

BOB BOND

Full transcript of interview conducted by Chris Eldon Lee

at his home in Church Stretton, Shropshire on 29th December 2005.

Transcribed by Elizabeth Edwards, British Antarctic Survey, 13 July 2007.

DISC ONE

Bob Bond : My name is **Peter Robert Bond** – but known as Bob - born in 1933 at Biggin Hall in Kent and raised there until the war when we evacuated to North Wales, my father being a civil servant.

Chris Lee : What was he doing?

Bob Bond : He was a tax inspector, I'm sorry to say.

Chris Lee : Not an adventurer, then?

Bob Bond : No, not at all, no....so where the adventure gene came from I don't know. Not from him possibly.

Chris Lee : What was your planned career structure, then?

Bob Bond : Well, I joined the Royal Air Force on National Service, but it became immediately clear that if you volunteered for Air Crew a) the pay was better, but that you also had to sign for 4 years....which was how I came in. And at that stage, I had not looked beyond 4 years flying with the Royal Air Force, but in fact I subsequently signed for 12 years and eventually for a permanent commission.

Chris Lee : Why did you choose the Royal Air Force? What was moving you?

Bob Bond : Well, I was born and raised at Biggin Hill, so I guess I was surrounded by airplanes and the Air Force, but I really didn't like the idea of the Royal Navy and disappearing to sea for long periods, nor did I want to live in a hedgerow like a soldier. So the Air Force - I don't think it was glamour, it just seemed a better life.

Chris Lee : Did you want to fly?

Bob Bond : Yes I did. I had no experience of flying as a teenager, but obviously I'd seen airplanes about and that looked good. If I could fly, I wanted to fly, provided ... as a pilot. I wasn't interested in the other aviation roles.

Chris Lee : So was this something perhaps that came from your childhood? I don't know. Looking up into the sky?

Bob Bond : Oh, maybe. Because certainly, being brought up in the Second World War period, you are exposed to all sorts of things and there are the story books, but also all the news items and it certainly seemed a nice way of life. But I guess I wasn't the classic young lad who'd built thousands of model airplanes and then started going down to aerodromes and watching airplanes in order to get a flight, or anything of that

nature. I went along for National Service, took the aptitude tests, found that I had aptitude to be a pilot and as far as I was concerned, that was good.

Chris Lee : This was in 1940?

Bob Bond : 1952 - April 1952. And ... however old I was then – 19, 18, 19. And I stayed then for 38 years, eventually.

Chris Lee : So where was your first base? Or where were you trained, perhaps, is more accurate?

Bob Bond : Training? We were trained ... we assembled at Cranwell, we then trained at Kirton in Lindsey in Lincolnshire, which was initial training - drill and what the Air Force is all about. My flying training subsequently was at Derby - Burnaston – now a Mitsubishi factory I think. Then to Wellesbourne Mountford, finally to Oxford. Finally to Chivenor to do jet conversion. Or Chivenor and Tarrant Rushton in Dorset. My first posting was to Germany on fighters - that was in '54, and we were flying the Sabre - Canadian built Sabre. The policy, I guess, was to get as many people into fighter airplanes as possible. That's what the Air Force was all about, at that stage of the game.

Chris Lee : So, were you expecting to fight?

Bob Bond : Oh, yes ... I mean ... that ... It never occurred to me that we wouldn't and, in fact, part of the role in Germany at that stage was one-way trips across into the Soviet Union, to go to targets, were it necessary. But then you'd jump, you came back as far as you could and jumped out and walked the rest, because there just wasn't the fuel in the airplane to go to some of them.

Chris Lee : Was that ever put to the test?

Bob Bond : No. Some people jumped out, but not for that reason.

Chris Lee : So, was that a happy lifestyle for you?

Bob Bond : Very much so - I mean we were - I was on a base at Wildenrath. There were four squadrons there, say about 20-30 young men on each squadron, so well over a hundred youngsters in the mess. On our own squadron, we only had two married people - the Squadron Commander and one of the Flight Commanders. So the social life was hectic, wild quite often. Booze was very cheap, so we rapidly became inured to alcohol. And we probably had more money there, because life was cheaper than we would had we stayed in England. So, yes, it was a superb time.

Chris Lee : And how did you take to flying? Was it something you had a particular affinity for? What was your feeling about it?

Bob Bond : My basic training was fine. I nipped through that in no time, went solo in fairly short order. But in the second phase, which was Oxford to Wellesbourne Mountford, I had a bit of a problem half-way through, where I was under review. But we survived that.

Chris Lee : How do you mean?

Bob Bond : Well, I wasn't coping really with some of the more advanced and instrument flying - night flying - side of life. And what they do, you know, you're normally given some dual instruction, then you're expected to do it solo and so on and so forth. Well, I needed a lot more dual and they still weren't very happy with me. So you progressed up the scale. You fly with your instructor, then the Flight Commander, then the Squadron Commander and they all suck their teeth and decide whether you're an acceptable risk, which they did with me, happily.

Chris Lee : Was it a bit touch and go?

Bob Bond : I could have gone, yes. I mean, we were getting rid then of probably half the course, one way or another.

Chris Lee : Really?

Bob Bond : So, yes, I could have gone. But once I was through that bit and on to jet flying, I was happy as a lamb and never looked back.

Chris Lee : And was it just some sort of a mental block? Or the fact that you weren't quite as adept as you would have liked to have been?

Bob Bond : I'm not sure what it was. Certainly, I was probably a slightly naive 18-year-old. I wasn't very good at Physics and Maths, I was better at Modern Languages than I was ... So, on the ground side, I was having the odd problem. But, no, it just was something I took a long time to get to grips with it.

Chris Lee : To sink in?

Bob Bond : Yes. But once you've got it, usually, it stays with you. It's like riding bicycles.

Chris Lee : So, how did your RAF Career progress in the '50s? Were you flying Sabres all the time, or what happened?

Bob Bond : No, we flew Sabres and ... for the A normal tour length was 2.5 to 3 years. So '57 was time to finish that first tour. And it was also time for the Sandys axe - Duncan Sandys, who was then Minister of Defence. The thought was that the fighter side of the Royal Air Force would disappear and it would become missiles. And there was a huge draw down. And the options were either night fighters or flying instruction and I opted for flying instruction, became a flying instructor, then instructed basic flying instruction i.e. Appendicia Pilots at Feltwell. Then I joined the University Air Squadron system, instructing at Cambridge and St. Andrews and Belfast. And it was at that stage that I volunteered to go down to the Antarctic.

Chris Lee : So, you had effectively stopped flying really, you had more teaching than piloting?

Bob Bond : No, I hadn't stopped flying, I was a flying instructor, so I was teaching every day, in fact you probably fly more as a flying instructor than you do otherwise.

Chris Lee : Had you moved down to smaller planes again?

Bob Bond : Certainly, yes, I mean in the University Air Squadron we were flying Chipmonks, which is, as you probably know, a basic piston engine airplane.

But the trouble with flying instruction was you were graded each year and you were expected to progress up through the grades. But if you ever got to A1 – I became A2 – but if you ever got to A1, which was an exceptional rating, then they tended to snatch you back to Central Flying School so you could instruct instructors. And if you're not careful, you're then stuck in that game for a long time. Which is no bad thing, if you want to be an instructor. But at that stage I still had a slight sort of twitchy feeling - itchy feeling, not twitchy - and was looking for other things. And the Antarctic came up as a job offer.

Chris Lee : Well. So you loved flying - was it fair to say you loved it ?

Bob Bond : Oh, yes, yes, I was ... By that time I had signed on a permanent commission, I was convinced that I wanted to stay flying. It was good fun.

Chris Lee : Was it more than fun? What was it that you loved?

Bob Bond : No, it was primarily fun. Certainly, at that stage in the fifties, the tendency was to look for a job with security and the Air Force gave you that. But you were only looking ..., I mean you were still not looking to pensionable age or anything of that nonsense. But no, I loved flying. Once I'd got to be good at it. It was something I always enjoyed doing. The way of life was good. As youngsters, you probably lived a pretty high quality life, I guess, in the Air Force.

Chris Lee : And you were never nervous or worried or fearful?

Bob Bond : Well, I guess you frighten yourself occasionally, but, no, not seriously.

Chris Lee : So tell me then about the Antarctic offer. You said it was an offer. Were you approached?

Bob Bond : No, periodically, because there were all sorts of exchange flying jobs that the Air Force did with other Air Forces and so on, they would send circulars whenever one of these job offers came up. And so it was with the Antarctic one. They were asking for somebody with piston engine experience, which I was doing at that stage. Above average assessments, which I had as a flying instructor. Pilot navigation. So in one sense I fitted all the little windows. But it also sounded exciting and good fun. And in fact, thinking back, at the eight-year period, I had considered leaving the Air Force and going for a job with the whaling companies down there. So I had already slightly clicked towards the Antarctic, if you wish. I didn't take it up. Instead, I ... that was when I signed for a permanent commission.

Chris Lee : So what was it that was making you want to go South, then? Even down to perhaps becoming a ... ?

Bob Bond : I don't know. Maybe I ... I don't think it was especially South. I also volunteered to go out and instruct with the Iraqi Air Force! Which came to nothing, because they had a revolution about that stage. So I guess I was just restless and wanted something out of the rut, if you wish. However, back to the Antarctic thing. It seemed to fit the bill. I had been instructing then for four years, so in my mind it was time for a change. And off we went for an interview in London.

Chris Lee : So, was it an advert you saw or a notice?

Bob Bond : No ... they... it was ... they used to call them Air Ministry Orders, on which they published every week the sort of things that were going on. If something was changing. But always in the back were notices - "looking for volunteers" - whether it was for Portnam Down, if you were foolish enough to go down there to seek a cure for the common cold, or these flying jobs, which was how the Iraq one had come up as well. So, no, we just used to look through them. Some people wanted to do it, some didn't.

Chris Lee : And a little light bulb appeared above your head, did it, on this one?

Bob Bond : Oh, very much so, yes. "I like the look of that", I thought.

Chris Lee : You were sure straight away?

Bob Bond : Yes, in my own mind I was. And I think you have to be, otherwise you don't convince an interview board.

Chris Lee : So, tell me about the interview. Do you remember where it was and who was on the other side of the table?

Bob Bond : I can remember where it was, yes It was in Adastral House, which is just off The Strand, which was where our personnel folk were billeted in those days. One of the interviewers was John Lewis, who of course was on the Transantarctic Expedition, who was then a Squadron Leader, I think, or Wing Commander, I can't remember. Bunny Fuchs was there and I think Bill Sloman was the third one. I'm pretty sure it was Bill. But they did a standard sort of job type interview, asking all the usual questions and, low and behold, they seemed to think I was okay. So I was delighted.

Chris Lee : So they were Antarctic hands behind the desk rather than flying hands?

Bob Bond : John Lewis was the only Air Force, I mean he was working in, at the Air Secretary's department, which is the department that moves people about. So, he was the Air Force professional, a pilot as well, and of course a pilot with Antarctic experience, which is even more appropriate. Bill Sloman was obviously heavily into the acquiring of people.

Chris Lee : And had been for some years?

Bob Bond : Yes, and it was nice that Bunny Fuchs came along as well.

Chris Lee : What did you make of him?

Bob Bond : Well, I mean, at that stage, he ... to me he was someone slightly austere and fairly elevated in the hierarchy, if you wish. I mean, I don't know that FIDS is a particular hierarchy, but the Air Force certainly was. And elderly gentlemen were treated with respect, which was my attitude to him. I knew who he was, obviously, because I'd read the TA books and so on. But, I think John Lewis was the driving force in the interview.

Chris Lee : Did they give you a tough time, do you remember? Or was it Queensberry Rules, or?

Bob Bond : There was certainly ... it was an interview, there was nothing else. There were no selection-type testing or anything of the sort. But, no, they. Yes, it was friendly rather than antagonistic. But they asked all the usual types of questions as to why you want to go, do you think you can. And I guess the Bill Sloman and Fuchs angle were always on the sort of qualities you need if you're going to be stuck down there with a small bunch of people. And that's the sort of angle they were on all the time. John Lewis was very much more on the flying, making sure I had the right sort of flying experience. But, no, it wasn't a hard interview by any means. Interviews are always anxious, because you're never sure whether you're going to succeed.

Chris Lee : And you were dead keen, weren't you?

Bob Bond : And I was keen. And however keen and clever you are, you still don't know, particularly with experienced interviewers, because they don't give anything away.

Chris Lee : Did they tell you on the spot?

Bob Bond : I don't remember them doing so and I don't think they would have done, because I'm sure there would have been other applicants. But it wasn't very long, certainly.

Chris Lee : Talking to other ex FIDS, the period of time between getting the job and going South is usually quite short.

Bob Bond : It probably was. I don't remember the date of the interview, to be honest, but it was certainly within three months in my ... I would imagine. The interviews would have been probably in August/September.

Chris Lee : Were you ... you were staying within the RAF, or were you being transferred?

Bob Bond : Yes, you stay within the Air Force, but they second you to whichever organisation it is, and in this case we were seconded to FIDS. That didn't mean - but I was still paid by the Air Force, looked after by the Air Force and so on. So, from my

point of view nothing changed, except that I was not going to be wearing uniform and there was a secondment allowance - as there always is - of some sort.

Chris Lee : So you kept your rank, which would have been?

Bob Bond : Kept the rank, which at that stage was Flight Lieutenant, the same sort of rates of pay and so on and so forth.

Chris Lee : What happened in those few months between being appointed and flying South? Was there more training to be done?

Bob Bond : No, it was rather strange, in some respects. Once I knew I was going and I can't ... we were examined medically every year anyway, so I don't think there was a particularly special medical. But there was no suggestion of previous flying training and I think there's an assumption amongst Air Force flying instructors that if you give them an airplane, they'll fly it. You know, somebody tells you what speed it falls out of the sky at and that's all you need. And starts it for you. So there was no suggestion of flying training. But we went up to De Havilland's at Hatfield, where they had the Beaver at that time - De Havilland Canada, again, which was going into the Army Air Corps. And we did a technical course. And it was there I met the chap that was going down with me - who was an RAF Sargeant fitter, Roy Brand - and the two of us sat there for a week or so. They took their plane apart and I also did some sitting in it and so on, but we didn't do any flying training at all.

Chris Lee : You never left the ground?

Bob Bond : No. The first time I flew, well, as it happened, of course, they'd lost the Beaver at that stage down in the Antarctic anyway and there was going to be a second Otter, making two Otters rather than an Otter and a Beaver. So it really wouldn't have been much use anyway! Except it was made by the same people and the instrument panel looked very similar - so when I saw an Otter it wasn't a great surprise to me, it looked much as I expected it to look.

Chris Lee : Was there anybody you had to consult about going down? You were not married at this point. Was there a girlfriend or parents?

Bob Bond : No permanent girlfriends, no. I certainly wasn't married. Parents - both my parents were alive at that stage, so I spoke to them.

Chris Lee : No resistance?

Bob Bond : No resistance. They knew what I wanted to do and off I went, really.

Chris Lee : And you mentioned the loss of the Beaver. I've been looking through the logs of the airplanes that went to the Antarctic before you went. None of them seemed to last very long. There was a certain - it strikes me, as a civilian, that the crash rate was quite high.

Bob Bond : Well, I'm not sure that that's quite right. In fact, you'll find I think, if you look at it, that most of the aircraft that are lost in the Antarctic are destroyed when

they're sitting on the ground by sudden gales or whatever. That wasn't the case with our Beaver - that fell through the sea ice, after landing. It found a weak patch, and down it went, fortunately without any loss of life.

Chris Lee : So that wasn't a consideration, the dangers were not so obvious?

Bob Bond : That sort of danger ... we knew that flying down there could be hazardous, in the sense that you don't have all the paraphernalia of a support organisation that you do flying in this country, i.e. there was no reasonable weather forecasting system; there weren't many navigation aids; the mapping was pretty poor and primitive. So all those things were there and I guess that I ... in my mind I had already decided it was rather like Bush flying in Canada. I didn't know much about Bush flying, I'd had a ... in fact one of Maureen's cousins who'd done some bush flying, mail flying, in the very early days,. But I'd read a few books, so I knew what was going on.

Chris Lee : So all of that which would perhaps put the typical young man off going to the Antarctic actually encouraged you, did it?

Bob Bond : Yes, I don't think the rawness or the thought of danger puts young men off. It constitutes a challenge and challenges are the things you're looking for at this stage. You don't ... I think as a pilot if you worried about the risks all the time, you'd have a miserable life. "It doesn't happen to me" is probably the thing that you do.

Chris Lee : Did they tell you before you went the kind of work you'd be doing whilst you were down there ?

Bob Bond : That came out in the interview, yes. Again, I knew what John Lewis had done in the Trans-Antarctic Expedition and the other two told me, roughly, what they were trying to do, which at that time was, the hangar was going down or had gone down, but hadn't got into Marguerite Bay because of the ice. So it was still sitting in the Falklands. So there was the hangar to get in somewhere. And they were trying, at that stage, really, to get down the west coast of the Peninsula into King George VI Sound - Fossil Bluff as it became - and down the east coast as well. The sledging parties from Stonington and Hope Bay had done quite a bit of survey work and geological work, but they needed to get further afield and airplanes were the obvious answer.

Chris Lee : So you were operating a kind of supply service for the planes, you weren't doing mapping from the plane yourself?

Bob Bond: In my time, no. Right towards the end, in '63, just before I came home, we had a camera and we did try a couple of photographic runs, but in fact a single-engine airplane is not a good airplane to have a camera in, because you've got vibrations, you've got fumes coming back past the fuselage, so wherever you put the camera is not going to be very good. So at that sense it was a no-no and we were far more involved moving people and kit about.

Chris Lee : So the trip South. How did you get there and when did you go?

Bob Bond : We set off from Southampton in December, in *John Biscoe*.

Chris Lee '61

Bob Bond : '60. I assume it was in December, I really can't remember, to be honest, but it must have been about December. Via Montevideo and then down to the Falklands. At that time in the 60's, Falklands was still operating, not a headquarters but as operational headquarters, if you like, so we got kitted out in the Falklands.

Chris Lee. This was personal gear?

Bob Bond : Personal gear. They were the people that were talking to the Bases at that stage, because communications were not that smart in those days. So it was into the Falklands, which I remember ... the Falklands was good for several things. It was duty free so you could buy cameras and watches and all the sort of gear that are going to be useful to you. I remember it for the pubs having blacklists, which we thought was highly amusing and although we were there only there three days, the aim was to try and get yourself onto a black list while you were there - which we didn't achieve.

Chris Lee : Were these published on the blackboard?

Bob Bond : Yes, outside the pub, you know, well there were only two pubs, I think, in Port Stanley at that stage. But, there was a big sign outside saying "you're banned".

Chris Lee : There was a certain status attached?

Bob Bond : We thought there was, yes. Mind you, if you're a transit passenger there could be status. If you're a resident, it could be damned irritating, I suppose.

Chris Lee : Can I ask how you might have got yourself on to it?

Bob Bond : Only by drinking to excess and making a lot of noise.

Chris Lee : And you tried that?

Bob Bond : Oh well, yes, we'd got used to doing that on the way down. But no, we really weren't the hooligans it sounds. But we also had a cocktail party with the Governor.

Chris Lee : Who was?

Bob Bond : Who at that stage was, I think it was Sir Edwin Arrowsmith at that stage. I'm not sure, not a hundred per cent sure. But I think he did that for all the FIDs ships coming through, which was very nice. And we played a football match against somebody while we were there and probably lost. And that was it and you were on your way.

Chris Lee : Did you sense adventure, even at that point?

Bob Bond : Oh, I think so, because the ... once on board the ship you were into a totally different mix of people, i.e. there were a lot of scientists, there were the gash hands, the experienced mountaineers and so on; and having come out of a fairly closed grouping in the Air Force, this was good for me. And what's more, the way of life on the ship, there was a certain levelling between everybody. There isn't really a rank structure within FIDs, as you probably know. I mean there is, but not in the sense that there is in the Air Force, and I found that fairly refreshing and what's more I think we all became ... we made friends fairly firmly on the way down. So, yes, we were ready for a few drinks a) when we got to Montevideo and b) when we got to Port Stanley.

Chris Lee : So you were at Stanley for just a handful of days?

Bob Bond : Yes.

Chris Lee : And then you were South again? What happened next?

Bob Bond : Yes, then the move. I mean, as far as I was concerned it was a move to Deception.

Chris Lee : Was that the plan?

Bob Bond : Yes, that was the plan. Because they'd failed to get the hangar through to Stonington, they had opted to put it in Deception and we were going to use Deception as the winter base for the airplanes. So, that was where I was headed. I suspect that the choice of where the ship is going from Stanley depends a lot on ice and other priorities, but in fact, it didn't. Excuse me [coughs].

So we went down to Deception, which wasn't a long journey at all - a few days.

Chris Lee : Had you seen photographs of it ?

Bob Bond : Of Deception? Yes I had.

Chris Lee : So you knew what to expect?

Bob Bond : I knew. You've been to Deception, so you know what a funny looking place it is.

Chris Lee : I bet. But for the benefit of the recording – what was your first impression?

Bob Bond : Probably what a derelict-looking place it was. Although you've seen pictures of it, when you actually sail into Deception Harbour and there are all the old whaling buildings and broken down bits and pieces all over the place, you think, "My God". It didn't worry me, I have to say. But I was slightly surprised at how broken down the place looked. But once ashore, you're pretty busy, everybody helps offloading stores from the ships. We also had an airplane to unload. Although, I don't think it was on the *Biscoe*, I think it came down on one of the other ships – ie. an Otter to replace the Beaver.

So, we arrived at Deception, settled in slightly, did a lot of unloading. Then came the ... the airplane was the next priority as far as we were concerned, well as far as everyone was concerned. So they brought that ashore on some sort of pontoon arrangement with sort of oil drums and God knows what else. The fuselage, and with the engine and so on, and that was brought off the pontoon onto the shore. Deception, being ash, of course, and a good sort of running surface. And our two fitters - the one, Roy, who came down with me - and Tom Sumner, who was the guy that was there. Well, in fact, there were two there, because the other one hadn't gone home. Pete Bates and Tom Sumner - the three of them set to, to build the airplane. Which, again, was a new experience for me. Airplanes come out of hangers in the Air Force and you fly them!

Chris Lee : Not out of crates?

Bob Bond : Not out of crates.

Chris Lee : Getting the plane ashore – was that brute force and manpower or did you have ...?

Bob Bond : I think ... The ship's crew thought very hard about it. Most of the loading ... off loading from *Biscoe* was done in scows – which are sort of large, flat-bottomed barges, if you like, that normally sit on the ship's deck and are pulled by one of the ship's motor boats tied alongside. Which works well in shallow and protected waters. But I think we ... somehow we thought that if it was on a scow, the centre of gravity might be a bit high and I recall there being oil drums and, you know, a duly-rigged raft, if you like, again pulled ashore by the ship's small motorboats. Just, then, planks laid down and we had Ferguson tractors on Deception, at that stage - you know, the normal little old grey Fergusons - and the airplane was towed down that, probably ... I don't actually remember it coming off the pontoon but I imagine there were lots of chaps on ropes securing the thing as it came ashore. I do remember putting the wings on, because somewhere I still have a black and white photograph of about 20 FIDS standing with their hands over their heads, on top of which is the wing, and it was pouring with rain on that particular day, but they, having got the thing balanced on top of all the FIDs, then the FIDs walked the wing up to the airplane and the wing was bolted on. There were no cranes or ... I guess you could have rigged one of these, whatever you call them – a pull with a little pulley on top - that they occasionally used. But we didn't, we used FID power. And the wings were put on in that fashion, as ... anything else, of course, wasn't that heavy and could be managed. The engine was already in.

Chris Lee : Would this have been the first plane at Deception?

Bob Bond : No, the previous Otter.

Chris Lee : What about the Beaver?

Bob Bond : Well, there had been the Otter and the Beaver. The Beaver had not been lost, so there was one Otter left. And, again, really, because of the danger of an aircraft going down, they hadn't been doing a lot of flying with the one Otter away

from Deception, I mean it had come back to Deception, obviously. But they, and we subsequently always had in mind that wherever one airplane went, the other wasn't always with it, just in case there was a weather problem. If one went down, there was another one about somewhere to do something about it.

Chris Lee : So, could they both be in the air at the same time but not heading in the same direction?

Bob Bond : Sometimes they were. I mean, but it was a thing you always thought about. Subsequently, in the summer, some of us - we tended to fly in very good weather and weather comes in phases. You may not fly for a couple of weeks, then all of a sudden the weather clears and away you go. And if it is doing that, then you have no option but to fly both the airplanes, but we would fly them at opposite ends of a shuttle, if you wish, so they weren't in the same area.

Chris Lee : And was that written down, or was that just ... ?

Bob Bond : No, it wasn't written anywhere. There was nothing written anywhere!

Chris Lee : This was just commonsense?

Bob Bond : It was commonsense. The guys who were down there had a year's experience, so they learned a few lessons. And at that stage the aim was always to fly two seasons, or three as it turned out, although subsequently it didn't stay that way. But no, you ... there were no rules, nor was there anyone to apply them, come to that, yes. But that was a commonsense thing. In the same way, we flew generally with about two months emergency rations in the airplane, so if you did plop down somewhere, you could last a little while. And, I guess, if you sit and think about these things, they're obvious to anybody. Because it was a single-engine airplane and a lot of our flying was over water, we tried not to think about that, because you didn't have very many options. But anywhere else, you always have an eye, "If the engine stops now, where can I go?" Which is normal single-engine flying practice. You would work out how big an iceberg, if it was a tabular iceberg, how long it needed to be to get onto it. But in essence, you were always trying to stay relatively close to real land.

Chris Lee : What did you have in the way of survival gear? Did you have a rubber dinghy on board?

Bob Bond : We had a standard Air Force inflatable dingy, you know, the sort of thing that's used all the time. We had life jackets. We didn't fly in immersion suits - which is what you would use flying over the North Sea, for instance. We tended to fly in normal FIDS-type gear. But then most of our flying was over land, it was only when you were leaving Deception that you were over the sea, or leaving Adelaide to go down to Fossil Bluff, you had a sea crossing. But no, we had dinghies and pyrotechnics, so you could send up flares and so on and so forth. And every year the Air Force, God bless them, would send down a new pair of dinghies and survival kit and we would try and inflate the one we'd been flying with the previous year and it never worked! On the gas bottle. Whether it was the cold weather or whether we didn't look after them properly...I guess when survival equipment in the normal run of events is serviced every so often, but of course we didn't do that. We had no means

of doing it, other than looking at it, blowing air in and seeing that it didn't leak, rather like an inner tube on a bicycle. But, no, that's what we had. But our key to survival really was food and warm clothing.

Chris Lee : Was this a ... How many of them were you? Was there a team of aviation staff?

Bob Bond : There were two airplanes, two pilots, two aircraft fitters - aircraft fitters being a combination guy, if you wish - who could do airframe work and engine work.

Chris Lee : So, this team, there were two pilots?

Bob Bond : Yes, 2 aircraft, 2 pilots and 2 fitters, fitters being skilled in both engine maintenance and airframe maintenance. And that was it.

Chris Lee : Was it an Air Unit? Or, was there any sort of demarcation?

Bob Bond : No. We didn't call ourselves anything, in particular. We were there, on the base. We treated ourselves as FIDS and expected other people to do the same. Airs and graces were not part of the scene at all. So, no, just as there were Met. men who did Met. observations, there were pilots who flew the airplanes and there were fitters who made sure they kept going.

Chris Lee : And at the Deception Island base, the huts, you didn't have your own quarters or ... you all mucked in together?

Bob Bond : No, you were just one of the base members and in fact the ... again on the safety angle, we never flew alone with just a pilot. We would always take somebody, and it wasn't always, or quite often, was not the fitter - you would take one of the FIDS from the base.

Chris Lee : For a joyride?

Bob Bond : A) - they wanted to fly, so that was good. I'm now assuming that you're not actually taking them somewhere to do something. So they were there, but they were also there from a survival point of view (i.e. there would be two of you) and it was another pair of hands for offloading whatever it was you were carrying somewhere.

Chris Lee : Was that practice, that rule, that practice ever broken? Did you ever fly anywhere solo?

Bob Bond : I don't think I ever flew the airplane by myself. No.

Chris Lee : What kind of backup did you have from Falkland Islands? Was there any ... What was your relationship with the Falkland Islands? Was that ... ?

Bob Bond : Well, we didn't ... The Falklands Islands was the ... As Fids and even when it was BAS was the point of contact. Our base radio operators talked to the

operator in the Falklands and they then had longer range communication back to London, so it was our first point of contact. There was no way we could talk direct to London at that stage. In Air Force terms, or flying terms, there was no reason to talk to the Falklands, nor was there any support in real terms from the Falklands. I mean, obviously they were supporting us and they were determining what it is they wanted us to do in general terms. But, you just got on ... OK, your job ... For instance, in '60/61, the first year, A) – we want to get the hangar built at Deception. Secondly, we want to establish Fossil Bluff.

Chris Lee : And that was decided by who?

Bob Bond : That would have been determined, presumably, back here in the UK.

Chris Lee : By London.

Bob Bond : By London. And, again, the Falklands were the operators, if you like, the operational headquarters. The Generals, in military terms, would have been back here in London, or Cambridge - London in those days. Those would have been the priorities. And in fact we normally used to get somebody down on the ships. John Green was Secretary to FIDS at that stage. I can't remember if Bill Sloman came down in my time. But somebody would come down and maybe redirect priorities during the year if it didn't appear to be going well. But I think the Base Leaders were given their priorities. We on the flying side knew what was expected of us and everybody got on with it to the best of their ability.

Chris Lee : So you weren't constantly referring back to the UK for advice and instructions?

Bob Bond : No. I think, in my first year the only message back in Air Force terms was to request dinghies and bits and pieces.

Chris Lee : Renewable gear?

Bob Bond : Yes There was absolutely no connection with the Air Force in flying or operational terms. We didn't really have weather forecasting. If you could see to fly, then it was good to fly.

Chris Lee : You had Met. men though?

Bob Bond : We did have Met. men - on the Base - who were making observations and sending those back, upwards.

Chris Lee : They were recording rather than predicting?

Bob Bond : Yes they were. But they would try ... I mean, if we wanted for instance, from Deception to go down to Adelaide Island, which was the first trip of the summer, well not the first trip of the summer, but the first movement South, then we would talk to the people, there was nobody at Adelaide at that stage, but at Stonington, and they would tell us what was happening. But it wasn't a forecast, as

you would know a forecast these days. They would tell you they could see certain mountains or islands.

Chris Lee : Where did you ... what happened to the airplanes before the hangar was completed? According to this, it was March '62 before the hangar was finished? So, how were the airplanes housed?

Bob Bond : Yes, the hangar was ... having failed to get to Stonington and then being stored in the Falklands. Falklanders are acquisitive folk – as anybody is who lives on the edge of civilisation. And I think when that hangar came back to us there was quite a lot missing.

Chris Lee : In large bits?

Bob Bond : Only little bits, you know, nuts and bolts, odd crinkly tin and so on. But the other point with the hangar was that it was such a huge structure. I mean, they expected FIDS to build a proper steel frame building, with big holes filled with concrete; vertical girders to bolt it in, and so on. Now, they sent down two steel erectors, who helped us, but it was the FIDS that did the labouring. They didn't send down any – I think the term, I think they're called sheeters, but they're the people who pin crinkly tin to steel framed building. And I think they only came down the second year. So, in the first year we got the frame up and the aircraft were tethered outside. You bury an oil drum in the ash; come the winter, it tends to freeze in, and that's tethered. We took the elevators off the back because they will flap about a bit, if you like. You could lock them by locking the control column inside, but if they're still trying to flap, you're merely straining the control run. So we would take those off, blank off the engine and they sat out there in the cold. And when it came time to fly them again, then, as with anything that you leave out in the snow, it gets a huge sort of drift around it. You would dig them out and rebuild them. Well, I say rebuild them – you were only putting the bits back on. And they survived that.

Chris Lee : And how did you survive the winter? Were you busy in the winter?

Bob Bond : The winter at Deception. We were all ... Yes, I guess you could say we were busy, in the same sense that you're busy when you retire. You've got more time to do things, but there are always things to do. We all took turns with the winter chores ... with the household chores and we had a sort of 12-week roster that varied between bringing in the snow blocks to put into the melt tank to produce water, to sweeping out places, to emptying the Elsan toilets. And it culminated in a week as gash hand to the cook , and that was cook's assistant where you did all the washing up and running around. And then the final glory when you were cook for a week. It wasn't glory, I mean it was purgatory in a sense, but you got quite reasonable at it. So you were doing all those chores. We used to help with the Met observations, because that was in our line.

You would go out and get exercise, whether it was skiing. We used to go up to the edge of - just beyond the window. At Deception you could see out then, out at the sea ice, so you could produce sea ice reports. We'd go and visit the Chileans, who were further up the bay, and the Argentineans, who were on the opposite side of the bay. So you'd do social visiting to them, in our case carrying whiskey, because both of them

liked that. We would swap that for Chilean wine and the Chileans also kept sheep, so we would get some fresh meat from them. And the Argentinians would give us wine as well in exchange for whisky. But you'd go there and you'd stay for 2 or 3 days and socialise.

Chris Lee : What were the sheep eating?

Bob Bond : Hay I suppose, I don't know. I mean, there was no natural vegetation for them to eat.

Chris Lee : So, construction of the hanger ceased in the winter months, did it?

Bob Bond : Yes it did. We'd got it to the point where it was just about a complete framework.

Chris Lee : So when would the summer begin? When would you start to dig out the planes?

Bob Bond : September/October. Our first flights were generally in October, so roundabout September we would get everything ready.

Chris Lee : Can you give examples of the kind of work were you doing, the flying work you were doing?

Bob Bond : Well, in the first season, having got the airplane built, we then flew down to Adelaide Island, leaving other people to get on with building the hangar. Adelaide Island, having been selected as a good place to put the airplanes because they didn't want to go into Stonington, knowing the problems they'd had before. I mean they weren't sure the ships were getting into Stonington, which would clearly be a problem with airplanes, because you need fuel.

So, Adelaide Island had been selected, we flew down there, built a small base hut there, landed 700-odd drums of aviation fuel, I recall, in 44-gallon drums, and we were about a mile up onto the Piedmont; where it levelled off was where we'd landed the airplanes. In the early stages, a dog team could take one drum of fuel at a time. Happily, we got some decent tractors in and they could pull more up on to the Piedmont for us.

Chris Lee : So, you were moving 700 drums of fuel from the beach?

Bob Bond : From the ship, in the scow, manhandling and out of the scow onto the beach, well it wasn't a beach, it was rocks. We did try building a jetty at Adelaide but it didn't work very well, it got washed away - and then they went a mile up the slope.

Chris Lee : That's quite a big job, isn't it?

Bob Bond: It took a long time. I mean, you didn't need it all at once, obviously, but each drum is 450 to 500 lbs weight, so they're not easy things to move around. As well as, of course, all the other ... the hut itself was put ashore and built...food and so on, all comes ashore in the old scow. But it works.

And then, having got onto Adelaide, the aim was to get a hut down into Fossil Bluff for the first overwintering party, which was three chaps. But to do that, you had to get the hut down by the building party, then you had to get fuel down there and in general terms you went for a guaranteed fuel of anthracite – whatever happens anthracite doesn't go away – but, obviously, diesel fuel as well, for a little diesel generator.

Chris Lee : So all this was being transported by water?

Bob Bond : No, it came down to us at Adelaide on the ship and we then flew it in.

Chris Lee : You flew with anthracite?

Bob Bond : Yes, oh yes. We didn't particularly want to, but if you do fly a few sacks of that in, then whatever else happens, the guys can light a stove. I mean we had an anthracite we used to use for the Rayburn – or did we have a Rayburn in there, I can't remember now. But you certainly had an anthracite-burning stove to keep the hut warm, rather like, you know, the little Courtier stoves you get.

Chris Lee : Fossil Bluff has been – correct me if I'm wrong - was being established at this point, or was it already in place?

Bob Bond : No, there had been nothing there. There had been people who'd sledged down the Sound and are determined that that was a good place to go for geological interest, amongst other things. So, a site had been identified and everything that went in there in the first instance, we flew in.

Chris Lee : Everything?

Bob Bond : Yes. There was a tractor train that came down from – no, not that first year. It didn't go the first year, it came down in the second year, the tractor train from Stonington.

Chris Lee : The base is quite a long way from the shore, am I right?

Bob Bond : At Fossil Bluff?

Chris Lee : Yes.

Bob Bond : Yes. It's, I can't recall how many – you have – south of Adelaide Island, there is quite a large bay. Then you hit land again and the Sound was permanently frozen, so for people coming from Stonington by tractor, they had a sea crossing and then a climb up onto the Sound. Just as we had a sea crossing. But it took – I could tell you if I look in my log book. I've a feeling it took us about 2 hours to fly there.

Chris Lee : From Adelaide?

Bob Bond : From Adelaide.

Chris Lee : So were you flying sections of hut and wood? What else were you ... what other cargo were you flying to Fossil Bluff?

Bob Bond: Well, yes. The hut itself, the first hut that went in was a wood-framed, quite small hut. Yes, so we flew that in, in bits. And looking in the log book, you would see that there was about 80 hours flying that first year, which was nearly all just going in and out of Fossil Bluff.

Chris Lee : So the guys down there were waiting, camping?

Bob Bond : No we took 3 or 4 guys in to build the hut. And the guys who were going to overwinter were at Stonington at that stage. And towards the end of the season, i.e. about March – we then flew in - once everybody was happy, we'd got enough food in and enough fuel and the hut was built and so on, they could survive, then we flew them in and left them. Which is another story. I don't know if you've read Cliff Pearce's book "The Silent Sound"? He was one of the first 3 down there. Quite ... I mean, they were a long way away from anybody and they did survive, although – obviously they survived, but they weren't really plush with goodies by the end of the winter.

DISC 2

Total disc duration – 1 hr 3 min

Track marks every five minutes

I think the Otter was a 1-ton airplane, i.e. about 2000 lbs weight of cargo, but I may be wrong and I'd have to look at a book to find out now. But, you could fly – in the - there was quite a sizeable cargo area and if it was given over to seating, you could probably take 10 people – six, happily, with a one ton. You could get a dog sledge in there, with dogs either side of the sledge, quite happily.

Chris Lee : And you did that, did you?

Bob Bond : We did that. If you were needed to transport a dog team, that's how we did it. We put the sledge in first and then put the dogs in and tied them down either side, because, of course, there was cargo securing rings either side of the fuselage so that they couldn't – because the huskies loved to get at each other, as you know. So they couldn't get at each other and we would have the lead dog up front with us; he'd sit between the pilot and whoever else was up front, tied to one of our seats. So he could sit up there and keep an eye on them and that suited his status, you know. He was something special, he wasn't like the rest of them. And we turned heat up full and, generally speaking, they went to sleep, which was nice.

Chris Lee : This idea was it of having the lead dog up with the crew? Was this something you learned over time with experience?

Bob Bond: I don't know. The dog drivers were very partial to their leaders and they certainly treated them as a leader, always. And so, I guess it seemed natural not to tie him down the sides amongst the others. He would always be at the front, and so the front was the front of the airplane, and so that's where he came. And it seemed to

work and we flew the odd teams around the place quite happily without mishap. And, as I say, they'd sometimes smell a bit, but generally speaking – well, so do FIDS, as you know. But they would sleep. But no, you could carry bulks of timber – and you could even get a sizeable panel of wood in there. We must have done, to get it down there.

Chris Lee : How was it from a pilot's point of view, how did the planes handle, did they handle pleasantly?

Bob Bond : It was a very easy airplane to fly; it was designed for bush flying, if you like. We had a ski-wheel combination, which – the wheels were useful at Deception, which was ash of course. Most everywhere else was on skis. But you could pump the wheels down through the skis, hydraulically; and you could also use that as a means of breaking the skis free if they froze to the snow overnight or when you stopped somewhere.

Chris Lee : Did you just lift the airplane up?

Bob Bond : In effect, you would put something under the wheel, pump the wheels down on them and that would break the skis free. Or you could usually get them free simply by starting the engine and wagging the rudder and it would shake itself free in the end. But it was an easy airplane to fly, we didn't have real problems. We had a bit of trouble with oil coring, which was oil congealing. Normally, airoengine will pass its oil somewhere through a cooler, that is an air-cooled system, and you ought to be able to blank those off, which we could, but it wasn't enough. So we had at one stage – we used to carry oil with us in the cockpit and the oil filler cap was just outside the door. So if the worst came to the worst, you could open the door and fill some more oil in. I don't think we ever had to do it, mind you, but we worked out we could have, if necessary.

Chris Lee : Can you compare them to any other aircraft you have flown, or you know? Were they similar to something else?

Bob Bond : No, it's a first. I mean, all my airplanes had been either jet fighters or trainers at that stage. It was a transporting airplane, so rather more cumbersome in a sense – but it did have a very short landing and take-off capability. It could do very steep approaches because it had a lot of flap, and very slow. What it didn't have, I suppose, I mean there was no such thing as an autopilot in those days, or not in that airplane. There were such things. We didn't have particularly good communication. We often used to use Morse code on HF radio to get through to the Bases. And we had an ADF - Automatic Direction Finding kit - that would home onto a beacon, if there is a beacon. But the only beacons at that stage were the Base radios and they really weren't strong enough – well all the ships – when the ships were there, they were fine. You could home onto a ship. But the Bases were such a short range that you really had to be there before you could use it, so it was a bit pointless. So, navigation was all visual and you soon got to know your landmarks on most of the places you were.

Chris Lee : Did you have much in the way of maps though?

Bob Bond : We had a map of - Well, I guess, of anywhere in the Antarctic, the Antarctic Peninsula is the best-mapped bit. The first time we went down to King George 6th Sound – KG6 - they'd been down there with sledges and they had identified and done basic mapping of either side. So, the prominent features were marked. And the first time you flew down you – we would just mark it that it was so many minutes down the Sound, so we knew where it was, even if they got it wrong the first time they'd marked it. But you could – because the rock faces always stay clear of snow a cliff face is a superb landmark, obviously, in the all-white situation.

Chris Lee : And the only concession then to the Antarctic were the skis - the 3 skis?

Bob Bond : Yes. Really, well I guess, nothing else. It was a standard Otter otherwise.

Chris Lee : Did you have any close calls? Were there moments when you were nervous?

Bob Bond : Happily, not too many. There were a couple that spring to mind. And again, it's the dreaded King George the 6th Sound. On one occasion going down King George the 6th Sound, we got to the point where it was rather like sea fog that comes in on the east coast of England. It can form very quickly and it did in the Sound on this day. And it was clear we weren't going to get to Fossil Bluff, to be able to land at Fossil Bluff, and they told us it was the same there. We knew exactly where we were because we could see the, I mean the Sound is several miles wide, so you knew where you were in the Sound, but the only thing seemed to be to try and land and we knew that the [frozen] surface was good in the middle. So, we set up the airplane and this again is a predetermined thing, like looking for a landing site. You set the airplane up for a very slow approach and fly it as slowly as possible, but letting down gently. And you just keep going until you touch down - although you were completely blind and on instruments. Which is not a recommended procedure by any means, but I mean it is relatively safe if you assume you're over a flat area, which we knew we were. So we had to do this on one occasion, but the peculiar thing was, having touched down, which was fine, we were then in the dreaded whiteout, where you can make out absolutely nothing. And although we knew we were on the ground, the guy who got out first was reluctant to step off the ski onto the snow. He looked back and by that time the engine was stopped and I pointed to the front and he then plucked up courage and stepped off and he was fine, needless to say. But that occasion worried me.

Chris Lee : How long were you down for?

Bob Bond : We were down for several hours, before it eventually, I think about 7 or 8 hours. There were odd times when you landed on a surface which wasn't as good as you'd expected it to be. We tried to land always up hill if we could, because it shortens the landing run and take off run. But on occasions - putting out field parties - it was just impossible. They wanted to be up on the hill somewhere and the only option was to run along the ridge, and they tend to be icy, because they're wind blown; and some of those were a bit exciting, where you'd touch down and waited and think, "I'll give it another five seconds and if I don't slow down I'm going to have to go and think again."

But, on one occasion. I guess the most worried I ever was was - we had flown from Adelaide Island, across Marguerite Bay over the peninsula to the high shelf on the other side to lay a depot over there. And, as you know, it's quite a high plateau at that stage. We knew we could get over the top i.e. we had enough climb left in the airplane to get over. We went over, we laid our depots. But coming back, it had clouded over. And you then get into this point of, we don't have a homing beacon, there were no ships there at that stage. And once again, we were sat above cloud and we thought, well the only option now is to fly west until we are quite sure we were well clear of all land. Then let down over the sea, then turn around and come back and see where we are. But, in fact, as we crossed Adelaide Island - where we thought we needed another at least half an hour to 45 minutes - there was hole in the cloud and we could see some water, some sea ice. So we thought, "that'll do for us", so we sort of spiralled down. But that was at a time - unlike the landing in King George the Sixth Sound, where I knew where I was and I was quite sure that was going to be alright, the thought of sort of flying for an hour and a half, to be sure, you're out over the sea, when you don't really know how strong the wind is, worried me. But as it turned out, all was well. And there we were. Shortly afterwards - in fact we came down though the cloud very close to where Rothera Base is now. But Adelaide Island Base was on the west.

So yes, you had your exciting moments. FIDS, like everybody else, the Army is very good at it, with helicopters as well. You will tell them, the load limit is X lbs and they will just conveniently forget to calculate the weight of their own kit and the few cases of beer. And so you end up much heavier than you expect. And the take-off run therefore is much longer than you thought it was going to be. There were those sort of things. But those are things you can deal with on an everyday basis. So, the real worrying moments were few, happily.

Chris Lee : Generally speaking, have you felt quite safe and secure in your job? You didn't feel you were taking frequent risks?

Bob Bond : No, not really. In that we knew that the weather could change very quickly. We therefore tended - when we were flying from Adelaide, going across the bay to King George Sixth, if we could see across the bay 100 miles, we would go. I mean, see the mountains, obviously. And you were reasonably guaranteed 4, 5 or 6 hours. Occasionally you'd get caught out.

Chris Lee : Would you turn back?

Bob Bond : Oh yes. If that was the best option. That happened several occasions, trying to get out of Deception, where it got so bad that we just went back. The same from Fossil Bluff, or Adelaide. If we didn't like the look of it, you'd go back.

Chris Lee : That was your decision, full stop.

Bob Bond : Oh yes.

Chris Lee : Let's take it forwards, if we may.

Bob Bond : Sure.

Chris Lee : So, we're back. We've just been watching a DVD called "Secrets of Antarctica" and you've seen yourself.

Bob Bond : Indeed, yes, flying along. I suspect the film comes from John Smith, who made a video at the time. Because I've certainly seen that sequence before. It's nice to see the old fool flying!

Chris Lee : The bearded fool!

Bob Bond : Yes, the bearded fool! Yes.

Chris Lee : What was particularly interesting was this fuselage that was at Deception Island. Perhaps you can tell me the story of that plane?

Bob Bond : Well, I think it must have been the first Otter down there. I'm not altogether sure. But it was certainly from 1960 through to early '63, it was the airplane I flew almost exclusively. 294 was its number. "Blue Label" was its name. When we became British Antarctic Survey in '60, as part of the change due to the Antarctic Treaty, it occurred to us that British Antarctic Survey spelt BAS and Bass was a good beer. So one became "Blue Label" and we wrote the same symbol minus an "s", obviously. One was Red Label, one was Blue Label.

Chris Lee : Was that something that London knew about?

Bob Bond : We certainly didn't ask them. So, probably they didn't know about it till such times as they saw pictures.

Chris Lee : Yours was?

Bob Bond : "Blue Label".

Chris Lee : And that was VP-FAK .

Bob Bond: Yes. I mean, both airplanes were identical in other senses. We flew them in the first year with a bare fuselage, got the British Antarctic Survey signing written on them, probably at the end of 60-61 season. And then nice new shiny signs.

Chris Lee : And they were both misnumbered? Now, what's the story behind that?

Bob Bond : That I knew absolutely nothing about until such times as I saw Joanna Rae's e-mail [2005]. As far as we were concerned they were FAK and FAL, I think. That's what it said on such paperwork as we had, but we were using Air Force documentation to service them on, which probably solved the registration and air worthiness certification problems down there...I don't know but I suspect that that was the reason. So we flew them as Air Force airplanes, which is why it was good to have a number. I don't mean to say that we thought of them as Air Force airplanes in the real sense, they did have a Roundel on them. But "British Antarctic Survey" all along the side, so it's obvious who they belonged to.

Chris Lee : So as far as you were concerned, they carried the correct numbers?

Bob Bond : Yes, indeed.

Chris Lee : And you were surprised to learn that they weren't?

Bob Bond : Where that occurred, I have no idea.

Chris Lee : Did they also have the flying Penguin on the side? Like earlier planes down there?

Bob Bond : No, they didn't. The only signage they had was a Roundel on the side, a small colour segment, as Air Force airplanes do, on the tail fin. British Antarctic Survey and the BAS and Blue Label/Red Label sign.

Chris Lee : What was the overall colour?

Bob Bond : Orange.

Chris Lee : Orange?

Bob Bond : Yes.

Chris Lee : OK. So the story of this plane that was left on Deception Island for four decades?

Bob Bond : Well, in the 2-and-a-half or so years that I was there we continued flying it and we had no problems. So, its demise was probably hastened by a few more years of fairly hard flying...I mean it's hard work, you're not landing on smooth runways all the time and there are extremes of temperature, of course, up and down. But, as I understand it, it suffered a landing accident – a heavy landing accident - somewhere down near Adelaide Island, was flown back up to Deception and, as with most things at that stage, thought uneconomic to recover.

Chris Lee : The one that you flew – 294 – according to the doctor's report – actually ended up suffering extensive metal fatigue.

Bob Bond : Right.

Chris Lee : Grounded in March '67. You're quite right, there was a crevasse accident on Adelaide Island in December '64.

Bob Bond : Right.

Bob Bond : But it must have flown again after that?

Bob Bond : Oh yes, must have been. I guess – it seems a very short life for an airplane, but it was a hard life, I guess, so – who is to say?

Chris Lee : Why were the people in the DVD so urgently wanting to get it secured – what was the story?

Bob Bond : As I understand the story, it had been at the hanger – beside the hangar - for nearly 40 years and clearly become... Most of the tourist ships down there call in at Deception, so it had become a “sight to see”, if you wish, the old airplane. It was rumoured that there was an American collector, and there are many of these about, who was aiming to come down, collect it, take it back and restore it. BAS clearly thought that they couldn't prevent him doing that. Or they could legally, because it's a Heritage site. Oh, I don't know if Deception is, but I mean it's a heritage area. But whether they could physically have prevented him taking it away had he been there first, I know not. But I think it's a super idea - that it's come home and is going to be in a museum...hopefully restored to something like its former glory.

Chris Lee : Was it strange to see it again on DVD?

Bob Bond : Yes it was and I've seen pictures of it. I haven't actually been to the museum yet, but it was - it is so battered by the weather and time that it's not obvious which of the two airplanes it was. But, no, it was nice to see it and brought back lots of fond memories.

Chris Lee : What's this business about an issue or a precedent if this American had got it? What was all that about?

Bob Bond : Well, I'm not sure. As far as I understand, they just wanted to be sure that he didn't steal it, which it would be, in a sense. On the other hand, if it's been sitting there for 40 years, I reckon it's fair game for whoever happens to pass by. We certainly used other stuff that we found around the Antarctic, whether they were old bases or whatever, on the assumption that if it was there, it was to be used. But at least that was for whatever you were doing down in the Antarctic.

Chris Lee : Ok. Returning to the questions that Joanna guided us to do. She's quite interested about the maintenance of the aircraft. We talked a bit about the shipment and the assembly. There was a fairly strict maintenance routine, I would have thought?

Bob Bond : Yes there is. Now, our two fitters were the guys responsible. The simplest part - the refuelling - was done from drums and hand pumps.

Chris Lee : It must have taken forever.

Bob Bond : It was a slow process, but no, it works. And so, replenishment of oil and so on, is similarly very easy. We used to keep them, if they were sitting out, as they would be during most of the summer season, then we had some hot air blowers - Herman Nelson heaters – and you could trunk warm air into the engine compartment, because we used to blank off the front of the engine. So you warmed the thing up before you tried to start it. So that if oil had congealed, standard sort of cold weather procedure – real cold weather procedures.

The other maintenance. The guys looked at them periodically but because of the sort of flying we were doing – i.e. wait for good weather then fly like crazy as long as the good weather lasted – during that period it would get fuel and oil put into it, and then everything was looked at thereafter. So, it probably had a slightly irregular servicing schedule, but all the things that needed to be done, were done.

Chris Lee : It's difficult to service a plane when it's actually in the air, isn't it?

Bob Bond : Oh, you can't, that's for sure. Very difficult.

Chris Lee : Apart from heating the engine before you turn it on, were there other specific maintenance issues because of the weather? I mean de-icing and so on, of wings?

Bob Bond : De-icing wasn't normally a problem. Again, because we were in a relatively dry-cold there, you tended not to get ice build up. Ice build up tends to be at lower temperatures and in high humidity, which wasn't our problem at all. So, de-icing – normally we had few problems. I don't recall ever sweeping ice off a wing, for instance.

Chris Lee : Oh, right, OK.

Bob Bond : Maybe we did, but it doesn't ring a bell to me, I would have thought it would have done.

Chris Lee : And as far as the loads were concerned, apart from construction and ferrying supplies – you mentioned anthracite, and presumably food as well, and men. Were you also ferrying scientific equipment and other unusual loads? What was – were there any specific consignments?

Bob Bond : No. A lot of my time was either establishing Fossil Bluff or re-enforcing it with men, food and equipment. At that stage, the only scientific equipment which we might have flown were the telemeters the surveyors were using, I suppose, and that sort of kit. But, no, no major equipment. We hadn't got to the point where they were doing – they did use them subsequently for magnetometer surveys and for photography. But none of that. No. Normally it would be - somebody was going somewhere, could we put a base in. By putting a base in by airplane several hundred miles away, you could extend a sledging trip enormously, needless to say. And a lot of the work in the third season, where we actually stayed down at Fossil Bluff for a little while during the summer, where we were putting the survey teams and the geological teams yet further down the Sound. Again, we were putting the men and the dogs and their camping equipment out, really. So, no. There were all sorts of things went in the airplane, some of which were heavier than they were supposed to be. Apart from that, no.

Chris Lee : And when you're laying a base, is it always a case of landing and manhandling the stuff, or were you parachuting it down?

Bob Bond : No, it was always manhandled out - landed and man-handled out. Either by – if you were delivering to somewhere with people there, it was easy because they would give you a hand, otherwise you did it yourself, obviously.

Chris Lee : And if you were dropping advance bases, so to speak, for sledging parties still to come, then presumably you flying virgin territory from time to time?

Bob Bond : Yes you were, yes.

Chris Lee : Unmapped?

Bob Bond: Not totally unmapped, no. I mean there were always features somewhere. When, for instance, we flew down, we did some depot laying for the Hope Bay parties on the east coast of the Peninsula and we put the first set of bases at a place called Longing Col, but people had been there before, the sledging parties had been, so they knew it. And aircraft had been there before because there was an upside down airplane still there – an American one. And further South, you could identify something and somewhere. And only very rarely were you into territory where – yes, you were into new territory, but you knew roughly where you were. We were never penetrating deep into the interior where, as you know, the big black spaces are. So navigation was not a serious problem. If you have a vague idea of where you are to start with, which you can tell by the various major features around, it doesn't matter how accurate the map is after that. You can pinpoint where you....

Chris Lee : So you never got lost?

Bob Bond : Not seriously, no. Apart from the case I mentioned, when we had to fly back over cloud. No, the rest of the time we always knew roughly where we were.

Chris Lee : We mentioned, in passing, transporting dog teams. Was that something you enjoyed or was that ..?

Bob Bond : Yes, they were good fun, because it was different. But in a sense, it was no different; to us it was nice to fly them, because they were different, and the dogs obviously appreciated it. And I'm sure they would rather fly for 200 miles than run for 200 miles.

Chris Lee : Yes. Ok. Setting up. She asked about particular projects and I guess Fossil Bluff was a particular project that you were doing fairly long scale. Well, actually, it's better perhaps if I ask you about the people you worked with. Are there any characters that particularly stand out? I mean, either people at Deception, or those you were delivering elsewhere in the Antarctic? You mentioned your fitter.

Bob Bond : Yes, the fitters we had were Tom Sumner and Roy Brand and they were super guys and did their work and we all got on very well. I guess the character, was a previous pilot to me, Ron Lord, who was a moustachioed, clarinet-playing buffoon by nature. I mean, he was a good pilot, don't get me wrong. But he was a very lively chap to have anywhere at a party.

Chris Lee : You met him yourself?

Bob Bond : Yes I did. I mean, he was the other pilot with me for the first year.

Chris Lee : Right.

Bob Bond : Then he went home and a guy called Abe Lincoln came down. Both Abe and Ron now are dead, unfortunately. And they were followed, when I went home, by David Blair, who I think you are going to interview later anyway.

Chris Lee : Did you witness Ron Lord's clarinet playing?

Bob Bond : I did. I witnessed Ron Lord driving tractors into Whalers Bay, I witnessed Ron Lord falling off ships, full of beer. And on many other occasions - he was just a good guy to be around, or to have around. But he was one of these people who would drink a couple of beers and then start giggling and telling stories and away he went. So he was certainly a major character.

Chris Lee : Were there occasions when, you know, the aviation folk in your party, your little unit, so to speak, where you felt you had to put your heads together to try and sort a problem, or sort something out, a pow-wow of sorts. Do you remember anything?

Bob Bond : Oh yes, I mean. Between us we sorted out the way we were going to operate. But I don't think we were in any way separated from the rest of the base.

Chris Lee : No, No. I'm not suggesting that, but I was just thinking of, can you think of an incident where, you know, there was something cropped up and you had to get together and thrash it out, as such?

Bob Bond : Not especially on the flying side, no. I mean. Clearly there were things, problems, occasionally, such as the oil coring, when we weren't sure why it was happening.

Chris Lee : What was that word again - oil ?

Bob Bond : Coring.

Chris Lee : Coring. C-o-r-i-n-g?

Bob Bond : Yes. What it's doing is, in a sense, solidifying within a pipe. And we, eventually. What you do, of course, is - it's rather like diesel fuel. If you have a boiler that runs on diesel fuel, you thin it to run it down in the winter, which is what we did. But you don't want to do that too much with lubricating oil.

But, we got messages to De Havilland in Canada and they talked to us. But, generally speaking, those sort of problems you either solved or you got on with it. I mean, you couldn't stop flying simply because the oil wasn't always getting round. Albeit, provided it was getting around enough to lubricate the engine.

Chris Lee : Did you ever get to the point where you were under some kind of pressure, even if it was only imagined pressure, to fly when it was a bit touch and go?

Bob Bond : We used to. I don't really think so. We used to think – worry - about the possibility of a flight in the winter period if, for instance, somebody fell ill on another base. I mean, clearly, we couldn't get them out of Antarctica at that stage because we didn't have the range to fly. Neither did we have a doctor on every Base. So if somebody was seriously ill on a non-doctor base, there would have been pressure to get somebody there. No, I don't think we were ever pressured to do something we didn't want to do. Because people assumed that we were the experts.

Chris Lee : Yes. But. So you weren't pressured from above?

Bob Bond : Nor from below.

Chris Lee : Or from within yourself?

Bob Bond : Oh, I see what you mean. No. I guess. Yes. There's always pressure to get the job done and there was an attitude that said, you know, let's do the job and sort the problem bits out later, if it could be done. But it was never to the point of getting the risk level really very much higher.

Chris Lee : So you never got back and thought "I shouldn't have done that"?

Bob Bond : I certainly got back on several occasions saying, "I didn't enjoy that", when the weather had turned and you'd sort of sloped around the coast line of the Peninsula, and the various islands, sort of island hopping back to Deception, when it's grey and murky and misty, which we didn't really like. But that tended to happen more up towards Deception than down near Adelaide.

Chris Lee : So what was... can you describe Adelaide Island station, what was it like when you were there in the early sixties?

Bob Bond : The hut was built on rock and it was a small, bright red-painted hut, probably about 12 x 12, I would think.

Chris Lee : Accommodating how many people?

Bob Bond : Well, when we were there in the summer, there were probably about eight of us in there. But the overwintering party, of course we disappeared back to Deception in the winter. The second year there were more huts built, so there was more space.

Chris Lee : Was the group divided into two different huts at that point?

Bob Bond : Not in my time. Once they'd got the second hut built, which I think was in '62/'63, then they may well have separated out the huts in some way, I've no idea. But no - we all mucked in together.

Chris Lee : Well, so, in your time was it a good Base, or were there problems with it?

Bob Bond : No, it was a good base. In many ways, ideal for what we were trying to do, so it was an easy base to fly from, because it was on the coast. Nice big landing area and so on. I guess, on the scientific side there wasn't a great deal you could do from there at that stage. So maybe they – I mean they did some trips up the island and I know there was some glaciology and survey work done round the islands, to the south. But unlike Stonington or Hope Bay, you weren't actually on the mainland, so if you were sledging, you couldn't get off and do the big, you and I might call them old fashioned, sledging trips. But, I mean, it's what the FIDS tradition was all about, was big long sledging trips. Originally it was dogs, eventually it was with tractors and so on. So maybe there could have been a bit of frustration on their part. I don't know, it was never very evident, there was always enough work to do.

Chris Lee : But the accommodation was OK, was it cramped, or ..?

Bob Bond : It was pretty basic. I mean, you have your bunks around a central area, where the stove is. And you have a kitchen and ... There must have been a loo, although I can't remember it, at Adelaide. But there must have been one.

Chris Lee : And you overnighted there a few times yourself?

Bob Bond : At Adelaide? We stayed there throughout the summer.

Chris Lee : Right.

Bob Bond : Fossil Bluff we occasionally stayed overnight for four or five nights a week, or something like this, while we were moving people around. It was easier to do that than keep coming back, obviously.

Chris Lee : So you would have a guest bedroom, would you?

Bob Bond : There is a guest bedroom now. No, I guess you hot-bunked in that sense. Whosever bunk it had been for the winter was probably out sledging, 'cos you'd just dumped him on a hilltop somewhere, so you had his bunk.

Chris Lee : Looking back at the whole experience, you were there for just about three years, weren't you?

Bob Bond : Just under, yes.

Chris Lee : Just under three years. Did it change you?

Bob Bond : It probably did. I suspect I came back very much more self-confident than I had gone down there. I don't think I was especially under-confident when I went there, mind you. The way of life down there, where there is none of the usual hierarchical structure to tell you what to do, or for you to tell people what to do. There are none of the normal pressures that you would get living and working anywhere else. It was just a case of "here we are, here's a job to do. The weather is the only thing, generally speaking, that makes it difficult for us to achieve it". And you got on with it. It's this sort of "get on with life" attitude that, I think, probably made us a bit

better. But you were, in those days, very remote. I mean the only contact we had backwards was, in those days, I forget what we call them now, but it was a sort of mailgram. You would write an airletter, you'd give it to your radio operator. He would translate it - transmit it, sorry - to Port Stanley. Port Stanley would re-write it and it would be sent home. To mum or dad or girlfriend, or whoever you happened to be writing to. But it was one a month. So, in a sense, you were cut off from the outside world until the ships came back again.

Chris Lee : And the only link between you and – the only physical link between you and Stanley was a ship? You didn't fly back to Stanley?

Bob Bond : No, we didn't.

Chris Lee : You didn't have a [indecipherable]

Bob Bond : No, we didn't. So from the time we went down, to coming back, we were somewhere around the Antarctic Peninsula. And I think after a while you ... it's probably wrong to say you lose interest in what's going on in the outside world, but you don't have a heightened level of interest if you don't have BBC News. I mean this is terrible to say this to a chap who's connected with the BBC, but if you're not looking at news every day, you're not bothered by it.

Chris Lee : It's a different world, isn't it?

Bob Bond : Yes. I think the... whilst we were there, of course, we had the Castro scare, in Cuba and I think that passed without us ever noticing it. Not because we didn't know about it, because it would have come in on the radio news, but ... because you weren't looking at that sort of thing.

Chris Lee : I say "it's another world". That's often been said to me by ex Fids who say "it's a separate planet, the Antarctic".

Bob Bond : Well, I think it is. I mean your problems are not whether nuclear war is about to break out. You'd probably get away with it if you happened to be down there, apart from anything else. No, your problems are really ... You know, most people were fairly stable characters down there, so there weren't huge problems within the groups. And your problems were how to get your job done and if the weather was making it difficult for you. If you happened to be ... or whether for us, perhaps, as flyers, more than for others. If you were down at Fossil Bluff in the first winter and you were running out of goodies, you probably worried about why there wasn't priority being given to fly an airplane into you with supplies. Or "what are they doing, putting the Hope Bay sledging parties out on the other side, while here I am with no tinned pineapple left", or whatever it happened to be, I don't know. But reading Cliff Pearce's book, they clearly ran fairly low on rations towards the end of their first winter. So, yes, it is a different planet. You're more concerned with getting on with life. But I think you'll find even now, if you go to the Outer Hebrides or you go to Alaska - anywhere that's a bit on the end of a supply chain - people are more concerned with everyday life problems than they are with anything else.

Chris Lee : How did you ... how was your time ... How did your time come to an end? Did you choose to leave? Was it the end of your tour?

Bob Bond : No ... we ... The aim had been to have a changeover of pilot every year. So, Ron Lord was down there for my first year and he'd already done a year. Then I was down there and Abe Lincoln came in and so on. But then they, for some reason which is ... I've no idea why they chose ... whether they thought we were coming back too rebellious or whatever it was, I've absolutely no idea. But they decided they would change people every year. Which meant that you, in some ways ... I don't think it was a good idea. It was a good idea to have experience. The rest of the bases always had people who'd been down there previous years.

Chris Lee : Handing on the knowledge?

Bob Bond : Handing on the knowledge and experience. I don't ... having said that I don't really think it probably affected the flying. Just, I'm happily confident that the guys who followed on were as good at doing the job as we were. All you need is a bit of luck and good weather and away you go.

Chris Lee : But you did do nearly three years, didn't you?

Bob Bond : Well, three seasons.

Chris Lee : Three seasons.

Bob Bond : So, you go down ... say, if you get down, as I did, in December '60 and then I came out in March '63. So you do the three summer seasons down there.

Chris Lee : And you came out because that was ...?

Bob Bond : That was the end of my time. Yes. It was due for me to be changed over.

Chris Lee : Regrets at leaving?

Bob Bond : No, I guess I was ready to go ... go home, at that stage. Not because I hadn't enjoyed the flying down there, or was enjoying the life. But, you know, there's a bit of the "been there, done that", I suppose, in it. It was nice to come home and get back to the Air Force in some senses.

Chris Lee : Was there any slight difficulty in coming back. Did you have any teething troubles on your return? Any settling problems?

Bob Bond : Well, no. Only in one slight sense. But the last winter I was down there my mother died. So I knew I was coming home to a sole parent and a family that had had to deal with that, whereas I hadn't really. I mean I had, at great distance. I think you come home ... because, in general, everybody comes home and is ... you've lived in this enclosed community, you're rather "offended", if you like, by outsiders to start with. I don't know what it is, but I'm sure there is a slight - shyness even, perhaps - when you come back into the real world.

Chris Lee : Shyness of strangers?

Bob Bond : Yes ... I don't ... I mean, it's nothing big ... but we perhaps felt slightly special and here we are coming back and the world has gone on quite well without us. And eventually, you soon get back into the swing. The Air Force ... When I reported back to the Ministry of Defence, as it had then become, to see where they were going to send me next, I realised that there was a thriving bureaucracy still in existence. They said, "You've been away three years and you haven't filled in your annual confidential report!". And I said, "No, that is true, but then there's nobody to report on me in the Antarctic, anyway". And they said, "Well ... it's ... We can't cope unless we've got three confidential reports. And I said, "Well, even if I fill in my bit, i.e. the flying hours and where I would have wanted to be posted to and these sort of things - there's nobody to report on me." "Never mind," they said, "You fill them in." And I dutifully filled in three annual reports. And they said, "Well, who shall we send them to?". I said, "You can send them to the British Antarctic Survey, but you won't get any meaningful comment." I mean, these are supposed to be, you know, our normal confidential type thing. But I thought, "Bureaucracy lives!". And we had got away from all of that, of course.

Chris Lee : So that was a slight shock, was it?

Bob Bond : Yes, it was. I have never been amenable to what I irreverently would call bulls**t. And that, to me, was extreme. But you get on and do it and smile and carry on with life.

Chris Lee : In a very small nutshell, then - you stayed in the RAF to retirement age?

Bob Bond : Yes I did. I retired at age 58, eventually, after 38 years. I enjoyed all the postings I had. I eventually got onto ... into the helicopter world and spent the rest of my time either flying helicopters or in jobs associated with helicopters. I was able ... I went out to America twice on postings, Singapore twice, Hong Kong. So, there was plenty to keep me occupied. And I enjoyed all of it.

Chris Lee : At some point you got married?

Bob Bond : I did - in '65, so I'd been back just over a year.

Chris Lee : How did that ... I've forgotten your wife's name ... I'm terribly sorry.

Bob Bond : Maureen.

Chris Lee : Maureen. How did you and Maureen meet? Because you'd been out of circulation with the fair sex for three years.

Bob Bond : In fact, when I was coming home, I wrote to my brother saying, "I'm coming home so line all the good looking girls up" . And, in fact, he used to travel to London by train with Maureen at that stage. But she took one look at the picture he had of me and decided that I was a nutcase. But we eventually met in the pub, the local pub, at Biggin Hill and it went from there, about a year later after I got back in fact.

Chris Lee : So you retired at 58 years of age, which is quite young. You're seventy-something now.

Bob Bond : 72.

Chris lee : 72. That's a long retirement, or have you done something with it?

Bob Bond : No, not really. I mean, I kept flying. There is a scheme you probably know about called the Air Experience Flight Scheme, which flies air training corps cadets and so on, whereby the Air Force gets a pilot for free and we get flying for free, in a sense, but you are giving these young lads and lasses air experience and showing them what flying is all about. And I did that until I was 65, which is the normal stop time. Albeit, I had a minor heart attack at the same time, which would have stopped me anyway. So there was that to do. But, no, I have found more than enough to do in retirement. The last five years, we have motor-homed a lot, so we go away for three years ... sorry three months every year, down to Spain, Portugal, France, anywhere where there is sunshine. And we have travelled a lot.

Chris Lee : Have you been back to the Antarctic in that time?

Bob Bond : No, I haven't. But I shall go on 10 January 2006 for just under three weeks, with a firm called Peregrine.

Chris Lee : To Deception?

Bob Bond : The trip they do – they call it The Antarctic Quest, which is ... their aim is to get down the Antarctic Peninsula, below the Antarctic Circle, i.e. more or less Adelaide Island. So, they will do the west coast of the Peninsula, probably Argentine Islands, almost certainly Lockroy and Lemaire Channel; Deception, yes; Hope Bay, yes. But they miss out South Georgia and the Falklands on that one.

Chris Lee : It's less than a fortnight till you go. How do you feel about it?

Bob Bond : I'm excited. I mean, I'm more excited for my daughter than I am for me. Perhaps. No, no, that's not true. I'm excited to go. It will be nice to see the places again. I realise it's going to be very different. I've clearly seen updated photographs of Deception after the eruption in - whenever it was.

Chris Lee : Late sixties.

Bob Bond : Yes. '67-8, wasn't it? Yes. We've seen odd pictures now with the airplane fuselage coming back and so on. And I've talked to people who've been down flying since, both at annual dinners and within the Air Force – people who've gone from the Air Force. So, in a sense I've kept in touch. But while you're rushing around in the Air Force, you don't keep in touch with, for instance, the BAS Club, in the way that you would if you were at home. You know, there are too many other things going on. So, yes, I'm looking forward to it. I think it's going to be good. It's going to be very different, undoubtedly. Hopefully, the trip across Drake's Passage will be smoother than it was in the *John Biscoe*, but I don't guarantee it.

Chris Lee : Why is it people have talked about ... what were the reasons the Antarctic ... well, more than one or two have said that the Antarctic years were the most memorable years of their lives. You may or may not agree.

Bob Bond : I think ... no. That is right. I think because it is so different. I don't know if you've read Bunny Fuchs' book "Of Ice and Men"? Somewhere in there, he's got a quote and he ... I can't remember all of it. But in essence he's describing the Antarctic and what it's all about. And what he says, in effect, is that there is a place that's remote and it's a challenge and young men go down there to face a challenge. They mix with lots of other guys. Generally speaking, they succeed and they come back very much wiser and very much better people for it. And I think it's a very true quote. And I certainly look back on the Antarctic as one of the big - big good times that we had.

Chris Lee : One or two more also talk about some sort of spiritual experience that they had down there. Do you have ... because of the pristine nature of it and they felt slightly closer to creation and ...?

Bob Bond : I wouldn't have said ... I can understand that, especially if you're out on sledging trips. And you're very remote. I can imagine even more so. I'm a bit of an agnostic by nature and so it's not something I felt. You do appreciate the Antarctic and the quietness and the beauty of it. Don't get me wrong, it really is a beautiful place. But, on the spiritual side, for me, no. What I value from it is the friendships we made - which are still going on. I mean we still see people that I was down there with, on a regular basis. And I think as you go through life, certainly in the Air Force, because we tend to do three-year tours, you make lots of acquaintances, but probably there are only one or two out of every three-year tour that become real friends. And there are lots of really good friends out of the Antarctic.

Chris Lee : So, lasting relationships?

Bob Bond : Yes. And when we look back now. I mean, this is going to be one of the funny things between the trip upcoming, to our time. People are so environmentally conscious now, perhaps in some ways almost to a silly degree. Whereas, we weren't in those days. There was a job to be done and you got on with it. And your gash was sledged out onto the sea ice and when the sea ice melted, it disappeared. The same with the Elsan toilets - they were whisked out, dumped, and none of that sort of stuff goes on now. In the same way that we took, as I mentioned earlier - 700 odd drums of aviation fuel - ashore each year. I'm assuming it stayed. And most of ours sunk down onto the Piedmont on Adelaide and I don't suppose it's been dug out, I don't know. Any more than the various Halley Bay stations that have submerged in the ice shelf, are now working their way towards the ice cliff. They're not really recoverable. I imagine that people all ... all the fuel drums are now brought out and it's become an acceptable cost. So that is going to be a difference.

Chris Lee : Because of attitude?

Bob Bond : It is, it's only attitude. I mean, we were there to do a job. We lived on Deception, which was ... had the old whaling station there, which was a bit of an

eyesore in a sense. I mean, we blew up half the whaling station that was in front of our base hut, using the whaling station's black powder, just to improve the view! But I don't suppose you could really do that any more. And you do that sort of thing and it's all part of life. Same as ... we got on very well with the Argentinians and the Chileans but it wasn't ever so. It was a bad time in the 50s, apparently, but in the 60s we would socialise and get on with life happily. But really, it was a chance to go down there, do some flying without anybody interfering with you and telling you what to do. Which is perhaps why I got into helicopters, because helicopters were a bit like that in the Air Force. I don't think the Air Force hierarchy really understood what helicopters were about either, so you were left to get on with it. And that's nice.

Chris Lee : Have a good trip.

Bob Bond : I shall, Chris, thank you very much.

ENDS