

KEN PAWSON

Edited transcript of a recording of Ken Pawson interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on the 2nd August 2013. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/231. Transcribed by Andy Smith, 29th August 2018.

Part One

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Ken Pawson, interviewed via Skype<sup>1</sup> by Chris Eldon Lee, on the 2nd of August 2013. Ken Pawson, Part 1.

Pawson: Kenneth Pawson, 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1923 in a little place called Triangle near Halifax in Yorkshire.

[Part 1 0:00:30] Lee: So how old are you now, Ken?

Pawson: Ninety<sup>2</sup>.

[Part 1 0:00:33] Lee: OK. Would you say your father was an educated man?

Pawson: It depends what you mean. He was a farmer and a butcher. He was a damn good horseman. He was good with cattle. He was good with meat. He was good with me.

[Part 1 0:00:50] Lee: Did he read much?

Pawson: Yes, he read lots of things, not ... All these Western magazines. His Dad was out in Canada, you see, so he had a lot of interest in Canada because Grandad ran cattle over here and he was always a buyer of Western magazines. At any rate he read any interesting things about the world, but as far as classical reading: he read the usual things every kid at school reads. It's hard to answer that question because I always saw him with a book in his hand but generally it was a paperback of some kind.

[Part 1 0:01:34] Lee: Tell me about your education. What sort of education did you have, Ken?

Pawson: I went to Triangle Elementary School. My mother was a schoolteacher but not at that school. She wasn't teaching when I was born. So I went to Triangle Elementary School which was such a damn good little school. Out of interest, when I got to Antarctica eventually, and my friend Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith (who died just recently), we found that we had much the same poetry etc. and classical verses that we liked because we happened to have a headmaster at Triangle School, he was a damn good scholar himself. And he was always reading poetry and said it to us, so I felt very much in touch with Geoff and we often joked about this, that a guy from Triangle School and one from Winchester had much the same classical interests.

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<sup>1</sup> To Calgary, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Pawson died on 29 April 2014, a few months after this interview ([www.mhfh.com/pawson-kenneth/](http://www.mhfh.com/pawson-kenneth/)).

[Part 1 0:02:36] Lee: Tell me a bit about Geoffrey, because I met him a few months ago, just before he died. What do you remember about him?

Pawson: Oh, excellent guy. Couldn't want better. Excellent man. He was a good sense of humour, a great leader and he had enough courage to say what he thought about things. Do you know what I mean? He was damn good, one of the best. And we spent many hours together on the rope, and that means something.

[Part 1 0:03:08] Lee: What made you want to think about going to the Antarctic, Ken?

Pawson: Well the Yorkshire Moors couldn't be better training. We lived near the Yorkshire Moors and I was always used to wild lonely places, and I read all the books that a kid always reads about Scott, Shackleton and the rest, you know. And just a lonely place like that interested me. And I was also, for some reason, interested in mapping. Whenever my granny, my mother's mother, looked after me, because never going to church in an evening, I was always drawing maps of our own local area in granny's house and maps fascinated me. And marking where I was and where I had been and things like that and reading about the maps of the explorers and how they fixed their position and everything else. It was just one of those things that took over.

[Part 1 0:04:17] Lee: So would you have joined the Ordnance Survey anyway, irrespective ...

Pawson: Quite probably yes. I wanted to get trained as a surveyor if possible, you see, and towards the end of the war, there wasn't ... You were limited in what you could do and what you couldn't do, and I was fortunate enough to get into the Ordnance Survey and undertake basic training there.

[Part 1 0:04:43] Lee: How did the opportunity to come to the Antarctic arise?

Pawson: For several years I decided that I was going to go down there, and this was while I was still doing Air Force training in Canada and various things and I wrote to all ... When the war was drawing to a close, there was all sorts of things in the papers about Antarctic exploration starting again, so I wrote to everything I could think of, to England, to South Africa, to Australia, to America, anybody that might be sending somebody down to Antarctica. England was the last to reply of course. I then got replies from South Africa and God knows where. They were all at that stage either not quite ready or were going to take their own people. America for instance, thanked me for my letter but they were just taking American Forces at that time. Then it was signed by, I noticed, Admiral Byrd. So I almost felt like saving the letter for an autograph. Anyway that's how I got out; I tried everybody and eventually, when I was on the way back to England from Trinidad (I had two years down there) there was a letter waiting (OHMS<sup>3</sup>, you know) obviously from the British Government and it said that there was a vacancy that year for someone going to the Antarctic. But I had to be in time to catch the ship from Montevideo. Anyway the ship had gone on about a week before, something like that. It was difficult for me to get on. So I wrote back straight away, even before I got my bags unpacked and explained to them that they had sent it too damn late and I would be interested in going, 'What about next year?'

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<sup>3</sup> On His Majesty's Service.

So they said yes, they would have to wait until summer came. So that's how I got going.

[Part 1 0:07:18] Lee: OK, so you had several months before departure.

Pawson: Yes.

[Part 1 0:07:24] Lee: What did you do? Did you have any special training in that period?

Pawson: Oh yes, I got in with the ... I reconnected with the Ordnance Survey. Let's see now, this is where I get a bit mixed up. I thought they were going to give me a course on more topographic survey, more advanced stuff than what I had ... When I got down to somewhere near London, where this course was supposed to be, I suddenly realised that it was a repeat of a course I had already done. Bastard! So I decided to go climbing with my friend instead in the Alps and I thought 'I can do this.' I said 'I am trying to get more things ...' Eventually, somehow or other, I got through ... I got hold of the Governor in the Falkland Islands. Miles Clifford who was in England at the time, in hospital or whatever. Anyway he recommended me for a course, or somehow he was part of it. I got recommended for a proper survey course, what I wanted, in University College, London. I applied for this and I was going to be starting a few weeks late but they would take me on for it.

[Part 1 0:08:53] Lee: How did you meet Miles Clifford, then? That's an unusual occurrence.

Pawson: How did I meet him?

[Part 1 0:09:01] Lee: Yes. A lucky break? Miles Clifford, when you met Miles Clifford?

Pawson: Miles Clifford? Oh yes. Well let's see. I will have to think about it. I seem to think I knew him beforehand somehow. I may be wrong there. No I am not quite sure on that one.

[Part 1 0:09:26] Lee: OK, don't worry.

Pawson: But I am rather interested in that myself. Anyway I met him and he ... Oh I know, I think Miles Clifford came into it ... Or was it after I had already got down to ... Yes, I think by that time I had been down to Antarctica on that first year. Yes, I think that was all part of it, because I couldn't go when I just got back to England from the Air Force. I did get on the following summer and I remember seeing Bingham.

[Part 1 0:10:11] Lee: Ted Bingham?

Pawson: Yes.

[Part 1 0:10:13] Lee: He interviewed you? Is that right?

Pawson: Yes. So I had already gone through the mill with the basic interviews etc. And at first I remember he asked me what ... I think he said 'That was a book of mine.' I wanted to get ... It went through that and decided that ... Oh yes. I didn't seem hopeful at first and then he said 'What other interests ...?' I thought 'If you'd read the bloody letter, you would see.' I reminded him I was a meteorologist. 'Oh,' he said 'that's just what we were wanting.' Typical UK Colonial Service. They had screwed up like hell sometimes. They do a good job actually but they screw up like hell sometimes. They said 'Oh sure, you are just what we are wanting. You will be put on the shortlist.' So a few moments after being put on, then possible, I was put on the bloody shortlist. In the mean time I was out climbing in Europe with my friend who had spent part of the first year with me, Bill Bailey. OK?

[Part 1 0:11:49] Lee: So that was Roy Bailey you were climbing with?

Pawson: Bill, everybody called him Bill. Roy was his official name, for tax purposes, but Bill. He's always Bill. He's a great guy. Very good.

[Part 1 0:12:06] Lee: OK. Were you expecting to be paid to go to the Antarctic?

Pawson: No, I would have paid them, to take me on an expedition if possible, a reasonable set sum. But when I realised I was getting a salary, that was even better. Everything was definitely better in those days.

[Part 1 0:12:24] Lee: Yes, yes. This was the first voyage South of the new *John Biscoe*, wasn't it?

Pawson: It was, yes.

[Part 1 0:12:32] Lee: Were you at the naming ceremony? Do you remember that?

Pawson: I was yes. The Secretary's wife crashed a bottle of champagne against the thing and said ... Yes, I was there, had a beer and a coffee in a coffee shop nearby and the Yorkshire papers made sure they had ... There were four of us Yorkshiremen on board. There was me myself of course, and little – I forget the name now – Michael Green who died in that fire at Hope Bay. There was Al ... turned out to be one of the top surveyors going in then, that lectured in something down in one of the colleges in the South, Bristol. I am trying to think of his name. The interesting thing about him: he was blown out of an exploding bomber I remember during the war, that was one of his stories. And he was a good skier. Dammit. We went climbing together in Tierra del Fuego on our way back from Antarctica, and horse-riding together and various things, yes. Anyway it will come.

[Part 1 0:14:04] Lee: What was the *Biscoe* like?

Pawson: What was it like? Well I missed something. Are you asking me now as somebody who went on it just as a trip or ... and didn't know a damn thing about that sort of thing?

[Part 1 0:14:17] Lee: Yes, as a passenger? Was it rough?

Pawson: No not really. I have been on rougher things in the Pacific and the Caribbean. In fact I went through a hurricane in the Caribbean, and we lost half the ships. So it wasn't in that sense, no. But it was rough going. We didn't have anything fancy about it but it was good food and ... It was just after the war days, so anything was OK, and we had ... I remember my friend, an old RAF friend who lived down in London. I stayed at his house when I was down there. He came in, I showed him the ship and he came in and looked at one bunk and the other. He said 'I suppose you will get used to sleeping with the other guy put above your face, Ken?' It was pretty cramped quarters but it was OK. We had a good time.

[Part 1 0:15:24] Lee: You were sharing a cabin with Dick Laws?

Pawson: He was a good guy, knew what he was doing. He could ski too, which was something. It is amazing that very few people that went to Antarctica knew a damn thing about cold weather, climbing, tying the right knots and everything. I think it was disgusting in a way that they should ... The British Government made a lot of screw-ups. They had to send a lot of vital things and they didn't send ... They didn't send cold weather equipment to the small bases because they are only four-man bases, they are not sledging bases. That's just bloody stupid. You want all the cold weather equipment at every damn base because it is like fire extinguishers in a house. You need the equipment to survive and they didn't send it half down. The first year we didn't realise the screw-up they had made and they assumed it was tougher at a big base, 8 to 12 people, than it was at a small base. It was just the other way around. You put new people, a group of four, and they had never been down there before or anything like that; that's a damn sight more testing, to survive and look after yourself than if you have got a group of twelve. It's a much different social structure altogether. But the first year, the people who organised things in England, I have got no respect whatsoever for the people that did that kind of organising. They were a bloody screw-up. Everybody was a good man. I don't mean anybody down there wasn't, but you can't just put a bunch of greenhorns down in the Antarctic and pluck one out because of some knowledge, and put him as a Base Leader, when he doesn't know a thing about tying knots or anything. So it was just bad.

[Part 1 0:17:25] Lee: Would you say this was because the whole business of taking people to the Antarctic was such a new concept, a new idea?

Pawson: Oh yes, it probably was. It was a new thing completely but what I am saying is ... I remember Geoff Hattersley-Smith saying he thought it was ... not long before he died. He said 'You know Ken, as I look back, I think it was almost criminal negligence, the way they did some of those things.'

[Part 1 0:17:54] Lee: How did you get round some of the problems? Did you make your own equipment? Did you find yourself having to make your own equipment?

Pawson: Oh My God, yes. If we didn't we wouldn't have anything. Jack Reid and Tim Nicholl at Base F, they had to make all their own sleeping bags from sheets and blankets and pieces of canvas stitched together. And they had -52 Centigrade, the coldest weather the coast had ever seen, that year. They had to make their own damn sleeping bags. I had to scrounge what I could from the American garbage dump. That's how I got a big two-man sleeping which Johnny Blyth and Bill Richards

shared. I got a smaller one which I had myself. And I got some skis down there. If we hadn't gone through the American base and rifled it – it was all old throwaways – we wouldn't have had a damn thing. I got my tent, two tents from there. It was just ridiculous. You couldn't look in and say here are the tents for this base because they never sent the damn things down, unless you were a sledging base. A four-man base wasn't supposed to be a sledging base. And yet that's not the point. You have got to be able to survive. One of the first most important things I did at our base when I got there was to divide all the equipment into three things. There was the main dump, the Nissen hut, and then another dump, a triangle some distance away, and another dump we had. There were the three dumps. Whichever way the wind came, and was blowing, you might lose two of your dumps but you would never lose all three at the same time. That wasn't even thought of in those days.

[Part 1 0:20:00] Lee: The American base you were scavenging from, that was Finn Ronne's base, was it?

Pawson: Finne Ronne's base, yes.

[Part 1 0:20:07] Lee: Did you ever meet them?

Pawson: I did, yes.

[Part 1 0:20:10] Lee: Tell me about that meeting.

Pawson: Well I met him because his ship was in Marguerite Bay when we went down the first year on our way South and we had to go into Marguerite Bay to drop our guys off, Fuchs and crowd. Finne Ronne's ship was there and there were two icebreakers, *Eastwind* and something else, *Edisto* was it? Anyway they took us through the ice. We went in; I met Ronne there. Yes, he's strange person.

[Part 1 0:20:54] Lee: In what respect?

Pawson: The best thing I can say about him is ... I met him myself, yes. The best thing I can say about him is he is a damn good skier. I can't say much else because I wasn't living with him. He created different experiences in different people, and some people might say he was a good leader. I don't know. I am still not speaking on that one.

[Part 1 0:21:20] Lee: And they had women with them of course, as well, didn't they?

Pawson: Yes, his wife was there. Jackie was it?

[Part 1 0:21:35] Lee: Yes.

Pawson: She was there, I met her, and Jenny ...

[Part 1 0:21:43] Lee: Darlington?

Pawson: Darlington, yes. She was there. Apparently they spent ... had the camp broke into two halves almost. One who supported Darlington, the other one who supported

.... We hadn't been used to this, women in the Antarctic, anywhere, in Britain in those days. I not saying she wasn't, some damn good women down there but obviously we were all used to the old man-style expedition and we thought it was a bit of a screw-up but ... I remember there is a story there about this. Ronne, I was told that when Ken Butler who was leader of the British base that year, offered Jackie Ronne ... she wanted a ride. She had never been out of the house door even, she wanted a ride on his sledge out to the Dion Islands about five miles away. She was grateful. Ken took her on this dog team. He told me that Finne Ronne stood at the door with the biggest pair of binoculars he had, and followed that sledge all the way from the base out to the Dion Islands and back again. There were no problems at all that way I'm sure. Ken Butler was no bloody fool. So it was just after the war days, all wanting to get something out of their system, you know what I mean? It was a good takeover from whatever you had done before, and it was so when I got back here eventually, and not long afterwards joined the Mountain Rescue group in Calgary. They were a very good bunch too. It was like a nice smoothing into society for me again.

[Part 1 0:23:54] Lee: What had been your instructions then, Ken? What were your ...? What was your mission going South? What were you supposed to be doing?

Pawson: I'm not really sure, to tell you the truth. I was meteorologist, met observer. That's all anyone mentioned. But I took it on myself to do some sledge journeys. And then you divide the jobs up between people, what you are doing and ... George Barry was our Base Leader. He said 'You can be in charge of food and rations, Ken.' I thought 'Well I have been to the Co-op with my mother all day shopping so ...' So anyway I was in charge of rations. I went through all that stuff that had come and all the stuff that England had got forgotten. One of the things that they had forgotten was the zinc oxide for filling teeth. So somehow I got put down as Ship's Dentist, as the dentist at the base left for some reason. I don't know why. And I remember we tried to think of every alternative we could for this damn zinc oxide. Eventually we finished up with breaking up a gramophone record, chipping it to get the wax off.

[Part 1 0:25:26] Lee: Did that work?

Pawson: It did. I was just going to tell you about that. We got this thing, boiled it up, and there was this lot of black wax. We had two people, holding the guy pretty steady. We then dropped this hot wax into his tooth. It seemed to work. It wasn't very pleasant if you know what I mean. So it was all those things you had to get used to, different things. Nowadays it has gone ... It's completely different in the Antarctic now. Everything is all plasticised. It's not ... That's why I would never want to go back down there. If I could afford to fly inland, to the centre somewhere, see some different things, but I would never ... They take people on these so-called Antarctic cruises and they see damn all really. They see little bits of the coast, yes sure, that's fair enough. That's the same. You can go onto rock and sees more mountains. It's nothing in life. You can't go back to the men you knew, to the dogs you knew, to the life you knew. It is a completely different lifestyle.

[Part 1 0:26:45] Lee: The other thing that you were desperately short of was yeast, apparently.

Pawson: Oh yes, we were. We had a run with Bill Bailey suggesting we search everywhere we could find some yeast. We even searched the fingernails I think of the previous cook to see if there were any yeast droppings left in there. Yes we were short of that but we got by.

[Part 1 0:27:10] Lee: Were you not originally intending to be based at Alexander Island?

Pawson: That's not quite right. I was originally. The second year I was supposed to go there.

[Part 1 0:27:25] Lee: So the first year you were definitely heading for Port Lockroy?

Pawson: Well as far as I knew, I was. They might have been sending me somewhere else but I don't know where that was. That was where it was the first year we knew about, yes.

[Part 1 0:27:36] Lee: Tell me about Port Lockroy in your first year. What was it like?

Pawson: Oh very different to what it is now. It looks a completely different place as far as I am concerned. I didn't even recognise half of it but it was .... They had taken part of the old building away to rebuild the Base-F down at Argentine Islands. A hut which had been left there had suddenly disappeared and they were blaming the Argentines. They started blaming them for everything. It wasn't their fault. It was actually, it turned out later on, this hut had been washed away by a tsunami which had started off in Alaska, that had taken this hut away. Anyway they had taken part of the old hut away from Lockroy to build something down at Base-F.

[Part 1 0:28:41] Lee: That was when you left, wasn't it, they did that? When you left, that was when they moved part of the hut away?

Pawson: OK, when we got down there, the hut had already had half of it taken away. So when we got down there, it was a hut, but it was only a big room that Scout Marr had had. He had gone and ours was a smaller base. Yet when they rebuilt it recently, they rebuilt it to the original style, with more in it.

[Part 1 0:29:38] Lee: Were you comfortable there?

Pawson: Oh sure. There were enough tents and made things easy. We were comfortable, but it probably wouldn't be considered so now. Everything is made for you now, done for you. When I got through to Calgary, after getting back from the Antarctic, some time after, because these people – what do you call those people who make the steel buildings – anyway the people who were on the race track ... Because this outfit that made steel buildings for the North and everything else suddenly realised I had been in the Antarctic, and I had used lots of buildings, they took me on a tour of the factory here, showing me the building of these huts. It was very interesting. They showed me this hut, and all this fancy stuff in it, and I saw another one. I said 'OK, well now why don't you show me the stuff that's going to the Antarctic?' He said 'These are the ones that are going to the Antarctic.' I said 'These are some fancy or other, up in the North or something.' They said 'No, these are the

things that are going to the Antarctic.’ And I said ‘Basically four walls with pictures on the walls and God knows what, and a rack and toothpaste screwed up and you put four walls and four or five bolts and you got a hut up in no time. This is so different from what ...

[Part 1 0:31:17] Lee: You had a very cosy wooden hut with just, is it five bunks or six bunks?

Pawson: Yes, we were there for a year, the first year and then go back for another year. How many bunks in the hut? Well we put in what you needed. We had four in ours because there were four of us, but there had been more when Marr and crowd were down. So that part had gone but nowadays there’s generally anywhere from four to twelve I suppose, depending on which of the bases.

[Part 1 0:32:03] Lee: Part of the job was to install the ionospheric equipment which Roy Bailey was in charge of?

Pawson: Ionospheric? Yes.

[Part 1 0:32:11] Lee: What do you remember about putting up the mast and fixing up the gear?

Pawson: It took all of us to pull wires and put this thing up, keep it straight. I remember we put this mast on a little hill behind base and made it safe with stones and digging whatever. A mass of wires to hold the damn thing up. It would have been a job for a Seagull to hold it up for some time, with so many wires going up. Yes, it went up and Bill was doing a good job. He was interested at that time in what they call the Sporadic E Layer. Every now and then, on the screens across the world, you get this extra layer come in. And it was sporadic, there was spray, and it was given the letter E because of where it fell, Sporadic E. One of the theories was that it might be due to meteorites striking the upper atmosphere. So as I was in the astronomical society, I slept outside a few nights looking for meteors and if I saw a meteor; I knew most of the stars in the sky in those days, not now. Like I’d say: time, I’d take a time, south of such and such a thing. You would describe its path across the night sky. Then you would hope that you saw something on the screen or not. But I don’t think we got any main correlations as far as I remember. It was always hard to tell you know, unless you are doing a really long search.

[Part 1 0:34:13] Pawson: I remember getting involved in some of that work – I think it was when I got back from the Antarctic – for Professor Blackett and Niels Bohr (was it?) out at Jodrell Bank Research Station. As I say, I remember lying there watching the night sky and calling out the meteors. They were still looking for Sporadic E then but I don’t think they got any correlations. What I do remember is that Professor Blackett at Jodrell Bank near Manchester, saying ‘Let me know if anything unusual happens on the screen. I am going to bed now.’ He disappeared into his tent, cabin or whatever it was. So did Niels – I think it was Bohr - well one of those Scandinavians. And about two or three in the morning there was something unusual showing on the screen. We awakened Blackett and I remember Blackett came out in his blue and white underpants, big Wellington boots. It was a muddy day, big Wellington boots

and an umbrella and Bohr came out in much the same dress and these were two of the top scientists in Britain at the time, walking across this field in Wellington boots.

[Part 1 0:35:37] Lee: Your main job was to set up the new Met station at Port Lockroy?

Pawson: Yes, that was just putting a Met screen in place and taking a few ... Yes.

[Part 1 0:35:47] Lee: Did that go smoothly? Was it easy?

Pawson: Oh yes. It was only putting up a Stevenson screen and taking out a few thermometers and things, depending on what equipment you got. Sure, it went all right. I got out of it as many times as I could, doing sledging work. And once again you asked about equipment. Johnny Blyth and Bill Richards were very good at making things. We made our own sledge from a pair old broken down skis and bits of wood. I think we did a few thousand miles with that thing, altogether, in bits and pieces.

[Part 1 0:36:25] Lee: Did you have all the Met equipment you needed?

Pawson: All the Met equipment? Basically because I had a cylinder of air for the hydrogen. I think at first I made my own hydrogen out of whatever it was they gave you in those days, for high altitude work. We got a balloon up to 38,000 to 40,000. We got one of the records for a time. You watch it through a field ... Oh yes.

[Part 1 0:37:02] Lee: You are the first person I have come across in all these interviews who has mentioned using candles on the balloons.

Pawson: Oh yes, you put a light on a night balloon, just hanging with it, I seem to remember that. Most of the day observations but we did send one at night sometimes.

[Part 1 0:37:27] Lee: So you hung a night light underneath the balloon?

Pawson: Yes. I seem to think we hung it in a little cradle of something.

[Part 1 0:37:35] Lee: Did you have any trouble with animals and birds in your equipment?

Pawson: Animals and birds? With the equipment? You mean did they rip our equipment apart? Or did we open a box and find that [???. Incomprehensible] No we ... I don't remember any real trouble with ... Oh yes, just a minute. Some damn thing, or was that up here in Canada, that you used to eat all the wires. No that was up here in Canada I think, yes. But down there no I don't remember ..., although you have got to watch out for elephant seals. Not elephant seal; leopard seal; that's the most dangerous creature we had.

[Part 1 0:38:18] Lee: You had a close encounter didn't you? With an elephant<sup>4</sup> seal?

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<sup>4</sup> Presumably he means leopard seal.

Pawson: Well you could say that. We were in a boat, in a dinghy. That was John and Bill were two experts in boats, the Falkland Islanders; great guys. One of them was. Anything to do with climbing, I was there but ... Well they joined all four of us. If it was climbing or something it was my choice to do it. Handling a boat was their choice; I wouldn't want to do it myself. Yes, I was in this dinghy. We went into it, pushed off and John and Bill were just at the front end there, the sharp end, the pointed end, and I was at the back. They suddenly saw ahead ... I heard Bill say ... Bill was an expert shot. He shot at Bisley, the shooting range in England, he shot there. He said 'Give me the gun. John.' And John threw the rifle quickly. I was sitting here; it was all happening about six or eight feet away. Bill picks up the gun. He was pointing it completely at my head. He said 'Hold it Ken.' And bang, a soft-nosed bullet whizzed past my shoulder and a suddenly I heard a flopping squashy sound and the front four feet of a ten- or twelve-foot leopard seal had dropped over the back of the boat and parked across my knees, with blood and guts all pouring out of his mouth. I have still got the stain somewhere on my windproofs. Oh yes, that was a leopard seal. They are dangerous devils.

[Part 1 0:40:21] Lee: Did you have any other close calls or difficult moments, scary moments?

Pawson: We were on bits of ice once or twice when killer whales broke into it, hit the thing and we were going up one of the channels in a Norwegian scow and ran into the thing and we got off. This was not long before we got to Antarctica. We got half frozen in. We were having to lift the oars over and break a hole to get the oar in, to pull, and Bill was sitting on the front of the boat kicking holes in the ice and there were about half a dozen or so fifty- or sixty-foot whales going around us, underneath the boat and up again the other side. A little bit scary but we trusted them to be friendly.

[Part 1 0:41:22] Lee: There are one or two other incidents I would like to ask you about. You were trapped on Doumer Island for several days, I believe. What happened there, Ken?

Pawson: Well we, as I say, were several miles away from base. We crossed this bay, this final bay and we ... I would like to have stopped the other side of it but anyway we didn't. Oh across and camped at the other side, and the sea froze during the night. It blew in anyway. This ice was [??? unintelligible] and we couldn't get away. So we got our ...

[Part 1 0:42:10] Lee: How did you survive?

Pawson: We killed a seal. We had a few days' rations; we had about three or four days' rations actually. We were green. We had only just got down to the Antarctic. We had at least got some of the basics. We killed a seal. We got some of the meat and went out to get the rest. A leopard seal comes to eat the rest. So we had a seal and used its blubber for a blubber stove. Hang some blubber up above a small fire. That drops in and feeds the fire, make it bigger and feeds more. An ongoing process, so we cooked on a blubber stove. Everything then of course gets black with soot. It wasn't too bad. You could see the meat wasn't properly cooked. It was all covered in soot anyway. We managed that way. Then one night I remember thinking I'd got the winds

coming from a different direction on the tent. So I got up and went out. It was coming down off the plateau and blowing the ice out rather than in. So we got up and had a quick breakfast, threw all the rest of the blubber and stuff in the boat and set off for base. Nothing particularly special.

[Part 1 0:43:51] Lee: You also had a couple of tricky moments whilst climbing as well, I believe, and skiing. Climbing and skiing; did you have any difficult times then?

Pawson: I can think of ... OK. We made what might have been the first ascent of Jabet Peak by this particular route. It might have been by any route for that matter. We had to cross, at one point ... You go a very narrow steep couloir several hundred feet, ice couloir, and crumbly ice and snow. When you get to the top you circle round, cross round and get up to the top. But you had got a sheet of nasty icy stuff to cross just at the top. We were coming back down, I think it was. Anyway we got on this icy stuff and the ice axe ... If the temperature is just wrong ..., and I put an ice axe in, it will sort of freeze in the ice and you will have a job pulling it out sometimes. It just happened that at this moment I got my ice axe in. I pulled it down and it had frozen. I went in towards the axe and again I couldn't hold it. I went sailing down. I could see John down below fifty feet, racing in all the slack and I thought 'I hope to God he stops me before I get to this crevasse, or whatever it was. He won't stop me.' Anyway I went sailing over the crevasse, upside down and inside out and everything else, and the sky seemed so ... you know you are going round in circles. I remember thinking 'When I hit the ground, don't dig in fast. Don't stick your claws in.' I think I had fallen on my feet. You don't dig in fast, you know. Dig in slowly. Slowly, otherwise you will tip up. So the old climbing instinct comes back to you when you need it. We got down, and came to a slithering stop. We went back up to get ... Because we had got all the ice .... So we had to get the stuff that was 600 feet above us. So we climbed back up, I remember using my big hunting knife, to chop steps and so on. It wasn't bad.

[Part 1 0:46:19] Lee: And there was also an incident where you had a near miss with an avalanche?

Pawson: We saw lots of avalanches. Oh yes, we had an avalanche came just across our camp. It was on the glacier which is bad for avalanches. We had stopped, camped there and we moved on 200 yards because it wasn't too healthy looking above. Apparently we hadn't moved on far enough because later in the afternoon an avalanche came down over that area where our old camp had been. But not where we were, so it was fortunate.

[Part 1 0:4:05] Lee: So you saw it come down where you'd been?

Pawson: Well we saw it. That's right, yes. That impresses you.

[Part 1 0:47:14] Lee: Tell me about the dogs you had in the Antarctic.

Pawson: Oh, the dogs. [Speaking to his son Mark] Mark, can you pick me up the harness from downstairs, on the wall. My only dog on the front, he was ... You'll see

it, won't you? Hanging on the wall downstairs Mark. If I hold it there. The dog harness here in front of you. You will be able to see it?

[Part 1 0:47:45] Lee: OK.

Pawson: OK, Mark has gone to get it. Bring it up son., will you?

[Part 1 0:47:54] Lee: I can't see you at present because the cameras are switched off but ...

Pawson: Oh well, OK. But anyway they are excellent creatures, husky dogs. We used Inuit dogs, big heavy dogs of the Canadian North. They are a special breed. They just enjoy pulling and are bloody good at it. [He is handed the harness.] Oh thanks.

[Part 1 0:48:22] Lee: Oh there we are. This is ...?

Pawson: Yes, this is the harness. That harness has done a few thousand miles of sledging. And also, before I got a dog team, Frank Elliott, it was his team. I think he might have made this harness. I made several. It's historical. I look after it like a treasure. In that book of mine, I had my poem about this thing: [Quotes poem.] 'Tucked away in drawers and cases are bits of souvenirs picked up in many places in many different years. Most of them, money for them wouldn't sell, but the [??? incomprehensible] is precious, all the memories it can bring. Whenever that old harness binds me, a heart that is beginning to fail. Something that reminds me: slog on to the end of the trail.'

[Part 1 0:49:39] Lee: This is a harness that you embroidered yourself, with your own sewing kit? Is that right?

Pawson: Oh yes. This particular one: I think Frank started this thing and I think he made this one up and finished it off. But I made lots of them, yes. You measure it to fit the dog so it takes the strain in the right places and they become quite precious.

[Part 1 0:50:02] Lee: Tell me about ... there were a couple of dogs that were very close to you. One was Old Captain.

Pawson: Old Captain? Oh yes. He was a happy old son of a bitch, yes. I think he was born in Labrador, maybe in East Greenland, but anyway he came from the North and he was a lead dog and a king dog. A king dog is a term that is used in the North more than down South. He is in charge of the team, you know. He growls and then rest ... Not necessarily the leader but Old Captain was a leader as well as a king dog. He was a wise old bird, When he got too old to catch penguins himself or whatever he was doing, then he had already taught the young puppies. They followed him and then when they caught a penguin, or whatever it was, he would go and take it off them. But he was a good old dog and you get used to them. You know the honest thing is in the eyes as a matter of fact. I think everybody should sometimes get a chance just to kneel in front of a husky dog, take him by his paw if you like to do it, and look into his eyes. In the eyes you will often see a wonderful camera reflection of what he is looking at, maybe the trail you have just been on or maybe the trail you are just about to go on. There is something mystical about it, spiritual almost. Yes, husky dogs' eyes ...

[Part 1 0:51:45] Lee: Old Captain seems to have survived several attempts to shoot him. People couldn't ...

Pawson: I did. You see you can't afford to keep dogs that are not working. They are not earning their feed, more or less. It is just not practical unfortunately. It may be different nowadays; I don't know. But then if a dog had finished his sledging life in two or three years, four years sometimes (it depends), then you would shoot them. No-one liked doing it. I have seen people take dogs out in all weather. 'Oh give me that; you are turning soft.' You take the same dog out and a gun and with Captain, they came back with Captain.

[Part 1 0:52:38] Lee: So several people were meant to shoot him but they couldn't bring themselves to do it?

Pawson: I think that's right.

[Part 1 0:52:43] Lee: What happened in the end? Was it your job in the end, Ken?

Pawson: We kept him to the end, as a house dog more or less. We kept him to be sure. I don't know what happened in the end.

[Part 1 0:52:56] Lee: And the other dog you write about poetically is Yapp.

Pawson: Yapp, yes. He was my leader. This guy's dog harness. [jingles harness]

[Part 1 0:53:04] Lee: That was at Admiralty Bay, yes?

Pawson: Yeah but Frank Elliott had taken him all down the coast of the Weddell Sea before that. Frank had trained him. Frank was a good driver. Frank Elliott died recently you know.

[Part 1 0:53:20] Lee: Did he? He was alive quite ... last time I heard he was still with us.

Pawson: He died about a week ago.

[Part 1 0:53:26] Lee: OK. Oh really? I didn't know. OK.

Pawson: Maybe two weeks ago.

[Part 1 0:53:36] Lee: Is there a story about Yapp being very intelligent and avoiding a disaster?

Pawson: Oh yes. Any good lead dog is to a certain extent. They are not magical but they are damned good at reading bad ice and bad water. And certainly yes, if this Yapp, if he'd refused to go across a piece of ice, I would never be stupid enough to force him over it because he probably had more sense than I ever had whether the ice was safe enough. I would respect my lead dog to a large extent.

[Part 1 0:54:18] Lee: When it came for you to leave the Antarctic, what were your feelings, Ken?

Pawson: To leave? I would have liked, in fact I applied to stay longer, another year, but they wouldn't let me do it then. I had already applied to go on the Trans Antarctic Expedition when I came out, and it was such a vague mix-up, what was happening and when and who was running it. I lost track of what was happening. I remember applying first of all when Ken Butler seemed to be organising a possible transantarctic expedition and I think Fuchs came along a bit later in this lot. But I got my name down with Ken Butler's crowd and then things seemed to change around, you know the usual things in the Colonial Office. You never know who is pushing who out and who is pushing who in. So it didn't come off. Suddenly a whole ... I was away in the Colonial Service by that time, with Jean. I was surveying. I think I was surveying in the Pacific islands or Borneo and somewhere, and in the meantime I suddenly realised when I was talking to Fuchs one day that the whole thing had changed over, and who was running who. He had more or less got it fixed by then. In any case I didn't mind. Kids came along and we had a good time in the Pacific and in Borneo. We were living among head-hunters etc., and they were just as peaceful as anybody else. So I didn't bother raising any more on it. I would have liked to have gone on that trip but I wasn't interested. I could have gone back. I was asked to go back in '52, a year after I got back and we were on the survey down in the Weddell Sea after we'd had the fire and lost all the wreckage there. But I wasn't interested, so I ain't going back to ..., going to that area. I wanted to ... I thought the trans Antarctic was coming up and quicker than it was, and it didn't. So I just went along with ... got on a Service job in Borneo. And it was good. We enjoyed ourselves there, Jean and I. And in the Pacific islands we lived in some pretty wild and lonely places, probably wilder than the Antarctic in many ways. So that's how we made our life. We came to Canada and settled here.

[Part 1 0:57:08] Lee: In your life, Ken, how do the Antarctic years rate? Are they at the top of the poll?

[Someone with Pawson repeats the question to him.]

Pawson: How does it range? In my whole life? As to what I enjoyed you mean?

[Part 1 0:57:29] Lee: Yes.

Pawson: Well at one time it did and then to a certain extent it might be now. But I wouldn't ... It's different from what it used to be, you see. It's not the Antarctic we knew. It's all bloody artificial now. In my whole life, it's hard to say. Jean and I had such wonderful times in Borneo, living with head-hunters and your lives depended on their word, you know what I mean? It was a good experience. If they took their weapons, whether it was spears or blowpipes, and they were told by their chief to go and support to ??? [unintelligible] and look after him. And they said, yes they would do, in front of this chief, and hold their spears or spear-throwers to their chest in front of you, letting you know they'd be ready against hell. Some of them were, and that was a good life. I can't argue; we had a good life.

[Part 1 0:58:28] [End of Part One]

## Part Two

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: This is Ken Pawson, interviewed via Skype by Chris Eldon Lee, on the 2nd of August 2013<sup>5</sup>. Ken Pawson, Part 2.

[Part 2 0:00:10] Lee: My first question is to do with why you went to the Antarctic, why they sent you to the Antarctic. So were you aware that there was more reason for you to go than just to do your met work? That there was a political background to all this as well?

Pawson: Well it gradually came out. We weren't at the time, not really no. You know what England was like in those situations. It's generally a bloody mix-up. You don't know what's really going on at the time, but I was wanting to go to the Antarctic and I didn't really give a bugger although it was free. As long as it was within reason legally, you know.

[Part 2 0:00:49] Lee: But did you become aware of the need for politics?

Pawson: Well yes, at other times it was ... I remember people were ... I am thinking of the broadcast that we suddenly began to realise there might be a different side to this lot. But then there was a different side to every damn thing you did for England in those days. So it was ... Sure, OK we were going to the Antarctic. Fair enough, they wanted us to do something.

[Part 2 0:01:18] Lee: Did you ever come across the Argentinians or the Chileans?

Pawson: Well yes sure, we met, I think was it of the guys had a damaged eye and something or other and our doctor Bill Sladen fixed him up on Deception Island. But it wasn't like it was a couple of years later when I think it was Frank Elliott, he went back to Hope Bay (was it?) and they started to fire.

[Part 2 0:01:52] Lee: Well there was some shooting wasn't there in Hope Bay eventually?

Pawson: Yes it was a bit ... In our time it wasn't. Everybody helped everybody else. It had to end. When three or four of us were missing from Port Lockroy .... We had gone out for a few-day trip. We were green to the Antarctic and we had about two days' rations and the weather turned against us we were trapped on Doumer Island. Anyway in that time I think the Argentines were going to help to come across the plateau and try and find us and search too. But of course Britain refused all help at the time I think. Yes we were vaguely aware of the fact that that there was a thing. If you met together we were best friends when we were in Port Lockroy. We had already settled in and this – I can't remember which ship it was now, whether it was Chilean or Argentine. I remember George Barry, basically when he showed up he had to hand him an Official Protest, the blue piece of paper that protests: 'You are in Her Majesty's land' or something. He went there and I got left back at base. He and John Blyth rowed him over. Then about an hour and a half, two hours later he came back

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<sup>5</sup> The BAS archives catalogue entry says Part 2 was recorded two weeks after the first, on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

and ‘Oh gee, Ken,’ he said, ‘I have forgotten to give them the bloody Protest.’ I said ‘OK I am the last one myself.’ I put on my jacket. ‘I will go over with this bloody Protest Note.’ Sitting there like Nelson with the bloody thing wrapped ... Then I got on to the ship and we went there. There was already a boat hanging down waiting for us. They thought we were coming back because we had forgotten something. We think George had forgotten something. We clicked heels. He said ‘I will receive your Protest. Here’s mine from the Argentine [??? Incomprehensible] people.’ So we clicked heels and gave each other a Protest. Then he said ‘Now let’s go and enjoy ourselves while our governments solve this problem. We went down. He said ‘Do you want a shave or anything?’ I had a breakfast and a bottle of wine or beer or something.

[Part 2 0:04:31] Lee: Did the Argentinian base have provisions that you didn’t? I hear stories of beef and wine.

Pawson: Well I hesitate to say. I think they probably had but the thing is that in those situations it always seems that something new is different or better or more easy. I couldn’t be sure. Certainly whoever did the planning for Britain that year just screwed the bloody thing up because they missed vital things out, or they didn’t send ... They were just green at the damn thing. I’m not saying the Argentines were any better. They probably weren’t. And the Americans were a bit of a screwed up bunch too in Ronne’s crowd, but there always seemed to be more when you’ve got somebody else’s place. Oh yes it was ...

[Part 2 0:05:23] Lee: How much contact did you have with other British bases? Were you in touch, for example, with Admiralty Bay?

Pawson: Were we in touch from Port Lockroy to Admiralty Bay, you mean?

[Part 2 0:05:36] Lee: Yes.

Pawson: We were in touch with all of them in theory if your radio got through. So there was news, more or less. I won’t say each day if your radio worked, from the other stations. You hear about Deception Island. You hear about Bunny Fuchs down at Marguerite Bay. But you could never become totally sure you were going to have radio contact of course. And it was generally Morse Code. Occasionally you had voice contact. And on one occasion at Port Lockroy we had – let’s see – George said ‘There must be a ship out in the harbour. We are getting a good contact coming through.’ He said ‘It’s a ship and he is at anchorage in the harbour.’ I said ‘No bloody ship out there. Look around.’ Jokingly I said it might be Anchorage in Alaska. And by God it was. It was a ship, one of those skipped contacts. Just perfect contact coming through from the other side of the world. The guy was in Alaska and we were down in the Antarctic. And we thought it was sitting outside in the bay there.

[Part 2 0:07:03] Lee: So did you have much radio contact with the outside world?

Pawson: Little or nothing in a sense, except every now and then, I think it was once a week or once a month we got this BBC programme that occasionally came on about doings in Antarctica. We didn’t always get contact with it but we ... Yes, we had that kind of contact. We didn’t really go down worrying about that sort of thing, or

thinking even about it. It was there when I began to wonder did we have this? Did we have that? But we were expecting to go to the Antarctic and have damn all contact for two years. So it was different what we ...

[Part 2 0:07:52] Lee: So in your book you mentioned that George received news of him becoming a father. So would that have come on the radio or by Morse?

Pawson: That came over the Morse Code – the old dah dah dit. I think he half expected it was time for when that was. He had it by Morse Code, yes.

[Part 2 0:08:26] Lee: You also heard some sad news from Stanley about John's fiancée, and I wonder just how that news hit the base.

Pawson: I am just trying to remember that now, now that you mention it. John Blyth's fiancée. Do we have something ...? I honestly have half forgotten about it.

[Part 2 0:08:44] Lee: I believe that his fiancée died in Stanley whilst he was with you in the Antarctic. Is that correct?

Pawson: Oh yes, that's coming back to me now. Yes there was. I don't remember too much about it I must admit. These things come and go, you know. In the middle of this conversation something completely different might suddenly hit you, of some whatever it was, yes.

[Part 2 0:09:09] Lee: What about the news of the death of Eric Platt? How did you receive that?

Pawson: You mean how did I receive it personally? Or how did we get it?

[Part 2 0:09:20] Lee: Both.

Pawson: Let's see. I have got to think now. I seem to remember that we got ... I seem to think we were out on a sledge trip ourselves when we got that. I think we were on a journey back of the Sierra du Fief and we got it from ... I think I personally got it from base, from George while we were out ourselves on this few weeks trip. I think we had it then. In memory I have ...

[Part 2 0:09:52] Lee: So you heard the news whilst you were in the field, effectively?

Pawson: Yes, I think I did. I think so but ...

[Part 2 0:09:59] Lee: And how did it affect you, Ken?

Pawson: It didn't make ... Once somebody had gone ... It was like lots of things during those days: you tend to accept it as part of the thing that goes along with it, you know. I don't know remember getting upset about it. If it's the guy who is sledging with me right there, it's him I'm more concerned about. You tend to, I guess, receive at the level you want to receive at sometimes.

[Part 2 0:10:36] Lee: You knew him at school, didn't you, in your childhood?

Pawson: Yes, he was younger than me at school. There was Eric Platt, Edward Platt and I think Edward had a sister anyway, but Edward Platt was his older brother, two or three of years older than he was, and also Edward was just a little older than me I think – not too much. Eric Platt was the younger, so I didn't really ... I knew Eric at school, sure, but he wasn't in my group that did things together or anything like that. But when we both realised we were going to the Antarctic, we got a bit more contact but I was still out with his brother, hiking if anything, although we didn't do too much together, Edward and I. Sometimes we had arguments but we ... Yes, I knew them at school. I knew other people better at school because I did more things with them.

[Part 2 0:11:40] Lee: There tends to be a feeling, in the Antarctic, when a tragedy happens, 'There but for the grace of God, go we.'

Pawson: A feeling that it might have been we, you mean?

[Part 2 0:11:54] Lee: Yes.

Pawson: I'm sure. There's always a climb; when you are climbing you think 'By gosh ...' I was on a Mountain Rescue for about twenty years or something, after I came back from the Antarctic and every time you pick up a body or bits and pieces of a body, you realise it could have been someone else, you know. Or yourself, even.

[Part 2 0:12:12] Lee: OK. I think he died of a heart attack, in fact, I believe. Is that correct?

Pawson: I think so. Someone dies, sure it's got to be something, and a heart attack seems to be the obvious thing, you know what I mean? But I don't know. I'm not a doctor. I didn't ... We all have our little bits of problems etcetera, much the same when we went down, but someone dies on the plateau with a heart attack. That's what happens sometimes in the Antarctic.

[Part 2 0:12:43] Lee: Whilst we are talking about Admiralty Bay, let me just try you on this question which may surprise you. Did you ever hear about a murder attempt at that base?

Pawson: May I ask you where you got your information from about that? It wasn't from Fiennes's book by any chance?

[Part 2 0:13:02] Lee: I interviewed Ian Biggs and Jack Reid a few years ago and Ian explained that at one point in their year.

Pawson: By this interview?

[Part 2 0:13:15] Lee: Ian Biggs.

Pawson: What's the last name?

[Part 2 0:13:19] Lee: Biggs with a B.

Pawson: Oh Ian Biggs? Oh was it Pat Biggs. Ian? OK, I knew a Pat Biggs. I think it was one of them we have just been talking about.

[Part 2 0:13:34] Lee: Ian Biggs was at Admiralty Bay with Jack Reid and some Falklanders ...

Pawson: I thought his name was Pat, though. OK go ahead. It must be the same guy I guess.

[Part 2 0:13:46] Lee: Yes, the same. Did you ever hear rumours of a murder attempt?

Pawson: Data on the murder attempt – are you going to put that in?

[Part 2 0:13:56] Lee: At Admiralty Bay in 1948?

Pawson: In the year that I was at Port Lockroy?

[Part 2 0:14:05] Lee: Yes. Did you ever hear any rumours about that?

Pawson: About a murder attempt at Admiralty Bay?

[Part 2 0:14:11] Lee: Yes, that's right.

Pawson: No.

[Part 2 0:14:14] Lee: OK.

Pawson: But the reason I asked you was that ...I don't know whether you read Fiennes' book *The Secret Hunters*?

[Part 2 0:14:24] Lee: Go on.

Pawson: Have you read that?

[Part 2 0:14:27] Lee: No.

Pawson: That's a whole mass of information you haven't got then. In his book, *The Secret Hunters*, it brings in all ... That's how I got in touch with Ran Fiennes, You know, the guy who did the Trans Polar trip, the explorer. Because I got a phone call one day. This was, six, ten years ago, something like that, a phone call one day and this voice said, English voice said 'I was wondering if you could tell me anything about ... would it be possible for one person to ...?' He didn't say 'one person' while that's obviously what he meant, something like that 'to come up from the Peltier Channel at the back of Luigi Peak, and to come up there onto some glacier eventually.' I said 'Well first of all, may I ask you who you are and why you are asking these questions?' He said 'My name is Ran Fiennes.' 'You mean Sir Ranulph Fiennes, the explorer?' He said 'Yes, but I didn't really want to mention that.' So I said 'When I am talking to people I would like to know as a matter of interest why you are asking these particular questions?'

[Part 2 0:16:18] Pawson: He said 'Well ...' He was writing a book on it anyway about Jim Bold, that sort of thing, everything from the death camps in the war to weird things happening down in the Antarctic, and this was part of it. So I said 'That's interesting.' 'Firstly' he said 'I am asking you because you are from England, BAS etc.', and he said 'As far as they know, the only person still living that's been behind that particular mountain range, is a guy who lived in Calgary at present.' I said 'Well that is partly correct. I am never quite sure who has been down there.' I said 'Well personally we were trying to go the other way, and it was only a short trip just to look. We decided it was too dangerous and too difficult to go any further down. We were justified as our sledge was dropping apart. In fact I think we fixed it up with a six-pound can of beans for the last few days during the ..., underneath all the runners.' Then he said 'Yes but sometimes it is often more difficult to go down than up, and the way the wood is.' And so I realised I knew I was just talking to somebody who had some idea what it was like, unlike the average person. He knew something about what he was talking about. So I said 'Yes, that is quite correct. It is often quite easier to climb up than to come down generally, as a matter of fact. It's like coming down a ladder, you know. It's quite often easier to go up the thing than turn round and come down it. So anyway I said 'Why are you asking?'

[Part 2 0:18:27] Pawson: Eventually a rather interesting story came out about he had been on a cruise ship for a time after the war and everything and he had got to this place southwest, southeast, south anyway of Port Lockroy. I have forgotten the name of the damn thing. It was a base at one time; it was going to be but it finished up ... They found this big book there, like a record of someone, someone's diary, someone's shipping diary I think, in which it mentions various things about people down there and it did actually involve a case of possibly, a case of murder down near Port Lockroy. It is a bit of a mixed up story but he said the pages were stuck together when they found it and so they pulled them apart and eventually checked with BAS. I remember Alan Carroll told me of this too. I am still not sure really what it did relate to, that story. Fiennes has always called it a novel because it was something he couldn't verify it as such. I was talking to Dick Butson on the phone about this once. 'Yes, Ken.' He named so many names of people, things and actual events back in the war camp days, the death marches really. So something occurred which somebody had recorded, but as I say, I am still not sure exactly what actually happened. But it brings Port Lockroy and various other places into it, in those days and parties looking for them, and of course money and gold and all those things come into it. But I suggest you get a copy of his book, the *Secret Hunters* and it will give you lots of references.

[Part 2 0:21:06] Pawson: You can put your own thoughts to the thing afterwards. So when you mentioned murders that's the only case I could think of. I had never heard of one of our guys on our bases. Then go for a case at Admiralty Bay when we were there actually. On one occasion – this was when we were about to leave and we had this new guy come in, and we had a gentleman in there, Joe whatever his name was, he used to spend a lot of his time making pots, lobster pots. He was a fisherman in Scotland. I think it was Christmas Eve, New Year's Day or something, I remember we were celebrating dinner. And suddenly Joe went outside with a shotgun, he just walked out the door. We heard a couple of shots. We said 'My God, he's shot himself.' We went out. Old Joe was coming in, enjoying half a glass of beer or something, and he said 'That's something we always do on our Scottish Island, a

couple of shots on New Year's Day.' I remember Dan Jardine saying 'I am from Airdrie up there. I never remember that. Is that right anyway?' So I mean there's all sorts of things that could easily figure in stories, but I am never quite sure. I have heard more weird things happen in the Borneo jungle than I have in Antarctica.

[Part 2 0:23:00] Lee: That's reassuring.

Pawson: More things happen in Calgary. I am sure Shrewsbury<sup>6</sup> probably gets a few.

[Part 2 0:23:10] Lee: Let me ask you about some of the climbing you did down there. Tell me about the first ascent of Jabet Peak.

Pawson: OK. Now whether it was the actual first ascent is a question mark because I think ... Speaking to Alan Carroll who has been there since then, I have a feeling that people may have gone up the ascent that we thought looked like an obvious track, looking from base, but I always felt it was avalanche prone. It might have been. So as we were at BAS many times, over what we used to call Harbour Glacier behind the range, behind Jabet, and I had always seen this steeper route, but what I would say was a safe route. A safe route if you didn't fall; any area can be dangerous. I thought if I was going up Jabet Peak, I would go from that way, and the reason I did that was that John Blyth had told me that when he was there with 'Scout' Marr's crowd, he took a couple of years before, Marr and the surveyor Andy - I can't think of his name, Canadian Major, Andy - what the dickens was his name? He was ... He did one of the first maps down there at Port Lockroy. I think he said either Marr or one of the crowd there, always one or two to come along the range at Jabet and climbed Noble Peak which is at the other end of the range from Jabet Peak.

[Part 2 0:25:28] Lee: Would this be Captain Andy Taylor?

Pawson: Oh Andy Taylor, that's the one.

[Part 2 0:25:35] Lee: Good. Carry on.

Pawson: Andy Taylor, yes. A great guy as a matter of fact. A good guy, Andy Taylor. I met him a few times since. He lived in Winnipeg and in fact in Calgary one day we were having a dinner for something, I don't know what; it was Antarctic. It was a survey occasion of some kind, and one of the fellows said 'Ken there is a guy here; you might be interested in meeting him. He was down in the Antarctic.' I saw this ... well he came up and he said 'I'm Andy Taylor.' I said 'Andy Taylor? My God, I was given your map when I got down there.' I said 'What surveying in Canada?' And he said 'Add anything you can to this map. This is Andy Taylor's map.' So we shook hands and it is such a small world in a way.

[Part 2 0:26:33] Lee: But tell me about your ascent. Was it easy? Were there any dangers?

Pawson: It depends to what extent ... on what you mean by 'easy'. I thought it looked as though we should be able to get up this steep ice, bit of a gully and get back, so

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<sup>6</sup> Eldon Lee was conducting the Skype interview from Shrewsbury.

John Blyth, it was John and myself. It was Bill Richards and myself; I am sure it was Bill. He hadn't climbed before or anything but he was a damn good guy. All Falkland Islanders are pretty handy at most things. They are mostly good on horses, or they are good on ships, all kind of boats. So if you give them something and tell them it is a climb, they will soon find ... They are good men to be with.

[Part 2 0:27:31] Lee: Was it dangerous? Did you have a difficult moment?

Pawson: Any climb in some situations can be dangerous. It wasn't dangerous in the sense you are probably thinking of but it could have been. We went up about 600 feet a near-vertical couloir, cutting ice steps and chopping all these holes and a rope, got to the top of this thing and let's see ... We got into a bit of a wind scoop, couloir at the back of the range, traversed round to the left and up a little, and came out onto the face that we would have been on, or above that. It was Jabet Peak, and instead of coming up the route that that I thought most people would probably want to do that, we had come up the glacier here, up and around, back onto this here. And so I considered that the whole lot, because it was unknown, and depending on snow conditions, it could have been either dangerous or more or less a cakewalk. But the thing is, you never know. So you have got to treat it with all the safety ... And we climbed up and it was, as far as I was concerned, a reasonably straightforward climb, but there was always one patch where .... At the top of this thing we had come up, it was like frozen scree: it was neither good enough for an ice axe to go in or ... It was in-between conditions, if you know what I mean. You could always slip here, if you know what I mean, and that was always a bit risky.

[Part 2 0:29:22] Lee: So was there ever an accident on Jabet Peak?

Pawson: Yes sure, I had one myself.

[Part 2 0:29:28] Lee: Tell me about that.

Pawson: Well yes, OK. This wasn't ... I went up several times.

[Part 2 0:29:35] Lee: Yes, this was later?

Pawson: This was later, yes. But John Blyth, I remember I took John up because he wanted to put a flagpole or something up on Jabet Peak, and I must admit I thought it would be a good idea to get a pole up there, in sight of our instruments. So we, he and I went up there at a later date and it was when we were coming back from that ... We went up the route that we had gone up the September before and when we were coming back we had got across this nasty icy patch but the snow temperatures ... Sometimes the snow temperature when you're climbing is ... it varies. It can be easy to cut a step and feel safe with it and at other times it can ... just a few degrees can make a difference whether it grips your ice axe. And this was one of the occasions when I got my ice axe in and I had come back down and I had lowered John down to a crevasse that you have got to cross from the couloir that we had come up to the wind scoop at the back. And I remember I had lowered John down to where he was just above ... He was anchored in just above this bergschrund, this crevasse, the final crevasse on the mountain that separates the ... I turned round to come down after lowering him to his belay.

[Part 2 0:31:27] Pawson: My ice axe had gone in beautiful condition. I put it in like that; the moment I turned a little bit and twisted it and pulled it. The bloody thing was [??? Incomprehensible]. I couldn't ... It held me for a second and pulled me off balance because I couldn't get my axe out. I just went enough to ... for my grip and everything on the axe to be lost, so I was trying to hold on and I went down. And I remember seeing John sixty feet or so below me, trying, rope-racing in the slack as I ... I remember thinking 'My God, John. I hope you stop me either just above this bloody crevasse or let me jump it.' You know what I mean? So I don't remember brilliant thoughts, of your whole life and family flashing in front of you. What I remember is thinking 'Well, not a good situation.' By this time I shot off a bit of an ice edge and was spinning in the air and I remember I was going to hit the crevasse above John somewhere but I hoped to God he would let me either jump the bloody thing or stop before it. You are going upside down, inside out, and I remember still thinking to myself 'When I do hit the ground, I have got to dig in slowly, dig in slowly ... don't jam your ...' I think we had crampons on. We must have had. Don't jam your heels in quickly and try and stop; otherwise you will catapult again.

[Part 2 0:33:12] Pawson: Your training or your experience comes back to you in those moments. You do the right thing and you might get through there. So anyway eventually I hit the thing and stopped. I stopped some several hundred feet lower, whatever rope he had left. And we, let's see, I called 'Are you OK?' And we had to go back up, you see. He had come down to where I was then. We were both stopped halfway up this steep icy couloir. We had nothing really to climb with. We had my ice axe up there and God knows where his was. I think his was somewhere up there as well. I know we had to go back up. So I had to get my hunting knife which I pulled out and I cut steps with this hunting knife to get up to where the high camp was. It was ... If anyone did it when I was taking them out on a glacier somewhere here, I would say 'What a fool.' And yet it wasn't really a 'bloody fool' situation. Every possible thing at the moment was just wrong for holding on to something. But even so, no-one ever gets away without an accident when I am teaching them to climb. I think it was one of those situations.

[Part 2 0:34:57] Lee: Were you lucky to live?

Pawson: I was lucky yes, and unlucky in one way. It's always difficult to know where to draw the line, especially when you are doing new routes and things, because there is a point where you are trying to go a little bit beyond perhaps what you should do, true. But it's not one of those things where you should or you shouldn't, you know what I mean? But you sometimes walk a line which is a bit finer perhaps than normal.

[Part 2 0:35:39] Lee: So do you think you therefore took risks then, when you were in the Antarctic?

Pawson: Everybody takes risks whatever they are doing, wherever they are climbing, but are they justifiable risks or are they stupid risks? I don't know whether you have read any of my poetry or not, but in one of my poems there – it's about Mountain Rescue days – I call it *An hour ago*. 'He sat serenely on the mountain summit an hour ago and now you have got a body at your feet. You are trying to ... you want to look at this body and say "You bloody fool. What are you trying to do? Prove

something?” So when you have seen enough situations like that, and they are not pleasant. You do what you can to help somebody but yes sure, everybody takes risks at some time but are these justifiable risks? I mean you take risks at the level of it when you cross the road in your car or whatever. You might think ‘Well yes, there’s a ... so I can get across.’ But you might never become sure. You can’t avoid risks, having brought them down to a limit.

[Part 2 0:37:13] Lee: Let me ask you about manhauling, because you did do a fair bit of manhauling whilst you were down there.

Pawson: Yes.

[Part 2 0:37:19] Lee: What sort of things would you think about, because it is quite a long slog isn’t it, manhauling? What would you think about when you were doing it?

Pawson: Everything from the next foot on this surface to maybe a girlfriend you knew, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, whatever. Or what you are going to get to eat in the day. All kinds of thoughts go through your head. I think I have tried to explain some of those thoughts in my book. All I can say it’s a fairly accurate idea of how things might go, or might not go and so on.

[Part 2 0:38:03] Lee: Would have ever had spiritual or religious thoughts about the majesty of the Antarctic, or God’s creativity?

Pawson: You ask some interesting questions, Chris.

[Part 2 0:38:19] Lee: It’s my job, Ken.

Pawson: I know lots of people and all their jobs but I don’t know that they ask interesting questions.

[Part 2 0:38:29] Lee: What can you say in answer to that question?

Pawson: It was more than just an average experience but the thing is: I can look back on jungle experiences which were even more strange. I can explain pretty well everything that happened when I got back on Antarctica. I can’t explain everything that happened when I got back on Borneo or on the Pacific islands. There were so many things that were beyond our normal .... ‘Oh well we will explain it when we know more science.’ The things that happened in the Antarctic, sure you can always put weights and measures on them down there and everything. But some of the experiences in the jungle days, I still don’t know what happened; I’m still not sure.

[Part 2 0:39:25] Lee: I am thinking more about the majesty and the spirituality of the Antarctic, that pristine nature, whether you were in awe of it?

Pawson: OK, that’s a popular idea that’s done by tourism, to tell you the truth, but you could get the same experience an hour away from home in the Rockies here, just the same.

[Part 2 0:39:49] Lee: OK.

Pawson: Tourism and the tourist industry, I don't have much time for them, but they push this business of the majesty and the awe and everything else. I don't have a great deal of ... I mean it is majestic and awe, I grant you that, but ending up at [???' incomprehensible] too even ...

[Part 2 0:40:17] Lee: Your old base, Port Lockroy, now receives thousands of tourists a year.

Pawson: Oh God, it's horrible. I would never dream of going there. I think it's something, was it seventeen thousand at Port Lockroy a year. A few years ago they sent me some results. I am not saying they shouldn't do, but is it's not my Antarctic. No-one can ever ever ever see it today and think they have been and seen the Antarctic as it was, the Antarctic that attracted us down there, that's for sure.

[Part 2 0:41:00] Lee: You were there really quite shortly after the Scott and Shackleton heroic years. I wonder whether you ever thought about that connection between what you were doing and what Scott and Shackleton ...

Pawson: Not very often but we sometimes thought 'Oh good God, we are the first persons been here since then.' Obviously there were ties but the newspapers and the people that write about these bloody fools etcetera, some of them write a bunch of crap, you know what I mean? They are wanting death and drama but they don't want us to say a straightforward report that these guys were so likely to get to the top, or whatever.

[Part 2 0:41:46] Lee: Shall we move on? Let's move on. Let's talk about other things.

Pawson: Whatever want. Chris?

[Part 2 0:42:05] Lee: There are two things in your book which took me by surprise. This is about manhauling. One was using snowballs in a whiteout. Now I have not read that or heard that from anybody else except from you, so tell me how you used snowballs in a whiteout.

Pawson: Snowballs in a what?

[Part 2 0:42:25] Lee: Snowballs in a whiteout?

Pawson: Yes, it's just something to give you a contrast for a moment, and a snowball is not white; it's compressed, just something you know for a moment that you can focus your eyes on more than a few feet, which you can't otherwise. So it's a way of getting a look by just giving a quick glimpse of better perspective.

[Part 2 0:43:00] Lee: So what is the problem in a whiteout?

Pawson: Everything disappears. You can't tell distance. You can step over a cliff with a hundred foot drop, when it's five feet away. It all disappears to about the same distance. You don't have a good grasp of distance.

[Part 2 0:43:43] Lee: And how does throwing a snowball help?

Pawson: For a moment it is a dark different thing. You know when you make a snowball, it's not just a white ... when you were at school. You can see it for a few moments, yes? You focus down to that area of you are interested in, five, ten, fifteen feet away.

[Part 2 0:43:47] Lee: So it gives you perspective, does it?

Pawson: Perspective, yes, sure.

[Part 2 0:43:54] Lee: Yes, OK.

Pawson: You want to get it better but you want help with perspective when come against a bloody wall.

[Part 2 0:44:01] Lee: It's just amazing that nobody else seems to have done that, apart from your year.

Pawson: I don't know. I have heard climbers mention it often.

[Part 2 0:44:10] Lee: OK. The other thing that you did, which again I was interested in, is shouting in poor visibility.

Pawson: Not a very good system, but it's better than nothing sometimes.

[Part 2 0:44:28] Lee: How does it work?

Pawson: Well it comes back up. If you are in a narrow chasm and you shout, if the time that it takes the echo to come back from this side and that side, you are somewhere in the middle of the thing. But if it takes twice as long from one way or the other, then you know damn well that you are closer to one side than the other.

[Part 2 0:44:51] Lee: So it's a way of keeping a kind of middle path through a chasm?

Pawson: It is, yes. It's a way of holding to it because the rock walls may vary in contour and everything else. My son is a climber and, a better climber than I. He'll not like walking between two exact things, knowing where the edge ... it gives you some idea.

[Part 2 0:45:22] Lee: And it is advantageous to stay in the middle to avoid avalanches?

Pawson: Well if you are trying to avoid things falling from one side or the other, it depends which side they are coming from. If you are in the middle both, because otherwise you might get first a wall that's more avalanche than the other, but it isn't always. Sometimes the route might be near one side but you don't always know. This is when you are dabbling with unknowns.

[Part 2 0:45:48] Lee: A classic example of common sense, isn't it?

Pawson: Yes, sure. I suppose so, or common stupidity whichever it is.

[Part 2 0:45:59] Lee: Let me ask you a bit more about the Met work you were doing, the Met station you set up, because I understand you had some problems early on with the local ... with the dogs and the birds.

Pawson: Oh them pissing over the sun gauge, was it?

[Part 2 0:46:17] Lee: Was it dogs piddling in the rain gauge?

Pawson: Yes I think that was it. I am sure I remember about that now you mention it. I had forgotten all about it. Yes you see this rain gauge and you sometimes find a dog had ... Of course, mind you, it wasn't only a rain gauge. If you stand still for a few moments and you might suddenly find your left foot getting warm. You look and the bugger is pissing inside your boot. So it can happen, yes, sure.

[Part 2 0:46:50] Lee: And what was the problem with birds on the sunshine record?

Pawson: Birds on the weather gear? What was the problem? I can't remember specifically.

[Part 2 0:47:05] Lee: On the sunshine records?

Pawson: I honestly can't recollect.

[Part 2 0:47:12] Lee: OK. Don't worry. It's fine. You just had the two dogs at Port Lockroy?

Pawson: Yes, we had Pretty and Peter. Pretty was a bitch from – I am saying this in the right sense of the word, not saying she was a bitch. She was a bitch. She was from Hope Bay, she started off at, I think, maybe one of Frank Elliott's original dogs. And Peter was an American dog, not much bloody use but was a friend of the thing, but he was better than nothing if you wanted to add a bit of weight to a team.

[Part 2 0:47:57] Lee: Did they breed?

Pawson: Did they breed? Well something bred with, I can't think of her name, I mentioned that. Yes because that's right, Pretty did have some pups. That's right, they must have bred, yes. I will have to look back through my record now. Yes, she had these pups in a blasted Norwegian, an old wooden barge, because she had the pups inside there and we had dynamite and all kind of stuff we used to wheel in there. It was not too far from base. So I remember going and feeding her, a bitch with pups. There were sticks of whatever it was, dynamite stuff lying around. I remember John cutting a hole into the side of the barge so we could get through and avoid walking through all those damn dynamite, to feed the pups. Otherwise unusual things happen. Yes, I forgot all about that.

[Part 2 0:49:18] Lee: Did they survive?

Pawson: No, I think we purposely were told to get rid of any pups that we didn't ... Yes, we wouldn't have let an American dog like Peter breed with them. They were no bloody use anyway. I think we got rid of them. I would have to look at my records and see whether we got rid of them. I think we did. You can't afford just toy dogs or things that are not going to be any use to you, feed and take food rations from dogs that are working. That's why you have to get rid of dogs sometimes.

[Part 2 0:50:00] Lee: I believe you heard about Pretty's death from the radio?

Pawson: About Pretty? Yes. Well I didn't hear about her pups from there but I heard about her death. It was Bill Sladen, Dr Bill Sladen saying one night on this BBC Antarctic .... They had a programme on every two weeks or so, I think it was, *Calling Antarctica*, or something like that, and I think we heard from ... Yes I remember a guy there saying 'Bill Sladen says that Ken Pawson will be interested to learn that Pretty had passed away.' Yes, that's right. Yes, I remember that.

[Part 2 0:50:44] Lee: That was in 1950?

Pawson: 1950? It would be about that, yes.

[Part 2 0:50:53] Lee: Tell me about leaving Port Lockroy, because was it to be closed down when you left?

Pawson: Yes, it was. Well as far as we knew it was anyway. It was to be closed down for ... Yes it was. I think it was closed down for a year wasn't it<sup>7</sup>?

[Part 2 0:51:12] Lee: So were you having to clear it completely?

Pawson: No I am not quite sure. We took all the valuable main stuff away. I am sure it shifted around I don't remember what happened after that. I don't know what happened.

[Part 2 0:51:32] Lee: When you left it, did you leave it just like you would at the end of any working day or did you empty it?

Pawson: Oh I don't think we had time to, as you say, empty it, but I think we shipped out the main things as you do, as any other base might want ... I just can't be sure. It's hard to say about these things of course. Once you start a move a lot like that going, you never know who's involved and who has ordered, levels and whatever.

[Part 2 0:52:03] Lee: Can you remember why they decided to close it?

Pawson: Not particularly, except it wasn't the best place for a weather station, I can tell you that. One of the reasons: it was a very variable weather system inside there, a little local system. But beyond that, I'm not sure. All sorts of decisions get made. You sometimes wonder who, what bloody fool thought of this one, you know what I mean? The same as during the war days. You are never quite sure, you orders sometimes come from, what it is for ... In a sense you salute and carry on, you know?

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<sup>7</sup> Port Lockroy was closed from 15 February 1949 until 23 January 1950 (BAS website).

[Part 2 0:52:47] Lee: Were you sad to leave?

Pawson: Sad to leave? Not particularly, no. I was going somewhere else. I didn't want to ... I almost got back there. You see they weren't sure what the hell they were doing at that time because they weren't sure where they were going to open a new base somewhere else. We were supposed to go down to Alexander Island and so was Dan Jardine. Various screw-ups occurred and I remember there was a real mix-up. There were times when people weren't ... Some were feeling happy and some were feeling unhappy about what was going on. But no, I wasn't sorry to leave Port Lockroy but I was willing to go back if that was the only way I could stay on the Antarctic and then Jardine ... I remember saying 'Give me a team of dogs and Jardine and I could ...' He was a good man, Dan Jardine. I could always enjoy with him. 'Sure, I will open it again for you.' But it was a very mixed-up situation. It was a time when I remember thinking that ... I had lost a lot of faith, I must admit, in some of the people that were doing the planning in England and that sort of stuff. You were never really sure what was happening but you can't really blame people back there. You think sometimes and we thought 'My God, you wouldn't organise a Scout camp like this.'

[Part 2 0:54:38] Lee: You were transferred to Admiralty Bay on the *Biscoe*.

Pawson: Yes, I went to Admiralty Bay, yes sure.

[Part 2 0:54:52] Lee: And the dogs were picketed on the deck and you had to rescue them.

Pawson: Yes, sure. We got into a rolling centre in a pretty bad sea, I remember, and we'd got a bunch of Hope Bay dogs which we had picked up. I guess we got them on board from Base E, from Marguerite Bay, where Frank Elliott ... Frank Elliott passed away not too long ago, you remember?

[Part 2 0:55:29] Lee: Yes. I heard, yes.

Pawson: The team he had brought down, which was the Yaps team of course, well one of them. So I think we picked them up at ... Yes, we picked them at Marguerite Bay to take them eventually to Alexander Island. But anyway everything else screwed up with the ship not having the right oil and we were having to wait. Delays and all kinds of things that were a bit of a mix up and ... So I lose track of just what happened sometimes.

[Part 2 0:56:15] Lee: What do you remember of rescuing these dogs from the ship's deck?

Pawson: On the ship's deck? Oh yes, well we ... The ship was rolling pretty badly, the deck over. I remember we stood around with bits of rope, trying to get to any dog before it hung itself, hanging over the side of the ship. Next morning I think we did find one bitch with dead pups lying by her side in a barge that tilted. Yes, I remember going there and the dogs were just looking pretty miserable. They were so grateful, I think, when someone actually arrived and put a rope round their collar or something and pulled them out. Yes, I remember that now. I had forgotten about it.

[Part 2 0:57:18] Lee: You took them to the back of the ship, to the rear of the ship?

Pawson: I think so. I just can't be absolutely sure now. Put them somewhere safe from the off rolls.

[Part 2 0:57:29] Lee: But was that a risky thing to do, for the humans?

Pawson: A bit risky, I guess, yes. This is why it might be a horse or dog. You can do risky things to save a horse sometimes. My dad was in the Army with horses and did lots of risky things to save the horses.

[Part 2 0:57:57] Lee: Tell me about working with Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith.

Pawson: A great man.

[Part 2 0:58:02] Lee: At Camp Glacier. Well tell me about him and the work you were doing with him.

Pawson: Well Geoff was a glaciologist essentially, studying glaciers. It started up in Iceland obviously, Switzerland and the Alps. He was well-known in the climbing world and in the polar world of course. Mind you, he hadn't done his work up in Ellesmere Island by that time but he was known in the climbing sphere and he was a good man. We get along, holiday together. I helped him with digging these holes on the glacier, digging by spade, you know, 35 feet or so in the ice, wide enough to work in. And a box full of ice chips to go out, the next load you get down deeper and deeper. Then we would try and drill down from the bottom of the pit and things like that.

[Part 2 0:59:20] Lee: Was that a hand-powered drill?

Pawson: Yes, hand-powered. Hand-powered or foot-powered, I can't remember. It wasn't a ...

[Part 2 0:59:33] Lee: Man-powered?

Pawson: Yes, I don't remember us ever having anything with power or anything like that, no.

[Part 2 0:59:41] Lee: And what were you doing? What were you trying to measure?

Pawson: He was trying to measure temperature gradients – different temperatures from the surface to down wherever he could get to, trying to get deep enough to see different ice structures and things like that. But he was looking for temperature changes and gradients. I was just a surveyor who could tell him where his bloody hole was but what he was going to find in it and get out of it, I didn't have the slightest idea in those days. So as long as I could tell him where I put his hole, it was OK, I was useful. But what this bloody thing was trying to do at the time, I wasn't always sure. But he was a good man.

[Part 2 1:00:32] Lee: Yes. You also did quite a long sledging trip right around the island, in 37 days.

Pawson: Yes, that was a short trip compared with what you were doing in Antarctica if you had been down at Marguerite Bay or some place. They did about a thousand miles trips. But it depends on ... A sledge trip isn't measured by just time. It's a different business going through etcetera and the country we were .... I remember Frank Elliott once saying, when I go back to re-open the Hope Bay base, he said ... I said 'Well we only just sledged at King George Island etc.' He said 'Ken,' he said 'If you can sledge on King George Island, you can sledge anywhere.' I wouldn't say that was completely true, but all I am saying, it is a measure of the ... Distance, so many things come into it, and King George Island was a pretty nasty mess, with glaciers here and there and variable ice and other things, but yes, we did about 37, I think it was 37 days on one occasion, but it was 33 or 34 on another one. Several shorter ones, you know?

[Part 2 1:01:59] Lee: Was this to map the island or was it just a recreational trip?

Pawson: Oh these weren't recreational trips. These were to map the bloody thing, or to get some rock structures or something. Or to do something that the Government wanted or what we wanted, whatever.

[Part 2 1:02:20] Lee: It was work?

Pawson: They weren't recreational trips. We only did one or two trips which were a class of climbing. About fifteen miles out and back, to climb a certain peak if Geoff and I wanted to climb it, and we could always find ... There was a regulation down there, which Bunny Fuchs sent: 'No climbing for climbing's sake'. So we could always find a reason for something, without pushing it too far. You could always say 'I am a surveyor. I want to get a shot, or something like that. It is a pity that thing hasn't got a nice pinnacle. I had better go up there and ...' So there were very few recreational trips just as such, but if there were they were just a few. I remember we did one or two on skis. We used to travel with the lightest equipment; we were on skis, and we had very light ... we look very light Alpine line with us, just so it wasn't heavy rope. Just doubled the line if we needed it. We were pretty reasonably good on what we were doing, so we travelled safely.

[Part 2 1:03:49] Lee: I was surprised to read that you found man-made objects on that trip.

Pawson: I'm sorry I am just trying to get your voice. Can you go again? What was that?

[Part 2 1:04:01] Lee: I was surprised to read in the book that you found man-made objects on that trip.

Pawson: Man-made objects? Oh, you mean from the German expedition?

[Part 2 1:04:12] Lee: Yes.

Pawson: Well they had been there, when was it? 1870 I think it was. Yes, we'd come over the over the plateau and Two something Bay. We found an old cauldron from the ships' sailing days for boiling the whales when the whales were there, the sealers. Oh yes, we found that and we found the Argentines' ... Yes, that's right, we found the dump that the Argentines ... when we were on – which trip was it? Oh yes, it was earlier at Port Lockroy when we were stuck on Doumer Island, the three of us – yes, three of us. And we opened a depot there – the Argentines' – just to make sure it had food; we weren't sure if it had or not. We thought 'If we are stuck here, we want to be able to know whether there is food here we are opening or if it is just something, rock collection or something'. So we opened it up and we found that it was food. We put a note in saying we had opened it and that we hadn't taken anything. In fact we put one bar of chocolate back in. One of ours we said, we thanked them for it. So yes, we found that too.

[Part 2 1:05:53] Lee: OK. You also found fossils, which took you by surprise, plant fossils?

Pawson: Oh gosh yes. You would think you had walked into a museum. Yes, that was on King George Island, at the end of what we called Camp Glacier – I don't know what it's called now. I think it's got a Polish name to it. We were walking along the beach and it was just like walking into a museum. It was a huge book's open, with all these fossilised leaves there. It was just amazing. I remember that, now you mention it. Yes it was an area of several square yards anyway, and it was just as though you had walked in ... There were rocks and you could open them to show you the fossils. It was fantastic.

[Part 2 1:07:01] Lee: Did you take any home with you?

Pawson: No, you weren't allowed to do so. That doesn't mean to say I didn't find a little craft that dropped somewhere. But no, we respected that area because we knew we were dealing with pretty precious things.

[Part 2 1:07:19] Lee: What you did do, and this again surprised me, is you brought some emperor penguins home with you.

Pawson: Emperor penguins?

[Part 2 1:07:33] Lee: Yes, for London Zoo.

Pawson: I didn't, but come to think of it, they did have some on the ship coming ... which they brought back I think from the Dion Islands or somewhere. Because the Festival of Britain was coming on, and there were so many things being done just to please the Festival of Britain, I'm sure, many many different things, not just from ... other parts of the world too. So yes, I seem to think that there were some penguins, some emperors brought up from the Dion Islands or somewhere like that. They were on the *Biscoe* I think, yes.

[Part 2 1:08:09] Lee: You say in your book that ... you talked about the values of your parents.

Pawson: We were brought up on old Yorkshire principles. If you can exist in a Yorkshire winter, you have probably got a good start for the Antarctic, you know what I mean? Somebody who is used to the Yorkshire moors, or a cold. A kid from the Canadian prairies is probably more experienced in cold weather than anybody in England was in those days. You were making your plans in England. A kid would be riding a horse to school and knowing how to look after himself in cold weather. They were there making plans in England back in those years, they were ignorant you know.

[Part 2 1:09:00] Lee: Looking back on this now, Ken, seventy years later, how do you regard those Antarctic years? Are they a highlight of your life?

Pawson: Oh they were great. I enjoyed them. But I have had stranger and different ... I think when we were in Borneo, soon after we got married, they were just as wonderful. But I did enjoy the Antarctic I must admit.

[Part 2 1:09:45] Lee: Did the Antarctic change you?

Pawson: Well I wouldn't say it has changed me at all. It made me ... I was planning to go back on the polar journey but all sorts of things got screwed around different, and yes, any journey should change you to some extent if you need changing, if you've just done it. Not just the Antarctic. You can go in a blizzard in those hills at the back of the house here and people could change a bit when you come back from it. But sure, it gives you different ideas obviously. When you have lived in the middle of the desert, probably more so, if you know what I mean. But as I say, the tourist trade, they just have to capitalise on these things, as though are going to see God or something. I don't have too much for the tourism as it is pushed in the papers and everything else. They are a load of crap, some of them. You can go and get in your car and go back in the Rockies here and you can find the ... I am sure it is slightly different but a lonely area should give you the same exact feelings too.

[Part 2 1:11:07] Lee: On the other hand, if it was not for the tourist income, Port Lockroy would be derelict by now.

Pawson: You are probably right, yes. I don't know. I always said we should have kept the dogs in and the tourists out. I wrote to England and told them that. But I must admit I am a bit wearied of all that. It's like going to a Pacific island. You have these damn big tourist ships now. When Jean and I were there, there were not tourist ships; there were working schooners and things. And once you have put a 4000-passenger ship tourist ship out in the base, it's no longer some remote Pacific Island. It's gone for ever. You can't tell me you have got various things, unloading 4000 people in ... That's no longer a remote Pacific island; that's just a bloody tourist ship again.

[Part 2 1:12:20] Lee: I tend to agree. Ken, it has been an absolute pleasure. Thank you very very much indeed

Pawson: Oh thank you.

[Part 2 1:12:28] [End of Part Two]  
ENDS

Possible extracts:

- [Part 1 0:23:54] An improvised tooth filling.
- [Part 1 0:38:18] Encounter with a leopard seal.
- [Part 1 0:42:10] Surviving on short rations.
- [Part 1 0:50:02] Old Captain - a king dog and lead dog.
- [Part 2 0:05:36] Radio contact with Alaska.
- [Part 2 0:29:35] A fall when climbing Mount Jabet.
- [Part 2 0:47:12] Pretty and Peter - Port Lockroy dogs.