Chile, I'm not sure. But, no, he gave us a very nice time and then he very kindly flew us up from Santiago to Antofagasta[7] by Chilean Airforce plane, so we were very lucky. The Argentines, I kept up with Christmas cards but I didn't actually visit them. Again, we had that sort of perfectly good relationship but not quite so close as the Chilean one.

[Part 2 00:10:45] Rae: … There's something I'd like to just ask you to do now, is to try and give us an image of what Deception Island looked like when you arrived. What the base, the structures, the buildings, the set up was like. To paint a picture for us, in a way.

Killingbeck: I think that if you are absolutely honest, when you come into Deception Island it can look the black hole of Calcutta! It can look absolutely dreadful, particularly if you come in on one of those dreary, sort of misty, rainy days, because by, certainly by, late December/ January most of the snow has melted, and you've got this very, very black ash everywhere and it can look quite, quite depressing. The whaling station at that period was still very much in evidence. The tanks were all in good condition. You could understand exactly where … the various processing plants were and also the, what's it called, planks where they pull the whales up?

[Part 2 00:12:00] Rae: Plan.

Killingbeck: The plan. You could see exactly where that was. There was the dry dock, a floating dry dock, which actually is still there, that was very prominent. We still had all around the water boats, which were full of black powder … which was used for blowing up - on the harpoons, I suppose. So that was quite interesting. And of course all these little … water houses had the name of each ship on it. I remember, the captain of the *Shackleton* in those days, Turnbull - we used to call his 'Frosty' Turnbull – David Turnbull, very nice fellow, he made a list of all of those huts which I think is in, it's in the records somewhere. The magistrate's hut was still in quite good condition. But a lot of it was – you know, the corrugated iron in the winter was creaking and flying about, it was quite eery in the winter. More in the winter than the summer as it was moving around.

[Part 2 00:13:08] Rae: When the weather was worse.

Killingbeck: Yeah, yes.

[Part 2 00:13:12] Rae: And what buildings did FIDS occupy?

Killingbeck: We, at that period, lived in the old bunkhouse of the whalers, which was called Biscoe House. And that was a lovely, lovely, big long building. Beautifully constructed, Norwegian timber, lovely jointed wood on it, which you could still see. They had that paper on it to give you protection against the wind in between the layers, so even in those days the buildings were well built. One end of it was beginning to collapse but we managed to keep that going. And it was very comfortable house. We felt we were part of that whaling history. Of course, we had the cemetery as well, and at that period, I remember writing in the various reports, we ought to put a new fence up on it, because it was looking a bit tatty. We respected that cemetery and it was quite nostalgic really. We had an idea of ships, complete ships, being lost, and there was one big monument recording all the people who were lost on a whaling – one of the catching ships.

[Part 2 00:14:21] Rae: Was the cemetery only used for whalers?

Killingbeck: Basically, yes. There was one grave to one British Fid, yeah. Farrant, who'd been a diesel mechanic.

[Part 2 00:14:38] Rae: Was he someone you'd known?

Killingbeck: No, it was quite a bit before my time.

[Part 2 00:14:45] Rae: And what about this FIDASE hut that you mentioned?

Killingbeck: Right. Yes, that was – Deception has been so involved with flying 'cos, we could talk about it more, but there was Wilkins' first flight coming down on the whaling ships[8], and then the FIDASE Hut was with these wonderful Canso flying planes. Falkland Islands' [Dependencies] Aerial Survey and they came up on that beach at Deception Island, the two Canso flying boats. And then they lived in this little FIDASE and processed all their filming. This was in 1957 I think, wasn't it?

[Part 2 00:15:19] Rae: '55 to '57, yeah.

Killingbeck: But that hut was there and in that period the little Air Unit had lived in it my previous year and then when I came there, that Air Unit came up to Biscoe House and the FIDASE Hut became empty and we actually … flew the engine across to Hope Bay, to be put in at View Point. So that Enfield engine[9] that was in Enfield [FIDASE] House went across to Hope Bay.

[Part 2 00:15:49] Rae: That was a generator, was it?

Killingbeck: That was a generator, yes. We basically just looked after the Hut and kept it clean. That was it.

[Part 2 00:16:01] Rae: Can we move on now to looking at the aircraft and the aircraft operations. The building of a hangar, your year.

Killingbeck: Yes, certainly, yeah. Well, the aircraft had come down the previous year and there'd been an early Otter, 294, and the Beaver. So this was before I was there. The Beaver had had a very chequered history because it lost its wing when, I think it was the *Biscoe* and *Shackleton* or another ship, had actually – the Beaver was flown by sea from floats, I think, off the ship and so it still had its wings and the wings were going beyond the side of the ship, and I think the anchors of the two ships suddenly caught or something and they couldn't control the ship so it took off one of the Beaver wings, or damaged it severely. So that winter they repaired the Beaver on Deception Island, and there's a little lean-to shed next to the boat shed, which is where they repaired it.

[Part 2 00:17:08] And then, at the end of that winter, they flew them down to Argentine Islands, Base F. Base F had marked out where to land on the sea ice and the Beaver came in to land on the sea ice and landed perfectly safely, and then the pilot, and this I would like to emphasis, was a very nice chap called Paddy English and the mechanic, who was Pete Bates, and they taxied off. When you think of this again, a Beaver is a little aircraft, even from Deception to Argentine Islands is quite a way and, you know, you're tired after a flight, you've brought it in, you've landed safely, and they taxied off just to do a sweep, and the idea was to let the other Otter come in, which was flown by Ron Lord and Tom Sumner, who was the mechanic. They landed on the sea ice and then they were directed up to the shore. Unfortunately, that Beaver, as it taxied it went in, and I've heard from Ron Lord and from [inaudible] and so on, the nose just went in and the wings held it up. And so Paddy English and Tom Sumner [editor: he means Pete Bates] got out – Paddy English was on his own because Pete Bates had already jumped out, so he was on his own and he jumped out, perfectly safely. Then, apparently, he went back and they got all the bits and pieces – the mail was on it, they got the mail out of it - and then Pete Bates and Tom Sumner took what they could of radio equipment and so on, they got that out of it, then they took the wings off and I think the ailerонds and rudders – what they could, as quick as they could were taken off – because they realised they couldn't save it. And those, I understand, were sold to the Falkland Islands air system[10] – so they bought those wings because that was the end of the Beaver. But in Bunny Fuchs' book *"Of Ice and Men"* it records the pilot as Ron Lord and as a pilot, obviously, the last thing you want to do is lose your aircraft so, if I may say, quite positively in this talk, that it wasn't Ron Lord who was flying the Beaver, it was Paddy English. If that book is ever re-written or anything.

[Part 2 00:19:35] Rae: Thanks for that.

Killingbeck: So then we come to my period, and the *Kista Dan* brought the second Otter down, which was 377. That was an amazing experience – I suppose everyone is the same. We had a pontoon, an army pontoon. The first day it was too rough to do anything, the next day the weather improved and then they uncrated the Otter on board, they lowered it on to this pontoon, and then we just paddled the pontoon ashore and then just got the aircraft on to the shore. It was just like one of those typical fids days, when you've got good weather, you just work and work and work so I think it was about an eighteen hour day they worked, the pilots and everyone. We got the aircraft ashore and then the wings come ashore. Then all the crew of the *Kista Dan*, there was captain Heinberg, I remember, then helped to lift the wings and then they were joined together.

[Part 2 00:20:35] Rae: Was this just done on the beach?

Killingbeck: This was done just on that beach on Deception Island. The mechanics then fitted everything else, the ailerонds, the rudders, wirelesses and things. They fitted all that up and then she was test flown about … - we were very busy doing other things then so it was about a week, and then it was test flown off from Deception. That is the same history, of course, as the first plane which had come down the year before.

[Part 2 00:21:03] Rae: They were ski and wheel?

Killingbeck: They had wheels and skis, they could land on both, yes. Of course, the runway at Deception is not very long but it's been lengthened by putting a turn in it. So you have a very unusual – you go up a hill and then it turns so if you haven't got airborne by the top of the hill you've still got a chance of going down on a turn, and when the planes were fully loaded we often went up, over the hill, and then down to try and get them airborne! So it was always a bit exciting – the flying!

[Part 2 00:21:39] Rae: I've heard those two planes called the Blue and the Red, have you heard that?

Killingbeck: Yes, yes.

[Part 2 00:21:45] Rae: I don’t understand why they were called that.

Killingbeck: It was all connected with when we came, in that period, to the name BAS, wasn’t it? And there was BASS beer in those days – had a red label and a blue label? … I can check on that from the pilot, Bob Bond. I thought it was a skit on the word ‘BAS’ and ‘BASS beer’, I think.

[Part 2 00:22:10] Rae: On pictures of the plane, of both those planes, [clock starts chiming in background] they’ve got ‘BASS’ written as the brewer’s wrote it.

Killingbeck: Right, right.

[Part 2 00:22:21] Rae: So that would link up.

Killingbeck: Right. Right.

[Part 2 00:22:24] Rae: I think we’d better wait for the clock!

Killingbeck: Yeah. I’ll check on that and try and find out.

[Part 2 00:22:36] Rae: Yeah, it would be quite interesting.

Killingbeck: Because Bob Bond would know definitely why that was.

[Part 2 00:22:42] Rae: I’ve got a note here about the routine you had for digging out and warming up the aircraft?

Killingbeck: Yes. In the winter … the winter when I was down there, the hangar hadn’t been completed. We’d got all the steel work but we hadn’t done the cladding, so the aircraft were still outside. We put up snow fences to try and protect them against the snow and the idea [was] that we guaranteed to get them airborne within 24 hours if there was an accident anywhere. So in order to achieve that we had to make sure the aircraft were run up frequently, so they were run up every week. The aileronds and the rudders were taken off them, they were obviously tied down, and they became iced up so it would have been quite an effort to get them ready within 24 hours but I think, probably, we could have done it.

[Part 2 00:23:41] In order to run them in the winter, the first thing was, we had a machine called a Herman-Nelson Heater, I think it was called. That had to be warmed up with a blow lamp, then we got that going and then we took that to the tractor, I think. We had a Massey Ferguson 65 tractor, warm that up. We towed the whole lot, then, to the aircraft and then, with various canopies to try and protect the heat, so we didn’t lose too much, we’d then warm them up with this Herman-Nelson. Because you’ve got to warm all the oil up before you can run them. So that job took about three hours, I guess, three to four hours, and then we could start them. Checking the planes out once a week took about a morning, five or six hours. But the mechanics were excellent on it. They were, obviously, supervising that.

[Part 2 00:24:36] Rae: So the mechanics over-wintered as well as the pilots?

Killingbeck: Yes, the mechanics over-wintered as well, yes. Two mechanics, two pilots.

[Part 2 00:24:44] Rae: And why was Deception Island chosen as the centre for air operations?

Killingbeck: Well, I think, originally they wanted it to be at Stonington, so that they could go further and further South, but they couldn't get the ships in. They couldn't build the hangar at Stonington and so they brought it to Deception, basically. Because Deception is quite a reasonable runway really, and, also, we were able, at that period, to supply Hope Bay as well. So we were working Hope Bay and putting depots at Cape Longing, Pedersen Nunatak and then going down to Adelaide and establishing Fossil Bluff. … The overload tanks were put in from Deception to Adelaide.

[Part 2 00:25:30] Rae: For fuel?

Killingbeck: For fuel. Yes. Amazing stories of them coming back because of the weather at Deception. The stratus cloud comes down very low. On many occasions they had to come down to sea level and come through the Bellows and then land. I remember one particular flight. It was really, really manky, bad weather, and we went down with flares, oil flares, about two or three of us on the end of the runway, just by the sea. The planes go down to sea level, came through the Bellows, we saw them with their lights on and we had the flares, and they landed above our heads on Deception. I think the pilots were absolutely wonderful. Even going across to Cape Longing - and remember these were one engine, only one engine, you know – finding a hole in the cloud to get down and trying to get through! I'm sure it's the same today but I thought it was fantastic flying. They never lost, both those pilots, never lost an aircraft.

[Part 2 00:26:30] Rae: What were their backgrounds, their flying backgrounds, do you know?

Killingbeck: One was a fighter pilot. One … had been a transport pilot. Ron Lord had been a fighter pilot. He thought the Otter was a fighter, I think, sometimes! And we had tremendous problems using – nothing to do with their flying – but we were using vast quantities of oil and we were sending telegrams all over the world, to De Havilland's, [to] John Lewis, who had flown across the Antarctic in front of Bunny Fuchs, to say, you know 'Why was it we were using this vast amount of oil?' It was almost to the stage where we couldn't make a flight to Adelaide because it was going to run out of oil. They couldn't solve it and then, at the end of the year, they suddenly realised - they lagged the oil pipes. And that little thing made all the difference to the oil consumption. So it was just - they weren't at the right temperature. After that, no trouble.

[Part 2 00:27:29] Rae: So the solution was to lag or to unlag?

Killingbeck: To lag the pipes. Yes. But you learn down there, I suppose.

[Part 2 00:27:42] Rae: Anything else about the aircraft in particular or shall we go on to the work that was going on at Deception?

Killingbeck: … Well, I think probably from an aircraft point of view, it would be very interesting to speak to one of those pilots of that period, because the homing aids for coming back were very, very limited. I remember, they were saying at the time, 'if only we could, you know, have a little bit more help like that really'. The radio operator at Deception Island, and obviously we needed to make sure our diesels were going to have that connection, and to have homing aids coming in. So that was all part of it, yeah.

[Part 2 00:28:30] Rae: What homing aids did they have?

Killingbeck: Well, I think they just had some … they were very basic RDF, is it called, to come in on? That was all. Which basically, from a flying point of view, was very, very limited.

[Part 2 00:28:46] Rae: And the aircraft were basically used for depot laying, rather than inputting field parties, would you have said?

Killingbeck: To begin with they were. It was realised, I think, very soon that a little aircraft to establish something like Fossil Bluff was really too small. It's the same as the present day, isn't it, if you've got the Dash 7 it's so much easier to put in your depots than your twin-engine Otters. Both pilots felt that we ought to be using them a lot more to support our field work. And once Fossil Bluff has been established then they started much more supporting the field work. So when I was working in Adelaide, we started having the aircraft coming and laying depots for us and helping us and moving us around. So that developed with that experience, I suppose. But why they didn't do it to begin with, was because they were so involved with Fossil Bluff. I mean, we used to fly to Hope Bay, and then pick up a depot from Hope Bay, and then take it to Cape Longing and Pedersen and then that gave the Hope Bay sledgers the chance to extend their season and work much further south. At that period, we worked the Hope Bay sledges from Deception, so they didn't have a radio operator, we did all the radio operation from Deception across to Hope Bay.

[Part 2 00:30:07] Rae: You mention in your notes, quite a lot about the use of Deception as a sort of centre for wireless communications. Could you tell us a bit about that?

Killingbeck: Well, I suppose Deception, at that period, was very much the gateway to that part of the Antarctic in every sense. So all ships of all nationalities were coming into it. So it was the key advance centre, where obviously today so would be, say, Rothera, so it was playing that same sort of role as what Rothera does today, I think. … Because we're in connection with Chileans and Argentines we were often giving them ice reports, and they were giving us ice reports, and that was all linked up through our radio communication system. Yes.

[Part 2 00:30:57] Rae: And you'd be communicating with Stanley?

Killingbeck: With Stanley, yes. All by Morse – well, most of it by Morse. Voice was very limited. I mean, sometimes you got voice but most of it was by Morse. So the radio operators were, you know, quite skilled on the Morse side of it. And when we went sledging, in those days we still had to try and communicate by Morse. So we had the code on the back of the food box, just tapped it out.

[Part 2 00:31:26] Rae: And did you actually get communications from … like Headquarters of FIDS and BAS in Stanley or

Killingbeck: Everything came through Stanley.

[Part 2 00:31:38] Rae: Right.

Killingbeck: and so we'd get telegrams direct from Stanley. Yes.

[Part 2 00:31:41] Rae: And what level of communication did you have? Did you have a personal allowance for speaking to family at all?

Killingbeck: Yes, we did. I can't remember all the details, but we were allowed 200 words a month, I think, which we were to send through. And we also had, of course, that "Calling the Falklands" or "Calling the Antarctic" – the radio programme, where you had that most embarrassing of things – your parents and your girlfriends, you know, sending messages and all your mates sitting around you and listening and laughing. That was fun, but always quite difficult! Yes, but we always listened to that. And in the Base, of course, in the winter you have a totally different life to the summer. … Everything will revolve around that weekly scrub-out on a Saturday, in the winter, and everyone was involved with the scrub-out. And then in those days we still had that old fashioned gramophone, and I think there's one at Port Lockroy now, and after the scrub-out we'd all have a beer, sit around the fire – we always had the coal fires to sit around – listening to the radio coming out, and we kept a stack of newspapers and magazines up in the loft and every week we'd bring out a different group, so we never looked at the whole lot. So there was something different each week. Yes. Saturday was a … break in the week.

[Part 2 00:33:10] Rae: And you all took turns in cooking in those days?

Killingbeck: Everyone took turns in everything, yes. The whole lot – cooking, getting ice for the – we used to, obviously, go and get ice to fill the water tanks up. On that side, we talked about the wells for the ships - it's amazing how someone has a break-through in thoughts and ideas. We had a chap called Graham Kyte, always known as 'Front', because he was a met. man and he put 'front' on his sweater [points to his chest] and 'back' [indicates his back] on the other, so he could remember which way to put it round! Anyway, he was a customs officer at London Airport and he had the brilliant idea that if we dug through the hut at Deception, through the bathroom, we would come to water.

[Part 2 00:34:00] Rae: Through the floor?

Killingbeck: Yes, so instead of lugging all this ice up and in the summer it was quite difficult … to get clean ice, why not dig a well? So he started digging a well and all credit to him and a chap called Jim Ferrar and they dug the well. We all got involved eventually, sured it all up and then – I can't remember the depth, something like 26 feet, I think – came to water. And ever since then they never ran short of water. They had a direct pump into the well, under the hut.

[Part 2 00:34:31] Rae: That must have been the only Base that BAS had that.

Killingbeck: The only Base with water, yes. And that happened many years after it was established. I think it was established in 1944?

[Part 2 00:34:42] Rae: Yes.

Killingbeck: And then this was 1960, and it's amazing really, isn't it? And that was just one person, one idea – 'Why don't we dig straight down?'

[Part 2 00:34:51] Rae: Incredible!

Killingbeck: Oh … people sometimes ask questions about pets, don't they, on bases? First of all, we had chickens on Deception. My predecessor the year before - Fraser White, I think it was - bought the chickens and they were kept in the boat house at Deception, which was down by the jetty. And, obviously, they bought food from the Falklands, and then they didn't lay many eggs.

[Part 2 00:35:31] Rae: Was that really what they were for?

Killingbeck: For eggs, yeah.

[Part 2 00:35:34] Rae: For eggs rather than meat?

Killingbeck: Yeah, yeah. And by the second year we only had two left, I think. So we felt a bit sorry for them so we brought them up to the Base hut and they lived in a new corridor to the diesel shed, where it was a bit warmer. We worked out that the eggs that we ever got from them must have cost about, I don't know, about £5 an egg, £2, you know! Something enormous. I can't remember that we ever ate them when they died, I don't think we did, actually.

[Part 2 00:36:04] Rae: Would you collect penguins' eggs and things like that?

Killingbeck: Oh, yeah. … You know the FIDS survey boxes, food boxes, - we would collect hundreds and hundreds of eggs, put them in flour. We'd go up to the Baily Head rookery, we'd collect the eggs there, and then they were kept in flour and we used them right through the winter.

[Part 2 00:36:23] Bucktrout: Would you just retouch on the penguin eggs. Start from the

[Part 2 00:36:26] Rae: Yeah, we were talking about what you used the penguin eggs for?

Killingbeck: Right, yes. These penguin eggs, they kept beautifully in the flour and they were used for all the cooking, mainly cakes, I suppose. Weren't very nice to have – because the white of a normal egg doesn't go white on the penguin egg, it's always transparent – so poached eggs and things like that, I don't think we ever used them for that. But they were used all the time. …

[Part 2 00:36:57] And then we had other pets on Base. We had a pet dog, called Puta, Spanish for prostitute, and she occasionally had pups from the huskies …

[Part 2 00:37:07] Rae: She wasn't a husky?

Killingbeck: No. … I think she'd come from an Argentine ship – before my time – and she was just a base dog. She lived in the hut. She was a bit like a … brown Labrador, a bit, a wee bit, but she was a cross. Very friendly dog. And whenever we went walking Puta would come with us. The dogs were very jealous, the huskies, outside, to think that she had the freedom.

[Part 2 00:37:38] And then, we talked about the pig. We wanted a pig at Deception so we got permission from the Governor to have a pig, but the pig never arrived because they couldn't get one into Deception. Or maybe Bill Johnston or someone, or Frosty Turnbull, wouldn't bring it on the ship. But it never came down. We got the food, we ordered the food and that arrived but not the pig. So we had lots of fun, yeah.

[Part 2 00:38:01] Rae: So you didn't have a base cat then, like some bases?

Killingbeck: No, no we didn't not t Deception, as far as I know. No, we didn't.

[Part 2 00:38:10] Rae: Just one other thing on the food that I've just thought of was - could you all cook when you went down there? How did you learn?

Killingbeck: No, no. … Cooking was fairly straight forward, I suppose, because there was a lot of tinned food. But remember, that period we were there we were allowed to use the seals. We didn't use penguins very much, just occasionally, but we had a lot of seal meat, and seal liver. And we had a special menu book which was produced by – ah, the name's gone from me.

[Part 2 00:38:39] Rae: Cutland?

Killingbeck: Yes, Jerry Cutland. So there were different menus to use the seal. … No one liked, I don't think, killing seals, or not really, but when we killed a fresh seal for the dogs then we'd obviously take the meat for ourselves, yeah.

[Part 2 00:38:58] Rae: What was it like?

Killingbeck: Very good. I mean, I think I would compare it with venison. It was a reddish meat, certainly didn't taste fishy at all, was very good. And whenever we had visitors, like we had the C-in-C South Atlantic, we'd always give them seal meat or something, you know, something unusual. I mean, this sounds terrible now, doesn't it, talking about eating seal meat and poor old penguins. We didn't eat many penguins but when you eat a penguin, you slit it down the middle, just take the two beasts off and just eat those.

[Part 2 00:39:37] Rae: And you feed the rest to the dogs, I suppose?

Killingbeck: The rest to the dogs, yeah.

[Part 2 00:39:40] Rae: So how many dogs were there on Deception?

Killingbeck: Well, Deception was really the old codgers base for dogs, so any of these older dogs, or if they were left by a ship. We had at that period, about seven or eight dogs, eight I think. But they were the basis of learning to drive dogs, so it was great.

[Part 2 00:40:01] Rae: That was how you learnt, was it?

Killingbeck: Yes, very much so, yes.

[Part 2 00:40:04] Rae: Did anyone teach you?

Killingbeck: No, no one taught us at all, no. … FIDS produced one or two little guides to looking after dogs and things like that so one read those. We had a lovely little book called '*Hints to Travellers*' – and Augustine Courtauld[11], I think it was, and Martin Lindsay[12] and people like that, had written in it, and ???[incomprehensible], so we learnt from that. We did have one fellow who'd come from Hope Bay so, I must admit, there was always someone who probably had just a little bit of experience but at Deception we never had a real dog driver. I particularly got interested with Ben Hodges, so we both went out with them. [Sound of John's dog panting in background].

[Part 2 00:40:52] … I mean, it's terrible to think of it now, environmentally, but all our gash[13] at Deception Island – we just did not know what to do with it. When you live on an island - it's actually the same in England - it's very, very difficult to know what to do. You know, do you landfill it, or what do you do with it? We tried the idea of putting it into the foundations of some of the huts but that didn't seem very satisfactory, when you've got winds blowing it, it used to blow everywhere. So it was thought that it would be much better to actually put it out into the middle of Whaler's Bay, which was quite deep - dig a hole in the sea ice and then sledge it out each week. So we used to … use the dogs for doing that. Clearly that isn't satisfactory but that's what used to happen. And then we got more and more keen on the dogs and we used to take them across to the Baily Head rookery – we just loved going there for holidays, to Baily Head.

[Part 2 00:41:54] Rae: That was across the sea ice?

Killingbeck: No, across over the hill behind Deception Island. Over the crevasses and things. And then we decided we'd … try and do a circumnavigation around Deception. All the Base saw us off - I remember there was a great dog fight. And then Ben and I, who were complete and utter novices, we took the dogs – we took five dogs not eight, five dogs – and we went up to Mount Pond, then we went down behind Mount Pond and around to Macaroni Point, and then the big terrace at the far side called Kendall Terrace, and then we decided we'd come down the side to the Argie Base. In fact that was as far as we could get, at the end of Kendall Terrace and we could not get around Stonethrow Ridge which is Mount Kirkwood, we couldn't get round that. Then we lowered the dogs down, one by one, on a col, and a sledge, and then we suddenly called in at the Argentine Base, said 'hello' to them. We always stayed a few nights, they always put us up, and they loved the dogs as well. Then we went across the sea ice to the Chilean Base and they gave us a nice welcome and then back. Once we'd done that, I think that gave us confidence, and then after that we would often travel on our own across the sea ice to the Chile Base and sometimes the Argentine Base. We always had the problems with the fumeroles and open water at the edge, so you had to find a way off it. But it was great, lovely. And because of that, on a personal point of view, because I really realised that this was one of those great things in life – the dog sledging – I resigned as base leader of Deception, which I'd enjoyed Deception immensely. The whole looking after and everything, it was great, but I really wanted to go dog sledging. So I went down to Base T.

[Part 2 00:43:51] Rae: So that's how you came to be there for the second year.

Killingbeck: In those days we always had a choice about where we wanted to go. A telegram used to come through and say 'There are vacancies at these bases. Send in your preferences and what you'd like'. Some people stayed two years at one base, some people moved on to another base.

[Part 2 00:44:12] Rae: What did your role of base leader consist of and were there any difficult situations you had to deal with?

Killingbeck: No, not really. I think it sounds a very big term, 'base leader', but in those days bases ran themselves so the base leader was very different to what you find as a base commander today. We were all the same really, you wouldn't know who the base leader was, I don't think. And base leaders, I guess each one is different, but at Deception Island we were so busy building the hangar and diesel shed we just all worked together. The only duties I found were – we had to entertain the visiting dignitaries and Chileans and Argentines so that was your job, I suppose. Writing boring reports at the end was the base leader's job.

[Part 2 00:45:11] We did have one tricky situation. I suppose it's 30 or 40 years so I can talk about it. [redacted] There aren't many responsibilities of the base leader but when you have an incident like that then you, obviously, do take over.

[Part 2 00:46:51] Rae: That's sort of what you're there for, the incidents that occasionally do happen.

Killingbeck: Yes, that's right. Yes…. I was working at that period very much with the two pilots so there was that sort of shared responsibility of making sure the aircraft was safe and so on. That was our prime duty, I think.

[Part 2 00:47:15] Rae: What other work went on at Deception?

Killingbeck: We had a very interesting little project, scientific project, which I don't know will ever happen again. But a chap called John Kirwan, who was at Argentine Islands, he had a project – I'm not a scientist, but the idea was to use Deception, that great sort of arc of Deception Island, as a giant transmitter on very low frequency radio waves. And so the idea was to put five copper wires from the inner harbour across Kendall Terrace, at the far end in Telefon Bay, to the outer harbour and then to transmit radio signals through these, and these would then be picked up on the opposite end of the Earth at Dartmouth College in America, Dr Morgan[14]. I guess, when I look back on it – I mean, John Kirwan would explain things. But we talk now about the dangers to whales and things with low frequency waves and things, but that was happening then. Whether it worked or not, I'm not quite sure. We did it at the very beginning of that season and then half way through the season, yeah. So that was one project. Meteorology went on all the time.

[Part 2 00:48:39] Rae: And that was a six-hour observation sequence?

Killingbeck: Six hours, yes. I'm just hesitating in case it was three hours, six-hours I think.

[Part 2 00:48:49] Rae: So you'd have been up in the night?

Killingbeck: Yeah, and everybody helped with that. So although we weren't met. people we would, say, help with night obs. and things, yes. Yeah. And then we also did ice observations for John Heap, who was doing a PhD in those days, I think. We used to go up to the Window every day, and just observe what the ice was. Sometimes climb up towards Mount Pond.

[Part 2 00:49:15] Rae: And you said there was a little glaciology project you did.

Killingbeck: I had a glaciology project on Mount Pond glacier. We had a ten-day camp up there. And then we were brought down a thermistor to measure temperatures in the frost, to try and study on frost-heaving. So these tubes were measuring across the resistance on 'Wheatstone Ridge'. I think that was quite early days of bringing down resistance thermometers and we were doing that. It wasn't very well done because I was really focussed on trying to get the hangar done, the diesel shed done, the aircraft operations etc. so it was very much a part-time activity.

[Part 2 00:49:57] Rae: No study of the volcanic activity being done then?

Killingbeck: No, other than the temperatures in the wells. That was all that was being done in those days.

[Part 2 00:50:06] Rae: Were you worried at all about sitting on a volcano?

Killingbeck: We always talked about it, and always talked about dashing out on our boats, these little rowing boats, to go through the Neptune's Bellows, yeah. Yes, we always talked about it and how we could escape over to Baily Head if necessary. But I don't suppose we ever thought it would really happen. The beaches were steaming and we often would come and find, say, krill which had been cooked and you could actually pick the krill up and eat them direct, just like a shrimp. So it was, as it is today, obviously, yeah.

[Part 2 00:50:45] Rae: What was your reaction when you heard that that there had actually been an eruption in '67?

Killingbeck: Amazed in one way, but not amazed in another, you know. You never really thought it would happen but you realised it could happen. I was amazed and I thought what a miracle it was that no body lost their life. The Chiles had all the bombs coming down, volcanic bombs with corrugated iron over their heads and things, coming over to the British Base [clock chimes in background] so that was amazing really, that they did survive. But one always realised [it could erupt], for instance when we were there, there was smoke coming out of Mount Pond, I mean steam. I think Mount Pond, on the top, you got these lobes, a bit like cauliflower lobes, of rime ice and I think underneath it, it's all hollow where you've got the steam coming up and I think Mount Kirkwood is the same – these great sort of ice caves, really, with the hot air coming up.

[Part 2 00:51:52] Rae: When you first went back to Deception in later times

Killingbeck: '93/'94

[Part 2 00:51:58] Rae: Yeah. After the eruption, what was your impression? How did you feel about seeing it then?

Killingbeck: It was sad, really. Because when we left it, you could still feel that that was a Norwegian, the Hector Whaling Station, you know, you could still feel that. And the things like the barges were still there … I think above all, the cemetery disappeared, I think that was really sad. Particularly all those Norwegian families. And it was a mess, you know, with the lahar, all that ash coming down. But when I go back now, a little bit now, you see it in a different light. That first time I saw it, I felt very sad, now-a-days I just look at it more as a historic site.

[Part 2 00:52:44] Rae: 'Cos the lahar came right through Biscoe House, didn't it?

Killingbeck: Right through Biscoe House. I could see exactly where … my bunk was still there! When I take visitors now, I take them up to that and I say 'That's Ron Lord's bunk!', so we have a lot of fun. One thing you can see is how that hut was built, and how strong it was. How it survived the lahar.

[Part 2 00:43:10] Talking about huts … Deception gets weeks, weeks of bad weather, and we had one week when we just could not build and the steel erector, the main steel erector, Pete Secker, had worked on the Auckland Harbour Bridge, so, you know, he was a really good steel erector. We were all a bit fed up with the weather and - I talked about the black powder in the whaling water boats - well, being a steel erector - explosions was too much of a temptation, so it was decided that we ought to blow up the hospital. … From an historic point of view, it sounds dreadful! But this was a very ugly building right in front of Biscoe House and it restricted our view of the harbour and corrugated iron was flying around everywhere. So Pete Secker, Ben Hodges, I think Ben was involved, fill the hut with black powder and then there was a line of black powder to a detonating point. And then we were all in the hut, watching – we should never have been in the hut, why we were I'm not sure – and they lit it, and you could see it going down and 'Boom!' The whole thing blew up, everything flew everywhere and, I don't know quite why, but the windows didn't break, but all the pots and pans and things on the walls fell off, the whole lot! And that was the end of the hospital! … To be honest, there was nothing in that hospital worth saving, so it didn't really matter. But it gave us entertainment. We had a lot of fun.

[Part 2 00:54:53] Rae: Subsequently, you wrote up some of the history of Deception, didn't you?

Killingbeck: Yes, yes.

[Part 2 00:54:58] Rae: Could you tell us briefly what that was about.

Killingbeck: It was such a long time ago.

[Part 2 00:55:03] Rae: Was it a PhD?

Killingbeck: No, no … When I came back from the Antarctic, I became a school master, which I always wanted to be, and I was able to take a – we used to have sabbaticals, where you were allowed a year off. We didn't get paid but your job was there when you came back. And so for a year I decided I'd do an MPhil, I think it was called a diploma actually in those days, at the Scott Polar [Research Institute], and that was a most wonderful year. There were five of us – one was a doctor from the Arctic, one was a trapper from the Arctic, there was another old base leader from Deception Island called Ian MacPherson[15], who'd been at Argentine Islands, and myself, and one other – a young chap who went down later on as a geologist with FIDS. We spent a year there. This was just part of that MPhil, a dissertation really. We had to do a project.

[Part 2 00:56:07] Rae: OK, that's great. Shall we rest there and then do Adelaide and Rothera after lunch?

Killingbeck: Yes, certainly. Do you want anything on the hangar?

[Part 2 00:56:17] Rae: Have you got a bit more?

Killingbeck: On the actual building of it? Yes, I could say a little bit.

[Part 2 00:56:26] Rae: Yeah, yes OK. Let's have it, yeah.

Bucktrout: There's about 8 minutes on this tape.

Killingbeck: Building the hangar, the hangar itself. The steel work had gone down to Stonington and never reached Stonington, I think had gone back to the Falklands and then, finally, back to Deception. There were hundreds, well over a hundred tons, of this steel. It was delayed, the building, because of permafrost, but it was only permafrost above unfrozen ground. So it was, if you like, a seasonal permafrost, but we needed pneumatic drills to be able to get through it. If that hangar ever moves, as I'm sure it will, it's really because [of] the fact that the foundations were built through that permafrost, then on to the softer ground underneath. The steel work was put up in one season. There was just one fellow called Pete Secker, who, as I mentioned was a man who had worked in Auckland, and Ben Hodges, those were the only two qualified people. And then the rest of it was all worked on by the base members when they could afford the time, and by ships' company when they could afford the time, particularly with the work like all the cement mixing and things like that. The second year, they did the cladding and put the floors in. But it was a hangar that was never really designed for the Antarctic so snow always came into it, right from the very beginning. And it was designed originally, I think, for the Beaver aircraft not two Otters, but the Otters can get in.

[Part 2 00:58:18] What else about it? It was just a long, long project and you just had to stick at it all the time. We could have done with a lot more labour, a lot more qualified people really.

[Part 2 00:58:31] Rae: Did you find ordinary base members were actually working up high?

Killingbeck: Yep, we all worked up high, we all carried up the steel girders to the top.

[Part 2 0058:41] Rae: Without safety harnesses or anything like that?

Killingbeck: No safety harnesses. Every truss was lifted by what was called a stick, with a hand winch at the bottom, lifting these great trusses up. We could build a truss in a day, lift it and put it on, yeah. I think, at the time, it must have been one of the biggest buildings in the Antarctic, when it was built, I think.

[Part 2 00:59:00] Rae: It looks enormous, from the photographs.

Killingbeck: Yeah, yeah. I think it's amazing that it was all built, basically, by amateur labour.

[Part 2 00:59:10] Rae: One other thing that we haven't mentioned is the husky that was brought out for the Husky Club.

Killingbeck: Right.

[Part 2 00:59:16] Rae: Could you just say a little bit about that.

Killingbeck: That was after Adelaide Island so shall I leave that to later?

[Part 2 00:59:22] Rae: Yes, OK we'll leave it 'til Adelaide then. That would be good.

[Filming ends, but John asks to say a bit more and filming resumes]

[Part 2 00:59:30] Killingbeck: I was asked a little while ago about the role of the base leader, and I think, perhaps, I was being a little bit facetious because when you are a base leader you obviously do appreciate you have the responsibility of all the base to look after, but you don't have to make too much of an issue of it. Clearly everyone has a different idea of how to be a base leader and, I think, most of the people at FIDS in my period in the '60s just used to work entirely as part of the team. It wasn't an obvious thing but at the back of it, you were aware of that responsibility, which was obviously an important one. It was a privilege to be it but you didn't think it was anything very different to the normal life of being a fid.

[Part 2 01:00:22] Rae: And you were 23 when you were a base leader?

Killingbeck: I think so – I might have been 24.

[Part 2 01:00:28] Rae: But there were a lot of people older than you?

Killingbeck: Oh, yes. The air mechanics were in their fifties, yeah. So there's quite a wide range of ages groups.

[Part 2 01:00:38] Rae: But you were respected as the leader, were you, without any trouble?

Killingbeck: I don't know! I hope so! [Laughs] We didn't have any riots or any revolutions! No, I think it was fine, yeah.

[Part 2 01:00:52] Rae: OK, that's great. Thanks.

Killingbeck: Thanks very much.

[Part 2 01:00:57] END PART 2

START OF PART 3

Killingbeck: They only put it there because they couldn't get to Rothera, wasn't it?

[Part 3 00:00:03] Rae: Right.

Bucktrout: OK Jo, when you're ready.

[Part 3 00:00:08] Rae: John, your second year, you were at Adelaide Island, Base T. Can you tell me a bit about the arrangement of the base?

Killingbeck: Yes, certainly. I went on the second year of operations at Adelaide. The first year there was one small base, which was really a reconnaissance year, where there were six people with each had their dog teams, I think. And then the second year when I arrived, they started building a meteorological hut and a base hut and then a diesel shed. And for some unexplainable reason it was decided to have two separate bases within six yards of each other. So one was called the Field Base and one was called the Static Base. I think all of us, irrespective of who you were, by the end of that winter realised that that wasn't a sensible system and, you know, it was much better just to have one base, one responsibility, one base leader really.

[Part 3 00:01:10] Rae: Were there actually two base leaders?

Killingbeck: There were two base leaders, yes. And the problem was – well, we were having a wonderful life, going out in the field, doing the surveying work, travelling hundreds and hundreds of miles with the dogs, and the static people didn't really have that opportunity but obviously you could feel that they wanted it. So round about half way through the year, they started coming out with us and so it became more integrated by that stage.

[Part 3 00:01:41] Rae: Was there a sense of resentment or separateness of the two groups causing problems?

Killingbeck: Not too much. I think … there was all that envy from the static base that they weren't part of the sledging base, and I suppose we didn't have that responsibility of having to stay around and do the things that they had to do, quite so much. So we had a much more interesting life, I guess really. One or two minor problems, which when you look back afterwards are very minor. For instance, we had field sledging gear – anoraks with the wolverine around them and that sort of thing, they weren't issued with that, and then when we wanted to take them out in the field, they hadn't got that equipment. So that was a silly little thing really but it caused a little bit of a problem.

[Part 3 00:02:45] Rae: How did you get round the two hut situation when you decided to bring the group together?

Killingbeck: Well, I think at the end of that year – by that stage I was … leaving the Antarctic, and in fact I spent quite a bit of that summer on Jenny Island and other islands connected with the survey and glaciology – so I wasn't really quite so involved with the base by then. I think it just sort of rather naturally came together. The next year there was just one base. They may have slept separately but I think there was probably just one base.

[Part 3 00:03:21] Rae: Do you know the origins of the idea? Was it from Headquarters or SecFids?

Killingbeck: Probably, almost certainly probably from SecFids – John Green – probably on the ship or whoever was in charge of things on the ship at that moment, who made that decision. Probably, I think. No, I don't think it would have been a planned thing from anywhere else.

[Part 3 00:03:41] Rae: No, I've never heard of it anywhere else in FIDS activities.

Killingbeck: No, I don't think so, no. I mean, I suppose the people in the static base were all employed just as meteorologists or whatever but, I mean, in other bases they all became sledging people anyway.

[Part 3 00:04:01] Rae: Tell us a bit about your role that second year.

Killingbeck: Adelaide was a wonderful year. We were involved with producing the first map of Adelaide. At that period, we were measuring it with tellurometers, which are these distance radar machines. So they would be taken about six to ten miles apart, the rays measured, and in fact we ran a line right the way round Adelaide Island with the tellurometers and at the same time also using theodolites up at the survey stations. So the map was slowly being produced as we worked on it. One of the interests of surveying is that that does happen. Yes, we just travelled virtually the whole year. We only came in for about three weeks or a month and other than that we were out continuously, laying depots or doing the field work. We came back June, just before midwinter's day, light was obviously very limited, but we were working up to that period. We each had our dog teams. We created a new team for a new member, Dave Nash, who was a surveyor, and he had a Debs team, just bitches in the team. It was great, all having nine dogs of our own.

[Part 3 00:05:22] Rae: What was your team?

Killingbeck: Mine was the Counties. An honourable team called the Counties. We had the Huns, the Trogs, the Debs, and the Giants. One of my dogs, it may be of interest, was … The lead dog was called Peppi, and she was born at Pembroke Docks from the British North Greenland Expedition, and her brother, I think it was, was given to Peter Scott, I think the RAF squadron gave him to Peter Scott. And then Peppi went to Base W with Angus Erskine, it was his dog, I think. She was a wonderful mother. She was also a survivor of that sad tragedy on the Dion's, where those young men lost their lives and let their dogs go. And Alma was one of those that survived, and the Giants, the team called the Giants, most of those dogs were her progeny. Lovely dog. That was Alma. No dogs with the names [of] counties in the time I was there.

[Part 3 00:06:37] Rae: Oh! Right, I'm surprised.

Killingbeck: We just had Beds and Herts but sadly they were put down just before I arrived, so they were the last of the counties.

[Part 3 00:06:45] Rae: Were those team names inherited year after year?

Killingbeck: They passed on from generation to generation. What was perhaps a little bit – well, unusual – at the very end, the last teams of dogs were the Admirals and the Huns and, see, those Huns were at Adelaide then, in 1960, and, previous to that, they'd come down from Hope Bay, so there was that wonderful continuity all the way through.

[Part 3 00:07:15] Rae: Some of the memorabilia that came back from Stonington Island included sort of team name plaques. Did you ever make those kind of memorabilia?

Killingbeck: No, we didn't, although I can imagine why it could happen. Say when you're hanging your dog harnesses up, perhaps, you might have the names on those. The problem with Adelaide was that we just lived in a very, very small hut. We just had one living quarters. At the top, in the loft, was where we kept our sledge equipment. We didn't have a bathroom – that was the photographic room – the bathroom disappeared. It was right back to the very basics, the little hut that we lived in, so we didn't have that, no.

[Part 3 00:07:59] Rae: How many dogs would there have been at Adelaide?

Killingbeck: At Adelaide, at that period, there were about 55 dogs. We were breeding all the time. Not that we had actually, that year, many pups because we were out most of the time.

[Part 3 00:08:17] Rae: Would one person on Base be responsible for the breeding programme?

Killingbeck: I think in all the history of the dogs, there was always one dog man who would have that responsibility. Yeah, I think so. Brian Nixon was the dog man with our party and he looked after the pups. We all looked after pups and then that year each of us had a young pup aged about between 10 months and 12 months who joined the team.

[Part 3 00:08:50] Rae: Is that how young dogs were trained?

Killingbeck: About that age, yes. Sometimes they'd join a little bit younger but you try and give them as much freedom as you can. Say round about 10 months would be the right age. And obviously the dogs, when they are pups, they're fed cod liver oil, minced up seal meat and really well looked after. They roam the base on their own and then eventually they join the spans and then join the teams.

[Part 3 00:09:15] Rae: Is there any particular reason why they were left to roam?

Killingbeck: No, just to give them the freedom because to tie down a young pup would not really be very sensible. When they were very small, they were kept in pens. I'm sure this has happened at many bases, but on Adelaide we had the dog pens down on the beach and one day all the ice went out and the sea came up to the beach and the mother - a dog called Mamie I think - she actually lifted each pup out of the dog pen to safety as the sea rose. That was during the night so it's amazing what those dogs do. Fantastic. … Sometimes you lose a dog when you let them roam free. We lost one I think, over than ice cliff, but then you weigh that up against the way you bring up those dogs and when they become good sledging dogs, and I think that freedom is part of the good upbringing. And, of course, they're handled a great deal. The reason why I think our huskies were never any problems to human beings was because as they were pups, they were always being handled and so they just grew to respect humans.

[Part 3 00:10:33] Rae: Was there a little procedure or anything you went through training a dog to work as part of a team? Did you ever have a team of all new dogs?

Killingbeck: No. I think, again, each base probably did it differently, but we would try and take the young pups ski-jorring if that was the right part of the season. So we'd take them out ski-jorring and then after that we'd probably introduce them to the team, just gently. So they wouldn't go for a long journey, it would just be a short journey and it's very, very unusual I think, not to find a pup almost immediately pulling when it joins a team – we had very few problems, they just want to work with their elders. So they're learning from the elders as soon as they join the team.

[Part 3 00:11:33] Rae: If we talk a bit about some of the field work. We've talked about the survey work that you did. Did you actually visit Rothera Point?

Killingbeck: Yes, yeah, quite a few times. We were surveying down through the Shambles Glacier up to the col, I think it's called McCallum Pass now – Gordon McCallum was there a year before me, he was in charge of the dogs the first year – and then we came on to what we called Square Peninsula in those days, now I think it's called Wright Peninsula, and yes, we came right down Reptile Ridge down to Rothera. I remember collecting mosses and lichens there and looking at frost-heave features. We camped there several times. I took one of the younger static base members for a winter journey for a month there, Harry Leckie, and we were on Rothera and we wanted to get back to base so we thought the sea ice looked pretty good so we'd go round via Cape Alexandra and Jenny Island. We got about half way, we had a rest and we looked up and I found three of my dogs swimming and the rest off the ice. So you sort of look at each other, you don't say many words in those situations, and then we got the dogs moving. They pulled the three out of the water, the sledge went over the hole and we ended up on the beach, on the ice cliffs, and then retreated rather foolishly. So Rothera, [clock chimes in background] yeah … it was part of our area. And then the aircraft, the first aircraft landing in that area, I suppose, I don't know if that's true, but probably, the Otters came down to take the tellurometer from us, from what we called then Square Peninsula, and then flew that down to Fossil Bluff. And also moved some dogs for us as well. We were landing aircraft up there in 1962.

[Part 3 00:13:32] Rae: … Were you aware that that was the site that was going to be used for a base eventually?

Killingbeck: Well … yes, I think we … realised that Adelaide was only really a temporary base. It was never meant to be there, but I think we thought it would remain there because it had, at that period, the good runway on the Fuchs Ice Piedmont, and although the slope up was steep, with the Muskeg tractors we could still manage it alright, plus dogs. So I think we thought it would probably stay and it seemed to be, you know, quite a good distance to Fossil Bluff. But then later on that ramp deteriorated very rapidly, I think, and they realised the Fuchs Piedmont was a bit more crevassed and then they established [Rothera]. But we did realise they'd tried to establish at Rothera. But when we went to Rothera … I didn't really think that it would become the base it is today, no.

[Part 3 00:14:34] Rae: You mentioned in your notes that the first dogs were transported in an Otter, in a Single Otter, from Adelaide, and you mentioned there was a dog fight?

Killingbeck: Yeah, I'm not quite sure they'd be the first dogs but some of the very earliest dogs in those Twin Otters, yeah. We took off with 18 dogs in it, and suddenly they started fighting and the aircraft started moving [waggles his outstretched arms up and down] so it was all quite interesting! And then the pilot, who was Ron Lord, just turned the heating on, full on, and the dogs just lay down. And I think ever since that, as far as I know, the heater has gone on in the aircraft and then the dogs have jumped in and there's been no problem of any fighting. So it just seemed to cure it by putting the heat on and there weren't fights. In those single engine Otters we never had to protect the floor from the dogs at all. In the Twin Otters we have to be a bit more careful because of the electrics so the single engine Otters were, in that sense, a bit more robust for moving dogs around.

[Part 3 00:15:43] Rae: OK. Let's move on from Adelaide now, as we need to keep a check on time, and move on 30 years to your return visit to Rothera in '93/'94. This was the time when there was the last dog trip before the huskies were removed from the Antarctic. Can you tell me how you came to be involved in the project?

Killingbeck: I don't really know, but it was quite an amazing thing. Jenny, my wife, got a phone call saying 'Would I like to go down?' – I was out watching a cricket match. So when I came home I had this offer of going back to doing something that I'd done thirty odd years ago – it was quite amazing. Obviously, the Survey will have the history of it, but I think they tried to get someone else who wasn't available and I was just very lucky old person who was around at that moment and was still fit enough to go down. So I was just very lucky and privileged to be in that position, yes. I suppose I had remained in contact with quite a few people in BAS, because I'd spent a year at the Scott Polar. For instance, David Drewry was working as a young assistant in those days at the Scott Polar so I had sort of connections, so may be that helped, I don't know. It was just a wonderful experience to go down. I mean there were hundreds and hundreds of dog drivers who, I know, would have loved to have been down there and it was a great experience. A sad experience.

[Part 3 00:17:27] Rae: Tell us a bit about the journey itself and what the mission was.

Killingbeck: Right. Well I think the mission really was, that we were the last nation to have the dogs in the Antarctic and by the Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, the dogs had to come out by the 1st of April 1994. So we were keeping our dogs until the very, very end and I think it was felt that we really needed a journey to say thank you to the dogs. We weren't trying to do a long journey or anything like that, we were trying to use them in the old traditional way of supporting science. So that was the idea, to take them out on a science journey, supporting science, then to bring them back to Rothera, then to fly them to the Falklands and then back home, well, to their home, where they came from originally up in the Arctic. So it was a farewell and a thank you to the dogs.

[Part 3 00:18:25] There were 14 dogs left I think, by the time I got down there. Some were quite old, obviously, very much loved by the base members. They knew them, probably, even better than we knew our dogs originally, in … some ways, because they'd been there a long time and they were very much part of the base.

[Part 3 00:18:47] Rae: What were they used for, by that time?

Killingbeck: Well, since 1975 they had been very much used as recreational dogs, I suppose. I think it was … really, really valuable, from a morale point of view, for the young people to be able to take those dogs out each winter, to go across the sea ice to somewhere like Horseshoe or down to the Debenham Islands, where ever, or around Adelaide. I think they were worth their weight in gold from a morale point of view and personally I think we should still have kept dogs in the Antarctic, just say two teams in a place like Rothera. It would have been that link with the past and with the history, we would have kept our skills of driving them going and it would just have been lovely. I do appreciate, with more and more really good science, people are more and more involved with their science work and so not everybody on the base may be particularly associated with dogs. I also appreciate that there is a problem of having to kill seals to feed the dogs, and a problem of the odd dog catching a penguin and so on – there is that problem. I don't think there's any evidence that dogs introduced disease to the seals, I don't think there's any evidence for that. So personally, I'm not involved in the politics in any way, I wish dogs were still in the Antarctic.

[Part 3 00:20:19] Rae: Did you speak to any of the people that were at Rothera that year about their views?

Killingbeck: Yes, yes, lots and lots of people. I think most would have liked the dogs to stay but they were realistic enough to realise that the Treaty was more important than the dogs, in that sense. And I think they also probably realised that those dogs were getting old, they hadn't been having a breeding programme for some time and so the future of that particular group of dogs was probably not a very good future. So perhaps they were more realistic than my more romantic view on them. But then you could bring in other dogs to replace them and bring in new breeding programmes. I mean we were always bringing in dogs from the Arctic to … breed.

[Part 3 00:21:13] Rae: Did the dogs look any different in the '90s to what they did in the '60s?

Killingbeck: Not a lot. They were still wonderful, wonderful dogs down there, I thought they were fantastic. There were one or two dogs who were exactly the same – Max, Elwood, just thinking of the names – which were those rather strong, stocky type of dogs which were the dogs which I think we always loved to have in our teams. There were, may be, one or two much bigger dogs down there, right at the very end. And I think at one stage there was a slight breeding programme with the Argentine dogs from the Debenhams so may be that had brought in a slightly different strain to those final dogs. I mean, they were still good dogs, excellent dogs, but I think on very long journeys those slightly shorter, stockier dogs were the ones that we favoured, for pulling dogs.

[Part 3 00:22:13] Rae: Did you find that they were more used to being treated like pets rather than as working dogs?

Killingbeck: Yes. Yes, yeah that certainly had happened and you could understand it. Yeah, dogs used to sit on the steps outside Rothera, they used to be taken for walks around and so on. Yeah, they were very much … closer part of the base than in our days probably. In our days, each team was out on the spans, we would take them out separately as a team and they only came into the base hut if they were ill, so there was that difference, yes. But they were still proper husky dogs, the last dogs that we took out.

[Part 3 00:23:02] Rae: Tell me a bit about the trip. Where you went and who you were with and things like that.

Killingbeck: I was looked after by everyone, basically. They were very kind to me, 'cos I was 58 when I went down. So I think I can claim [to be] one of the oldest dog sledgers in the Antarctic. John Sweeney was the general assistant. He'd been the dog man and had looked after the dogs so they were his dogs really. I was privileged to work with him and with, oh, lots of other people down there, who all had been associated with the dogs. And they were very generous and kind to me. It soon came back – the dog driving – it was amazing actually, when you start driving. I remember one of the very embarrassing situations – John and I were just running around the base training with them, and suddenly out jumped two Adelie penguins and they were eaten by the dogs, which is the last thing you want to happen if people are a bit, you know, worried about the dogs and the wildlife and so on! But that just happens! Yeah, and then we took the dogs on the aircraft, Twin Otters, a lovely flight down - each team separately - down to Alexander Island and we landed on Alexander Island and then we were involved with the surveying and glaciology programme. So the dogs, they had a really fine last run. They put on weight, gained weight with muscle weight, came back to base after – we were out about two, two and a half months, something like that – looking really fit. So it was good.

[Part 3 00:24:49] Rae: What happened after that, once they were back at Rothera? Can you just run through that for us?

Killingbeck: Right. Once we'd completed the work on Alexander Island – and at that stage we also, the very last bit, when the weather got bad, we had Rolph Orthel, the cameraman, came out with … ah, the name's escaped me, I'm getting old! Morton?

[Part 3 00:25:14] Rae: Ash?

Killingbeck: Ash Morton came out with them. And then we brought them back and … everyone who wanted to go out with the dogs for a last run came up on to what I call Square Peninsula, the Wright Peninsula, and we just camped up there and took them out for local trips. … The base members were particularly involved with that, which was great. And then finally we brought them down. Some dog pens[5] had been constructed because they thought they ought to have them for the flight, both to the Falklands and then from the Falklands back to England, so they were laid out to see whether we could get the dogs used to the pens. … They peed on the pens but nothing much else. And then finally, when the final day came for them to go, February the 22nd, we got up early I remember. Young people took them out for their last walk in the Antarctic … round the ash runway and then slowly they were put onto the aircraft. I remember someone saying to me, 'Why wasn't there a lot of clapping and cheering when they left?' but people were really sad and, you know, there were tears coming down. They just went on silently, finally, on to the plane and then John and I travelled back with them to the Falklands.

[Part 3 00:26:46] We were met at the Falklands, a very nice welcome at the Falklands. They were then transported by lorry up on to the common, up behind Stanley, and just pegged out on that common. Every day people used to come up to see them. We took children … out providing they were a little bit … I don't know, probably over seven or eight. We had one incident where a young boy, a red headed boy, a nice youngster, who was with them then suddenly got a nip by one of the dogs and so we sent him down to the hospital. I thought 'Oh dear, oh dear – a real problem!' I rang his father, who lived at Johnson's Harbour, and he said 'Oh, we've got about six or eight dogs at home, he should have known better' and he didn't worry at all. … People were able to come and stroke those dogs immediately, which shows how friendly they were and every time, when we fed them in the evenings, there were a lot, a lot, of Falkland Islanders came up to see them. We took them to the school – the community school – we gave talks at the community school. … They stayed in the Falklands nearly three weeks, so they were part of the Falklands, Port Stanley, for a bit.

[Part 3 00:28:10] Rae: How did they adapt to suddenly having grass and different smells and everything?

Killingbeck: To begin with they just could not understand anything, because they'd never seen, for instance, horses. I remember on that common, first of all they just stood up on their haunches and they just didn't do anything. There was about 20 minutes and then one of them started sort of rolling and then they all started rolling. And the same when they saw a horse. You could see they just … couldn't understand what it was, and they barked and so on, and then they just got used to it. They used to be taken out with the quad, just pulling the quad along, and exercised around the lanes and things in Stanley. … To them, I mean what an experience! To change from the Antarctic one moment, and then, suddenly, into the fields and civilization like that, as a contrast.

[Part 3 00:29:14] Rae: And then what happened after that?

Killingbeck: Well, we had one dog, Pujok, who had got arthritis in the shoulders and we'd kept her going on the trip, but not very well, and so we had her X-rayed in the hospital in Stanley, King Edward Hospital, and it showed that all her bones had fused together, so sadly she was … she's buried in the Falklands, so she didn't make that final journey. And then the Tristar was finally arranged. [John's dog starts barking in background] Incidentally, on the Dash-7 the dogs came out of their kennels and wandered up and down the fuselage with no trouble. On the Tristar, the RAF obviously weren't, at that stage, so used to dogs, but we put them on to the Tristar and that was quite a lot of space – it was just the dogs, John and myself and no one else on the whole Tristar, and so we let the dogs off quite a lot. They used to so go up to the pilots, lick their ears on the journey back, and that was that long, long journey back to England.

[Part 3 00:30:29] When we came to Ascension [Island], we kept them in the aircraft, because of the heat at Ascension. So we kept the air conditioning going, they stayed in the aircraft. And do you know, on all that journey there was only one dog out of those 13, by then, who made any mess in their kennels – on the whole journey. I thought it was quite amazing really! Then we arrived at Brize Norton round about 5am in the morning – really, really tired – and then a lorry picked up the dogs, we went across to Heathrow and then we met various people from BAS who came to see us. Then we [were] descended [on] by lots and lots of the press, seeing the dogs.

[Part 3 00:31:16] Rae: Did you leave them there?

Killingbeck: At that stage, I actually had a young family – how long ago? That's ten years ago now, isn't it? So my son was six, yeah. Was my daughter born then? I'm not quite sure. [John's dog stops barking] Yeah, so I actually then came back home, and John, John Sweeney, then went on to America. They were flown to Boston and they stayed in kennels in Boston and then it was … taken up by lorry to the bottom of James Bay, in Hudson Bay, and then they sledged all the way up Hudson Bay to Inukjuak, and then John presented them to the Inuit up there. … They were so well received up there, by particularly the elder people, the older people, and they said, 'These are the dogs that we remember', because for some reason in history the dogs of that area had been removed in the 1950s and so it was great to have the dogs coming back. The whole purpose of that, really, was to try and help the young people and to get them driving dogs, taking tourists out, earning a bit of money, and perhaps getting away from drugs and drink and so on. So it was a good aim. But sadly – I think probably everyone knows – the older dogs died the first year, probably parvo virus, we're not quite sure, and then the second year the younger dogs. Even though all those dogs had been inoculated against everything, in the Antarctic and in the Falklands, and I suppose they just hadn't got the resistance.

[Part 3 00:33:04] Rae: It's a sad end to the story really.

Killingbeck: Yes. There are many reasons why I think it's sad, because I wish we could have bred with them and kept that genetic stock going. [Dog starts barking again in background] And down in the Antarctic they lived out of doors all the time and with this ultra violet rays and things they would have been a wonderful study, to see the effect on the UV rays on them. We noticed on one or two dogs, they seemed to be getting one or two blotch marks on them [John indicates round the eyes and nose] – might have been due to increased ultra violet – but that sort of research opportunity also went with the dogs really.

[Part 3 00:33:40] Rae: Pete, are we picking up the dog's barking?

Bucktrout: Yes, we are a little bit.

[Part 3 00:33:43] Rae: Could you close the window?

[Brief pause in interview as John goes out to the dog]

[Part 3 00:34:05] Rae: Let's talk a bit, now, about the unique aspect of your experience which is the ability to compare BAS at two very different periods of its history. Could you tell me something about, for example, how communications have changed during that period?

Killingbeck: Yes. I think if you asked me what was the biggest difference … it would be communications. That really was the biggest difference. To think that in 1994 when we were down there, you could actually telephone back to your home, and you had that form of communication and all the other straight forward communication systems that were available. Because in the 1960s, early '60s, we just had, most of the time, Morse was our only real way of communicating. So there was a total difference in that way. I could see it had many, many advantages but also disadvantages. … I think, when I was down there, someone heard sad news, their mother had died, and they were out in the field, but that was instant news, so it was even before the funeral or anything like that. In the old days, we probably wouldn't have picked that up until sometime later, so I think the pressure is on a young person, with direct communication but not being able to do much about it, is quite a difficult one to cope with.

[Part 3 00:35:42] Rae: Was there anything else about the communications that you think would make a difference to the way people would experience their time in the Antarctic really?

Killingbeck: Well, I suppose, because the communication in the field was also very good compared with what the old system used to be, it meant that you were much more responsible to the whole setup rather than being more individual, I think. Often, we might go out and not have communications for three weeks or something like that, and people wouldn't worry because we knew that our old communication system on 68 radios may not have worked very well. So there wasn't that concern or that worry. I think you felt now that, if you couldn't get through for any particular reason, there would be an immediate concern and worry, because of health and so on. That was another factor that came into it.

[Part 3 00:36:43] From a purely professional point of view, we were using the satellites to work out our positions through the global GPS system and that depended entirely on being able to communicate the night before, selecting the right satellites and then communicating at the time. So when you're on top of the mountain and the weather was bad or whatever, we could still work, which was a great advantage compared with theodolites but we had to make sure we had good communications. So if, for any reason, the communications didn't work then it threw everything. You tend to get into a situation where you are depending on communications almost too much … you just do.

[Part 3 00:37:26] Rae: What about the sense of isolation, of a community? Was that different when you went back?

Killingbeck: From a base point of view, perhaps first?

[Part 3 00:37:34] Rae: Yes.

Killingbeck: Well, again, life was so different in many ways that I don't think … you can't quite compare them because they were so different. Today everything was much, much more professional. I don't think we were, perhaps, amateurs in the past but it was a much, much more professional thing. I was very, very impressed how well trained your general assistants, field assistants, were with their mountaineering skills, their rescue skills, and as a result I think there are far less accidents today than there were, probably, in our day. So that was a big difference in that field. I was very impressed by the professionalism of the pilots and to think that that, in the 1990s, there were many pilots there who had worked for many years in the Antarctic. In our period, probably they only had a couple of years' experience. So, again, that led to a very, very good flying skills which you could feel all around you in the 1990 period, with the flying – wonderful, in the Twin Otters.

[Part 3 00:38:45] Base life was different of course because they were modern buildings, many, many more people to what I'd been used to, everything had to be a bit more organised, I suppose, with meals and things. People were much more concerned with the professionalism of their job rather than the whole base, and so in the old days where you just expected, naturally, to do every single job from scrubbing floors to helping with the cooking or cooking, whatever, now that was more split. So if there was a job needed outside, I guess it took a bit more effort to get people to do it than it would have done in the old days. So maybe it's a bit more hard for base commanders, or whatever, I don't know. … I still felt, the young people down there felt the Antarctic in the same way that I did and my generation did. And when we came in, I remember, on the ship, the *James Clark Ross*, that was an amazing experience to see people just as we used to do on the *Biscoe*, standing up on the monkey bridge, looking at that wonderful scenery, looking at the seals, you felt it was the same really. Although modern things change, the fundamental things deep inside you, when you get to the Antarctic, are probably the same. I think, yeah.

[Part 3 00:40.07] Rae: Another big difference must have been the number of women working down there?

Killingbeck: Yes. [Clock chimes loudly through his next few words] Yes, that was splendid. I'm all for that, yes, certainly. In 1994, there weren't very many yet. They were just beginning, weren't they? … In fact, we had Marion, was it Marion, Booth?

[Part 3 00:40:39] Rae: Miriam Booth.

Killingbeck: Miriam Booth came down. I don't think anyone was actually living on base then – a girl? On Rothera, I don't think. But it developed very soon after that.

[Part 3 00:40:54] Rae: Did you ever imagine it in the '60s? Or was it a very male orientated environment that you wouldn't ever think of having women involved with?

Killingbeck: I don't think it was that we didn't think of having women – I don't think we ever thought probably, in that sense, that they wanted to come down. … I don't think we ever didn't want women to work there, I don't think we thought they would want to do that sort of job, which, when you look back was stupid really, because there must have been thousands and thousands of girls who'd love to have worked in the Antarctic and were perfectly capable and as well qualified as the men. It was just part of the system, in the same way that there weren't many women flying, and there weren't many women doing all these other jobs at that period, outside jobs.

[Part 3 00:41:47] Rae: That's true.

Killingbeck: Which was a shame really. I mean now, a friend of mine, his daughter was the doctor at Rothera – it's gone a complete circle, which is great.

[Part 3 00:42:00] Rae: Other things that occur to me that must have changed a lot are care of the environment, waste disposal, health and safety issues. Can you say whether you saw a difference between those things?

Killingbeck: Yes. Totally different. And it was wonderful, again, to see everyone accepting the environmental conditions that were there. I mean the way that we sorted out all our rubbish in the 1990s. The way that there was, when I arrived there, a compacting machine came for the paper and cardboard and so all of that was taken out, the chemicals were sorted out. Yes, it was an example to the world, I think, all that environmental side. In our day, it just was not thought about. We obviously were part of the group who left all those barrels and things at Fossil Bluff but it just was not thought about. We were probably, almost certainly, in the wrong, it was a shame that they weren't taken out each time. I suppose, it was more difficult in a sense, perhaps, aircraft were fairly full-up all the time, I don't know.

[Part 3 00:43:17] Rae: And the health and safety issue?

Killingbeck: Health and safety, yeah, completely different. Our lives were lived on a theme of common sense and we were given a lot of freedom. If we wanted to go on a winter journey, we only had to send a telegram through, Bunny Fuchs would approve a journey. Most of the time, obviously, it was connected with survey work, like laying depots, but there was that freedom and you were just based on common sense. The whole time we were learning from our predecessors, most of us had, probably, experience in the past, before we went down, of various things. Occasionally we had a wonderful mountaineer. I was in a period when we had John Cunningham, who was probably, at that period, one of the greatest mountaineers in Britain or Europe, and so his influence was very important and he was able to pass on a lot of skills to us. But we were, most of us, amateurs, not all of us, but most of us were amateurs in real mountaineering and we were practicing when we were down there. All things like using prussic loops and abseiling, so we did our training on the spot. But, basically, we were relying on common sense. If you take an example, Ben Hodges, who was a steel erector, he'd been a steeple jack before he went down – he soon picked up the skills of a lot of mountaineering. His dogs suddenly went down a crevasse above Stonington, he went down and retrieved his dogs – so you do pick up those skills, actually, partly on the job.

[Part 3 00:45:05] Rae: Did you feel, in the 1990s, activities were more restricted because of health and safety issues?

Killingbeck: Yes. I think they are, and I did feel quite a bit for the young people in many ways. I suppose it's a sensible thing to do, like you've got to clock out and clock in, this is a function of size. When you have a base of six or twelve you don't really need to do that because you know where everyone is. But I suppose as places get bigger that's probably a sensible thing, I don't know. So I felt things like that were a bit restricting. I must admit I used to love - and friends of mine - to go on solo journeys, just for a few hours, just to have that little break from base. May be take the dogs off on the sea ice or whatever. And obviously I feel that you would be letting your companions down at the present day if you did things like solo journeys, so that's understandable too. … The rules that are there are usually based, I suppose, on good reasons. I mean, when you break a rule, not linking up skidoos and things, and then one skidoo goes down on its own, is an example of it.

[Part 3 00:46:23] Rae: Did you see any big differences in equipment or travel rations?

Killingbeck: Travel rations were basically the same, except a little bit heavier because they're based more on skidoos, so the weight factor on sledging has gone up quite a bit, and so in that sense it's a bit more comfortable. The sledges themselves are a little bit heavier because again they've been beefed up for skidoo work. To have night traces, we had a night trace of chains, which was excellent, so you had no trouble of dogs breaking loose, but obviously that's a lot heavier to carry chains on a journey. So there's that question of weight – weight was very important when you were having to lay depots, in the past, and so you reduced everything to the very minimum. Nowadays you're allowed to have things increased in weight. Obviously, the equipment nowadays is better tried, it's had another 30 – 40 years of developing and so the clothing and everything is far better really, except one thing is not better – the sealskin boots – you cannot beat the sealskin boots! And I was very pleased to see that they were still using ventile jackets, but they don't have the wolverine so that's a shame but I can understand that.

[Part 3 00:47:49] Rae: Everything fell back into place quite readily?

Killingbeck: Well, the fundamental things are the same, aren't they? You've still got to look after each other. You've still got to look after your dogs. Your tents are still those wonderful pyramid polar tents made out of ventile - they're just a little bit different but basically the same. The weather doesn't change, the beauty doesn't change. So, although there are big changes, it's still a great experience.

[Part 3 00:48:20] Rae: What did you think about coming to BAS Headquarters and having an organisation with a headquarters all under one roof? That must have been quite a change?

Killingbeck: I felt completely lost! Completely and utterly lost! You know, finding my way round all those corridors and so on. But again, it's just a reflection, isn't it, on the huge size of the organisation, how everything had developed and the professionalism of it. It must be a little bit difficult, the dining room – the cafeteria – is a place where people meet, but I always felt it was quite difficult for people to all meet together, so you're quite tight in your different compartments. … But then again, once you're down in the Antarctic, you've got a mixture of all your disciplines coming together there. … Perhaps another difference was, maybe, all our various people like, I don't know, wireless operators, diesel mechanics, we all seemed to mix quite closely in the past. Now whether you can do that today, I'm not quite sure – I suppose you do? But the headquarters at BAS is much more science orientated, isn't it, so you don't quite see that other side of it quite so much.

[Part 3 00:49:45] Rae: Yes, that's true. A lot of the tradesmen don't actually come back to Cambridge at all.

Killingbeck: No, no. So you don't see them quite so much up in the cafeteria and things like that.

[Part 3 00:49:59] Rae: No.

Killingbeck: Which is a pity really because they've got another aspect on life which is equally important, particularly when you are living down there together.

[Part 3 00:50:08] Rae: How would you sum up your experiences in the Antarctic, do you think?

Killingbeck: All of them?

[Part 3 00:50:15] Rae: Yeah.

Killingbeck: I think anyone who works in the Antarctic is so privileged, and it gives you – I mean you don't want to get too philosophical but – the meaning of life when you go down there and you go out on those great ice wastes and you're on your own, or just with one other companion, it is such an experience to do that. I don't think I would want to live down there without the dogs. I think once you've lived and travelled with dogs, the Antarctic afterwards, if you lived there, well, it wouldn't seem the same place. It was that companionship and that linking with the dogs which was very important. … If I wintered down there now without dogs, I'd definitely miss them. If you weren't getting on with your companions, you could go out with your dogs, swear at the dogs or whatever – so it was great, wonderful to have them! It's great, yeah, yeah. In a way, I'm so lucky because I've had those three different Antarctic lives. First of all, in the '50s, '60s rather, surveying, working with the surveyors and things. And then the '90s with those last dogs. And then now with the tourist boats.

[Part 3 00:51:50] Rae: Do you want to say anything about your work with the tourist boats?

Killingbeck: No, not really. That's nothing to do with BAS.

[Part 3 00:51:54] Rae: We'll leave that out then. Well, that will be quite a nice place to end then, I think.

[Part 3 00:51:58] Bucktrout: That's great.

[Part 3 00:52:00] Rae: OK, thanks ever so much.

[Part 3 00:52:02] ENDS

Notes

All place names have been checked. Any I could not find (mainly in the SCAR Antarctic Digital Database or SCAR Gazetteer) are in single inverted commas.

1. Ventile: see https://ventile.co.uk/history/ Confirms what John says of its invention.

2. Jumar: an ascender device, named for its inventor, Jümar Pangit (Wikipedia)

3. Tufnol: a proprietary brand of laminated plastic material. It has been made in Birmingham, England since the mid-1920s and is one of the pioneering types of resin bonded plastic materials used for engineering components. (http://ahistoryoftufnol.org/whatistufnol/)

4. Snowsled Polar Ltd (https://uk.linkedin.com/in/roger-daynes-3728a418)

5. More accurately, these dog pens were individual dog crates with a grill front (see film from 1994)

6. Arturo Frondizi Ercoli (October 28, 1908 – April 18, 1995) was an Argentine politician and lawyer who was President of Argentina from 1 May 1958 until 29 March 1962. (Wikipedia)

7. Antofagasta is a port city in northern Chile, about 1,100 kilometres north of Santiago. (Wikipedia)

8. Hubert Wilkins, Australian aviator who made the first flights in Antarctica from Deception Island. 1st Wilkins-Hearst Antarctic Expedition 1928-29, 2nd Wilkins-Hearst Antarctic Expedition 1929-30 (www.south-pole.com)

9. Enfield engine was a diesel generator. The Enfield Cycle Company Limited of Redditch, Worcestershire, manufactured motorcycles, bicycles, lawnmowers and stationary engines. (Wikipedia)

10. Falkland Islands Government Air Service (Wikipedia)

11. Augustine Courtauld (26 August 1904 – 3 March 1959) was a yachtsman and British Arctic explorer, best known for serving as the solo meteorologist of a winter observation post, Icecap Station, located in the interior of Greenland during British Arctic Air Route Expedition 1930–1931. (Wikipedia)

12. Lieutenant Colonel Sir Martin Alexander Lindsay, 1st Baronet, CBE, DSO (22 August 1905 – 5 May 1981) was a British Army officer, polar explorer, politician and author. 1930-31 surveyor on British Arctic Air Route Expedition to Greenland. 1934 leader of British Trans-Greenland Expedition. (Wikipedia)

13. FIDS slang for rubbish, waste. (See lists of FIDS/BAS abbreviations, slang etc in BAS Archives)

14. Millett G. Morgan, radio physicist, Thayer School of Engineering, Dartmouth College, Hanover, USA. See https://engineering.dartmouth.edu/news/professor-millett-morgan/ and records about the ‘whistler’ research projects he undertook with FIDS/BAS in BAS Archives.

15. Ian MacPherson – I’m unsure of spelling. Cannot find this name in Winterers’ database. Neil J MacPherson was at Base F, Argentine Islands, 1970 and 1971, later as base commander.

16. Clem – nick-name of Raymond David Clements, long-serving fid, diesel mechanic and wireless operator 1956-59, radio operator, Stanley, 1960.

See also: Article written by John Killingbeck on last BAS dog sledging trip, 'Lost heritage'. Reproduced in *The Fan Hitch*, vol 5, no 4, Sep 2003
http://thefanhitch.org/V5N4/V5N4Heritage.html
(First published in *Nonesuch*, the University of Bristol Magazine, Spring1995.)

[redacted]

[redacted]

Possible extracts:

Part 1 00:20:28 – 00:24:06: John demonstrating a dog team setting off. Shows his exhilaration. (An extract of this has been made)

Part 2 00:00:06: About protest notes. Amusing story and John reads out the text of the British note.

Part 2 00:08:04: Party at the Argentine Base to mark Antarctic Treaty.

Part 2 00:17:08: Loss of Beaver aircraft through sea ice at Base F.

Part 2 00:21:03: The runway at Deception Island – taking off with a heavy load.

Part 2 00:22:42: Procedure used to warm up an aircraft for flight during the winter, before the hangar was built.

Part 2 00:25:30: Otter aircraft landing at Deception Island beach runway in low cloud – evocative description. (An extract of this has been made)

Part 2 00:34:00: Digging a well in Biscoe House – making it the only Base with fresh water without melting ice.

Part 3 00:11:33: Dog sledging to Rothera Point before the Base established, and a near-miss on sea-ice.

Part 3 00:23:02: Last dog sledging trip, 1993/94 season. Followed by good account of them leaving Rothera.

Part 3 00:35:42: Dependence on communications technology in 1990's compared to 1960's.