

ROBBIE PECK

Edited transcript of interview with Robbie Peck conducted by Jack Tolson at his home on 4th June, 2013. BAS archives AD6/24/1/220. Transcribed by Allan Wearden on 22nd November, 2017.

[0:00:00]Peck: Robbie Peck, it's the 4th of June 2013 in my house in Holbury, near the New Forest in Southampton.

[0:00:14] Tolson: Robbie, hi!

Peck: Hi Jack!

[0:00:16] Tolson: I'd just like to start with your childhood reminisces. You're a Falkland Islander by birth, tell me something about your early days in Port Stanley, what dad did and ...?

Peck: I was actually born in Port Stanley, but my mum and dad worked on a farm at Fitzroy which was mentioned in the '82 thing and all that, so I was brought up mostly on a farm and I think we had to make our own entertainment a lot! Because there was two or three kids my own age, we sort of done our own thing if you know what I mean, but it was all pretty quiet and then once, I think it was once every month or two months we would get this travelling teacher who would arrive on horseback with all his kit! And he'd stay for a month then he'd move on to the next place.

[0:01:24] Tolson: So the travelling teacher was teaching a group of you?

Peck: Yeah, I mean one of the blokes who was a travelling teacher is still alive out in the Falklands to this day, a bloke by the name of Nick Hadden who was teaching for quite a few years out there, yeah. So you'd have a teacher for say a month and then you may not see him again for another three months! But then again in the whole island there was probably two or three of these teachers or even more maybe?

[0:01:54] Tolson: And you, you eventually went to a school?

Peck: They built a boarding school at Darwin and think it was like, was it there was two, something like probably 30 boys and 30 girls, I can't just remember now. And I was there for probably about three years I think, for the last three years of my schooling.

[0:02:26] Tolson: What did you learn at school?

Peck: Probably not a lot! Because I wasn't very good at any of it, but maths was my failure, but funny enough I've always said it and I used to keep in touch with that headmaster for years until he died a couple of years ago! And because I always sat by his daughter in the class I actually learnt more off her than I did off the teaching I think! But it was all quite good yeah. But that came to sad end. The teachers changed and the headmaster was a Mr Honeyman, and he decided he was going to get one of these ex-army jeeps which everybody in the Falklands got, and when he went away, he went away for the weekends somewhere and

he left one of the other teachers in charge, and there was this girl there who, her dad was getting one of these jeeps and she wanted to learn to drive. And so I said 'Well there's nobody about, we'll get it out', because I'd knew how to drive one of these things and we got it out and she said to me, 'Right you can put it back in the garage!' because the boys built the garage as a project for chipping sort of thing, and I said, 'No you can drive it back in!' And anyway she forgot to stop and we sort of nearly came out of the other end and put a horrible dent in it! We got that sorted out, but then this gardener that was there, he shopped me to the headmaster about it and anyway one thing led to another, and I sort of come into conflict with him. One day he was in the garden and just punched him in the face, and then legged it! So about a week later I was sort of, that was the end of my school days, I got made redundant! [laughter]

[0:04:21] Tolson: You'd heard quite a bit about BAS, British Antarctic Survey, as a child growing up I assume?

Peck: Yeah, because in them days obviously before telly anything that happen with BAS, you had like an hour's Friday night news bulletin sort of thing, which everybody used to look forward to and listen to, because it was the main source of communications. So you'd sit there and watch this radio and wait to see what was said and you'd often get things like, instances of like what the ships were doing, the *Shack* and the *Biscoe* whatever. And I always thought, 'Yeah that's going to be me', because I wasn't really into sheep, I wasn't really into horses - if you tried to give a sheep a haircut it bit you! If you tried to go to somewhere for the weekend you got on horse, if it didn't like it threw you off! And that seemed to happened to me quite regularly, so I thought 'This is not really me'! So the other thing was, I had an uncle who went away to sea years ago in the Malta, he actually got killed in the Malta convoy, but it was always in the back of my mind that's what I was going to do! And I don't really know why, but from a young lad I knew that I was never going to stay there for some reason!

[0:05:36] Tolson: As a lad growing up the landscape of the Falklands, sort of describe how it made you feel?

Peck: I don't know. I used to do lots of little adventure things on my own, I used to, it was miles and miles of nothing apart from mountains and rocks, I used to walk, do walks and in later years when I finally got an old bicycle I think I used to ride around a lot and as I got older we would go fishing and things like that. But there was always something to do, I would always remember if somebody was going from A to B in a Land Rover, and they'd ask you if you wanted to come and open the gates, it was a massive thing something big in them days sort of thing, you know I'm talking about 50's, late 50's and till I went away to sea really.

[0:06:32] Tolson: So tell me about how it came about, you actually did join BAS?

Peck: I been trying, since I got made redundant from school, as I said I worked on the farm for a little while, again I wasn't really interested in the farm work but I did do it and I think the highlight of it was driving tractors! But then in 1963 my brother actually got away and he

wanted to go to sea and he got a job with BAS in 1963, so that sort of got me going even more, I thought 'Right he's gone I'm going for one as well'! And it took quite a while, then there was bloke from the Falklands paid off and I can't remember whether I got a phone call or whatever, but I didn't really have an interview I just went on and met the mate and he said, 'Yeah I'll take you'! And that was it and from the farm in, I always remember it because Raymond Clement who was, I can't remember quite what his title was with BAS and Jim Shirtcliffe had been out on the farm shooting geese, and they actually took me into Stanley to join the ship.

[0:07:55] Tolson: I presume you had actually seen the ships before?

Peck: Oh yeah, yeah.

[0:07:58] Tolson: So when you saw it, so tell me about your first ship, and again what was the name of it?

Peck: The first ship I joined was the *Shackleton* and I joined her probably three days before she sailed coming north. I remember being a youngster the exciting thing was you got a sweater with the ship's name on it, you got one of those silly round hats and all the rest of it! And that's what we had to wear to stations in them days, but yeah I'll always remember actually joining but I can't remember now, but it was only a couple days before she actually sailed, yeah, for UK.

[0:08:36] Tolson: The ship had done its Antarctic bit and it and you were now heading back to UK?

Peck: Yeah that's right, yeah.

[0:08:41] Tolson: So you had the excitement of, did they do a crossing the line then?

Peck: They did all sorts of things to me, I had all the tricks played on me and I'll always remember, I'd been, the first night I was on there it was quite rough, and I thought 'God, mother wasn't so bad after all'! I mean, I'd give anything to be home tonight! And I started, I got a can of Coke because in them days you had the 'Peggy', the junior seaman looked after the others and cleaned the mess room up and got the food, you know what I mean, all the plates sorted out and everything and it all seemed so warm and if you're feeling sick sort of sweaty and that! And I remember I got some Coke, a case of Coke and I drank too much of that and that didn't do me any good at all. And then the bo'sun who was a bloke called Ronnie Hanson, and an AB called Arthur Coney who I still keep in touch with his family, they got me down and made me have a full meal, and of course I shot out to the toilet and I thought 'Well that's gone!' But no, when I come back I had to, they made me eat the rest and I think from the third or fourth day at sea, I was never sick again! Then came the exciting bit when they said, 'Do you want to do, we're going to take you up' Arthur sort of took me under his wing and he was going to show me how to steer the ship and all the rest of it, and then of course they did all the silly things like asking me how my head was? And I said, 'Oh not too bad now I've got over the seasickness'! But of course he meant what way we will head and of course the third mate was a bloke called Robbie Laphorn, and him an' Arthur

had worked all this out, and Arthur he said to me, 'Right I'm going to leave you now and go down, I'll come back in half an hour and see how you're getting on'! But as he went out he switched the light off the gyro, so of course there's me, the ship's leaping about a bit, it's going all the wrong way and I can't, I've only got the rudder indicator to look at because he'd switched the compass off, and I was shy because I didn't quite know what to say and I shouted to this second mate and of course he didn't come out for about five minutes till she started to roll a bit! But then when he came out he was laughing, so I knew it was alright! But had all the tricks, 'Take something up for the iron mike' and all the rest which we never had anyway, because she was hand steering, yeah.

[0:11:05] Tolson: Your captain on that trip, those early trips, who was he?

Peck: Captain, I think his name was Captain John Turnbull I'm not quite sure what his first name was, because we just obviously called him Captain Turnbull and I think he only just died a couple of years ago, but he was with me and I'm sure I think he was a New Zealander or born in New Zealand, yeah? And he was there, and he was captain there the whole time I was on the *Shackleton*, until I was going to say John Cole done a trip as captain, but I don't think so no! Captain Turnbull was with me the whole time or I was with him.

[0:11:49] Tolson: How did you get on with him?

Peck: I was a bit scared of him for a start because he always sort of looked at you, as, you know, he was going to go for you or something! And I always used to for ages, I quite never knew how to take him sort of thing and I remember one day we was in thick fog going in near South Georgia, and ice and it was thick and I remember looking up and there was a little blue patch in the sky and I said to him, 'Captain I think we might be in luck' I said, 'I think the fog might be going' I said, 'I can see a bit of blue sky up there' And he said 'There's only one thing wrong with that Peck, we ain't going that f'ing way'!! [laughter!] So that was sort of things you got from him, but once you used to him it was alright. And then another time he sort of got nervy I suppose, I don't know, the Kamewa [Note: Swedish brand name of variable pitch propeller - Wikipedia] stuck and I remember the pitch was a lever and the revs was a handle with a chain on which went all the way back I presume obviously down to the engine room. And he was pulling on this lever, and I, because the phone was right by the wheel I said, 'Do you want me to phone the Chief?', who was Jack Richardson at the time, and he said 'No I don't need f'ing Jack'! And he gave this lever a kicking, and of course it went flying and everything was alright. But yeah, I quite enjoyed it with him. And then a few years later I was doing a boat drill on a commercial ship here in Southampton and the DTI came round to do the boat drill and next thing I looked and I seen him there, and he said 'Ah Peck if I'd have known you was here, you'd have been out in that boat'! But he was alright.

[0:13:36] Tolson: So your first trip, you're the Peggy, you get into Southampton I presume a big new world for you!?

Peck: Massive! Took my ages to find anywhere or, which you're bound to, you're brought up on a farm with three or four houses, then you arrive on the docks and it was all a whole

new ball game, and I suppose the crew took the micky out of you for quite a long time. But even in them days you still had steam trains and I had an auntie in Reading, and even getting on the steam train in Southampton docks or just outside Southampton docks, Turners Terrace, and going to Reading was great big adventure! And then visiting people, because my brother had done it a couple of years before or the year before, so friends and relatives who lived in England we used to go round and see them, and then eventually he got a car and we went so we went on. But yeah it was a massive change of life!

[0:14:39] Tolson: Presumably in those days as it was some years later you, the ship, did nothing during the British summer, all summer just sat idle?

Peck: That's right yeah.

[0:14:51] Tolson: You had to go and find accommodation?

Peck: Yeah, I mean you could either stay with friends or a lot of people off the *Biscoe* and the *Shack*, or we used to go to holiday camps and do, I remember I was funnily enough at a holiday camp with funnily enough Treve Betts was one of them. And we were breakfast chefs (can you believe it?), but all we ever done was fry the eggs! And we were there, then we changed jobs or whatever and we done that for a couple of years. One year I was on Red Funnel Ferries, done a season there, or if you were really rich you didn't bother doing anything, you were waiting for your next lot of pay to come through to the office!

[0:15:36] Tolson: And then presumably the next season started in something like August or September, I think?

Peck: Used to leave Southampton roughly end of September, always definitely before the middle of October you're well on your way, usually early October.

[0:15:56] Tolson: The ship filled up in Southampton?

Peck: Loaded in Southampton, well quite often before you joined the ship, probably a week and in them days she was up in the River Itchen because there was a little slip yard, where the little ships use to go and before the Itchen bridge was built so the ships use to go up there, and do a refit. So you would join her there and probably store up there, clean her up and probably come down to the docks to load up and away!

[0:16:25] Tolson: And on the *Shackleton* in those days, where we are talking the mid 60's, were you carrying Fids?

Peck: Yes, yeah I mean they were always called Fids then and like now, at least they are flown from A to B either by the planes down there or, but very few seem to go down on the ships now, but yeah everything was done on the ships in them days.

[0:16:52] Tolson: So when you by this time back in 1965 you might have thought yourself to be a very seasoned seafarer, at the age about 19 or so, how did you view these characters coming on from university!?

Peck: I never, I mean yes we use to meet up with a lot of them, but me being born I suppose in the Falklands or whatever, you've got to get used to them all. I mean a lot of them just, there was diesel mechanics which were, I mean they were still Fids they were nothing scientific or anything and there was Met people and they all went down as, they were all fairly good, there wasn't anything in them days what you would call really posh or student type people! I think they were all, I found them all pretty down to earth sort of people. One of the first blokes I ever met, and I have mentioned him before, was a bloke called Jim Conroy, and there was another bloke come off Pete Prince and there was another bloke whose name I wrote down but I've just forgot! He always used to come on the *Shack* and when he come he always used to prefer to come round and have a beer with the boys rather than the Fids, and you always used to see him coming round with his case of beer for a drink, especially when we had a movie or anything. But no I think I got on, in later years I used to out of my way to meet them all and help them as much as you could really because it was just part of the job sort of thing!

[0:18:43] Tolson: So going south now approaching the Falkland Islands again, was it something rather special for you?

Peck: I suppose in a funny sort of way you felt a bit cocky, because you'd been away and half the people who were watching the ship come in had never been away! And to this day, there's a lot of them never left the place and you was always sort of a bit, yes, a bit of I suppose to have a quick look. But yeah you felt a little bit different, because you weren't actually living there, but on a ship coming and going from there.

[0:19:18] Tolson: Would you say you were resolved even at that young age never to go back and live in the Falklands?

Peck: I knew I'd never go back when I left yeah. As I said before I wasn't into this farming malarky at all, and I must have found the right place because I done 43 years altogether at sea! So but yeah, I knew I'd made up my mind long before I went away that I was never going to go back there to live and work.

[0:20:03] Tolson: Coming in through the Narrows you didn't happen to be on the wheel at that time did you?

Peck: I don't think I did no, not the first time not that I can remember anyway, but I would have been I always tied up on the fo'c'sle, so I would have on station for'ard probably for coming in, I just can't remember the actual coming in for the first time.

[0:20:33] Tolson: It was must never the less have been very special, when you were on the fo'c'sle or wherever, to be a little bit cocky to come back home?

Peck: Yeah, yeah.

[0:20:45] Tolson: Going again through the Narrows, Stanley is a pretty impressive little community isn't it?

Peck: Yeah.

[0:20:50] Tolson: Strip housing?

Peck: That's right yeah, it was yeah nice to get back and just to see people or the very few people that I did know, because I had been brought up on a farm you never got to know many people anyway, so but yes it was, there was people I did know in the town.

[0:21:13] Tolson: Then I guess it was a few days of taking stores onboard?

Peck: Usually in them days, it probably still is today there was quite a lot of stuff to unload in the Falklands i.e. Landrovers for BAS personnel in the Falklands, and then she was always full! And fuel was probably loaded and left there in drums for ongoing somewhere, and then of course everything was loaded in the Falklands that was needed for any building going on. I remember sand and stuff like that we would load for days! Full loads of sand going to places, i.e. that were built either a new base hut, not so much in the deep Antarctic but Signy and Deception and places like that, all sand and building materials went down from the Falklands.

[0:22:14] Tolson: And all the labour was done by ship's crew and Fids?

Peck: Yeah, Fids always, all the time I worked for BAS, Fids. I mean it's not allowed now but Fids mucked in and helped you, and did the hatch and the humping work down in the hatch along with us fellows and they even used to help us paint, when they could in the tropics. And they used to do the watches going through so we could concentrate on maintaining the ship, and of course that's in days gone by and is a big no-no now!

[0:22:53] Tolson: Tell me a little bit about the *Shackleton*, how many hatches did it have, did it have derricks or cranes or were you used?

Peck: She had just had two hatches, one McGregor hatch and an ASA crane, electric crane, and one small hatch on the fo'c'sle which was mostly where we, well they did fill it with general cargo often it would be full of drums of, what was it the planes used to use?, w as it kerosene to fly or 'avtur' or whatever yeah, but she just had the one hatch for'ard of the accommodation because she has accommodation aft, and a lower hold obviously which held quite a bit as well.

[0:23:42] Tolson: So you are heading out south now, this really is new territory for you?

Peck: It is yeah!

[0:23:47] Tolson: You were going somewhere special? Where, do you remember the very first trip south, where were you going, do you remember?

Peck: South Georgia, always seemed to be the in thing then was South Georgia because, then I think if I remember rightly you would unload stuff at South Georgia or whatever, and then in them days Bird Island was just a relative new thing and you had two or three people and I still think, they were I'm sure were actually living in tents for the first few years until they

got a small hut, and I don't think even when I left in, BAS in 1973/4 that there was even wintering people at Bird Island, but I can't just remember now.

[0:24:38] Tolson: What was there then apart from Bird Island, the other base?

Peck: Yeah, because in them days KEP [Note: King Edward Point] as they seem to call it now, was actually I think I'm right saying it come under BAS, but that was one of the relatively easy bases because the ship could alongside and discharge the cargo, there and then so. But as you say it was something different, much different weather too, it was coming through the tropics for a start! But by then I'd got used to it, so rough days were quite impressive I thought!

[0:25:20] Tolson: This was just after the whaling station officially closed at Grytviken?

Peck: No!

[0:25:27] Tolson: It was still running was it?

Peck: The first year I was there in 1964, now I don't know when the whaling station closed but I still pictures of South Georgia and that was operated by Japanese, with Norwegian overseers or whatever you called them. But yeah it was still going in 1964, but I think that may have been the final year, I just can't remember.

[0:26:02] Tolson: Did you ever get the chance to walk around?

Peck: Yes, yeah I've got photographs and slides of walking around in amongst them cutting up the whale, and you know pictures of other crew members there, and the smoke and I can still smell it now! But of course, in them days 1964 it was the done thing and nobody took any notice of it, but like I done a slide show for the World Ships Society a couple of years ago, and they were really impressed with these whaling, some of the wives weren't so impressed! I had to say in the days that I took them pictures it was the done thing, and nobody batted an eyelid because people going out and killing whales, I mean now I hate the thought of it, and dolphins yeah!

[0:26:57] Tolson: The base itself at King Edward Point was it lived in by Fids or was it still the governor and that?

Peck: I can't remember quite, they had governor a bloke who was sort of ran it they had a big massive great bunkhouse there, called Shackleton House which must have been built the year before or what? And I remember they still had a policeman and a bloke who was in charge, but it was BAS personnel or perhaps they come the next year, I can't just quite remember but I know it all seemed to come under BAS and I'm not sure. But yeah there was definitely a policeman and a bloke in charge of it, but then later when I went back on the *Bransfield* it was definitely run by BAS!

[0:27:57] Tolson: After South G where did you go?

Peck: I think probably in them days the next place we went would have been Signy, and I remember, I think it was that first trip we went into Signy when they built the first fibreglass hut, which was a little green thing! And then later years they built a double storey one which was the same fibreglass construction, but it was a two tier one and to be quite sure, not sure how long they lasted was it still there or any of it still there or not?

[0:28:36] Tolson: Did you see any sunshine at Signy? [Laughter!]

Peck: Very little! It was either very wet or windy or damp and foggy or something like that, yeah! And I don't ever remember having trouble at Signy with ice, but went back on the *Bransfield* a few years later we had a lot of trouble getting in and out with ice! Yeah, Signy wasn't sort of the highlight of it all, but it was a base and it was different and it was new!

[0:29:16] Tolson: And then the next new place for you must have been?

Peck: Probably in them days, Deception Island which was total, as we all know was total ash and completely different thing again, and again you had, years ago it was interesting to me being a new boy and my first trip because there had been whaling there in years gone by.

[0:29:42] Tolson: Did they still have the aircraft flying out?

Peck: Deception in them days in the early 60's I think was classed as the main base for the, there was quite a big hangar there. I can't remember, I was there probably still on the *Shackleton* when the first twin Otter ever landed there, and we were there for the purpose of it coming in I think, I can't, probably a radio, no I don't know why, I know the ship was there anyway, and we formed a sort of runway holding flares and smoke floats for the wind for the pilot bring it in, because it was the first flight obviously flew south from Punta Arenas. And prior to that they had a small aircraft a Pilatus Porter or something like that, just a very small. But yeah Deception was the main place because I always remember, think it was the first year I was there, and there was an old Otter or a Beaver that had had a mishap, which was pulled to bits and just laid by the shed, the hangar.

[0:31:00] Tolson: Quite a few of those around!

Peck: [Laughing] Yeah, but I always remember I was there. Obviously before the Otter they had this little plane and again, it's something that wouldn't be allowed to happen, but I mean I went up for a quick flight in it, the twin Otter, but we had this pilot there I can't think of his name I did the morning but it's gone! He always used to wear a bowler hat and carry an umbrella when he got into the Falklands and that, but he was, they put this little Pilatus plane together and he went up and was sort of doing tests with it, and this Fid was with him and I can't think who he was now, but I remember it well and he said when he landed again, he said 'Oh that was pretty tame I was expecting a bit of excitement'! So he said 'Get in again' and away they went, he was away about half an hour doing all kinds of silly things around the base! And when they got out, this poor bloke was as sick as a pig and white as a sheet! [laughter!]

[0:32:10] Tolson: Heading on to the Peninsula next I suppose?

Peck: I suppose yeah, and I would imagine the first place after Deception then would have been the Argentine Islands, which again was another different thing because as you know yourself going down the Lemaire Channel and all them places, it was something spectacular! I mean again, I've still got, I always, everybody took loads of pictures going through there and then again, yeah different set up different base, different people, different way of unloading it was all quite a big learning curve really. And then I suppose normally either or just before Argentine Islands which was base, can't think what it was now, anyway we'd either go into Palmer station which was the American one nine times out of ten it was just a courtesy call. But in later years we took cargo there when I went back.

[0:33:14] Tolson: Tell me a little bit about them days, the *Shackleton* days how cargo operations were carried out, did you have a scow?

Peck: The very first year I was on the well probably all the time I was on the, we just had the wooden work boat that had like a small hold in it, and it was probably three nets, two nets of whatever the cargo was at a time. I remember Deception Island for instance, when they, when we first went in there they were going to build the jetty, because it was always a Heath-Robinson affair with scaffolding poles and planks poked into the ice, and they decided they were going to build a proper jetty there! So we had hundreds and hundreds of these drums of Fondu, quick drying cement, and I mean we were doing that for days getting all this stuff, and then as I said before bags of sand and everything had to go, but it was all in that work boat. And if we done, if we were tying up at Deception, because there was a spring in the bay as well, we'd tie up and anchor and drop both anchors and stern to the beach and put water hoses along the mooring ropes. But we'd probably normally do the drums there and we used to put a big flat board on the boat, and load the drums with can hooks on to the top and then push them off at the beach and there was people there to, but it was all Heath-Robinson sort of, quite hard long days, and quite hard work I thought! In fact I take the micky out of my son now, because I'll always say we pioneered the way for him, now they've got these fancy boats with all the gear on them, high up crane and a ramp that goes down, and it's all much simpler now!

[0:35:15] Tolson: Faraday of course or Argentine Islands as it was called was a lovely place for unloading, because it would seldom could get rough.

Peck: That's right!

[0:35:26] Tolson: You're next place was another story altogether!?

Peck: Adelaide, anything could happen there! I mean that was a nightmare even if it was a nice day, there was either lots of ice or a big swell at anytime really and I don't know who decided to put a base there, but it wasn't the best idea he'd ever come up with! But no we used to cope, and then in later days on the *Bransfield* we actually put an International, well I suppose they did before my time, but we actually had a scow on the *Bransfield*, and I'll always remember this International tractor and it had to be loaded just right on the scow, and we only just got it ashore because it started to go little bit haywire, but they did get it off!

[0:36:23] Tolson: The *Shackleton* of course never went to Halley did it?

Peck: No never, I mean they used to say she was ice strengthened and before I went on her, they had an incident where it was getting close to losing her I think. But I can't remember it was before I joined them, but after I joined them we were going up the Bransfield Strait and quite a lot of ice but just doing the normal sort of in, and you know and back and forwards to get through but because she was riveted in places, one of the rivets popped and in the lower hold of number one, and by the time the morning come, we noticed she was starting to dip down by the head and we got into Deception and obviously when they took soundings they knew there was quite a bit of water in there! And we had to start unloading everything quick that was in there and a lot of the stuff, this was at Deception and a lot of the stuff would have been for Argentine Islands, Stonington and Adelaide and all down that coast. We managed to salvage most of that stuff in the tween decks, but the stuff in the lower hold was totally ruined I can't think what it was now, but I know we had the old type survival suits down there you know trying to get the boxes out.

[0:37:54] Tolson: Of course at this same time the *John Biscoe* was also operating down there in the Antarctic?

Pecks: That's right yeah.

[0:38:00] Tolson: So she was complementing you and she was doing base work herself?

Peck: Yeah but she was sort of classed as the better ship for ice I presume, because she was built for it, and I'm not sure if she had thicker plates or anything but quite often she would do places like Stonington and Adelaide if there was a lot of ice, because the poor old *Shack* just wasn't really designed for it! I mean she was only built as a Dutch, Danish rather cargo ship as far as I know, I've got the bits on it somewhere, but I haven't read them for a while!

[0:38:39] Tolson: You had a pretty scary incident on the *Shackleton* didn't you, your fire!?

Peck: Fire, yes that was quite scary and the laundry, the crew laundry was right aft nearest the steering gear room, and over, I'll always remember over the sink in the laundry was a little hole and I'll always remember the engineers had been in and they might have oxy-acetylene bottles going or something and the donkey man at the time, I used to shout through this hole sort of thing because quite a big bolt hole sort of thing. And if he was there with a blow torch he'd throw a little flame through when I was at the sink, in and out sort of thing. Anyhow I was down there on this particular day doing my laundry, and this flame, I could see this flame and I shouted through to him, I said 'You better stop doing that, the paints starting to bulge this side', and I thought it was him mucking about! But anyway when I went to investigate it was, they had the emergency fire pump running and a pipe had burst on the diesel fire pump and sprayed the exhaust and it had caught fire! And of course the worrying thing was, again it wouldn't be allowed to happen I don't suppose today, but there was the oxy-acetylene bottles lashed to the, or close even to I can't remember, the fire pump. Well so anyway the first thing I done was I couldn't get through on the phone, so I ran up to the bridge and told the captain and he got things going! It took us, I can't really remember offhand the mate at

the time was a bloke I've never heard of since, a bloke called Peter G, and he decided to go in first and I'll always remember, again he would have got a telling off, because he never put the gear on probably, the breathing apparatus on probably, and he wasn't the bloke that was supposed to go in anyway if it had gone by the book, but we did manage to get it out! And I think, I'm guessing, but it took about an hour and a half and quite a lot of fire extinguishers because we didn't have much gear left. I was, again by this time I was probably an AB, I can't remember now. But I know I was helping the lamp trimmer, or it might have even the lamp trimmer, but I know we didn't have many refills left for the fire extinguishers and of course that was really the days before CO2 extinguishers were out, if remember rightly.

[0:41:28] Tolson: That incident set in your mind the precedence for fire extinguishers which we're going to discuss late on?

Peck: Yes.

[0:41:37] Tolson: It was certainly [Peck: It was!] I'm sure a formulation point of your fanaticism quite rightly so. Tell me what is a lamp trimmer? We have all these rating terms but the terminology has like JOS, junior ordinary seaman, and SOS?

Peck: Yeah, this is making me feel really old here. On the *Shackleton* and on the ships of that era that age, it was long before you had an emergency generators or backup systems for lighting, and so if the main genny shuts down you either had battery or, like you have now, either you have battery lighting or generators to kick in. I can't quite remember whether the *Shack* had a little emergency generator or not I've gone blank now! What was the question you asked!?

[0:42:38] Tolson: What is a lamp trimmer!?

Peck: [Laughing!] Ah yes, and of course it was before the days of things, so they had these paraffin lamps and it was lamps that you had to keep them full of fuel, and even the *Shack* had a little locker that was just solely for the lamps. And always on the mast there was always a bracket for fixing these lamps on to if you totally lost power, so the lamp trimmer was man in charge of keeping them ready, keeping the wicks, and that how the lamp trimmer came about!

[0:43:11] Tolson: On the deck department the hierarchy was the bo'sun at the top [Peck: Yeah] how did it work down, and the bo'sun whoever he was in charge of the deck crew [Peck: Yeah, yeah] under the chief officer who was the next rank?

Peck: You had the, well on the *Shack* in the days of the *Shack*, you had the bo'sun in them days still they never had a bo'sun's mate as such the bo'sun's mate was the lamp trimmer really, then you had on those ship you had a launch man and then you had the AB's, then you had junior, senior ordinary seamen, which was like after a year at sea time or 15 months or whatever and then you junior ordinary seamen, boy who joined that year or whatever close to it.

[0:44:17] Tolson: And the launch man's had the role, important role in running the cargo ashore but on the *Shackleton* did you also get involved in shooting the seals?

Peck: Yeah, well we pretty much had, although everybody had their own job, the launch man everybody did a bit of everything I mean you had to down there! It was, there was no such thing, as 'That's not my job', you got on and done as the mate said. 'Do you want to have a go at the launch and taking a load ashore?' 'Course I was, I was a brand new boy and I wanted a go at everything, and yes we did quite a lot of the shooting of the seal in them days to feed the huskies. I don't know why they had huskies at Deception but that was, I think it was the breeding area for them. And we used to, well we used to take seal all over the place, but we mostly got seal out on the ice. I think probably the *Biscoe* done more sealing than we did, but there were years when we done quite a bit! On the *Shackleton* it was usually one of the officers that done the shooting and we used to gut them and bring them back to the ship, we used to try and tow them rather than load them on to the boat! But on the days of the *Bransfield* and towards the end of seal shooting, I actually used to go and do the shooting and we done it mostly in South Georgia and it was in later days when I was on the *Bransfield*, I think vet were involved because occasionally we used to carry vets and I think they were involved, and they sort of decided which seal, elephants, were shot in this smelly pool of stinking animals! But that, I think that it finished probably about the time I finished on the *Bransfield*.

[0:46:23] Tolson: So a complete trip you were wrapping up Antarctic operations probably about March, the end of March time?

Peck: Yeah we used to, March/April, I think again you sort of done everything round the other way, because in them days on the *Shack*, Stonington was still a big base and so you always used to try to get any new stores in on the last trip, and Stonington was then the first one, because it was the farthest south and then you'd come up to Adelaide and then you moved away before the ice got heavy!

[0:47:07] Tolson: What, did the *Shackleton* do any scientific work?

Peck: Yes, I mean she was more into scientific work than the *Biscoe* in them days, because the *Biscoe* was like, call it the workhorse more than we were and it was Birmingham University used to do a lot of work on the *Shack*, and seismic stuff. Probably if Pete Barker I think his name was, was still alive he could tell in a fairly simple way doing it, whereas now seismic I think is quite a sophisticated set up, it was more with electronic stuff but that's not my side of it! But I mean I used to be still quite interested and go in and I can't remember who all the people were, but I remember Pete Barker would say when they done this seismic thing, that could be a layer coal, could be a layer of oil, it could be a layer of nothing you know what I mean, nothing of interest, but that is what they used to do! And he, I remember when we done some close round the Falklands he said 'I wouldn't be surprised if there isn't a lot of oil round here'! Because he used to show these black things and he used to say it's either oil or coal, because in them days you couldn't really determine the difference with them and we used to do the seismic, we used to do it ourselves putting buoys over and

steaming away and doing detonators then 1lb and then 2lb and up to, I think they used to rig it up to 20 or 30lbs! And then some years *HMS Protector* would be with us and she would, we would be the buoy and she would go away dropping the detonators all the way up and then she, I think, I'm guessing, I'm not guessing but I think it was about 20 miles then she would do a depth charge, and then we'd start all over again!

[0:49:17] Tolson: So you weren't towing, or you were towing a long a cable?

Peck: That I think was different. With the seismic we had buoys that recorded the whatever, but they used to tow a long cable when we went from A to B and that was called a magnetometer, exactly what that did I can't quite remember, but that was the cable towing, but yeah!

[0:49:47] Tolson: Arriving back in Stanley you must have done that several times on the voyage I know, but your last time before heading north again for the UK, again you must have felt pretty proud of yourself having done a complete trip?

Peck: Yeah especially the first year, you know you've succeeded, you've done what they wanted you to do and you coped and you're still there, they've taken you on for another trip so yeah, it was quite good! And of course going in, know you were going out again to warmer weather was always a bonus!

[0:50:36] Tolson: Did you ever perhaps at the stage when you were new on the ships, did you ever meet the governor?

Peck: The governor of the Falklands?

[0:50:46] Tolson: Yes.

Peck: I don't think we ever did personally. You would probably see him going past the mess room port hole, but I don't think we ever actually got to meet him at all when we were on the *Shackleton*! But later on, probably in my second trip on the *Bransfield*, the whole crew got invited to the, (what would he be was next to the governor?), the Colonial Secretary house for a cocktail party and that was the whole crew and everybody! Apart from watch keepers but the governor was present, so that was, and I can't think which one it was, but that was a one off thing and I can't remember why.

[0:51:30] Tolson: Maybe Tom Woodfield's wife?

Peck: Could have been yeah!

[0:51:33] Tolson: That's one I went to.

Peck: Might have been the same one yeah, up past the war memorial?

[0:51:39] Tolson: That's right yes.

Peck: Perhaps the same one then!

[0:51:45] Tolson: So getting back, back to the UK after this first full voyage did you do several more seasons on the *Shackleton*?

Peck: I done from 1964 to her final voyage in 1968, when we left her in Barry Island.

[0:52:05] Tolson: And that was it for a refit?

Peck: No that was when, all season it had been 'Is this her last trip or is it not?' And then when we were probably doing our last run round the bases, and it was confirmed the *Shack* was finishing that year and that was in '68 [note: It was actually spring '69] so, it was three years before the *Bransfield* actually came to be, but it was known she was going to be and I just assumed because we done our own thing after we paid off in Barry, Barry Island in Wales in '68, [note: actually '69!] that I presumed the *Biscoe* just coped on her own! But of course then in them days they also had charter ships in for Halley Bay, rather than the *Biscoe*, I mean the *Biscoe* did go to Halley, but there was the *Dan* boats so they probably managed with that.

[0:53:05] Tolson: So you effectively you were paid off by BAS that was it!?

Peck: Yeah!

[0:53:11] Tolson: The ship finished you went somewhere else, so tell me?

Peck: I think some of them, there maybe was a couple that did go to the *Biscoe*, I can't just remember now but basically yeah, most of us finished at Barry!

[0:53:25] Tolson: What happened to you, because you were hell bent in not going back to the Falklands!

Peck: That's right yeah. I mean I was alright, there was some people that sort of had to, well they sort of had to, well some them did have trouble with immigration! Because if you couldn't in them days, I mean now everyone in the Falklands has got a British passport, but in them days if you couldn't prove that if it was your great grandparents were born in this country, even after I left the *Bransfield* there was a young lad, I don't know him I just know the story, he was refused entry into the UK because he never had a British passport and his ancestry went back too far to, but I was alright because, I don't know two generations back or something. My grandparents came from Norfolk, somewhere like that!

[0:54:22] Tolson: What did you do then go into commercial shipping?

Peck: Well between, between the *Shack* and the *Bransfield* I went, also based in Barry was the NERC ships which were a different sort of set up, and they had a couple of, *Discovery* was the main ship which was *Discovery 2* I presume, she's just been scrapped now as we speak! We went on her, couple, three or four of us got jobs on her after about a couple of months, after we had our leave. We applied, because we'd met the ships and some of the crew in Barry Island, and think there was four of us applied and got jobs on the *Discovery*, so that's where I was from 1968 until I joined the *Bransfield* in '72.

[0:55:15] Tolson: Tell me your story about how you got on the *Bransfield*, who grabbed you!?

Peck: I was, I came into Southampton on the *Discovery* and went to my local pub, who we quite often used to stay there in later years. I stayed there most summers or whenever I was on leave from other ships, but when I went in the landlord said to me, 'There's been a bloke in here by the name John Morton looking for you, and he's been in, and he came in and wants to know when you were getting in'! So I thought I'd maybe just have a pint or something, because John he was that sort of bloke he would have drink and a chat with anybody sort of thing! He said, this landlord said 'I think he's looking for you for work'! And I said 'I'm alright I've got a job at the moment'. Anyway whenever I came in and I phone him, and he said 'I'll be right over tomorrow lunchtime to see you', he said 'Don't get too keen about the next trip because you're not doing it'! and I said 'Oh aren't I?!' Anyway yeah, he came an interviewed me and spoke about this *Bransfield* job, convinced me that I could do it, or should do it or whatever, and then I still sailed on the ship because, they didn't want me for a couple of months or a month or whatever I can't remember the exact dates. And then it was to go up to Leith because she was doing her guaranteed warranted refit up there, and that's when I first closely had anything to do with Captain Woodfield, and that was where Ella come into it, because she was our office girl!

[0:57:08] Tolson: That's right yeah, and unfortunately John didn't get to sail with you?

Peck: Yeah, he didn't end up sailing at all, so it was Chris Elliot. But of course the other thing was when we were in that yard, Robb Caledon's ship yard I think it was, can't remember, at that time there was a British tug being built or just being finished called the *Englishman*, always remember it, and we always used to use the same little pub in the evenings outside the dock gate, and the Mate off this *Englishman* tried to convince me I'd be better off on this tug, than I would be on that bloody thing going down to the Antarctic!! But no I wasn't, didn't fancy the tugs and by then I was quite excited about going on the *Bransfield*!

[0:57:57] Tolson: You were bo'sun on the *Bransfield*?

Peck: Yeah, yeah.

[0:58:01] Tolson: Right from the start?

Peck: A pub landlady in Southampton, I think she knew more the Ministry of Shipping, we used to call her, but she always said at that time I was the youngest bo'sun to sail out, whether I was or not I'd just gone 21, I think I was when I went on the *Bransfield*! And in later years when Stuart Lawrence come on, him and I were the same age and I think we were 20's and one of the little trips we done on the *Bransfield*, we were both about 24 or something and we two, apart from the engineers were the two oldest on deck!

[0:58:44] Tolson: But you as a 21 year old bo'sun for a period of time were rather frowned on by Captain Tom?

Peck: I think I probably was because he sort of used to look you up and down when you went on the bridge sort of thing, and I think it was probably because there was this thing with the, I don't what you would call it, it was just sort of a little bit of a game. I used to think of it because we always used to mix with the all crews on the *Biscoe*, but there was this little bit of a thing as maybe to do with the two captains or not I don't know, but once we'd been on there a week or so, he sort of accepted me and we seemed to, we got on fine after yeah! I mean he never ever said anything, but I was always just a bit cautious about him, because he used to sort of have that look about him didn't he? But yeah.

[0:59:41] Tolson: Did you always remain cautious of him?

Peck: No I don't think so, because we used to, everybody had to be together as a team sort of thing, he used to come and have a drink in our bar and the Fids' bar, and we always, I think it was just initially the first month or so [Robbie's phone goes!] perhaps he thought I wasn't even, perhaps he would have preferred somebody else I'm not really sure? [phone, no it's alright, I never thought about that one!] No I mean, after we settled down and got going everything was alright!

[1:00:31] Tolson: From the *Shackleton* to the *Discovery* to the *Bransfield* quite a big physical change in size [Peck: Yeah] being impressive ships?

Peck: Yeah I mean at that time the *Bransfield* was the biggest ship I'd ever been on, 5000 what was she 5200 ton or something like that yeah? [Tolson: Yes] The *Shackleton* was 1100 and the *Discovery* was 2500 tons I think, so yeah up until then it was all quite small. Yes, she was big!

[1:01:02] Tolson: Can you take your mind back to those very early days. You'd gone to this much larger ship, you are the bo'sun, what professionally now was going through your mind?

Peck: Well because it was all new I suppose it was partly the captain worry as well, would I be able to cope with it because I was still quite young, I was still only into what four, still in ten years of my sea career I suppose! So yeah I was a bit cautious of it, but I mean once I'd plenty of time to look round the ship because we were in, I was the only one up there for a long time so I was either with the Captain Woodfield, looking at tanks or either doing whatever he was doing and then another day I'd be with the mate in tanks or working with them because just me up there for first few weeks until the crew joined!

[1:02:11] Tolson: And did you have any involvement in selecting a crew?

Peck: After the first fiasco, yeah quite a lot! Or one of the young AB's was with me on the *Discovery* he went, he was quite envious after I said I was leaving to go on this *Bransfield* and he wanted, he fancied it as well, so when it came to the crewing up thing I mentioned to John Morton about this young lad on the Shetland Islands who I knew was quite good and would have been, turned out to be very good he was launch man with me for the last year! And he said 'Right we'll see how things go and we'll get him down' he said. I remember him saying 'Do you think he needs an interview?' I said 'No, he'll be alright'. So he was one and then the mate would mention, 'What do you think of this bloke or that bloke, have

you heard of them?' I'd either say 'Yes' or 'No', but I think, I remember we interviewed two blokes locally from Leith, one had actually been on the ships to do with the whaling for Salvesen's, and the other was a mate of his who had spent a lot of time on fishing boats. So it was fairly obvious they were able to do a bit of graft here and there, and there was Ron Dixon who stayed, so I think about two thirds of the crew were new the second year.

[1:03:51] Tolson: You talked earlier about a fiasco with the crew what actually happened do you recall?

Peck: Prior to me joining or?

[1:03:59] Tolson: Yeah this fiasco with the crew?

Peck: I don't know what really happened, but I know John Morton saying 'I wish I'd had you here last year, because a few of them needed [laughing] a bit of roughing up'! And I'm led to believe and I don't know, Mossie will probably put you in the picture even better or remember it more, but I think they pilfering stuff out of the Fids bags or belongings in the hold or something, I'm not really sure!

[1:04:39] Tolson: As bo'sun how did you then think or perhaps you would always take the same view of the bo'sun's role, how was your relationship between your immediate men, the AB's and EDH's and crew, and the say the other departments, and the officers and Fids, how did you work out, what was your role?

Peck: I suppose it took a little while to get used to, but I always used to get into the front of everything, like remember the one time like you're the go-between aren't you!? So you've sort of try to keep the mate happy, you've got to try to keep your crew happy and you've got to try work with the Fids, because after all it is their domain if you know what I mean, the scientific side, we've got to run the ships for them. But I always used to, I remember once not long just after we sailed I gone round and done something, and when I went round a corner and all the lads were standing there by the hatch having a cigarette aft sort of thing, and they all disappeared and I sort of said to them after, 'Look I'm just a crew member as well, I work with you, and because I come round a corner I don't expect you to scarper! You what I mean if you're having a quick cigarette, you're having a quick cigarette and that's fair enough with me!' And I think that's how I got on because I always, I suppose it's not a seaman's term but try and lead from the front and as time went by, I assume I have got better at it because I sort of succeeded. All the scientists Fids, all the scientists now were Fids, I always used to get on with, I don't remember ever having problems with any of them to be quite honest.

[1:06:43] Tolson: How did you always feel the dynamic between crew and the broader term crew, not just the deck crew and the officers?

Peck: I always enjoyed it on them, different to any other ship because to me it was always one sort of pretty happy family! I mean I'm not blowing my own trumpet but I'm the sort of bloke who I like to get in with, well not to get in with, but I like to get myself known and work with the chief engineer or engineers or whatever, because you've all got your jobs to do

and you've all got to help each other sort of thing and I used to always, the same as with the King Fid whoever they used to designate to be King Fid, I used to liaise with them and try and help them all out. But I think being a bo'sun you've got to be able to deal everybody, and I don't think I had any, they never told me to my face if they had any problems with me anyway! [laughter!]

[1:07:45] Tolson: Certainly not!

Peck: And the first chief was Tony? [Tolson: Trotter!] Trotter yeah, I mean I got on really well with him and most of them, all of them!

[1:07:58] Tolson: Yes that first trip going south on the *Bransfield* for everyone, obviously nobody knew how she was going handle and that sort of thing?

Peck: Ah, that was the first trip, I was the second trip!

[1:08:09] Tolson: Yeah.

Peck: I mean the captain and a couple, a few of them had been on her then, but it was new to me yeah.

[1:08:19] Tolson: But she was still pretty, she was a fierce ship wasn't she?

Peck: Yeah!

[1:08:28] Tolson: And do you remember they had to put those holes from your deck through the Fiddery deck, through the Officers' deck, to stop the vibration?

Peck: That's right yeah, because after I went on her, I woke up one morning after a rough trip and my cabin had water sloshing around in it! And the corners of the housing where it was welded to the deck had actually split and we, the engineers done a temporary job on it when she went back. When we got back to UK the next time they literally had to put to re-strengthen all round the front of the accommodation block, and then the cabin I was in they had to re-insulate the deck and do a different deck because the freezers were underneath! So coming through the tropics I got wet feet anyway because the condensation came up through or whatever caused it to sweat!

[1:09:31] Tolson: Did you have any time for a hobby, I don't know if you were into hobbies?

Peck: Not really because we never really had a lot of time that I could think of for hobbies! If you were on the, yes I suppose there were people that did hobbies I'll tell you what we did, we all got into the thing of making belts on there, getting nylon belts with this macramé and I've still got one upstairs funnily enough! And I suppose that was a thing that caught on, and the Fids used to want one getting made, so that was the only hobby I actually remember doing on there. But if you were at sea, everybody was watch keeping and it was a fairly small crew, so there was on deck myself, the bo'sun's mate and two day workers I think at any one time, oh and the launch man and then the watch keepers and of course in those days we had four boys as well, so there was four deck boys on the *Bransfield*.

[1:10:38] Tolson: Going into Monte after the haul down the Atlantic that was always the first port of call wasn't it?

Peck: Yeah it was always the first port of call when I was on them, yeah.

[1:10:51] Tolson: And from there to, back to home!

Peck: Back home either going from Monte to the Falklands, I remember you could either have a reasonable trip or you could have one hell of a trip! I remember one time we were going down, in fact perhaps it was the first year it was the time maybe we weren't going to call at Monte, we were going straight - no we'd been to Monte and we'd left and Sir Vivian Fuchs got on the ship and we'd set off and got into a right old gale, rolling all over the place and Sir Vivian Fuchs took ill. Now I can't think what for or well anyway we had to go to Mar del Plata and he was taken off there, and I think he actually flew home and came out later. But we had 24 hours in Mar del Plata on the way down as well.

[1:11:54] Tolson: But the whole concept of the *Bransfield* was much more cargo to take to more bases, and now of course Halley Bay was on!

Peck: That's right yeah, yeah.

[1:12:07] Tolson: We all have memories of Halley just we have of other bases for other reasons!

Peck: That's right Yeah!

[1:12:15] Tolson: Tell me about that?

Peck: Well Halley was a sort of fascinating place. As you know yourself you went from one bay to the other looking to see, quite often and once with Muskegs they used to go and find the safest place or the place that was best to tie up. And quite often you could, I remember doing, I think probably the first season, we sat in this bay, done everything and nothing happened. The second one was a different kettle of fish which was when we unloaded the, probably the hut in the tube! I'm just getting the years mixed up now, but first of all the bay broke out and we had a couple of blokes stranded on great lumps of ice, and they managed to cling on and we managed to get ropes to them and hold them there until we were able to get in close enough, and we picked them up with forward crane! Because in them days we often used to stand on the hook and go ashore that way, which again is a no-no now! And that was how we rescued a couple of them on broken ice, but luckily nobody got wet and how it happened I'll never know! And the next time, the biggest fiasco was when, I was thinking it was when we unloaded the round hut, but it might not have been, it might have been after that. But anyway we were working, they must have been doing the building there, working 12 hour shifts although we often did but there were a lot of building there at the same time, and we unloaded the main stuff, I think there was a couple of Muskegs and the bay broke up, so then went alongside the high cliff, which was almost level with the bridge if I remember right and I know we just managed to get a, I was driving the speed crane and we just managed to get a Muskeg in over the cliff, so we didn't have a lot to play with and they had a

Caterpillar that drug it away as we paid out on the thing, on the runner, and we'd been sat there a couple of days.

[1:14:41] And Ron Dixon and this little Scotsman who I just mentioned that came with me off the *Discovery*, we'd gone for a walk out because they had a memorial for the people that had lost their lives at Halley in previous years, however with Muskegs or dogs and we'd gone to see that and take some photographs. And coming back I got them to take a photograph of me and in this great crack which was just a 100 foot from the ship, and we done that and I remember going back on the ship and the lads said to me 'Are we going to have a pint first or a shower first?' I said 'Oh we'll have a pint first I think'! And we were sat in the picnic room, and every member of the ship had been motionless for a week, ten days or whatever, and the next thing all hell broke loose because she'd done a violent roll! And I remember sat in the bar, and we used to keep the beer kegs under a bench in there and they all come flying out! So we had to put our feet out to stop that lot and everything, and you could hear the Fiddery above us being demolished by chairs and everything going over and when she finally came upright, and I shot out to the watertight door which luckily we kept shut you could see she had dipped the gunwale, because there was water and slushy ice over the fo'c'sle, the foredeck was just a mass of ice and I can't remember how many degrees list we had, but a lot of it had fell off because it had gone over that far, but also once it was light enough for her to come up she did! But there was still an awful lot, I mean we spent the rest of that night and probably half of next day getting rid of the ice, and assessing the damage, which luckily was only of, well only all the bulwarks from the accommodation to the fo'c'sle and all the vent pipes that happened to be along there with it, yeah quite scary!!

[1:16:48] Tolson: Yes, that perhaps other than the fire is one of your worst moments!?

Peck: Probably yeah, yeah!

[1:17:01] Tolson: Cargo operations of course in general now with the *Bransfield* and now that very large scow!

Peck: That was a very big leap forward from the *Shack*!

[1:17:10] Tolson: Yes, yes and for you it was a new thing and for your launch man it must have been, and for everybody it was new?

Peck: Yes, that's right yeah.

[1:17:22] Tolson: It was new and for the mate as well!

Peck: I can't remember now whether they would have had scow the first time or not, I think it was sometimes nine times out of ten left in the Falklands. I remember the one we had it used to, it fancied itself as a submarine I think! Because it leaked more than it did, but yeah it was it was certainly a lot better and you could get a lot more stuff on the thing from what we used to in the old days on the *Shack*, one little launch and that one little space forward!

[1:17:54] Tolson: So cargo work was now becoming quite a big operation in other words, pretty much all the bases they were all growing to some extent especially in size!

Peck: That's right. The only thing I might add I might have missed out, occasionally on the *Shack* we had a boat we used to call it the *Red Peril*, it was double ended lifeboat, which I think may have been originated from South Georgia or somewhere. So occasionally we used to use that and of course on the *Bransfield* as well they had lot of these, we didn't have a lot we had two or three of these ex-army 'flubbers' they called them, we used to, you could if you had two lashed together, transport and I think we did on a couple of occasions, take heavy tractors and machinery on that!

[1:18:46] Tolson: Yes the 'flubbers' were valuable [Peck: Yes.] for heavy machinery particularly for South Georgia beaches!

Peck: That's right. I think if I remember rightly there used to be a middle bit they put in and they could fill it with fuel, for Bird Island.

[1:19:02] Tolson: Yes.

Peck: And that was sort of very modern!

[1:19:10] Tolson: And they constructed a metal frame.

Peck: That's right for the gangway, and of course going back I know we haven't reached that far yet, little laughs and I'll say it while I think of it. I remember once on the *Bransfield* we went round the back to a place called Annenkov Island. Now I can't remember what was there but we had to go into this beach with this 'flubber' and there was quite a swell so we had to get them organised and I remember I got all the Fids trained. Now I took the motor boat in and I was heading into the beach and I said, 'Right I'm going to go in fast and when I swing it round, I want you in the 'flubber' to jump out the back end and get ashore with the rope! Because by then I should have straightened up and whoever I had on the fo'c'sle on the motor boat, I want him to throw the anchor over!' And it was all looking good, so I remember we went charging into this beach and I said 'Right, now with the 'flubber' rope'! And it all went completely wrong - the bloke on the motor boat that was going to do the anchor for me jumped over and the bloke in the 'flubber' never moved! [Laughter!] So we had to start again, I can't remember who they were, but I always remember it!

[1:20:31] Tolson: Even with cargo operations and boating operations, BAS has been incredibly lucky haven't they?

Peck: When you think of it, with these different things with the ice and people jumping in or falling in the water or what. I mean I fell in the water once, luckily it was only at Deception I fell in, but by the time I got back to the ship I was a little sheet of ice all over! Yeah, how, when you see compared to the working gear now, we used to go in our working gear as now they have to wear their lifejackets, survival suits and goodness knows what! Which I suppose is good, but how we got away with it I don't really know, I'll never know, that none of us

were ever killed! Either with handling cargo, nets swinging in bad weather because we used to push it to the limit sometimes!

[1:21:27] Tolson: On number three hatch on the *Bransfield* where the swing...?

Peck: The speed crane!

[1:21:33] Tolson: Yeah the crane that was a bit of a devil, you always had to drive that or you always chose to drive that?

Peck: I always did because I enjoyed it, I got the knack of that thing, and I used to, Chris Elliot used to, he used to say 'I don't know how the hell you do that!' I used to have a challenge, I used to try and make him run as fast as I could from one side to the other, when he was doing the hatch man's job! And I used to use the, I used to use my knee on the cut out button, used to use the override button which would let derrick go down lower and it was ages before I told him how I done it! He'd say 'How the heck do you get it to go so quick?' But I used to use both levers, my knee on the override button and get down, and once you got used to that, it was a brilliant bit of kit if you mastered it, but if it mastered you it was a different ball game!

[1:22:28] Tolson: Yes it was pretty temperamental, in a sense temperamental yes!

Peck: Yes, I mean part of the problem was the very first year, the guys were so near to the centre of the pivot of the derrick and in the year I joined her, they put beams out on the outside of the accommodation just a short bit if I remember right and strengthened it, and put them out, put the guys out on there, but it was still dodgy because it could ride up on itself yeah!

[1:23:06] Tolson: Getting a, just getting a scow out and over the side in lovely weather was quite an operation?

Peck: Could be yeah, if she was rolling quite a bit. Places like Adelaide you had to have blokes on your painters holding her pretty tight again all the way down, and again of course you had to be very careful with the crane because you have a big lump on her, lots of people running round it was case of having have eyes everywhere, but we got by!

[1:23:40] Tolson: At the work boat on the starboard side that was often used to run Fids in and out of bases at night wasn't it?

Peck: The starboard side was the *Terror* normally wasn't it?

[1:23:55] Tolson: Was it?

Peck: No the *Erebus* was the posh one on the port side!

[1:24:00] Tolson: That was on the port side was it?

Peck: Yeah the *Terror* was the starboard side, which the one incidentally if you didn't know was the boat we had on the *Shackleton*.

[1:24:12] Tolson: Yes she got transferred over, didn't she.

Peck: Yeah so that was still used for cargo.

[1:24:19] Tolson: But that launching mechanism for the *Erebus* [Peck: Yeah] and it had a ...?

Peck: Self tension!

[1:24:27] Tolson: And that could be quite hairy?

Peck: Yeah, that could be. Again on a good day that was good and on a bad day it wasn't so good!! [Laughter!] And then another thing we changed a lot of that after I went on there, because them blocks were always swinging round and we made up nylon pennants and hanging off wires, so that when we actually lowered her into the water she was lowered on nylon rather than the blocks swinging round, which was a big improvement!

[1:25:05] Tolson: Did you get involved in the very early stages of setting Rothera up?

Peck: No, the only thing I can remember about that was, I'm not sure whether it was Captain Woodfield or Lawrence was in charge, in command, by then, but we did go round into where Rothera now is and do a lot of soundings etc, but that was well before the base was built I think. I mean I'm talking that was probably my last year on the *Bransfield* which was '74, I'm not sure when they started building Rothera because I was gone by then! But we did go round that area did a lot of soundings I remember with the launch and the ship.

[1:26:00] Tolson: Looking back over your vast experience, do you have any especially memorable moments, which to you made you very happy?

Peck: I think it was all pretty good. I mean if you're coming to the funny things we're coming to that later, but I don't think there was anything that, yes, it was always a challenge and every day could be different and next year could be so much different to this year. Working at the same bases, but nothing really sticks out in my mind work wise. I suppose one of the biggest challenges I suppose was getting all of that new stuff ashore at Halley Bay! But then we were all young, it all came, it was just a job that we did and everybody mucked in and it all seemed to go well!

[1:27:06] Tolson: You never felt there were real down periods and bad times where you just didn't want to be there?

Peck: I don't recall, I don't think I really did have. I'm not really saying by the time of the end of the season coming, you weren't ready to get a bit of sun in the tropics and do something different! And you could work long hours and late nights and of course the later the summer went on, the longer the daylight you took advantage especially places like Adelaide where if it was good weather it paid to get on with it! And never had trouble with getting people to volunteer or we just got on and done it!

[1:27:52] Tolson: There was a very good rapport between everybody as we have already discussed and I guess to a great extent, booze helped a little bit you know it was nice to have a few beers, [Peck: Yeah] nice to have the odd piss up!?

Peck: Yeah!

[1:28:10] Tolson: Did you ever worry about it going too far or did you, could you control it?

Peck: I controlled it to a certain extent and, yes, I sometimes used to worry about it going too far. But we never had, I don't think we had, we may have a couple of times when you do as anywhere in life! Get the lads up, especially when I got older and the younger lads were coming in, I always if there was anything going on, like we'll come to later with the New Year thing, I always knew when to stop and stop in good time and went away and done my own thing! So that I knew that I had my head on for in the morning for work as every eventuality might happen, but I don't really think we had any bad times, no! Obviously yeah, you might have trouble getting one or two people up for a watch after a night, but just the normal things. But for a start the chief steward, or purser as they called them now, when I went on there was Eric Heaththorn and he was dead against the crew having a bar! And Captain Woodfield was the one that said 'No, if Robbie's prepared to run it', and this was in the early days of my time, 'He'll run it and look after it', and that's what we did and it went quite good! I mean I used to shut it, there was times when I used to say 'It's not open', or unless someone else said they'd look after it, the door wasn't open 24/7, it was locked when we finished at night and left locked till we opened next morning! Because it was our rest room as well as a bar, so I looked after it all the bar side of it in my day.

[1:30:15] Tolson: Special events were rather special and we obviously had good inter-level piss ups and that and the New Year's one you've just mentioning a particularly alcoholic evening should we say!?

Peck: That was different, that was a bit different and you probably remember that started at Adelaide.

[1:30:39] Tolson: I don't remember very much about it! [laughter!]

Peck: Not the New Year bit, but Captain Woodfield said to us 'Look the weather's good', he said 'If you want to work through the night in shifts or whatever and get Adelaide done, we will anchor in the Beagle Channel for New Year's Eve'! And of course in them days you never had tracking systems so BAS didn't really know where we were or what we were doing in them days, did they!?! So we all agreed and we got on and done it and he said 'Right we'll spend New Year's Eve anchored in (I'm sure it was) the Beagle Channel just before you go up into Punta' Anyway and that's exactly what we did, and we dropped anchor I don't know early evening if I remember rightly. And Ron Dixon, my bo'sun's mate and I had already planned that we'll let the crew have their little drinkypoos in the morning. Obviously there was still watch keepers on it that night, that weren't involved in the party and anything, and I said to him 'I'll go to the wheel and you do your anchor sort of thing, and then we'll start watches at midday' I think it was - we were going to leave about 10 or 11 - so I said 'I'll do

the watch, you do the anchor', that was the plan! Well, we did carry on with the plan then we had this - do you want me to carry on? - [Laughter!] - then we had the New Year's thing kicked off and it was all up in the Fiddery if I remember rightly, and the captain and his wife had been there, all had their celebration do or whatever we were doing, and they'd gone off to bed, I'd gone off to bed Ron had gone off to his bunk or our bunks, because that was what we were going to do. And then I'd no sooner sort of got to sleep than one of the boys come in, and he said 'Robbie you better come out quick'! He said this, what did we say his name was mister?

[1:32:45] Tolson: ██████████.

Peck: ██████████, I always used to think it was ██████████, but anyway he was from the embassy in Montevideo and as we said about fire extinguishers and that, and I had been to this day and always had been anything to do with lifesaving it was a red rag to a bull with me if anybody interfered with it, and this bloke was flying around with this fire extinguisher! And I managed to catch him up at the top, he'd started down on our deck by the bar and then he's left an empty extinguisher there and then he'd gone up and started outside of the Fiddery, and by the time I caught him, he'd just got hold of one of the water extinguishers and fired it off in the scientist Fids cabins! And of course in them days they all had big cameras and Garrard decks, some were going to Halley for a year or whatever and I'm afraid I just lost it and landed him one!! And I thought, yeah two minutes after I'd done it I thought 'Probably not a good move', but anyway nothing happened. Stuart Lawrence was mate at the time and he wasn't over impressed, but when I went and seen him or he heard about it, but he sort of said 'Robbie that was a bit silly'!! And had a silly drink up, but we'll have a drink then this gentleman gets wheeled off, and he had to have stitches put in his face and everything was alright, I remember going back to my bunk and then when I got up in the morning I thought, 'Yeah I've got to face Captain Woodfield because I'm going on the bridge haven't I?', and I thought 'This is not going to be easy and could be my last day in his good books!' So anyway I got up there and the anchor was coming in and got down to five shackles or whatever and I thought, 'Blimey I better say something to the old man', and he's going back and forwards like he always did from one bridge to the other, with his black leather boots and I always remember he had his black leather boots on, and four shackles left to come and thought 'Yeah, better do something about this pretty soon!' Anyway got down to about two and thought, and I said 'Captain' as he went across the wheel 'I've got to report myself! And he said 'Oh, what have you been up to Robbie?' And I said 'You know this Mr ██████████?', or what did we say his name was ...?

[1:35:11] ██████████!

Peck: ██████████, I said 'I lost it with him last night because he was setting off fire extinguishers and that, and I you know sort of lost it and smacked him one, and he's been and had stitches put in his face and all the rest of it', and he said, 'OK!', and he still had his serious face on, and he said 'OK' and he goes straight to the phone and he said 'Ella will you come to the bridge?' And I thought 'Here we go, she's the witness she's going to witness what he writes down', and he said 'You better give Robbie a pat on the back!' And she said 'Why's that?',

and he said 'He thumped your mate last night!' And I thought 'Thank God for that, I'm safe!' And after everything had happened he said 'Come down to my cabin after we get in', or whatever, and I thought, 'Yeah I'm still not sure I'm safe', and he said 'I'm not doing a thing about it!' In other words he more or less said he thinks he deserved what he got, for what he done and he hadn't been popular on the ship anyway if I remember rightly, with a lot of people, but anyway, he said 'The only problem is on his way home he's meeting Sir Vivian Fuchs in Santiago'!

[1:36:26] I thought, 'Oh yeah that's not so good either'. Anyway I never seen this bloke until this time when he's going off to catch his plane, because I'm near the gangway on the foredeck and he come over and he, give him his due, he actually apologised, said it's the stupidest thing he ever done! And I thought, 'Yeah you're probably not going to say that to Sir Vivian Fuchs when you see him'! And I was still, anyway Sir Vivian Fuchs come on, and it was on a night and then we sailed and I met Captain Woodfield, or I don't know whether he called me to the bridge or we just happened to meet, and he said 'You're alright', he said give ██████████ his due, 'He said, he told them he fell off a table being silly!' So that was the end of it. [Laughter!] But I've had stick from that every time I meet somebody. In fact a couple of years ago I went down the *JCR* and I was talking to the chief officer, who I can't think of his name but he was a Scotsman when she was in refit, and as I looked up the alleyway I saw young Mr Lawrence coming along, and he decided he would let this Scottish chief officer know all about his to do with me!

[1:37:38] Tolson: Anyhow you got away with that one!? [Peck: Yeah!] And Sir Vivian of course sailed south on to Halley Bay didn't he?

Peck: That's right yeah.

[1:37:48] Tolson: He took you all on a bit of a journey of discovery?

Peck: Which was probably that time, so yes I'm never sure what the base was called or how it came about, but there must have been about, I don't know, 10 or 15 of us decided to go with him, and after we got halfway up to this place, I think we were about half an hour or more from the ice edge. And it was pretty precarious getting up to the ice edge off the bow of the ship to start with, if I remember rightly, and we went trotting off and found this place amongst all these crevasses, and thinking 'I wish to God I hadn't come now', and we had a bottle of rum each like! A few of us in our pocket sort of thing and all these crevasses, and I thought 'Right Sir Vivian Fuchs don't seem worried about this at all so I'll going to stick pretty close to him, because he knows what's happening'! And we did find this place and I don't know whether it had been spotted from the air, but the only thing we could see somebody spotted it out, there it is was one of these little chimney's, all the BAS huts used to have these little pipes going up like a hood on it didn't they? And we spotted that and we must have dug for, and he knew exactly where the door was and how far down it was going to be, and we dug down and got into his hut and there was stuff that he'd left there, Marmite and all the bits and pieces and somewhere I've got a slide, up in the actual eaves was all this

crystallized icicles just hanging, all been there for years but apart from that it was, but I can't remember was the hut, what the base was called or?

[1:39:31] Tolson: Well it was his base camp for setting off for the Trans-Antarctic [Peck: Yeah.] Expedition, 50 years ago!

Peck: Yeah I always get mixed up with one on the other side of the continent, but that was somebody else who set off from the New Zealand side and that had a name, but can't remember what he called his or if it had a name even? [Note: It was called Shackleton]

[1:39:57] Tolson: You had a few over the years obviously some funny moments, I think perhaps one of them when you were in a Gemini with, well Chris Elliot was in another one [Peck: Yeah!] tell me about where that was and what happened?

Peck: Yeah that was probably second funniest thing, I mean the funniest was Halley but it was I don't quite know why they decided four o'clock in the morning, whether it was something to do with tides of something. It was quite a nice morning at Bird Island anchored, watch keepers doing their thing and why because normally a Gemini would be a third or fourth mate would take it, but anyway this particularly morning they asked me 'Would I take the second one?' He had Sir Vivian Fuchs and a few others and I had people with cameras and whatnot, I thought I was just following Chris in and away we went and all of a sudden this flipping, there was a bit of a swell but I knew there was something wasn't right! And we had 50 horsepower engines, I think they were started racing and I looked down 'Oh my God' I just went cold, 'How come I'm following him and I've hit that flipping rock!' That was between the ship and the entrance into Bird Island. It wasn't till, I mean the engine never tripped it just revved and we went down again, and when I looked around I could just see the belly of this flipping whale turning and going off! So that could have been quite hairy and luckily the whale didn't panic as much as I did, and we got away with it! [Laughter!]

[1:41:40] Tolson: Any other magic moments like that?

Peck: What, as in funny?

[1:41:45] Tolson: Yes that's it!

Peck: Well it's the funniest thing that I've ever seen in my life, and I will never forget as long as I live! And I still laugh, but at Halley I'm not sure which year it was but everything was happening. I'd just finished my morning to evening shift and the night shift was taking over, like i.e. the bo'sun's mate and the other part of the crew and the other half of the Fids. And unloading away and I thought 'I'll just have a little walk up the hill before I have a shower and that', and Gordon Ramage - now damage! - was up there getting these ski-doo's already because they'd had a consignment must have been four or five bright new yellow ski-doo's and I stopped chatting to him, and he was having trouble with one of them, and he said 'Tell you what Robbie, I'll get the petrol through', and said 'Will you pull on the old cord!' Because if you remember, I don't know about now but in them days they were automatic because you opened the throttle up, and then they slowly whizzed off! And I remember then

we both had these mukluk boots they used to call them, and I had a pair on and Gordon had a pair on and he gets this, and of course where he's been mucking about with it this thing, he's sunk into the snow because we're up on fairly new snow, so anyway I was pulling away on this thing and nothing was happening, and then all of a sudden it fires into life! And because Gordon's now sunk in the snow and he's got his hand on the throttle, and I've done the pulling to get it going and of course it fires up into life and starts to move off! Because it's the only thing he's got to hang on to, I don't know what he was doing with his other hand but anyway, probably holding on to the seat, but it started to move forward the throttle opened up even more and of course he just lost it, the thing took off, and at the same time the throttle obviously stuck because the next thing, there's Gordon on his knees in the snow, there's me trying not to wet myself! And this flipping ski-doo it's heading I don't know a mile down the ramp towards these Fids and crew unloading on the deck, and of course as it's going along I'm trying whistle and all of a sudden, I don't think my whistle done any good, I couldn't get nothing to come out but all off a sudden you see this V forming because somebody spotted it! And this beautiful bright yellow brand new ski-doo, you can just see it hitting the ship and the yellow disappearing never to be seen again!! Well I've never laughed, and don't mind admitting I couldn't stop laughing for hours after! And even when I went back to the ship and got in the shower and having a shower I just could not stop laughing, I was actually in pain from laughing and even next day, and to this day I still see it, and I'm going to email Gordon about it soon! [Laughter!] Yeah so that was the funniest thing, and of course poor Gordon he said to me, as we were walking back down to the ship, he's not going to start any of the others he's had enough this day! And he said to me 'Ah well that's my BAS career over', because that was his first! He was going to be diesel mech at, not at Halley but at he was going as diesel mech somewhere. And he said, 'I think that's my BAS days over!' But we never heard no more about it so, in them days perhaps BAS never knew it happened!

[1:45:35] Tolson: What do you think was your proudest memories are about your career with BAS, what do you feel?

Peck: I don't quite know, because I was quite young I think I was quite honoured, and proud to be given a job in the first place on the *Bransfield*. Remember I'm still quite early into my career at sea, and I always, I don't know whether you do, but it's never happened quite so much since those days. But I often took, prided myself in keeping her as nice and up to and clean as we could, and I think I achieved it - nobody ever said I didn't! And of course, yeah I suppose just keeping her nice, always looked smart and everything but that's not taking it away from the ships now. I mean the *JCR* poor old thing looks quite rough at times! But then she doesn't get the TLC or the time to do what we did, and of course in them days as I said before I used to get the lads out, the Fids out, used to get them working for me as well, which was part of the thing they were meant to do, but I always seemed to get a few more or get a bit more out of them sometimes! Yeah, and I suppose the other thing carrying on, on that thing whichever it was, year it was, we went to Mar del Plata for I think it was something like a ten days' maintenance period, and for some reason there'd been a muck up with our money, or money for the ship, was you there then I can't remember? Yeah and the money didn't arrive and the captain was told, or the captain was told by the authorities he could open

the bond and sell stuff, because Mar del Plata being the holiday place was full of holiday people wasn't it!?

[1:47:54] And we opened the ship for an afternoon, and then there was a young bloke came on he was there for quite a while and he bought some stuff and that, and at that time we had the bar locked and he said 'Is there any chance of having one of your Heinekens after?' And I said 'Yeah just go ashore with the rest and hang around till about six o'clock when we've got everybody off and I'll bring you one and have a pint!' Anyway that led to two or three pints, because I don't know if you remember that Heineken was brewed specially for us, a barrel of Heineken is supposed to last for 30 days, well they brewed this specially to last 8 months and I remember if you had a pint in the tropics on a hot lunchtime, you knew you'd had a pint of Heineken! And anyway one thing led to another and this bloke said 'Have you got any time off??' And I said 'Well I'm not sure yet, we might be able to'. Anyway one thing led to another and I went and seen the old man, and I said 'A few of us have invited out to this ranch out in', and he said 'If you want to do the job and finish it, you're in charge do it!' So again I got all the Fids out and we painted all the housing white, we worked late into the night and later on, in the time we had there we had two nights out on this ranch, with this lad, and it turned out when we got out there, we all had bunkhouses, we had one day of shooting, half day shooting, half day of fishing and the next day we went out in these South America horse drawn carriages or whatever they might be, and I got speaking to the lad because obviously I was the one that had OK'd it, the one that gave him the beer, so I said to him 'Who actually owns the farm?' And he said 'I do', and he said it's something like second biggest beef ranch in Argentina and it was the biggest polo pony breeding ranch, and they also bred these little mini ponies we saw all of them, and I said to him 'Blimey!' And he said 'I wasn't meant be the owner of this, but because of the size of it my mother and father they had a small plane and they used to go out and to see where the cattle was', and he said they went out to look where the cattle was one weekend and something went wrong and they had a nasty accident and they were both killed in a plane crash! But it was all a bit, I mean we had a really enjoyable, there was a girl, we all had girls with us sort of thing! But no, it was all kosher they were from the university in B.A. or something, all very strict Roman Catholics and he told us all that in no uncertain terms before we went! But we really had a wonderful time, it was one of the good times it was completely different if you know what I mean, yeah.

[1:51:19] Tolson: So you left at the end of the '74 season you left BAS?

Peck: Yeah, the end of the '74 season yeah.

[1:51:29] Tolson: Just had enough?

Peck: I think after, no I had offers I wanted to do other things, I wanted to go New Zealand and out that way, and I thought if I don't do it now I'll get stuck in a rut and I'll end up staying there forever perhaps! You don't really know, I'm always a bit sad that I never went back, but I've known from other people who did, that I probably made the right decision. Once you've gone and you've done a few years you're better off keeping away! I don't

regret, I mean I enjoyed every minute I worked for BAS and I still think it was probably OK, I don't think you done it for the money , you done it was more of an experience, because in them days there wasn't that many people that had done what we done! But yeah I just wanted to move on I think.

[1:52:28] Tolson: So from the mid '70's you have led a commercial shipping life in many different countries?

Peck: Yeah, yeah well not that many because I always had a thing, I found a ship and stayed on it, I liked it I stayed quite a while. I mean I done reefers to New Zealand, I done the *QE II* for nine months, didn't like it at all! Dirtiest ship I've ever been on in my life behind the scenes, and how things never went wrong on there I'll never know because it just seemed to be a party ship every night for 90% of the crew sort of thing! Didn't enjoy it at all, but glad I done because that was the *QE II*!

[1:53:21] Tolson: And now in your semi retirement you are looking after them all?

Peck: Looking after them yeah, behind fences and stuff!

[1:53:31] Tolson: Security stuff yeah!

Peck: Yeah, I mean I, the last probably ten years of me seagoing career wasn't my best, because the only thing you could actually get then was sort of ferries with British crews on and ferries weren't really my scene! But when they got these two new big ones P & O down in Portsmouth, 33 thousand ton, and 33 thousand and half ton, I got the job of deck maintenance which was just looking after all the fire fighting gear and the lifeboat gear, everything and anything plus maintenance on, any maintenance on her, and in later years my favourite toy was the fast rescue boat which I used to take away on my own quite often, and on a good day the old man would say when they were having boat drill, 'You stow all the boats when you get back but disappear up Fareham Creek in your toy!' [laughter!] Yeah, unfortunately I had to leave the sea at 58 instead of 64 because of back problems, which I think was to do with lifting life rafts around because we used to service life rafts so many at a time before the refit, so that when it come to refit they wasn't all away at the same time, but yeah I had 43 years of pretty good fun!

[1:54:58] Tolson: And the highlight was BAS?

Peck: And the highlight was BAS yeah! And I'm still in touch with the *JCR* because me son's on it, one I've never met the man yet but the radio operator on there, Mike Gloistein his name is, I'm always in touch with him, and I still pull them up when I see something on the webcam that I don't like!

[1:55:26] Tolson: Well Robbie, thank you very much indeed!

Peck: Thank you Jack!

[1:55:30] Tolson: For your memories [Peck: yeah] of a truly wonderful ear! [Peck: yeah!] cheers!

Peck: Thank you very much!

Interesting clips:

- Arriving in the UK for the first time in 1965. [0:13:36]
- Getting to see the end of the whaling at South Georgia in 1965. [0:25:27]
- A Fid being taken for a little flight in the Pilatus Porter aircraft! [0:31:00]
- A very bad fire being fought on the *RRS Shackleton*! [0:38:39]
- Talking about the seismic work that was done on the *Shackleton* in the 60's.
- [0:57:08] Being head hunted and joining *RRS Bransfield* for her second voyage! [0:47:07]
- People being adrift on an ice floe at Halley! [1:12:15]
- Ice falling and almost swamping the *Bransfield* at Halley! [1:14:41]
- How Robbie managed to drive the speed crane! [1:21:33]
- The New Year's Eve incident and putting himself on report! [1:30:39]
- Going with Sir Vivian Fuchs and finding his old base hut on the ice shelf! [1:37:48]
- Going out in Gemini boat and having a whale of a time! [1:39:57]
- The loss of a brand new ski-doo at Halley! [1:41:45]
- A pint leading to a weekend at the largest polo pony breeding farm in Argentina! [1:47:54]
- Leaving BAS in 1975 for new adventures! [1:52:28]

