

Leek_Paul version 2 [11 June 2014]

Edited transcription of Paul Leek by Chris Eldon Lee on 20 November 2013. BAS Archives AD6/1/235.

Transcribed by David Price 7 June 2014.

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Paul Leek interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on 20th November 2013.

Paul Leek Part One.

Leek: My Name is Paul Hilton Leek and I was born in Sheffield, England.

[Part 1 0:00:25] Lee: When was that?

Leek: 25 July 1937.

[Part 1 0:00:26] Lee: So how old are you now Paul?

Leek: 76.

[Part1 0:00:28] Lee: Would you say your father was an educated man?

Leek: My father was a great guy, he was always proud of the fact that he was working class, whereas, looking back at it he wasn't really. He would have loved to be educated except for the fact that he had to leave school when he was ten because of family circumstances, but he was self-educated. Although he was a working guy he was um, the peculiar system that they had in Sheffield, he was a *little mester*¹, which meant that he was kind of freelance working in a Company, It's a weird and wonderful system. He claimed he was working class, he owned his own house, at one point he owned two houses and he owned a car, so by any measure he was basically middle class at the very least.

[Part 1 0:01:27] Lee: What was his career, what did he do?

Leek: He was referred to as an agricultural fitter, what he did was he made parts for agricultural machines. I believe during the war which he fortuitously missed, he missed the first world war because he was too young, the second World War came along, what happened was it started in 1939 and I believe the story is that when it started when he got to 1940 and things started to get a little tough he went round to the recruiting office and offered his services and the recruiting sergeant looked at him and said "Where do you work?" he said Spaffords and he said 'What do you do?' and me dad said I'm a fitter and the guy said 'look, you're better off making stuff to throw at the buggers than being over there trying to shoot at them.' Which was almost certainly true, so anyway, by this time he was forty one or two anyway, so he said 'You're too old anyway mate, go back and get to work.' So he probably

¹ A '*little mester*' is a self-employed worker who rents space in a factory or works for their own workshop, a system peculiar to Sheffield. Little mesters either worked alone or employed a small number of workers, most were employed in the cutlery or edge tools industry. The word 'mester' is believed to have been derived from 'master'.

made a fair amount of money, he always owned his own house; I don't think he ever had a mortgage but, even when he started out, but he always owned his own house.

[Part1 0:02:51] Lee: His name?

Leek: Harold, Harold Leek.

[Part1 0:02:54] Lee: And your Mum?

Leek: Me mother was Nora Leek. She was, they were both from Sheffield. Me mother's father, me grandfather, he was a barber, a hairdresser although he always referred to himself as a businessman.

[Part1 0:03:15] Lee: So what about your education Paul?

Leek: I went through the usual thing about Grammar School and then I went to Liverpool University and I got a Bachelor's degree in physics.

[Part1 0:03:27] Lee: Why did you, why were you attracted to physics, first of all, were you the first of your family to go to university?

Leek: Yes.

[Part1 0:03:33] Lee: And why did you choose physics?

Leek: I was very interested in... Well I was what is known nowadays as a nerd². I was the guy who, you know I had very little interest in girls; girls were too complicated for me. Social relations were too complicated so, I was um I was a sort of kid I was an awkward kid, I was always the awkward guy. I went to Grammar School which surprised the hell out of everybody because nobody thought, or at least my teachers were as surprised as I was to actually get into grammar school. I did reasonably well until I was fifteen, when we got to the O level, towards the O level I got into some trouble. The headmaster took me into his office and he said, you know 'What's happening, what's happening?' I said well you're making me take Latin, I hate Latin. You took away my two best subjects which were geography and woodwork. He said 'OK, you're going back. So, six months, I did six months of geography and woodwork and got an O level in both of them, just like that. I went from the bottom to the top of the class just like that. So, yes I liked that, if I like doing something I do well at it.

[Part1 0:04:58] Lee: So where did physics come in?

Leek: Physics came in because physics and maths and chemistry were the sort of things I really liked because they were concrete, you know. I could learn something and do something and learn, and I could read about it, learn something and do some experiments, and that was it. You know I knew what was going to happen, I liked to be able to work out things, consequences, you know, if someone showed me something and had to work it out, like a magic trick. You do a magic trick and I'll work out how you were going to do it. That's the way I am you see, now when it came to get ready for the university I was thinking about it, I was torn between physics and engineering. When I was at school, in the sixth form I did

² Nerd. A person who lacks social skills or is boringly studious. (OED)

physics, chemistry and double maths, pure and applied maths, double maths, I was very good at all of those and I was kind of deciding whether to do physics and engineering. I was kind of torn towards engineering because although I'm kind of interested in physics I'm not really a theoretical physicist. The Big Bang is a great idea but all these ideas they have about strength theory, I'm not really interested in, as far as I'm concerned they're a legend. I mean I'm sorry about it, I mean, people are interested, I maybe a nerd but I ain't quite that much of a nerd.

[Part1 0:06:39] Lee: Are you saying you like things where there's one correct answer?

Leek: Well, where I can work out an answer, yes. I like things where I can establish a definite cause and a definite effect; your personal relationships are much more difficult. Where you can think that so and so obviously should do such and such and damn me they don't, they do something completely different for other reasons. Anyway I like the concrete results and the concrete this, that and the other. So like you say I was thinking about the physics or engineering but the engineering, I came to the conclusion was more of a fixed answer, in other words, you've got a question here, you've got a fixed answer. I did like having a bit of flexibility plus the fact that engineering was, OK you did either electrical engineering or mechanical engineering or, I was really interested in electronics, but it didn't exist then, see. It was called radio or whatever but electronics didn't exist, so ok, so anyway I thought physics because physics, I do a lot of stuff and I get interested in all this stuff. You know, I can feel I can do a lot of stuff a lot of different stuff and I do. For instance my present job I'm designing linear accelerators and do a lot of electronics, you know; electronic work and stuff like that. Few years ago we had a problem and I had to do, to verify that a piece of building was ok and the welding was ok, I just looked my old book up and ok I've got the formula here I've got the...ok, it's set. So, you know, I like... I'm a Renaissance man³ I do everything. And as we say, you do everything well but you don't do everything perfectly. So that was my impulse. I really liked physics because you can... in those days, ok physics is this and that, but I realised later on physics was just a blooming mess. You've got all sorts of stuff, you've got optics, you've got electrics, you've got mechanics and all these different aspects are completely different but at the same time that allows you to do all sorts of stuff and know all sorts of stuff and use all sorts of stuff.

[Part1 0:09:29] Lee: It's a real conglomerate isn't it really?

Leek: It's a mess.

[Part1 0:09:34] Lee: Well ok, your words, not mine. Where did the interest in the Antarctic spring from then?

Leek: Well it came about like this, When I was at college, no, I went to college, I was doing all this stuff you see I kind of started to move away from being fixated on... I guess, what it amounts to is partly the fact that when you go to college, you are in high school or grammar school, what happens is that you're top of the school, a boy that... you know, he's a blooming genius and when you go to college and you meet another bunch of guys or girls, in my days it was mainly guys, all blooming genius's and you get to the stage where you, I'm not the sort of guy that competes on anything. So you say 'Ok, well that's fine.' I did a lot of stuff there and then I got more interested in outdoor work, I was already quite interested in

³ Renaissance man. A man of with many talents or areas of knowledge. (OED)

going outdoors doing backpacking and rock climbing and all this sort of stuff, so I was always interested in that sort of stuff and I got more interested when I was at college. So when I finished, when I got my degree I said 'ok,' in fact when I got my degree from the graduation ceremony I said to my dad 'Ok, I'll see you' and went up to the Lake District for a couple of weeks, rock climbing! So I was interested in the outdoors, mountaineering and all that sort of stuff.

[Part1 0:11:09] Lee: Had you read about the heroes, the Antarctic heroes?

Leek: I had to a certain extent but only vaguely. I hadn't been focussed on the Antarctic particularly.

[Part1 0:11:21] Lee: Had you had a yearning to go then?

Leek: I had no desperate yearning to go there, no; I had no desperate yearning to go anywhere. I never had a career path. I never worked on having a career path it was all a case of 'Ok play it by ear' you see, which has worked out very well. Ok play it by ear so what it amounts to is that I graduated from university, between you and me I was lucky that I did physics in those days because I got scholarships so that I got more than enough money from Derbyshire County Council, you know my parents didn't have to pay a dime and I didn't have to get any loans. That was in; these were the glory days of education which I think was supremely better than what we've got nowadays but anyway, whatever you guys have got is. But anyway, I maybe had a couple of bucks stored away, saved and anyway I went climbing for a couple of weeks up in the Lake District I think, got back and I thought 'well, ok, better get a job.' Oh, and there was another big factor, National Service.

[Part1 0:13:38] Lee: Right. To be avoided?

Leek: Well I wasn't particularly to be avoided it was a case of National Service was something you had to think about, see. Thinking back on it, it was really a paper tiger shall we say because looking back on it there was always any number of jobs that I could have got and I would have got deferred then, because what it amounts to is that I reached the stage. I'm not sure about the exact chronology but the year that I graduated was the year that they quit National Service. After that they were mopping up so I was going to be mopped up too. Later on I knew lots of guys who had basically got jobs with companies especially with electronics or radio, what the hell do you call it, radio, radar, radar, radio whatever it is, call it electronics. Electronics was kind of not quite invented as a word in those days, anyway I kind of, I got my favourite magazine which was *Wireless World* and I was looking through there and I saw this advert for FIDS you see. I thought that sounds kind of interesting, so I'll send them a letter saying 'Ok I'm interested' and they sent me a telegram back saying 'Ok come down.' So I went down to London, walked in the office and they said 'Who are you?' and I said 'I'm Paul Leek' they said 'Oh we thought you weren't coming we got a telegram saying you weren't coming;' I said 'Well, I'm here.' So they said 'Well ok, we'll interview you.' Anyway they, I said 'You know what it amounts to is the job I saw advertised was as Radio Operator I've got my City and Guilds in Radio Engineering, I can get my Morse up if you want I've had a bit of interest in amateur radio so he said 'Ok, what we want is an ionosphericist.' I said 'Ok, what's that?' So he explained what it was. He said 'We don't need any more radio mechanics at the moment but we do need an ionosphericist and we do need people that have got degrees so basically if you've got a degree then we'll welcome you with open arms' they didn't say for anything but this was the implication. So I said 'OK, that's

good' then he turned around and said 'Ok fill the form in, oh we've got a bit of a problem' I said 'what's that?' he said 'Well, you aren't 21' I said 'Well, I'll be 21 in a couple of weeks.' 'Oh, ok,' they went back and had a huddle and he said 'Ok, we've decided if your 21 when you get on the ship then you're ok' so I said 'Ok that's fine.' He turned around and said 'Ok, we'll sign you on but you only get 400 pounds a year' I can't remember if it was 400 or 420 pounds a year but I thought 'Ha, blimey,' I'd read all about some of these expeditions I thought 'Ha, I actually get paid, Oh, this is good.'

[Part1 0:16:17] Lee: Was there any extra re-numeration because you were a graduate?

Leek: No, they said that, he said 'You don't get anything because you've got a degree, we're working on that.' 'Ok that's good, work on it.' I thought to myself 'I'm getting 400 pounds, you know' and then he turned round and said 'We'll sign you on for this and you can give your family some money.' I said 'Ok I'll give them 10 pounds a month, he said 'wait a minute, that's going to cut into your...' I said 'Ok, tell you what give them 5 pounds, I think it was 5 pounds per month.' I think it was 5 pounds a month I said 'Ok, give that to me folks.' and they said 'Ok, you've got to go to...'

[Part1 0:17:04] Lee: They were signing you up for ionospherics and you knew nothing about ionospherics or did you know something and you weren't telling them?

Leek: Well, I'm a physicist and I know a little bit about that, a physicist and also I, like I said, interested in amateur radio so I knew what the ionosphere was, I knew quite a bit about it.

[Part1 0:17:28] Lee: You still had to be trained.

Leek: I still had to be trained because I didn't know anything about details, I didn't know anything about these E layers, F layers, they weren't gibberish to me but I had some vague knowledge of them, you see. but anyway they said 'You know...' but not only that they said 'You've got to be trained in the machine they were using, the Ionosonde, we had to fix the darned thing, but I did have a lot of knowledge and background in what is now called electronics, tubes and all that sort of stuff. Because I'd been, when I was a lad I'd been taking radios apart and going down to the dump and picking up what bits I could and kind of working out how to put them together and get some pretty healthy electric shocks at times. So I knew which end of a soldering iron gets hot, let's put it that way, so I knew something about it.

[Part1 0:18:31] Lee: In the interview, they couldn't ask you questions about ionospherics because you didn't know much, what did they ask you, were they kind of sussing you out do you think?

Leek: Well, I don't really know to be quite honest with you. I often think about that because, you know, they had a pretty tough job, because thinking on about it, what have you got? You end up with the situation where you've got five guys stuck together in a very difficult situation. I mean, you know, I could say I just went along, I didn't have any career prospects, I didn't have any career ideas, Ok I'll go, what are we going to do next ok this looks good let's have a go at it and then I sort of read a little bit more about it and looked around at what they'd got and thought 'Oh blimey, look at all the bloody mountains they've got down there, looks great, oh boy. I was ready to climb the lot mate, no problem so um but I mean, you know, it didn't occur to me anything about it, but I'm sure, but let me say I'm sure they

should have been in a position where they were working out how you work on interpersonal relationships because it was very important. But the, I don't really know because I don't quite remember exactly what it was.

[Part1 0:19:56] Lee: Alright, you were sent off to training first of all in Slough?

Leek: Yeah, they said 'Ok you've got to go down to Slough for, I think it was a couple of weeks down there at the Radio Research Station there, and then they sent me off to Inverness, I was there about a couple of months I think. I was introduced to a whole world that I didn't know about and my parents had no concept of and that was, ok, you're going somewhere, the Company's paying, ok you need a passport, company's paying, oh, you need this, the company's paying. It was a whole complete new world that I knew nothing about and my parents had no knowledge of either, so anyway I went down to Slough for a couple of weeks and they said 'Ok, we've got another guy and he's already up in Inverness, so I went up to Inverness, basically learning how to do the stuff, which wasn't all that tough and then learning about the ionosonde itself, how it worked and all the electronics and that stuff which I didn't find very challenging at all. As far as I was concerned it was real good stuff and, you know you get up to Inverness and you can go for a long walks and they had their bikes.

[Part1 0:21:22] Lee: The odd mountain?

Leek: We got back.... [uncomprehensible]. We travelled around on the bikes, it was kind of cute, I liked that and of course I also started to get the concept that, you know, someone is paying me, which was an interesting concept to me.

[Part1 0:21:46] Lee: How did you adjust to the idea of doing ionospherics, how did you get on with it, did it come naturally?

Leek: It came naturally, there wasn't, as far as I was concerned there wasn't really a lot to it. The fact of the matter is that you're in university and you learn a lot of stuff, there's a lot of, you know, you get crammed with a lot of stuff as you're going along, but this was 'can you learn this?' and it's not as if you learn this and then go on to something completely different. You learn this and this is what you're going to be doing for the next two years, it becomes easier to do because you know you're learning something in depth but it's not something that, I didn't find it to be too difficult, let me put it that way. It was quite easy for me.

[Part1 0:22:35] Lee: Do remember who taught you?

Leek: To be quite honest, I don't. Most of the shall we say, the heavy duty stuff going through the circuits going through all the different parts of the Ionosonde they'd done in Slough. I think the idea was that we went up to Inverness to basically keep us on line, I dunno' it was that we had these guys ready to go down and that was it.

[Part1 0:23:06] Lee: Was it not rather like running an ionospheric station, in Inverness, it was like a dummy run for the Antarctic?

Leek: Well it was exactly the same machine, it was running exactly the same way it was exactly the same work. Between you and me we were not doing ionospheric research it was basically just measurements, measuring the ionosphere. In those days the ionosphere was very important because it was the basis of world-wide communications. They didn't have

cables, they hadn't got internet, they hadn't got satellites or anything that got transmitted from London to Australia or wherever, they went through the ionosphere and so you had to know what was happening, what the parameters were, ok, this time of day you transmit to them because the ionosphere is closely controlled by the sun and the seasons. So at night the ionosphere gets much smaller, shall we say, in the winter it gets much smaller and this is one of the advantages where we were you have the solar effects, the other effect is the magnetic poles, which we didn't have, that was around the other side of the Antarctic. We were in a position where you could sort out the two effects, not that we were doing that we were just doing the measurements, someone else was doing whatever was required. Although we did end up with several research projects but we were basically just collecting data.

[Part1 0:24:42] Lee: Like recording the weather?

Leek: It was like recording the weather, yes. It was like recording the weather.

[Part1 0:24:49] Lee: Just going back to Inverness then, was there a sense that you had to pass that part of the process to be sure of going south, was it a test?

Leek: As far as I'm aware there was never any question about going south.

[Part1 0:25:03] Lee: What did you parents make of this idea of 'Our Paul' going to the Antarctic?

Leek: My mother was not in favour of it, my mother was not in favour of it I think me father was, my father was one of these guys who, he was a proper Yorkshire man and didn't say a whole hell of a lot. He thought a helluva lot but he didn't say a whole helluva lot, and I think he was probably quite happy about it, me mother on the other hand was not but of course I was aided by National Service, you see. It was a case of either he goes there or he may end up in Cyprus getting shot at, so ok then, I think the Antarctic is safer and I do remember that me mother said to me, what it amounts to is that about two months after I sailed from Southampton she got a letter from the Government saying 'Ok, report to Catterick⁴ at such and such and such' and she wrote back to them and said 'I'm sorry mate, you've got to put a bigger stamp on it.' [Laughter]

[Part1 0:26:41] Lee: How big a factor in your mind was avoiding National Service, was it a tilting factor?

Leek: No, it wasn't a factor at all, let me put it this way; I just loafed along through life at that point. I mean I could have really pursued things by joining the OTC, Officers Training Club⁵ at Liverpool or stuff like that, but I couldn't be bothered, I just didn't bother I was just the sort of guy that had gone into the army and they had turned round and said 'Ok, couple of weeks square bashing, you've got a degree so your officer material' so I probably would have done ok in the army. I wouldn't have made any great waves about it, they may have turned round and said 'You don't tie your boots up right' but they would have put me on some, you know, fixing radars and all that sort of thing, a radar mechanic whatsit because they said 'this is what you can do.'

⁴ Catterick, A major army base and garrison much used for training National Servicemen. located in North Yorkshire, approximately 3 miles from Richmond.

⁵ Correction. Should be Officers Training Corps (OTC) sometimes called the University Officers Training Corps (UOTC). Provides military leadership training to students at British universities.

[Part1 0:27:22] Lee: How did you get South?

Leek: What did you mean, get South?

[Part1 0:27:27] Lee: On what mode of transport?

Leek: Oh, down to the Antarctic, um I went on the *Shackleton*, The RRS *Shackleton*. I enjoyed that; I enjoyed that; that was good. I went down to Southampton, probably about this time of year, September, October or something. I forget exactly when it was. Hey, I never been on a ship before so that was all good stuff, it was kind of funny actually because if I remember rightly we started out, I went into my bunk, the next morning I woke up, looked out of the porthole and thought 'Funny, there's land on the wrong side here guys. We had to go back for something or other, I don't know what it was but it was back to Southampton because something had been forgotten or something, I don't know but there was... It turned around and went back again. So that was good I enjoyed that, I enjoyed being on the ship, like I said it was all, I kind of like new experiences. Incidentally, when I was in Scotland I met the guy who was going to accompany me on the ship and everything, this guy George Lewis, he was older than me and he'd had much more experience than I'd had, he came from a kind of middle class family anyway but he was a good guy but I did learn one thing from him and that is that he was the sort of guy who had a fund of experience. He'd spent several years in Germany and he had a fund of experiences, a fund of funny stories and what I discovered was that these funny stories are great the first time around. Not too bad the second time around, but you know, you live on base with some guy and he starts bringing these damn things up and after a while you turn round and say 'Hoy, George, I have heard that one before.' So I kind of learned, you know, keep it down guys.'

[Part1 0:29:41] Lee: So how did you all get on the five of you, because there were some interesting characters, Alan Cameron, David Price, I've interviewed both those? How were the social dynamics of that first year?

Leek: I just, the social dynamics were ok, I mean George was the, I won't say he was the odd man out but he was the guy who was a bit different from the rest. He came from, his family were Army, you see, as far as I was concerned Army was Army, I discovered in later life that if you're in the army, well, in point of fact he came from a family that was Army and he had bucked the trend by joining the Air Force so he was... His family was that sort of Army, you see, and he'd been to a Public School or a Private School, depending on how you look at it, I don't know which one it was but he'd been to Public School. He was basically from our point of view of a different social class, but he fitted in ok. He fitted in, not perfectly but ok. Alan Cameron was a good lad he was the Base Leader, when I was there he was the Base Leader but in point of fact the Base Leader as far as he was concerned was 'First among equals' you know. He'd turn around and say 'Ok, we've got all this coal to bring up, you know, and that's it,' His idea was 'Ok I'm the first guy, you guys come along and follow me,' and he didn't turn around and say 'Ok, you, you, and you' it was a case of 'let us bring the coal up and let us get on with it,' see. Dave Price, he was an easy going guy too, he knew...

[Part1 0:31:37] Lee: He was the diesel mechanic seconded from Listers⁶.

Leek: He was the diesel mechanic, yes. He's a diesel mechanic and what it amounts to is that he went down there specifically with the diesels because they'd got these new Lister diesels, and he was the guy who basically put them in and got them working and all that sort of stuff and what they wanted to do, their idea was that he had to stay there for a second year because he was the Lister expert, you see. He was kind of, he was a bit of an outdoor guy and he wanted to move to... what it amounted to was everybody at Port Lockroy, not everybody, don't include me, but a lot of people at Port Lockroy they wanted to go further South because we weren't below the Antarctic Circle. You've got to be below the Antarctic Circle. George Lewis that was a big thing with him, he really wanted to be below the Antarctic Circle, so he applied and he got transferred to Halley Bay. As far as I was concerned Halley Bay was as flat as a blooming pancake for goodness sake, 'Where's the bloody mountains? You know, what am I going to climb?

[Part 1 0:32:44] Lee: So how did you get on with Dave Price?

Leek: Dave Price, I got on very well with Dave Price, yes, I got on very well with almost... the only one that was ... I could get along with George ok, the only one that was a little funny at times was Crockford, Mike Crockford.

[Part1 0:33:02] Lee: He was the radio operator?

Leek: He was the radio operator and ah, I mean I got on ok with him but sometimes we would get into a bit of an argument about things.

[Part1 0:33:13] Lee: What did you argue about?

Leek: Well he... we had a dog there, Peso; I didn't think he treated the dog quite as well as he ought to. You know I... He teased the dog and stuff like that, I didn't like that but apart from that he was ok.

[Part1 0:33:34] Lee: There was a guy called Jack Tinbergen who...

Leek: Jack Tinbergen, yes, he was there when I arrived and he was there for a month or so after I got there and then he came out. He was ok; Jack was a big guy like a lot of big guys, easy going. He came from a scientific family. I know his father was I think he was an animal psychologist or something like that, an animal expert, let's put it that way, but he was a nice guy.

[Part1 0:34:13] Lee: When you first sailed into the bay at Port Lockroy describe to me what you saw. What was the base like, what was its location like?

Leek: Well the thing is we had already visited about five bases. Going down the Neumayer Channel there, it's impressive. You've got this bloody great mountain on one side and mountains on the other side and then you come round and you go into the bay, I thought 'this

⁶ Correction: Price was not seconded from Listers but left the company to join FIDS, there was a gentleman's agreement with Listers that he would re-join the company at a later date, which he did when he eventually came to be Managing Director of the Australian subsidiary for many years until retirement.

is kind of like heaven here', you know for somebody who likes mountains, boy, I'm in heaven here, I thought. Of course the thing is you get there, it was round about Christmas, I can't remember exactly when it was, it was sort of middle of December, something like that maybe a little after that round about Christmas, you arrive round about the solstice so, it doesn't matter what time you get in there it's blooming daylight for goodness sake. You look around and think 'By heck it's bloody grand here, I tell thee.' I was very impressed, yes, as far as I'm concerned it was a beautiful place.

[Part1 0:35:24] Lee: Did you get to climb the mountains?

Leek: Yes, I climbed some of the mountains, I was a little disappointed about some of the mountains, actually things as far as I'm concerned I had fallen on me feet so I wanted to climb the mountains and Dave Price he was interested but he wasn't too keen and the way the schedules worked with the cooking and gash hand, they didn't work out very well. At one point we got to the stage where I persuaded him, ok, we'll go for a camping trip up the glacier. So I went up on a camping trip up the glacier, went up the glacier, put the tent up, it blew like you know what mate. It blew like the son of a bitch, it even picked up a 50 lb bloody, what's it, they had these boxes of food, ration boxes; 50 lb ration boxes just took off. So we turned around and went back, and when we got back George Lewis is sat there saying, yes, we recorded a100 knots⁷. What it amounts to reason why I say I fell on my feet it was because I got used to it and travelled around in the first year, but the second year FIDS decided that they wanted to hire this guy John Cunningham and John Cunningham was I discovered when he said he was a climber from a notorious climbing club in Scotland, so I thought, this is great, we did get to do some climbing when he came in. But you know, what it amounts to, when you read the books by people like Charcot or people like that they go up this mountain, up that mountain but we're not in that position because what it amounts to was that you always had this idea that if anything happens you are on your own. Even though you can be dare-devil about it, you've got four other guys and it's always at the back of your mind that you have to be...

Just imagine, you know it happens, when I went down there we picked up, can't remember his name now, oh that's terrible. I think we picked up this guy at Signy and when we got to Hope Bay him and I; he was interested in climbing so him and I climbed up the mountain at the back. I think it was Mount Flora I think it was called, we climbed up there and you know I got friendly with him and we had to drop him off at one of the islands there before we got to Deception and he died, he got killed. He went out for a walk with another guy Russ Thompson, can't remember the other guy's name but he went out with Russ Thompson, I don't know if it was a kind of a lack thought at the back of your mind, because what it amounts to is he... I always wonder, he was walking on the glacier with this other guy Russ Thompson and a husky and the husky lost its footing on the ice, ran into the guy, knocked him off his feet and he slid down the slope and ended up hitting some rocks with his head and you know, he was dead. Whether he was instantly dead or whether they could have rescued him but the fact of the matter is that Russ Thompson then went back to the base which probably took him about an hour to get there so he didn't send a rescue team out to him when he'd broken his neck, what the hell could they do? It's really tough. It's kind of interesting because I had a lot of interest in, a lot of fun on the way down as well, you see because see we climbed that mountain and when we got to Deception. On the way into Deception we were way out of that place, Base G, King Georges Bay or something I can't remember, but anyway on the way out of there the ship got 'twanged'. I learnt a lot about how ships, how

⁷ Knots: 100 knots equals 185.2 kilometres per hour.

you go on ships, but what it amounts to is that the Captain⁸ decided, or someone decided that we don't want to unload stores, ok, tomorrow morning we're going to start up, see. So tomorrow morning comes and you look, all the bay is busy filling up with bloody ice floes, you see, the wind's changed and ,boy, we're getting it so ok, the Captain decides to get out, you see, so he starts to charge, barge his way out and ends up getting stuck and he reverses the ship. In reversing the ship he bends the rudder so now we can only turn left.

[Part1 0:40:53] Lee: this is the *Shackleton* isn't it?

Leek: That's the *Shackleton*, yes.

[Part1 0:40:54] Lee: How did they solve the problem?

Leek: Well they solved the problem they, the dynamics were interesting, you see, because now you've got all the mechanics, the engine room staff were thoroughly pissed, of course and the Captain is saying well ok, we basically ended up being the interlocutor between the Captain and the engine room because they didn't want to talk to one another. So we went down and we were talking to the, I guess the bosun and these other guys you see and what they did was they basically unfastened the whatsit, the bolt or whatever it was and said ok, go forwards it isn't quite so jammed and they unfastened all the gearing and made, they re-arranged it and so forth so the rudder would run in the right direction, you see. In fact it took some time and a lot of effort.

[Part1 0:41:53] Lee: Were they doing that from inside the ship?

Leek: Inside the ship, yes, yes. So they did it from inside the ship, in the meantime I think the Captain was a little concerned, sometimes you are not entirely sure exactly the dynamics because you know you told these guys, there's two things that happened I realised later that the first thing is that the Captain can be concerned about things or he can just say he's concerned about something in order to get guys to, captains of ships always like to keep people doing something, you know. People standing around doing nothing, especially in a situation like that, so basically what it amounts to is he decided to, ok, we should start collecting a bunch of snow and that because we are short of water. So we were expecting snow, hey, we get out to walk on the ice floes which we'd never done before, this is great stuff, have a stroll around take photographs, a little bit of work, it was great. Like I say, eventually, about a day or so later the wind changed and so we got out and I realised that everything in the Antarctic is more dependent on weather that it is anywhere else. You can be flummoxed faster than that, with the weather.

So it's a great experience, then we get to Deception, hey, Deception is kind of neat. What had happened in the other place, thrumming into all the ice it kind of twanged the bow a bit so we had a bit of a leak so they beached the ship in Deception which is all great fun as well you see. They were busy trying to do something, maybe they'd got some Araldite to vulcanise it....

[Part1 0:43:43] Lee: Repairing the bows.

Leek: Eh?

⁸ The Captain of the *Shackleton* on that voyage was Capt. John Blackburn RN (Retd).

[Part1 0:43:43] Lee: Repairing the bows.

Leek: Yes, they were doing something to repair the bows, they didn't have Araldite in those days but they had a bunch of something but the thing is we were all concerned because the year before they had ripped the side out of the damned thing so anyway we got a fair amount of time there so we got to go ashore. I went ashore, I can't remember his name, I went ashore with another guy, we went and visited the Argentinians and I spent a night there, it was quite fun but the other thing we, that happened was they had these barges on the shore. The barges were full of boxes so we opened these see and I said 'what's in these boxes?' We took a box out and opened it up inside there was these two big tins about a foot square, so we opened a tin up and it's got this black powder in it. This other guy said (can't think what his name is) 'Hey, it's gunpowder' 'oh of course' so what do we do, so I said 'ok, fine so I get a handful of gunpowder and... a la Bugs Bunny you see,' so I'm about eighty feet away thinking I'll go and get another handful and I turned round and this other guy's got a match. I said 'Hold' I was just going to say something and he tossed the bloody match into the... there was a big flash I thought it was going to explode but there was a big flash. He's turning around there 'his anorak catches fire' and gets knocked down. I go up to him, 'Are you ok?' 'Yes' ok, good, you see, about twenty feet away there's this kind of shed and there's this shout from the other side of this shed, all this cursing and swearing, we go round there, the second mate is taking a shit round the other side [Laughter] of the shed. I said 'Boy, that must have helped' he said 'helped like hell' [More laughter.]

[Part10:45:47] Lee: Where did this other gunpowder come from, what was it for?

Leek: Well, it was left over from the whalers.

[Part1 0:45:51] Lee: All right, so you found it actually?

Leek: Yes, we got all this...[unintelligible] we did the next trick you see. I was going to set this thing up, it's gunpowder, I had to set it off.

[Part1 0:45:59] Lee: You want an explosion don't you?

Leek: Yes, yes, you betcha, so we worked it out, tell you what we do. We'll go to the base and borrow a rifle, so we borrowed a rifle and we got a box and put it by the ice cliff there. Bang, BOOM! Oh great. So I think we got through about four boxes and one of the guys who had seen it came up to us and said 'The Captain would like to talk to you' so we ended up in front of the Captain and he said 'I would prefer you don't do that,' in other words 'If you do that again and your are off my bloody ship.' We said 'Ok sorry sir.'

[Part1 0:46:42] Lee: What was his reasoning, do you know?

Leek: He thought it was dangerous. He didn't like explosions near his ship. I can understand that but, hey, we're just having fun but he decided that it wasn't safe also I think he was concerned we might blow ourselves up.

[Part1 0:47:03] Lee: Whilst we're at Deception there's another story concerning a scow and a digger?

Leek: Oh well, that was funny too, I was getting on to that. Like you say, I'm a physicist, I look at things and I try to work things out but at the same time I'm a young guy and I think well I don't really know anything about this stuff you see, but anyway we stood there and they had this tractor, a caterpillar tractor, and they decided they wanted to take this from the base on to the ship so we got the scow. A scow like a kind of big empty box that floats, so they put a couple of boards on the top. I thought, 'this is going to be fun I don't think he going to be able to get up there' I was wrong, he got up, he went a long way up, right to the top and they put these two boards on the top 'I don't think that's going to work, that's definitely not, I don't think it's going to work. They get to the top but they must know what they are doing. So they get to the top and they got this guy who was driving it, he was a bit of a character. He's got a deerstalker hat and a bloody pipe, so he was like Sherlock Holmes; he was got up like Sherlock Holmes. When he gets to the top he gets into the middle of this thing, he was going really slow about a quarter of a mile per hour, he was just creeping along but when he stops what happens is the inertia that he's got carries on, in any case he got over the centre line so the whole thing just keeled over like this, real slow.

[Part1 0:48:45] Lee: Forwards?

Leek: Forwards into the sea. The whole thing lifted upon the side and down into the sea but then on top, in a classic diving position [Much laughter, unintelligible]. I hope he's alright, he kind of got himself out, the water isn't quite so cold there because that beach is volcanic so it's not freezing cold. Not very warm mind you but he came out, he'd got his pipe but I think he'd lost his hat and he was irritated about losing his hat.

[Part1 0:49:26] Lee: Did they recover the digger?

Leek: They recovered the digger later I believe, yes, they didn't recover it while we were there but they recovered it later, then they waited until the tide went out, I dunno but they did actually recover it I'm told, yes.

[Part1 0:49:40] Lee: Let's go back to Port Lockroy, you were talking about climbing with John Cunningham in your second season which would have been in 1960.

Leek: Yes,

[Part 1 0:49:50] Lee: Did you have any first ascents or... [Crosstalk, not understood]

Leek: I thought we had a first ascent but we climbed up Wall Mountain⁹ which I thought was a first ascent but maybe it wasn't but who the hell knows but...

[Part1 0:50:03] Lee: Tell me about that.

Leek: That was another kind of interesting experience because we went up the glacier and we were climbing up the wall side of the mountain, and, you don't know what it's like in the Antarctic in that sort of situation. When I say it's quiet, it's bloody quiet, there you get some wind, this particular day was a beautiful day, the sun was out it was great and there was no

⁹ Wall Mountain, Due East of Goudier Island, located on Wienke island between Mt Luigi and Mount Nemo, and between Channel and Thunder Glaciers. Known as such when Base A was occupied and shown as such on base charts at that time. (Carroll A – *Place names in the region of Port Lockroy.*)

wind. It was absolutely quiet, we were about halfway up I says to John, I says ‘did you hear that?’ he said ‘yeah, sounds like an outboard motor, how the hell can there be an outboard motor up here?’ The noise gets louder and there’s a blooming plane coming along, below us, they were at a lower level, we were waving like hell because they never saw us ‘That must be the plane from Deception,’ which they finally got out, they had a hell of a lot of problems with that you see. They finally got out and they were taking it down to Base F, Argentine Islands, you see. ‘There’s a plane, how about that hey?’ fancy us seeing that. Of course they’d chosen a great day. They had a hell of a lot of problems with that plane because they had the plane at Deception and they’d built like a shed...

[Part1 0:51:33] Lee: A hanger.

Leek: A hanger, I beg your pardon, a shed. They built the shed the wrong way round so what it amounts to is that every time it snowed there was a big pile of snow built up. Of course if you get a snow drift you get a snow drift and they had to dig the damn thing out every time. Anyway, to continue the litany of disasters what happened was this plane went down to the Argentine Islands, it landed on the ice and as he came to a stop he ended up on a soft spot, one of the skis went through the ice, the pilot jumped out, got out, jumped down onto the ice and walked ashore and the airplane just sank through the ice. Nobody had told him there was a soft spot there.

[Part1 0:53:18] Lee: It went on to have quite serious implications for that season’s work because they were down to one plane which they therefore couldn’t do anything with.

Leek: They were down to one plane, I think they lost that one because what happened to it was, I think it was on the *John Biscoe*, which we used to call the *John Bisto* and I think the *Protector* came in at the same time into Port Lockroy and went a little close and sheared the bloody wing off of it, so that kind of got rid of all their bloody airplane antics I believe¹⁰.

[Part1 0:52:55] Lee: Meanwhile you were talking about climbing, were there any significant, memorable climbs that you did, with or without John Cunningham?

Leek: Well, yeah, I mean most of the climbs I did were with John. We did some nice climbs, climbing with John was great. John was a good guy he really was a nice guy. The thing is I was told that he was a member of this famous Scottish, finest Glasgow climbing club, the Creagh Dhu¹¹ and they had, they were known in the climbing world as hard men. Well, and people, I remember reading in the BAS magazine someone was saying what happened to this dog Peso and you know, John had had him¹² put down or something. John was they softest type of guy you’d ever meet, he was a real nice guy and he really liked the dog. We’d go,

¹⁰ Error. The whole of this paragraph is incorrect, the aircraft referred to was FIDS DHC-2 ‘Beaver’ VP-FAJ. As a result of a collision in a blizzard whilst anchored at the Argentine Islands on 12 March 1960 between the *John Biscoe* and the *Kista Dan* the wing was sheared off and sank. The ‘plane was returned to Deception where it was repaired in August of that year. This transcriber was present at the scene of this accident and witnessed the whole thing. DMP.

¹¹ Creagh Dhu. A climbing club formed in 1929 in Glasgow by Clydeside dockyard workers. They had a fearsome reputation as expert and tough climbers, and sometimes noted for their somewhat antisocial behaviour. John Cunningham was a leading member.

¹² Correction, Peso was a bitzer bitch not a male, resident at Port Lockroy in the late 1950’s and early 60’s. She was generally a much loved dog and transferred to Base T Adelaide Island with Dave Houndsell when Lockroy closed finally in 1962.

what it amounts to we'd go out from the base and we'd go off for a climb, we climbed up Jabet¹³, we climbed up that a couple of times and at one time we went up there and we were going up the ice-fall and the dog's following us and he says 'We got to go...' I said 'Don't worry about the dog, the dog's fine, the dog will get to a stage when it can't go any further, because I know dogs, She'll whine a bit and then she'll go back. We'll come back down and the dog will be bloody fine when we get back to base.' Which is true but he was really worried about this, he said, 'But where will she...' I said 'No, no he'll go back to the blasted base, because it was a long way.' So the other time we climbed up there was the first time and what happened was we set out in the boat, went across the bay to the glacier opposite and we climbed up the glacier and climbed up like a pinnacle at one side of Jabet, we climbed up there and we were climbing up to get to the top and we were getting close to the top and I said 'Wind's changed, Ok wind's changed.' I said 'We'd better go back John' 'But we're almost there.' 'No we've got to go back.' he says 'Why?' I says 'we've got to go back, you'll find out.' So we went back across the glacier, by this time the ice had started to come in. we used to slide down the glacier, ass end down, got in the boat, we got about three quarters of the way back and the ice was like that, you see. He said 'Oh, ok, what do we do now is get out and we man haul the boat over the blasted ice-flows.' Which we did, I think one or two guys came out from base to give us a hand, it was hard work, those boats are about 400 lbs and they took a bit of pulling over the ice, I don't think we had the right one either because there was two of them, One that was a prow, just trying to remember the name of the other type of dinghy that's got a front...¹⁴

[Part1 0:56:14] Lee: Is it a scow?

Leek: No it's not a scow, gee, I can't remember these names any more but there's one that's almost got a kind of, the bow is...

[Part1 0:56:22] Lee: A pram?

Leek: A pram, no it's not a pram, anyway it's got a bow which goes up like that so it's easier to pull onto the ice, anyway we got home you see. He said 'I can see know why you turned round, and said turn round.' Another time him and I went out, we had a small pram dinghy and we went out to an iceberg out in the bay, he said 'We'll go out there.' So we went out to this iceberg, this was the first time I had been with him in the boat and he's there saying, he's really worried because we could see the waves he said 'what happens if the waves get bigger and they get in the boat?' I said 'they won't get big enough to get in the boat.' He was worried about it, we went out to this iceberg and we did a bit of ice climbing on the iceberg. The thing is you're not enthusiastic because if you slipped and went in, I said 'Its bloody cold mate, I tell you.'

[Part1 0:57:21] Lee: Did you get to the top of the iceberg?

Leek: No we didn't, no.

[Part1 0:57:24] Lee: So somebody pulled out, did John pull out?

¹³ Jabet Peak, 545 m on Wienke Island. roughly mapped by Charcot in 1905 and named *Pic jabet* after Jacques Jabet boatswain of the *Français*. A prominent peak clearly viewed from Port Lockroy.

¹⁴ At Port Lockroy there were two dinghys, one, a smaller Norwegian pram, with an upswept bow, the other, a much heavier robust boat, a stem dingy. It was this that was likely used in this escapade.

Leek: No, we both pulled out, we both said, you know we did a bit of climbing and said, 'well that's kind of fun, let's get back in the boat.' John was a climber and he was a mountaineer but he was not as comfortable in water as I was.

[Part1 0:57:42] Lee: Was he the sort of a man not to take risks?

Leek: He was the sort of guy who is prepared to take risks, like I was. He was the type of guy who is prepared to take risks if he understood the risks, and he didn't understand the risks in water and he kind of was not comfortable with the water. I must confess I wasn't real comfortable. I didn't want to get in the bloody water either for that matter.

[Part1 0:58:08] Lee: He later was working with the Outward Bound¹⁵ movement wasn't he?

Leek: I believe so, yes.

[Part1 0:58:15] Lee: Did news of his death reach you?

Leek: It didn't, no, a few years ago I was looking up on the web and I read that he was climbing some mountain, I thought 'Well. I guess he died with his boots on, which probably pleased him' as much as anybody's death pleases them. I don't know, I don't know if he ever got married or anything like that but he was, but like I say, he was a good guy. The other thing that we did, we did all sorts of stuff but the other thing that we did, John and I, was one day I think it's maybe in the diary, but one day I says 'You know, I think the Neumeyer is frozen right over' I say 'Let's go and see how far we...' so we walked all the way across, well we didn't go all the way across because we didn't, you know, we've got ice-cliffs over there. We walked within 50 or 100 yards of the other side and back. We realised later that this was a kind of a dangerous thing to do because the ice wasn't really frozen over. It was brash that was all frozen together, it wasn't really frozen over in the normal manner, it very rarely froze over because there's such a strong current through the channel there, but we managed the other side and back. The back is important.

[Part1 0:59:42] Lee: Skiing, any skiing?

Leek: Yes, skiing, we did quite a bit of skiing, yes. I mean John was an expert at skiing and the other guy who was an expert was George Lewis, when we were down there George was full of the fact that he'd got these super Head skis, Austrian I think they were, these super metal Head skis, he was enthusiastic about that. I'd never skied before but well ok, we'll have a go at it, I actually got quite good at it. I mean, basically when you're there, when you get out onto the glacier, that's what you do, you are after your skis otherwise if you're not careful you go down a blasted hole, you need the skis.

[Part1 1:00:37] Lee: Is that how you broke your wrist?

Leek: Yes, skiing, yes.

[Part1 1:00:41] Lee: What happened? Apart from that you were fairly accident free period.

¹⁵ Outward Bound, Programmes to foster personal growth and social skills of young participants by using challenging expeditions in the outdoors, originally mountaineering and sailing.

Leek: Well, I was skiing, I can't remember, I was skiing down the slope just back of the base there by the penguin rookery. I guess I fell and my wrist got caught in the ski pole, and it hurt. I can tell you more about that because it was painful so we got on the radio to Base F where they've got a doctor and he said 'Oh yes, you broken a little bone in your wrist, the scaphoid, it happens all the time,' you see, he says 'If it hurts just, this is a universal remedy, a wee dram and a couple of Aspirins would... Well, what it amounts to is maybe 10 years ago I was playing with my grandchildren, young girls, teenagers at that point you see. We went somewhere or other, they had roller skates so I put roller skates on and fell and landed and hurt my wrist. So then I went to the doctors and they x-rayed it and they said was 'well, it's funny this you've got all these broken bones in your wrist but they aren't the ones that are causing the problem, you've got a crack in the ulna,' you see, I say 'Oh well I broke them years ago skiing in the Antarctic.' I'm the sort of guy who is not very happy about this so what they did was they put a cast on, they said 'Ok, come back in three weeks.' So I had this cast on and you know, casts drive you crazy, they drive me crazy anyway so after about a week or so I said ok, I went back and they said 'Oh yes, it's healing fine' you see. I said 'healing fine, sounds good.' So I went back to the shop and just cut the damn thing off, I said it's ...? They said well they can't do anything about the little bits so I said 'ok, leave them there.' That's why it won't bend as good as the other one.

[Part1 1:02:59] Lee: Let's pause Paul, When we reconvene I think we can talk to you more about Port Lockroy and your work.

Leek: Ok then, sure.

[Part1 1:03:05] Lee: Take a break.

END PART 1.

PAUL LEEK PART 2

This is Paul Leek interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee on 20 November 2013.
Edited transcription by David Price 7 June 2014.

[Part 2 0:00:12] Lee: Before we start again Paul, the man whose name you were trying to recall that died in the Antarctic was Alan.

Leek: Sharman.

[Part2 0:00:17] Lee: Alan Sharman. Tell me about Port Lockroy and the Beastie work you were doing.

[Part 2 0:00:26} Lee: Why was it called Beastie?

Leek: I don't know, well it was a big piece of electronic gear. I've got a feeling the word was coined by Tinbergen, Jack Tinbergen¹⁶, he was the one who introduced us to it anyway, they called it the Beastie and that was it, it was just something they called it and that was it. It's

¹⁶ The Beastie – Was a Union Radio Ionosonde, installed at Port Lockroy in 1953, shipped in component parts, it weighed in at about 500 kg. The Ionosondes were already known as 'Beasties' after the first production unit gave considerable trouble during its commissioning at Port Stanley, Falkland Islands. It was so christened by Frank Kift who was the commissioning engineer, his comment 'This machine breeds problems like rabbits.'

like 'smoko', why do you call it smoko when you have a cup of coffee or a cup of tea? I should say, and that's it, it's one of these things. They call it the Beastie, it was kind of, between you and me, it was a routine, also between you and me it was easy work. It was as we say, in England it's a 'Bobby's job,' we didn't have a helluva lot to do. As far as I was aware the reason why there were five guys on base was because FIDS decided that, that was the minimum size of a base they could have and I think there was a certain amount of justification in that because the year before one of the guys took ill and so they ended up with four guys. It's a bit of a chore running the base. The basic thing basically was, as I understand it and it was basically we were flying the flag, this is Base A and this was kind of, you know, our initial Base.

[Part 2 0:02:09] Lee: The guy who was taken ill was the leader John Smith, wasn't it?

Leek: The year before? Yes. I don't know about John Smith, Smith doesn't ring a bell, could have been but um.

[Part 2 0:02:20] Lee: Did you meet this person? Did you meet him, on the way out?

Leek: Effectively yes, they were carrying him out when I arrived. I think it was Muir Smith, Jim Muir Smith yes. As far as I remember he used the surname Muir Smith, that's what I remember anyway, maybe I'm wrong but...

Part 2 0:02:45] Lee: I'm sure you are right.

Leek: I'm not good with names but anyway the beastie work was, let me say, it's like all these things, it was electronics, it was electronics from the 50's. It was basically radar work, radar technology, the electronics, people don't understand it but nowadays this particular work electron tubes lasted for a helluva long time in those days so basically most of the maintenance work we had was the mechanics you had variable capacitors that's moved in and then there was the film transport mechanism, there was a certain amount of mechanics there but it didn't cause a heck of a lot of trouble at all.

[Part2 0:03:42] Lee: Did it ever go wrong?

Leek: It did on occasions, yes, but not very often. When it did it was fairly simple thing to do, we had an oscilloscope, multi meters and various other things and so we had the basics to fix it for almost any eventuality. I'm sure there was a bunch of stuff that could happen to it, like I said that stuff was jolly reliable. We had other stuff that was not, we had a bunch of stuff that was not actually FIDS, official Government Issue, shall we say.

[Part2 0:04:28] Lee: Go on.

Leek: One of these things was, the year before, I think it was about a year before Dartmouth College in the States sent a tape recorder down and some tapes and instructed the guys how to build kind of a crude antenna to receive whistlers. I had never heard of whistlers before but apparently this whole thing apparently grew out of some technology that was discovered, some stuff that was discovered during the First World War. What happened was that the people in the, I guess it was the British army, but in one of the armies decided that all the communications between the Front and various other places was going on telephone wires and they conceived the idea of kind of build big antenna to see if they could pick up electro-

magnetic signals from these things. I don't think it was very successful in that but what they heard was, kind of surprised them, they could hear these noises like whistlers which went [demonstrates a whistle] like this, you see. there was a whole bunch of other stuff but they could hear them, you see, so what it amounts to is that Dartmouth decided to do some research, find out what these were and various other stuff it could do. So what it amounts to is they sent this tape recorder down with the tape and instructions how to build like a crude antenna, maybe they connected it up to the antenna at the base, anyway the guys complied with this and sent the tapes back and then they got a furious message from Dartmouth saying 'Ok who's the guy with the microphone, so they said 'what do you mean, why. 'You guys can't possibly have been hearing that, no. There's no background noise, there's no hum, there's nothing, whistlers aren't that clear.' we said 'well, they are here' so Dartmouth really got into gear and sent a whole pile of tapes down for us and the tape recorder and some other gear because they wanted to, the idea was this tape recorder switched itself on the idea was it was supposed to switch itself on every hour and record 10, 15 I can't remember what the numbers were. Then we said 'it ain't going to work, the beastie goes on at, on the hour and it's on for five minutes and you ain't going to get diddly squat. So ok we changed the timing. The whistler recording was kind of cute. The thing is what happened is the whistlers are lightning flashes in the Northern Hemisphere, in the United States in particular they travel along the lines of magnetic force and the earth and they come down a long time later or several seconds later but they don't come down as a bang. The path is what's known as a dispersive media and so what it does is that it makes high frequencies travel faster than low frequencies so instead of coming out as a [noise demonstration] it comes down as a [whistle of descending tone] you see. But they were even more fascinated by this, not only were we as clear as a bell and they could hear every bloody thing but they could also hear double whistlers that [another sound demonstration] they came to the conclusion those were lightning flashes from the Southern hemisphere which went north, bounced back and came back down again, you see. But the, to quite honest with you I didn't actually follow this but I know there was a whole bunch of other stuff, we got all sorts of other noises on there, some of them were kind of repetitive like [another sound demonstration] which we called wagon wheels and there was another one like a twitter [demonstration] which we called dawn chorus. You know what it amounts to is you'd sit there and you'd be looking at the tape recorder and they had a VU meter on there that showed you what was happening. Sometimes you got a lot of activity 'What the hell's that?' You could see this thing jumping up and down, it was really weird, I don't know what conclusion Dartmouth came to but it was kind of a cute experiment shall we say.

[Part 2 0:09:16] Lee: There's two questions there, one is, was this official liaison between Dartmouth College, was it Rhode Island?

Leek: Yes, Dartmouth College in Rhode Island,¹⁷ yes.

[Part2 0:09:24] Lee: And was it official liaison between Dartmouth College and FIDS or were you doing this 'on the quiet?'

Leek: No, no , I'm pretty well sure it was through FIDS, I'm pretty sure it was done officially.¹⁸ through the old British government, yes, some sort of liaison there. It didn't

¹⁷ Dartmouth College, commonly known as 'Dartmouth' founded in 1769 and located in Hanover, New Hampshire, USA. One of the country's leading academic institutions.

occupy any significant amount of our time. In fact when I first arrived there the guys including Jack Tinbergen was still there, they all got together because they wanted to put an extra antenna over on the penguin rookery, which was even quieter because it was about 50, 60, 100 yards away from everything on the base. So there was no interference whatsoever and they put that there and then they had a wire going under the sea into the base. I don't know who paid for that but I guess it was FIDS paid for it.

[Part 2 0:10:25] Lee: Was there any talk of practical application for all this, this discovery or these readings?

Leek: Well, let me say there was no talk about any particular practicality as far as the Whistlers were concerned. But now as far as the beastie work was concerned there were practical applications there, like I said, all communications used the ionosphere and what we used to do we used to have um, we used to take the data and we basically created a précis of the data every month and that would get sent back to their head office. Another thing is, another piece of research that we did was for the US Navy I think it was, but what they did was they wanted to see, they wanted to test communications of 15 kilohertz. So what they did was, they sent us a receiver down so we could receive data at 15 kilohertz and we had to do the same sort of thing with that, record that. I thought it was kind of cute that because they were trying to somehow or other they would do some tests as to whether they could use this to communicate with submarines. As apparently 15 kilohertz penetrates a certain distance in the sea so they wanted to do that. I thought it was kind of fun that because I could tune this thing up because at that time I could actually hear 15 kilohertz. So I could tune this darn thing by ear, which I thought was absolutely incredible that I could tune a radio without, just using my own ears.

[Part2 0:12:10] Lee: This cable under the sea from the extended new aerial back to the hut had an episode, didn't it?

Leek: Yeah well, we had a bit of fun with that. What it amounts to is the cable came into the hut, into the Beastie room through a hole that we had drilled in the window and one day there was me and, I think it was me and Bunny Austin were sat there and we were chatting, I may have been working, but who the hell knows. Anyway all of a sudden there was a little bit of a noise, we looked up and we could see this wire, the wire came through and was spliced on to a couple of other wires and it was kind of moving. All of a sudden the wire started moving and getting pulled out through the hole and broke the contact with the other wires, 'What the hell's happening?' So we went out and all we saw was, there was a bergy bit busy steaming through the channel between the base, between our island and the main or the other island Wienke Island there. It was obviously caught on this cable. There was a discussion between me, and like I say, I think it was Bunny, I'm not sure. Between the two of us it was 'Grab hold of the wire and hold it, or let it go, we decided in the end it was better to let it go because otherwise it was likely to take us out to sea with it. There was no stopping that damn thing, it was on its way so anyway we didn't bother about it and what it amounts to it kind of dropped it, the cable kind of came free and we had to pull it back in through the hole. It must have just caught. The thing is we just put the cable down, we just kind of laid it down in the channel, it could have had a loop in there or something.

¹⁸ Definitely official, the equipment was flown from Hanover, New Hampshire to the Antarctic, picked up by USS naval icebreaker. HMS *Protector* was diverted to rendezvous with the ice breaker, transfer the equipment and thus deliver it at Port Lockroy, December 1956. *The Enigma of Port Lockroy* – Carroll. A.

[Part 2 0:14:09] Lee: had you in fact tried to do an aerial connection, not an aerial, I mean a wire in the air?

Leek: Well what they did was they built a, I think that was a triangle; anyway the antennas were all basically a loop. What we call a loop antenna, the thing is if you put wires in the air if you're not careful you get a dipole that works at one frequency, and a loop tends to work better; especially at low frequencies it works a lot better. These were, you know, well the Whistlers were audio frequencies, a few kilohertz down to maybe a half a kilohertz or something like that they weren't real high frequencies.

[Part 2 0:14:52] Lee: But the wire that carried the signal from the aerial back to your hut, did you not try initially to go over water rather than under it?

Leek: No, no, there was no idea well, maybe there was with other people because I just arrived when they were fixed on putting that in, but I think maybe they talked about it but the thing is that, that was too difficult. The fact of the matter is that with the sort of winds we get it would need a, as it was the aerial blew down at least once, on the rookery at least once it blew down and we had to re-erect the damn thing. You get a 100 miles per hour wind its powerful stuff and it's not easy to find something to fasten it into. You know the ground is either frozen or it's got snow on it, it's not an easy task to do so it's much better to but it underneath. Like I was saying I agree with you, I believe there was some talk of that but we decided that it was much better to go under water.

[Part 2 0:15:58] Lee: Why was monitoring the Whistlers so important?

Leek: I dunno, as far as I was concerned that was interesting. That was blue sky research but it was kind of interesting to...

[Part 2 0:16:11] Lee: But it's pure research without any plan to use the information later?

Leek: No, as far as I'm aware, no. I find it difficult to find any way you could have used it but its um you know its um, I find it interesting I'm not sure what Dartmouth did with the results but it was kind of it was blue sky research. But of course the research as far as the Navy was concerned was for 15 kilohertz. That had some use to them at any rate.

[Part 2 0:16:46] Lee: So what was the ionospheric work you were doing, the importance was a bit more obvious was it?

Leek: Yeah, they were, the ionospheric work was basically we'd, we ran the Beastie. When I got there it was the end of the IGY, I guess it was and they'd been doing some research on Absorption in the D layer and when I was there we did one of the last runs of that. There was some discussion about that, well you're going to be up all night, ok then we'll be up all night. So we busily were running the... We had some special piece of equipment that the guys had put together that worked at really low frequencies, can't remember exactly what it was now. It was below the frequencies that the Beastie ran at, to measure the absorption in the lowest layer, the D layer. We ran it specifically at night because that's when the D layer was most evident.

[Part 2 0:17:50] Lee: Were there ever any unusual results, any surprises?

Leek: I don't think so, no, apart from the Whistlers. They were a bit of a surprise to everybody but I don't remember any real surprises, no. The data was pretty much what we would expect. We didn't have any breakthroughs or anything happening that was completely unexpected.

[Part 2 0:18:30] Lee: So why were you, so this was what begun in the IGY year was it, the two years prior to you?

Leek: No, as far as I'm aware was happened was, maybe I'm out of line but as far as I'm aware what happened was the FIDS or whoever it was at the time started Base A and then from what I hear or what I heard they say 'It's a great place, very nice place, nice anchorage and everything, except it had two major disadvantages, one was that it wasn't connected to the mainland so it was a bit of a bugger to get to do any sledging, the second was it had its own, in their word, micro-climate and so it wasn't giving you a heck of a lot of information about the meteorology either. I think one of the things was that, and I'm just inferring like I was a young lad then. I'm inferring from what happened later, I infer from later stuff was that first thing was that during the war they decided they had to have a base down there and they kept the flag flying. And the second thing is, well, 'We've got to do something with it, so I'll tell you what we'll do, ionospheric research.' That's my, from some respects it was ideal for that, ok the climate was by their standards relatively benign, I wouldn't say that it was all that benign but relatively benign and it was fairly easy to get at and there was about as far south as they could reliably go. So it met a lot of nice criteria and I believe the reason why they closed it down the year after I was there was because they just decided that 'this is daft, we've got five guys here basically one of them and he's only working half his bloody time anyway, so...'

[Part 2 0:20:35] Lee: I wonder whether you felt any echoes of that in your time, and whether you felt after being there for a while you felt the work you were doing was probably not terribly important, really?

Leek: No we always felt the work was important from the point of view it was very important as far as world communications was concerned. We were one of the, or let me say the... We felt we were in a unique position, as I say we were in a situation where we had Antarctic weather as far as the sun was concerned but as far as the geomagnetic and the geomagnetic situation was concerned we were on the opposite side of the Antarctic. So, you could theoretically sort out the effects of different things, so from our point of view the work that we did was important. As I said the big... wasn't a problem, it was very nice, basically you had a lot of time on your hands, but the problem from FIDS point of view was that it didn't really take five guys to do the work we were doing. Now maybe you could turn round and say from the point of view of the world communications our work was maybe more important than anybody else's but anyhow that's how we felt and like I say I was not in a position where I was interested where I was interested in analysing these things, I was straight out of college and as far as I was concerned it was a great place to be, and that was great. But, I believe that when they closed Lockroy down they moved everything down to the Argentine Islands and probably had just one guy working on it part time, I dunno. And now they're down at where's that place down, that new place down there...

[Part 2 0:22:39] Lee: Sky Blue?

Leek: Pardon?

[Part 2 0:22:41] Lee: Halley? Sky Blue? Fossil Bluff?

Leek: No, no I think, [unintelligible] if they are doing any work at all. They may have quit doing that entirely because the ionosphere is decreased in importance significantly because of the advent of satellites and cable communications they don't need it. In our day it was very important and it was also, it was great fun because we'd get up on the amateur radio and we'd had some idea as to what was happening, all the other guys were working blind and we said 'Ok I can see there's a solar flare.'

[Part 2 0:23:25] Lee: Part of the process was for photographic purposes, you had your own darkroom?

Leek: Well yes, what we did was, the way the Beastie worked was it had a, ok, I'll explain the whole thing. It worked like a radar only different, what it had was a transmitter there that transmitted radio waves up in pulses. Pulses were about, I can't remember now maybe 5 to 10 micro seconds long and a tube there amplified from, I'm just trying to think now, from about 100 kilohertz maybe 50 kilohertz up to 25 megahertz but they are in bands and you could figure something like 5 bands and of course your [unintelligible] of the damn things. Anyway 5 bands and we didn't necessarily use them all because where we were the top band almost never occurred. But what it amounts to is that you use any of these 5 bands and what happened was you sent a pulse of radio up basically like a radar you waited until it came back and you measured how long it took and what we did to record this was we had a cathode ray tube which indicated, which showed the pulse and then when the pulse came back it showed the pulse coming back. We actually had two cathode ray tubes, one was called PTIF is called for transmission in the UK, where you could see the two pulses and you could see the difference, the distance or the delay shall we say, when the one came back. The other one worked just by having a, it changed the illumination so it got bright when there was a pulse and it got bright when you could see a pulse coming back and that one, what happened then was we had a film that went past that. As it went along the frequency of the radio going up, scanned through whatever frequency decided to start with, say about 50 to 100 kilohertz and it ran up to whatever we decided to stop at, and you could see, basically we were showing how far up the ionosphere was. The ionosphere was two layers or three layers the E layer, the F layer and the F2 layer and what happens is the radio goes through a certain frequency the radio waves go further and further into the layer so eventually they pop through and then you can see the next layer. The next layer comes in and you get the same with the next layer and it kind of falls off right on the end of the F2 then basically everything goes out into space. By looking at this we had a special transparency with a curve on it which just designated in it, we just ran it along and you looked at where the end of the curve was and it told you what sort of frequency that was. You said ok, the frequency's this or this would be the M.U.F the maximum useable frequency. It's all coming back to me. So that was the maximum useable frequency, what we did then was you categorised that that for every run which was every hour for the whole day and then you would basically, at the end of, I think it was the end of every month but maybe it was every day, I can't remember now. That got, the data got shipped back to Port Stanley.

[Part 2 0:27:26] Lee: Shipped back?

Leek: No, it was radioed back.

[Part 2 0:27:29] Lee: By Morse?

Leek: Yes, yes by the radio operator.

[Part 2 0:27:33] Lee: You had a radio operator as part of the team to do that?

Leek: Yes, yes we had a radio operator, the team was radio operator, diesel mechanic and then there was three others.

[Part 2 0:27:47] Lee: Hence the easy shifts?

Leek: Oh yes, the shifts were easier than that¹⁹ because basically you could leave, that machine would run something like three days. If there was enough film in there the damn thing would run for three days. So you basically, when you take the film out and you developed it and we had a developing tank you didn't touch it just developed the darned film. You know we could basically do the readouts at our leisure [leisure (sic) as we say in the States.] the basic data reduction was maybe, two or three hour's work.

[Part 2 0:28:30] Lee: Would any one of you do that or was one person specifically in charge of interpreting the results, notating the results?

Leek: Any one of the ionospheresists would do that, basically first year I was there, there was Alan, me and George Lewis so we would basically share that between us, some sort of basis ok, I'll do this, developing the films stuff like that. We'd share it up without any big deal. The second year was just two of us, me and Bunny Austin were the two ionospheresists so I wouldn't say we were overworked to be quite honest with you.

[Part 2 0:29:10] Lee: What were the reasons for the five of you, of course you had to run the base, you had to actually live?

Leek: That's right.

[Part 2 0:29:16] Lee: There was a heck of a lot of manual, physical and routine domestic work involved. I was interested to read about getting the oil drums to the shore when you first arrived. It must have been quite a trial?

Leek: Oh when I first arrived, getting the oil drums. Let me say this, getting the oil drums ashore was a pain in the neck. Those things were very heavy, they were English 40 gallon drums so they had a lot of weight, about 2 or 300 pounds I believe and they tended to have diesel over the outside which made it a little bit of a chore to move the damn things. The biggest problem actually was other bases. Because at other bases you were landing on rocks, some places you were landing these things on 'you've got to be nuts getting off a boat here' it was a real pain in the neck. At Port Lockroy it was easy, we had a jetty. We could pull the scow up to the jetty, we didn't actually have a crane on the jetty but we could have done. It was dead easy to do stuff at Port Lockroy because the jetty was there and you could unload

¹⁹ Paul omitted to mention that during IGY and IGC, on designated World Days the Beastie run was done every 15 minutes, not once per hour. Thus the workload was increased by almost four times – hence the need for three men which fell back to two when IGY/IGC finished.

stuff really easy with, it was not so much of a chore. You could get the stuff ashore and you could just roll it up a fair distance, if there was any snow you could just roll it just stood it, they had to make sure you stored, stood all the barrels in a line because otherwise you would get, if you stood them the wrong way, if you stood them in lines the right way, that was fine. If you stood them the wrong way they would cause drifts you' only be able to get at one row of barrels because the rest would be under snow.

[Part 2 0:31:08] Lee: You lined the barrels to be in a straight line, down wind?

Leek: You knew which way to align them by people telling you which way to align them 'Align the barrels the right way now' they had the barrels all set up. The biggest problem with Port Lockroy was it was easy to unload the barrels the problem was there was a lot more of them because we were running 24 hours a day so there was at least 10 or 20 times as many barrels so that was a pain in the neck from that point of view. What happened was we had all the barrels lined up and then what would happen is the diesel mechanic would then have a hand pump he'd use to pump the oil up to the diesel shed²⁰. We had a tank there which actually ran the two diesels. I'm not sure how many barrels there were, I would guess offhand there was about 50, I'm sure Dave Price would tell you exactly how many there were.

[Part 2 0:32:20] Lee: The diesel mechanic. Because you were so dependent upon 24 hour power did you ever loose it, did you ever have any problems with that?

Leek: We, I don't ever remember us actually losing power. It's possible we did, I know we had problems with at one point in the second year, Evan Watson had a problem, one of the diesels, we all had to muck in and help him rebuild the damn thing but that's the only, but I don't ever remember the actual losing power but we almost certainly did but altogether we had three generators anyway. We had the two Listers and then we still had one of the old Enfields as well.

[Part 2 0:33:06] Lee: as a backup?

Leek: Yes, so the Listers were kind of, they would run, I'm not sure what the schedule was but they would probably run it for a week or maybe a couple of weeks then switch over to the other one. They had whatever maintenance they felt like doing.

[Part 2 0:33:24] Lee: Did you make any alterations to the base?

Leek: Um, yeah we did make some alterations. We'd built like a porch out the front, I don't remember doing it but apparently Alan and I were the ones that did it. [Unintelligible comment.] But we also built the um, if I remember rightly we built the whatsit, the darkroom that we were using because what happened was that they had the new diesel shed and the old diesel shed was still there. If I remember rightly I got involved with helping to build the darkroom which was part of the old diesel shed and then what happened was the old darkroom, which must have been really bloody poky I can tell you because it was really small. Well the old darkroom became the base office, Alan used to do all his official

²⁰ Correction – The hand pump was only an emergency pump. The usual method was by a 2hp fuel transfer electric pump installed in 1957. It drew 10 amps of current which meant running a dedicated diesel generator for this duty. We used one of the redundant Enfield generating sets specifically for this purpose.

paperwork, stamps and all that stuff, I've still got some of those stamps with the Port Lockroy stamp on them.

[Part2 0:34:35] Lee: So have I.

Leek: Mine are older than yours.

[Part 2 0:34:41] Lee: There was a certain amount of interior decoration went on as well I believe?

Leek: It's kind of funny that, the first, the thing is you've got a bunch of guys with a lot of time on their hands, especially in the winter. You know, the thing is you talk to people about the Antarctic, they say it was cold, cold, cold, the cold isn't a big deal, what people don't understand is that in the winter there ain't no light. You could say ok we weren't below the Antarctic Circle so we didn't lose daylight completely but Mt Français's up there and a glacier opposite. We basically lost sunlight for two months so what it amounts to is, but when we did have sunlight at best we had twilight for maybe, depending upon how you felt about it maybe a couple of hours midday, so you've got a lot of time on your hands. So people, to their credit FIDS had kind of worked this out I think, so they get a lot of paint this is the old Navy trick, we discovered that of the ship when we were going down. If the guys were stood around with nothing to do the first thing you do is ok, you get a chipper and you get a paint brush and paint anything. You know, the old Navy adage is if it moves salute it, if it don't, paint it, you see. So there was a good deal of painting went on, and then the second year we had this guy Evan Watson, he was the diesel mechanic and what happened was that he like everybody else had a certain amount of time on his hands. So he decided he was going to paint himself a picture of a young lady, a pin-up, a life sized pin-up in the diesel shed. I forget which one it was now; can't remember so he painted this and of course everybody says 'hey, that's a good idea, I want one of them.' So we all had a pin-up painted, I wanted an Audrey Hepburn but somebody beat me to that one, so I had somebody else. What I said was 'I want a pin-up but I want one that's naked, I want one with no clothes on.' So he painted me one with no clothes on, I forget who the hell it was that he painted but it was a rear view, [laughter] that's a fact. A rear view of somebody I can't think who the hell he chose but...

[Part 2 0:37:30] Lee: A film stars of sorts.

Leek: Oh yes we'd got lots of pictures we could choose but anyway he painted them all on the doors of our lockers and he painted at least three on the wall in the bunkroom, and he painted, he decided, having heard what I said he decided he was going to go all the way. he painted I think it was Jane Russell above his bed full size, full frontal nudity which, was kind of interesting because this was in the days when you didn't get a lot of magazines or a lot of feed-back on full frontal nudity so he didn't quite get what he wanted so then he painted a pair of knickers on her and I think he put a top on her. He made her more modest. I don't quite know what happened because apparently that stuff was there the year afterwards but a lot of that stuff disappeared and some of the paintings have now re-appeared still on the walls, but Evan Watson was the guy that did it. It was actually, bearing in mind that he didn't have the painters gear, they didn't have the right paints and he was making whatever paints he could up from paints which were intended for painting walls he did quite a cracker job.

[Part 2 0:39:14] Lee: But were these stars recognisable?

Leek: Yes, let me say, yes, they were, yes, yes they were quite recognisable, yes. When you get then full faced they were actually, let's face it for what we had was basically publicity picture but you know as well as I do that they don't particularly look like the person anyway. You look at a star, if you actually meet a star in the flesh you say 'You don't look like your picture mate.'

[Part 2 0:39:46] Lee: So, was there any communication with the fairer sex at all, radio, correspondence, magazines?

Leek: That's kind of interesting. There was a certain amount of communication, I always maintained I am a lucky guy, in some respects I'm the luckiest guy. What it amounts to is that the guys would go, Dave Price was a prime example, he would go, on the radio, because we all had amateur radio call signs. They would go up on the radio trying to talk to people in England and trying to communicate with his family and stuff like that. One day he came into me and he says 'I've found somebody in Derbyshire' he said. I was rather non-committal because Derbyshire's a big place. He said 'this guy is near Chesterfield. I said 'well, ok, that's a promising start' you see. So anyway, he says, I said 'ok, I'll talk to him' you see, so I got upon the radio and I was talking with this guy, he says 'Oh, his name's Alex, Alex Bowyer. Ok, I says 'well, I says 'I come from, I live down Hephthorne Lane, you see' he says 'Oh' he says well I'm in North Wingfield' I says 'Oh, ok it's next door we are in Hephthorne Lane' so I says '72 Hephthorne Lane' you see, so ok, we chatted for a bit, he says 'Hang on a minute' and this voice comes on, it's me mother! I says 'oh, hello mum' I was talking to me mum and dad you see and Ben came back and says 'I just sent me brother down, your house is only five minutes away by car,' so I sent me brother down and said 'hey do you want to talk to your Paul' [both laugh.] So I talked to me mother and me dad and my sister, the one that's in there.

[Part 2 0:41:55] Lee: Were you tongue tied, by the surprise or amazed?

Leek: I was a bit taken aback, yes, so what we did was we established a regular sked as they call it and I used to talk to them, well I tried to talk to them once a week. But the thing is that radio communications were not that reliable, as I knew, this was probably in the spring, the Antarctic spring and I got and I was having a talk for a month or so and then we couldn't and then we'd talk again a little later on , so we got to a stage where we could talk for two or three months once a week and then conditions went. In winter the conditions were no good because there was not enough sun, and in the summer conditions were no good because there was too much sun which screwed the ionosphere up.

[Part 2 0:42:50] Lee: What was the attitude of FIDS towards those kind of communications were they tolerant or?

Leek: I don't think, I didn't have any reaction I mean as far as FIDS were concerned. I don't think that they would have any real concerns about it. Let me put it this way, I'm sure FIDS would be only too happy about it, officially it was illegal. We weren't supposed to communicate except through the, according to the GPO in England was concerned but I'm sure the GPO would turn round and say 'Hey, if you can do it, get on with it mate.'

[Part 2 0:43:34] Lee: Communication was supposed to go through Stanley wasn't it?

Leek: Communications, no, FIDS had no, no problems about you going up and talking on the radio, amateur radio. Let me put it this way, as you can see, they've got a bunch of guys, especially on our base who are kind of tied to base, they're bored. So anything that keeps the buggers happy, from FIDS point of view it's a good idea.

[Part 2 0:44:04] Lee: Was there any sense of being able to communicate with home a kind of dual edged sword? I ask this question because today, of course they can communicate any time they like. There are Fids who say actually it's a distraction, it's a pain. You get your missus on the phone saying the boiler bust, what do I do, and you are on the other side of the planet, there's nothing you can do apart from ... It also also can accentuate home sickness, did have any of those kind of problems?

Leek: Oh, let me see, as far as I was concerned it was great. We didn't talk, I'm not the sort of guy who can get on the phone now and talk, you may think that I'm talking at great length here but I'm not the sort of guy... If I'm talking to my wife on the phone I don't talk for very long.

[Part 2 0:44:55] Lee: So it didn't have any ill affects?

Leek: As far as I'm concerned it was great. The only problem was the other guys were jealous because nobody managed to achieve anywhere close to the communications I'd got. I'm sorry about that but It just so happened that this guy, I'm just trying to remember his name now, but anyway his last name was Bowyer actually Ben, I was talking to him, Alex was his brother and when I got back I went and visited him, we used to have Christmas together, stuff like that. In fact I inspired him to go and work on the DEW Line ²¹up in Northern Canada but as far as I was concerned it was not a problem for most of the guys for the simple reason that none of them had any real strong ties back home. We say now, ok the wives saying the boiler... I don't think any of them were married, there was one or two of them had girl-friends, and of course that was always the thing about, you know , you get a Dear John letter. I believe that FIDS were assiduous about it but they were kind of real keen on getting guys who didn't have any emotional attachments back home, because you're cut off for two years basically and that was it.

[Part 2 0:46:17] Lee: what was this about the *Women's Own* magazine?

Leek: Ha, ha, that was funny that, that was funny, I can't remember. What it amounts to is Base O I think, Forget what the name of the place is²²what it amounts to is FIDS set this base up actually on...

[Part 2 0:46:40] Lee: Danco Island.

Leek: Danco Coast I think it is isn't it, anyway they set this base up, but what it amounts to is that they had, what's it? They had parties going down from Hope Bay and they could only get down a certain distance, but Danco was halfway down the coast. They wanted something halfway down the coast so they set this base up, it turned out that they couldn't get up on to the Peninsula very easily because of the glacier issue. Anyway that's by the way, what it

²¹ DEW Line – Distant Early Warning Line, was a system of radar stations in the far northern Arctic regions. It was set up to detect incoming Soviet bombers during the Cold War. Operational from 1957 to late 1980's.

²² Base O Usually called Danco Island but also variously known as Paradise Harbour, and Danco Coast, located 64°44'S, 62°36'W and occupied from February 1956 to February 1959.

amounts to is that one of the guys there as part of the stuff that came down, he received a parcel, must have been his sister or even his girl-friend but someone had put in one of these ladies magazine, *Women's Own* or something like that. So one of the other guys conceived the idea 'We'll write to this' so they wrote to the *Women's Own* 'I'm at this base with 5,7 I can't remember, a bunch of guys on here, and we haven't seen a woman in goodness knows how long.' Well there were stacks of bloody mail, we were on the Shackleton and there were several sacks of mail, there was a bunch of sacks there already, and this place was closed now so what do you do – you start riffling through them.

[Part 2 0:48:11] Lee: So they were distributed across the bases, were these letters?

Leek: No, no they were all at Danco, they were all there at Danco Coast. What it amounts to is that we went in and we dropped a bunch of these sacks of mail off and then we said 'Ok, we'll look through them.' We were sorting out which ones we wanted, I mean you've got a whole bunch of these things, the criterion is ok, which ones got photographs in, so you choose a whole bunch of these things, maybe a dozen. I thought to myself 'I'm on my way down, in two years I'm going to be going back, if I communicate with anyone it's going to be a long distance process, you see. I wasn't all that concerned. Now apparently someone did do that and communicated with some young lady and ended up getting married to her, now that's good. I wasn't that concerned about it but I just thought that was funny that there was a whole pile of these things and someone writes with some pretty lurid pictures in them too.

[Part 2 0:49:17] Lee: Stampede!

Leek: No nudity but some very beautiful young ladies.

[Part 2 0:49:19] Lee: Ok, the man that had the initiative may have been Duncan Boston, does that name ring a bell?

Leek: No it doesn't.

[Part 2 0:49:27] Lee: he was base leader at Danco.

Leek: Yes, but there was nobody there when we went there so I guess he'd gone. That could have been the year before we went down there, the way the mail worked it could have been in the works. That bag of mail could have been in Port Stanley for a year couldn't it?

[Part 2 0:49:48] Lee: And BBC radio, your family were herded into a BBC studio at one point?

Leek: My family was, yes. I think it was once a month they could get on and talk to us over the radio, something like that. They had a script, in fact I have copies of the script somewhere or other. They submitted a script and were allowed to talk over the radio, because there was no interaction, I couldn't talk back to them but I could listen to them.

[Part 2 0:50:19] Lee: Was this *Calling Antarctica* ?

Leek: It may have been, yes, yes.

[Part 2 0:50:23] Lee: You're the first person to say that they had to write a script. It wasn't *ab lib* then, it wasn't off the cuff, it was scripted?

Leek: I guess it was off the cuff to a certain extent but I've got a copy of the script. I believe that my folks used the script I think that yeah I definitely have copies of the script, some script, maybe that was just a guide, you know 'Ok what are you going to talk about?' They'd give you a...

[Part 2 0:50:56] Lee: A pro forma?

Leek: You write down what you think because the thing is you could be on the radio and people could get all tongue tied when you're in a BBC studio. Like my folks, they're not used to that sort of stuff so...

[Part 2 0:51:09] Lee: It would have been pre-recorded, it wouldn't have been live?

Leek: I dunno, maybe, I don't know it could be it was pre-recorded.

[Part 2 0:51:17] Lee: I think it was, yes. You could hear it all the time?

Leek: As far as I know yes, yes we could hear it pretty well yes.

[Part 2 0:51:25] Lee: Some Fids learnt to cook in the Antarctic, were you one of them?

Leek: Let me put it this way, I was the cook every five weeks so, let me say this, you're doing cooking, the cook wasn't required to do anything else. So when you're on cook you're on cook and you had basically five meals a day to produce so you've got breakfast, you've got smoko, morning smoko you've got lunch or dinner and afternoon smoko and an evening meal. You also had to produce, you had to leave something like five loaves of bread for the next guy. This was a biblical situation, anyway I had to produce a bunch of nutritious meals. You had a certain amount of basic stuff to use, if you were lucky you got a ham, there was something like maybe a dozen hams available so they turned up on a periodic basis, the idea was that to make sure everybody got one, in turn. It was very egalitarian, and there was two things about, was two things I remember about cooking, I kind of, the thing is I'd been in college so I knew a bit about cooking, basic sort of cooking. We had a bunch of, you know, Mrs Beaton's cook book and all that sort of stuff to use so I'm not unhappy about cooking, I quite like cooking but there was a couple of things, one is at one point, my first meal there, in the cupboard there we had all these tins of stuff and one of them was these tins of steak and kidney pudding. Now in my house steak and kidney pudding I used to love, mother used to do that, cook one of those things, a bunch of chips; that was great. So I thought 'Ok this is great, this is a meal, you see, so I'll put this stuff on the table and everybody went 'Ugh!' you see. Now my attitude is this, ok I'm the cook, I don't understand like I do with my wife, I'm the cook, that's it. You don't like it, you know where the kitchen is, get on with it boy. There's enough bread there, plenty of jam, away you go. But at the same time you say 'Ok are they going to refuse that if I serve the same thing again.' I enjoyed experimenting with this stuff, making bread for me was easy because my mother made it all the time and the stove that we had in the Antarctic was exactly the same stove that she had back home, so I knew exactly how to do it, what to do, the whole thing so cooking was ok, it wasn't a chore.

[Part 2 0:54:35] Lee: But surely the trickiest part was finding fresh ingredients from the wild around you?

Leek: Well, let me say, first of all you didn't have to find fresh ingredients from the wild but we did on occasions. We'd get penguin eggs when we could, we'd get shag eggs when we could and we'd get the odd penguin and the odd seal. I had a, from my point of view a funny experience with Lewis there, George Lewis.

[Part 2 0:55:18] Lee: Is this the 'first catch your Shag' story?

Leek: Yes, what it amounts to is...

[Part 2 0:55:22] Lee: To paraphrase Mrs Beaton?

Leek: He decided that he wanted to branch out and cook a Shag. So I said 'Ok' so we went down to, took the boat and went down to Shag Rocks. Shag Rocks gets all these shags which are cormorants incidentally, all these shags nesting on the rocks all the way up, like all the Antarctic wildlife they are as tame as anything. What it amounts to is that you walk up to them, pat them on the head and all this sort of stuff. Now George was a big gun enthusiast so when he was in Port Stanley he went in and he says 'Oh boy, I can buy myself, actually 'Oh boy' wasn't one of his expressions, I can buy myself a .303 rifle.' Good for you, so he bought a .303 rifle and he tended this darn thing so we get down to Shag Rocks and he decided he was going to have a Shag. Now a Shag has a very thin neck about maybe an inch wide and a small head, he said 'Well I'm going to shoot this thing but I'll not shoot it in the body because then that will destroy it. I'll shoot it in the head.' Ok, so he lines up about six feet away from this poor old Shag, it was looking him straight in the eye and he pulls the trigger, there's the most enormous bang. The Shag jumps up and flies off 'Oh, Oh' so it flies back again I thought he's a glutton for punishment, shaking his head and giving George the evil eye this time. He lines up again, BANG and this shag jumps up and flies off. I can't remember if he did it two or three times. You know what 'It's getting too noisy.' So George says 'I know, I understand this so, and then he decided that he still has to have a Shag so now he's got to get one and he's going to basically ring it's neck. I'll tell ya, he discovered ringing a Shags neck, ringing any birds neck is not easy, ringing a Shag's neck, [Laughter] I think he was going to beat the bird to death with a oar or paddle out of the boat. I'm laughing about it, it was a complete disaster. The Shag when we ate it was very much like penguin, penguin is, penguin and seal the flesh is kind of like leather it's got, it's got a lot of haemoglobin in it. I think what it amounts to when they dive they store oxygen in the haemoglobin is in everything. I like leather, so I was fine but the shag was, it was ok when it was cooked but getting it was, you know, like you say a Mrs Beaton moment. 'First catch your Hare.'

[Part 2 0:58:42] Lee: Did you ever have it again? Did you ever have Shag again?

Leek: We never had Shag again, we had penguin. What he discovered in the end and did some research and did discover that the bullet come out and jumps off to one side by about three inches which was enough to completely miss the Shag. He said it was straight at 100 yards I said yes but 100 yards away you'd be in the blasted sea for goodness sake.

[Part 2 0:59:08] Lee: I mean you talked earlier about the long, darkish winter days and how you would read a great deal and in order to facilitate your reading you built yourself an armchair?

Leek: that's right yes.

[Part 2 0:59:23] Lee: Out of what?

Leek: Well what it amounts to is I'm a bit of a wriggle bottom as you may have noticed. Well the chairs were, they were ok, but they weren't all that comfortable and I thought well, you know, I'll build an armchair. What I did was, in the Nissen Hut we had all sorts of stuff and we had a bunch of this, like Meccano, Dexion angle, so I just got a bunch of Dexion angle and I built the outline of a chair and then to provide the webbing we had a bunch of cable, telephone type cable, signalling cable. Strung it with that and then we had these foam beds, you know foam mattresses, I just hung that over the back of it and I had my armchair. I said 'Boy this is great you see' I say to George 'You want me to make you one?' no he didn't want one, no. nobody else wanted one, I don't know what the hell happened to it in the end but.

[Part 2 1:00:34] Lee: And was there a considerable library to read from?

Leek: There was a lot of stuff, yes, there was a lot of stuff to read. A lot of mysteries and stuff like that. There was also a fair amount of Antarctic literature, Shackleton and all these others, Mawson and these other guys. You read a certain amount of that and you think 'I don't know' you can read a certain amount of that and if you read too much of that you're going to getting yourself worried about it, it gets a little repetitious, ok been there, done that so. Mysteries, you know, Agatha Christie and all these others, they were light reading.

[Part 2 1:01:11] Lee: But you could only read those once couldn't you, because you knew the outcome?

Leek: you can, but we had a heck of a lot of them, so it's ok.

[Part 2 1:01:20] Lee: I get the impression particularly at Port Lockroy that Fids didn't get off base much but you made a trip to the Chilean base? Tell me the story about that please.

Leek: You see the thing is, yes I kind of almost resented the whatsit but I liked to get out and I was the sort of guy who would, especially in the summer I would get up at 2 o'clock in the morning and think well ok I think I'll go off for the... at least a couple of times at 2 o'clock in the morning so ok that's it. The only form of motorised transport you've got, ok you jump into the boat and you'd go tootling off down the other end of Anvers Island to see what there was around there and we just got about as far away as round the, there's now an American base there now²³, there was nothing there in my day. Anyway I remembered the story Dave Price had about the guys from the Chilean, I think it was a Chileano base²⁴ who came across to help with Muir Smith. I thought 'I wouldn't mind doing that' so right at the very end of my tenure this guy Dave Harrison came in, he was a new guy so I could persuade him to do all sorts of things. I said 'I'm thinking of having a trip over to the mainland there' you see, he not knowing the whole hell of a lot about what was what, he said 'Yes, sounds good' you see,

²³ Palmer Station 64°77'S 64°05'W located Arthur Harbour, Anvers island. Base initial construction completed in 1968. Operated by United States Antarctic Service (USAP). Station houses approximately 40 people in summer dropping to 15-20 for winter maintenance.

²⁴ Correction- it was not the Chileans but the Argentinians from their base *Almirante Brown* located in Paradise Harbour.

so I said 'Ok' so one morning we got in the boat and I said 'Ok we're going to the Chileano base' and we tootled off. We went up the end of the, what is it, Wienke Island I think it is, right. There we are, there was a beach or something there and we stopped and we looked at it and said 'Ok that's where we are going, across there, ok fine, and we started out across, it's quite wide. So we plodded across, got halfway across it got misty and Dave said 'Oh, how do we know which way to go?' I said 'Well now I'm just keeping the wind in the same direction.' About 15 to 20 minutes later it cleared up, ok away we go, so we motored into the bay on the other side there, the current was really fierce, there was lots of ice busy rushing past us. Anyway we landed there, there was a bunch of guys on this Chileano base so we greeted them they were saying 'Where's the boat, where's the boat?' They thought we'd come off a cruise ship or something you see I said 'No, no we came from Port Lockroy.' 'You've got to be nuts' they said probably in Spanish [Laughter]. The problem was we couldn't communicate back to base, we got the radio with us but we hadn't got the right frequency and we tried with the Chileano radio, so, ok. The next day we, because I was intending to stay an extra day or so, you know, have a meeting with them, the South Americans.

[Part 2 1:04:44] Lee: So how did you get on with them, because they were the enemy weren't they?

Leek: No, no, no, nobody's the enemy in the Antarctic, you don't get enemies, I mean they were the guys who sent a bloody boat across to blooming doctor Muir Smith the year before, for God's sake. and they risked their lives to do that. There's only one enemy and that's the blasted weather. So anyway they were very friendly and as I say we'd gone with[unintelligible] there was one or two who could speak enough English. So anyway we went back and of course when we got back they said 'Where were you? Secfids is all worried and blah, blah, blah.' apparently they'd sent a rescue and they'd diverted the *John Biscoe* 'Oh, oh, sorry guys.' I think after that FIDS decided 'Get that bugger off the base.'

[Part 2 1:05:37] Lee: So, you could hear the base, but the base couldn't hear you, you could hear?

Leek: No we couldn't hear either way.

[Part 2 1:05:42] Lee: You couldn't hear either way?

Leek: No, no we couldn't hear either way. We didn't know what was happening, if we'd have known it wouldn't make any difference. We were not going to go straight back, we went back the next day.

[Part 2 1:05:53] Lee: you were amazed to hear the sound of bleating sheep at the Chilean base?

Leek: Yes, they had sheep there. They had live sheep, I think they kept the live sheep for quite a while, I think they butchered them either when they ran out of, they had bales of hay and when they ran out of the hay or when they were feeling peckish. It's a good way to keep fresh meat.

[Part 2 1:06:22] Lee: That was right toward the end of your time in the Antarctic, I wonder as departure loomed whether you were feeling glad to get out or very sorry to leave, what was your feeling at that time.?

Leek: I've always been in a situation where I'm kind of, I'm looking forward to the next step. I'm not sort of, I don't get 'Oh, oh well I'm very sorry to leave but at the same time if you'd turned round and said 'do you want to stay another year?' I'd probably have said 'Yes, sure.' I wasn't 'well I've got to get out of here' and I wasn't at the same time saying 'I really miss the guys' and all that sort of stuff. I was looking forward to basically travelling further south and also getting home eventually but, I wasn't desperate let's put it that way.

[Part 2 1:07:16] Lee: You were delayed on the way back, you were stuck in South Africa for a couple of months?

Leek: Yes we did, yes that was good, I thought that was great. On the way back we got to South Africa, the ship had been commissioned, I'm not sure, the South African government or the French government, they went to, they had to go to Isles de Kerguelen²⁵, I think it was, out in the Indian Ocean, and they said 'Ok, we've got this commission to go to and basically take supplies out to this island.' Way out in the sub-Antarctic part of the Indian Ocean, all of us said 'Tell you what, been there, done that, give us an advance on our pay and at least five of us and what happened was we rented a car. At this point I didn't have a drivers licence, I'm trying to remember who else didn't have a drivers licence I believe there was me, Barry Williamson, Evan Watson and Paddy someone or other.

[Part 2 1:08:46] Lee: Wouldn't you take your driving licences with you, to the Antarctic?

Leek: Well, it's like this, I didn't have one. I didn't have one in England so...

[Part 2 1:08:55] Lee: What's the point you are trying to make?

Leek: Well the point is there was only two of us could drive, only two of them could drive and we rented a car, you had to have a driver's licence you see. One of them was this guy, can't remember his name now, Paddy, Patrick somebody or other, he was a big tall guy and nobody would like to be driving with him because he was the scariest bloody driver you've ever seen and so what it amounts to is we had this car, old fashioned where the front seats were all together, bench front seats, so he was driving so I was sitting with him so I could fall asleep whilst he was driving. We spent at least a month and a half driving around South Africa, went up to the Krueger National Park and various other places, we had a ball.

[Part 2 1:09:52] Lee: Very, very different from where you'd been?

Leek: It was a bit of a change, yes. I liked South Africa, I liked what'sit, Cape Town, Cape Town was good. I thought Cape Town was great because it was the only town I'd ever been in where I got a bus into town you know, to climb a mountain oh I thought this was great.

²⁵ Kerguelen Islands 49°21'S 70°13'E. Part of French Southern and Antarctic Lands, also known as the Desolation Islands. They are among the most isolated places on earth being more than 3300km (2051miles) from the nearest population centre. France maintains a permanent presence of 50-100 scientist, engineers and researchers.

[Part 2 1:10:13] Lee: You had a very substantial and interesting career after FIDS working on computers, atomic energy, linear accelerators and so on, Quite an interesting engineering career, we haven't got time to go into that now but what I would like to know was whether you feel that was there anything you learned in the Antarctic which stood you in good stead later in your life either in your career or in handling people but did you change in those two years?

Leek: I would say no, let me say this, anything I learnt down there was of great value but thinking back on it, I've been married for 51 years and the biggest value of living on the base and especially that base is learning how to get on with other people, other people with different views and different backgrounds and as far as I'm concerned that's the best training for being married [Both laugh]. I mean I'm happily married but the thing is, you're married and you've got to get on with somebody, living on base is even worse than being married because being married you go out to work so you only interact with you wife for only three or four hours a day. Being on base with those guys you're re acting and interacting for something like 24 hours a day, there aint no, there's not lot of getting out.

[Part 2 1:11:44] Lee: That's the best answer I've ever had to that question, thank you Paul.

ENDS

Possible Extracts.

- Paul's father, an interesting man. [Part1 0:00:28]
- Education, school and university. [Part1 0:03:15]
- Antarctica and National Service. [Part1 0:11:21]
- The FIDS interview and ionospheric training. [Part1 0:13:38]
- Meeting the old lags on base. [Part1 0:27:27]
- First impressions of PortLockroy. [Part1 0:34:13]
- Mountaineering with John Cunningham. [Part1 0:35:24]
- The *Shackleton* bends a rudder. [Part1 0:40:53]
- An explosive visit to Deception Island. [Part1 0:43:43]
- Deception, adventures with a digger. [Part1 0:47:03]
- A first recorded ascent (perhaps). [Part1 0:49:50]
- Various adventures with John Cunningham. [Part1 0:52:55]
- Breaking a wrist – skiing. [Part1 0:59:42]
- Musings on the Beastie and ionospheric work. [Part2 0:02:45]
- The undersea cable. [Part2 0:12:10]
- The significance of IGY research. [Part2 0:18:30]
- We were not overworked. [Part2 0:27:47]
- Interior decoration and pin-ups. [Part2 0:34:41]
- Ham radio contact with parents. [Part2 0:39:49]
- *Womens Own* magazine and fan mail. [Part2 0:46:17]
- The trials of cooking. [Part2 0:51:25]
- First catch your Shag. [Part2 0:55:18]
- A boat trip across the De Gerlache. [Part2 1:01:20]
- Home via South Africa. [Part2 1:07:16]
- Final word, FIDS good training for marriage. [Part2 1:10:13]

ENDS