

JIM SHIRTCLIFFE

Edited transcript of a recording of Jim Shirtcliffe interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee at his home in Galleywood, Chelmsford, on 16th October 2009. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/49. Transcribed by Chris Lush, 30th December 2013. Edited by Andy Smith, 14 March 2014.

[Part 1a 0:00:00] Lee: This is Jim Shirtcliffe recorded at his home in Galleywood, Chelmsford, by Chris Eldon Lee on the 16th of October 2009. Jim Shirtcliffe, Part One.

Shirtcliffe: My name in complete is Lionel James Shirtcliffe. I was born in Hendon in Middlesex, in 1931.

[Part 1a 0:00:20] Lee: What date?

Shirtcliffe: 23rd of October. Schooling, well it was normal school up until secondary and then I won a scholarship and went to St Marylebone Grammar School where I matriculated. Ah, but I was rather anxious at that stage to get out of schooling and look at the world, and see what I could do really. Erm, where did we go from there?

[Part 1a 0:00:53] Lee: So you are nearly 78 years old? 78 next week?

Shirtcliffe: You're right.

[Part 1a 0:00:57] Lee: What was your first contact in any way shape or form with the Antarctic?

Shirtcliffe: With the Antarctic? Right.

[Part 1a 0:01:04] Lee: Did you read about it?

Shirtcliffe: I was a national serviceman. I went in the Royal Air Force, and I was trained by the Air Ministry as a meteorologist which is ah, that took a month or two of training.

[Part 1a 0:01:19] Lee: Where?

Shirtcliffe: I went to um, in London at Ashford House. And because they considered my plotting was neater than other people's, they kept me on the staff there for a month or two just plotting. Atlantic charts and American charts as well as Europe from old ones, old versions I had to plot everything in the colours. And that would be reproduced for teaching forecasters of the future, how to draw on the isobars and what to derive from what you saw. That was a couple of months.

[Part 1a 0:02:04] Shirtcliffe: Then I went to Uxbridge because Uxbridge was as close as you could get to my home in Middlesex. And I stayed there I guess half a year or so, and Joe

Lewis or Arthur Lewis as we knew him in those days was our Corporal, and he got me interested in playing in the rugby team, so we got fairly close. He was a swimmer and a rugby player like myself. And so our billet used to put forward about six rugby players and we got on fairly well together.

[Part 1a 0:02:38] Lee: All this was just before the war or during the war?

Shirtcliffe: After the war: 1951 or '50, '50 – '51. Yes the war was over. Arthur, or Joe Lewis was a Corporal and I was a Senior Aircraftsman. In the billet you know everybody else was a Senior Aircraftsman because it went with the job. Joe often spoke about BAS.

[Part 1a 0:03:10] Lee: Was he a Fid?

Shirtcliffe: He had been a Fid and he had been to, I think he had been to Hope Bay. But he was full of enthusiasm about, certainly about BAS or about FIDS in those days. And when I was de-mobbed I was really looking to take on a proper job. I thought Met with all its implications, of shift work and the irregularity of it, that it was a bit disturbing from my point of view. I like something a bit more regular and to give you a bit more challenging ... Meteorology is quite repetitive in many ways.

[Part 1a 0:03:56] Shirtcliffe: I was looking for a way out and so I'd applied for a job as a saw surgeon, or what did they call you? Where you looked at the teeth of the saw and put a hone, a finish on it. I looked for training in that area but before I had the interview, I got an interview with BAS or with FIDS, sorry. It was FIDS in those days. I went for an interview with FIDS and they sent me straight away for a medical, and within about two hours I was looking at my contract. And I thought 'My God, this is quick.'

[Part 1a 0:04:38] Lee: What do you remember of the interview Jim, was it rigorous?

Shirtcliffe: No not very. They sent me to Harley Street for a doctor to see how physically you were in the pecking order and the doctor said He asked me one or two questions: 'Oh do you play rugby? Oh yes well let's have a look at you.' And he said, 'Oh well you seem to be in good shape' and 'have a look at your teeth', and 'any trouble with your teeth and eyes?' and so on. And it was quite simple really.

[Part 1a 0:05:10] Lee: But in the actual verbal interview, were you given any challenging questions? Were you asked about your psychology or ...?

Shirtcliffe: No, no I was, I thought the interview was not thorough really. I kept thinking you know that if I'd been interviewing myself, I would probably have said. 'Go and stand in the queue and wait' [laughing] or something even worse. He might have even said 'No sorry, you're the wrong sort.' But however they seemed to ah, they had few requests of people to join, and so they just took me on.

[Part 1a 0:05:50] Lee: What was the job you were going for?

Shirtcliffe: Well I thought I was going to be a MET man in the Antarctic and that in Port Stanley I would be given a station to go to. But I went to Stanley and I started working at Stanley MET office, and I think by the time I'd had a word with SecFIDS in Stanley, about you know, when could I go down to the Antarctic They, I think they were labouring with the impression that I was going to stay in Stanley for two years and work for them. And I kept saying 'No, I was promised in London that I'd go to the Antarctic.' And so we, you know they seemed reluctant to release me and I was kind of looking forward to go South and eventually I was sent to Deception.

[Part 1a 0:06:47] Lee: Let's just backtrack slightly.

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 1a 0:06:50] Lee: Apart from Lewis who inspired you about the Antarctic, ...

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 1a 0:06:55] Lee: ... had you read about it?

Shirtcliffe: A little, and seen films; I'd seen *Scott of the Antarctic*.

[Part 1a 0:07:00] Lee: John Mills?

Shirtcliffe: Yes that's right. I wasn't so impressed by, as much as Shackleton's novel or book. Shackleton's book I thought was really amazing. You know if you've got a natural you know, if you've got a leader or a person that you worship, it would be Shackleton. For some reason he just – he had everything. He, he would never say die. Even when he was faced with extremes, he always thought ...

[Part 1a 0:07:00] Shirtcliffe: From Elephant Island for example, he set out on that little boat¹ with four men to head for South Georgia, and South Georgia is a little tiny spot. And it's hundreds of miles away and they must have realised that if they'd passed it at night it was too late. Africa would be the next stop, and they'd probably die before they got there, so when they saw South Georgia they had to get ashore. It's just that, and so they got ashore on the south coast; never been done before, scaled up nonstop had to keep going, never take a sleep on the way otherwise doom faced you. So he took them forward to the whaling station. I can imagine the surprise on the whaling station manager's face when he said 'My name's Shackleton. I've just come over from the south coast.' He must have been flabbergasted.

¹ The *James Caird*. – AJS.

[Part 1a 0:08:36] Lee: Is it fair to say that you admire the heroic nature of all that?

Shirtcliffe: Oh yes.

[Part 1a 0:08:42] Lee: Did you perhaps see Shirtcliffe as being a bit heroic in going down South?

Shirtcliffe: Well, I suppose in a dream you might think yourself towards that a little bit. What I think my ambition in a way was to get behind a team of dogs and go and do a bit of exploration and sort of open up a bit of country. But I did like many of my colleagues did; you start off in a humble way and do some MET and the difference between meteorology on base is that you never plot any charts and you only do a few statistics at the end of the month. Most of the time you are just doing your observations every three hours and then of course you've got no other obligations, so you can do other things.

[Part 1a 0:09:26] Shirtcliffe: You can do building or cooking or whatever else, make yourself useful. But at the back of the mind of many Fids is.... Well take Mike Cousins for example. He goes down as a MET man and he was trained in Stanmore. He did it within his ability while he was down there. He didn't plot any charts, and you know he did his little bit of shift work. But his ambition was a bit like mine, that he thought he was a climber, a mountaineer and a walker and he wanted to get himself a sledge and be a General Assistant. That seemed to be the pinnacle, to be a General Assistant and

[Part 1a 0:10:09] Lee: That was a fun job?

Shirtcliffe: That is a fun job, and making decisions. You know when you go out on a trip like Fossil Bluff from Adelaide, you head yourself towards Fossil Bluff. And you know its three hundred miles away and eventually you'll get there and it was a That was a fantastic journey by the way.

[Part 1a 0:10:30] Lee: We'll come to that.

Shirtcliffe: We'll come to that?

[Part 1a 0:10:32] Lee: I promise you. –What was, what was the Stanley MET office like in '53?

Shirtcliffe: It was a bit old fashioned in many ways, a funny old place on the top of the hill. I think it was built of local Chilean timber, knocked up on the site – fairly basic. How did it run? Well it was casual in many ways; you had to follow a routine though, of every third hour throughout the day. And throughout the days and the year, nonstop, you did observations of the weather. The chart was plotted, maybe three or four times a day. South Atlantic, local stuff and the weather forecast went on the air or told the broadcasters what the weather was

going to be for the day. And the pilot would phone you if necessary and say ‘What’s it like on the west’? And you would give him actual weather reports. How was it? Yes, casual.

[Part 1a 0:11:50] Lee: What was the gear like? The equipment?

Shirtcliffe: Standard.

[Part 1a 0:11:54] Lee: Yes?

Shirtcliffe: If you’re looking at instruments, I think all the instruments are regulation instruments. They have to be approved by a certain manufacturer. Thermometers for example, approved by the National Physics Laboratory to be accurate within you know – nothing. Barometer the same, the wind direction indicator, direction and speed: that was authentic. Of course it was on a thirty-foot mast, so you’re measuring the air speed up there thirty feet above you, so there’s no interference from trees and other buildings. What was it like? Kind of boring in a way.

[Part 1a 0:12:42] Lee: [Laughs] Hence the desire to go somewhere else?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, yes.

[Part 1a 0:12:45] Lee: So, tell me about this posting to Deception, then. How did you manage to fix that?

Shirtcliffe: Um.

[Part 1a 0:12:54] Lee: In ‘54.

Shirtcliffe: Well, I suppose it caused a little bit of bad blood in a way because I kept talking to the senior Met Officer, that I’d like to go to the Antarctic. ‘Look, I think my purpose in coming down here was to go to the Antarctic.’ and he seemed to think otherwise. And so I said ‘I might have to speak to Mr Green, Johnny Green, about the Antarctic.’ because when I’d signed up my contract it was a FIDs contract. Not FIDS MET in Stanley and I was misled, that I thought I was going to go to the Antarctic.

Shirtcliffe: And so when I spoke to Johnny Green about it he didn’t say a yes or a no, but I did say to Gordon Halkins, the senior Met Officer, that if I didn’t get a favourable outcome that I would have to think about asking them to return me to the UK, and we start all over again: you know they would give me a return fare and that’s it, wash their hands of me.

[Part 1a 0:13:59] Lee: Were you bluffing?

Shirtcliffe: No, not really. I think I’d have had to go through with it. You know once you have made a statement like that you are really bound to do it if you have to.

[Part 1a 0:14:13] Lee: So it was Monte Carlo or bust was it?

Shirtcliffe: Yes really.

[Part 1a 0:14:16] Lee: Yes?

Shirtcliffe: And so they gave me Deception. And Deception was, talk about bad timing, ... I arrived at Deception shortly after they buried Arthur Farrant. And I didn't know what Deception ... You probably haven't got much in your mind about Deception, but Deception is an island. It's called Deception because it's deceptively large from the outside as you sail past. But the middle is a great big hole – it was the cone² of the volcano, and the Whalers Bay is another little one off that.

[Part 1a 0:14:56] Shirtcliffe: And the beaches are all black because it's like black; it's like coke that's been slightly pulverised, and it's porous and if you look at the beach from the ship, steam comes up as the tide washes in and out. And if you go out about four or five feet from the water's edge and guggle down in the sand for about a foot, it's too hot to hold your hand there. It gets up to about 55°C (Centigrade), so it's too darn hot, amazing. It's a really strange place. From the hill when you look at our hut or when you are looking down into Whalers Bay, there's a lake called Lake Lalo³ which is a kind of odd greenish colour. Sulphurous and that's all something to do with the volcano as well.

[Part 1a 0:15:53] Shirtcliffe: It's a really strange place. Anyway what I say as a builder, what I found difficult was that the sand is very absorbent. It takes in a great deal of fluid water, either melt water or sea water, and it freezes. And of course at depth in the summer, at about a foot, it's permafrost. And if you try to dig a hole to bury Arthur Farrant, the big problem is even with a pick axe you can hit the same spot twice running but you don't remove any of the ground, hardly. Because no sooner do you pull the pick out and it kind of ..., water runs into that little dent you made. And the chances of hitting it a second time are pretty slim, and so you work away and work away.

[Part 1a 0:16:44] Shirtcliffe: What George Hemmen discovered was: go down to the permafrost and scratch away as much as you can and just leave it exposed to the weather. And then the next day you can go down another inch and so on and so on, but this fellow had to go down to six feet. So the chances are you would have been there an awful long time before you could bury him that deep. So what they did as a compromise was, they put him down in a hole four feet deep I believe. I didn't see the statistics about this but they put him down in a hole about four feet deep and then put some rocks on top of his ... a couple of feet high. So at least he was six feet down from the top of the rock. And he was in the graveyard with all the other whalers who'd been killed or died or whatever while they were there.

² He really means the crater. - AJS.

³ Not listed by the UK Antarctic Place-names Committee. Possibly an unofficial local name. – AJS.

[Part 1a 0:17:33] Lee: Farrant committed suicide?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, yes he...

[Part 1a 0:17:37] Lee: So you arrived shortly after that?

Shirtcliffe: I arrived shortly after and ...

[Part 1a 0:17:41] Lee: What was it like? What was the feeling? What was the mood?

Shirtcliffe: Tense, I thought. Right, what the MET office said to me, by telegram, was: 'There's a mast; if you look around you will see a mast about thirty feet long' or whatever it was. And they wanted it raised if I could choose the location, that putting this mast and to put up a wind direction indicator on the top of the mast, it was wind speed and direction. And so Dougie Mumford and I had discovered that on the beach there was a barge that had tins, about two hundred, two hundred and twenty square cubic called Krudt. And it was little granules of grey powder which they used to feed in the harpoon guns, I suspect. It was gun powder in other words, so what we did, the MET office said could I put up this mast, or could we put up this mast. So Derek Parsons and I went out and chose a site.

[Part 1a 0:18:59] Shirtcliffe: And I said to Derek 'Why don't we just take a pick or a crowbar and dig a smallish hole but deep and fill it with Krudt and put a rock or two on the top and a trail from it and see what happens. And if it blows a hole so much the better you see.' So I got a rock and put it on top and lit the fuse and it went off with a ginormous bang. And this rock actually sailed over my head and finished up about half a mile down the coast somewhere, and before not too long George Hemmen came out of the base hut firing a Very pistol, summoning everybody there for a bollocking.

[Part 1a 0:19:46] Shirtcliffe: And I suspect that because Arthur Farrant had shot himself and apparently, according to Dougie Mumford, all they did, they were sitting around talking and they heard this bang and they thought it was a door blowing shut. But it was Arthur shooting himself. Right so when we went down the beach and let off this bang, I wonder whether George Hemmen may have been thinking 'Oh my goodness, somebody else has done it now.' But I don't know, I don't know how George's mind worked but he was livid. He was beside himself with anger. And he said he didn't want to hear, he did not want any more of this you see, and he said 'Besides the Argentines will record this on their seismograph as an earth tremor or something.' And I said 'Perhaps we will have to explain to them that we were digging a hole.' [Laughs] I was taking it all light heartedly really. [Both laugh].

[Part 1a 0:20:43] Shirtcliffe: I said to him 'After all you're asking me to make a hole in the ground to put up this mast and it takes time. If I do it your way, like expose the gravel and then let the sun shine and then scratch away, it's going to take so long.' And I said 'The hole keeps filling with snow when it's blowing.' I said 'What do you suggest?' And he said 'Well

just dig generally around and ...' I think in the end we used some boiling water or something to soften up the ice and bore a hole and stick in this aerial, but we stuck in the aerial in the end. But we came to the conclusion that the hole in the ground didn't matter very much because it would be guyed from three directions, and that hole in the ground is just to stop the thing slipping around. And so I said 'Ah yes, what a fool. Here I was thinking you were going to put it down three or four feet and it was going to hold it rigidly.' And of course the guys hold it, so Derek and I said 'Well we can do it as it is now.'

[Part 1a 0:21:45] Lee: What were the guys fastened to?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, the guys, I think going back, pickets: we had some T-pattern galvanised pickets about four feet long. And with a sledge hammer you could bang these into the ... It took a bit of doing.

[Part 1a 0:22:03] Lee: Was the base depressed by Arthur Farrant's suicide?

Shirtcliffe: Dougie Mumford was buoyant. And so was Smithy (John Smith), he was reasonably buoyant. Derek⁴, it didn't affect Derek a great deal, although he did tend to say 'You know, you knew Arthur Farrant had blown ... you know, shot himself with a '45. And I said 'Yea I did know that.' but it was almost like a taboo subject in a way. The only one that was depressed was George I think. He wasn't depressed so much as tense, I would have said he was ah..... I think it was really ah, the fact that when he ... They had a court of inquiry, I believe. Of course the Royal Navy were there. And they had to have an official outcome, like a coroner's report, why this man had done this. I don't know, I didn't see the coroner's report. I don't really know to this day why Arthur shot himself actually. But I guess he was depressed.

[Part 1a 0:23:14] Lee: Was there any feeling of blame or guilt; did they blame themselves, or feel guilty about it, do you think? [Pause.] If you can't answer the question, then ...

Shirtcliffe: No, who would feel guilty?

[Part 1a 0:23:24] Lee: Well the rest on the base, for not spotting what was coming, for not spotting his.....

Shirtcliffe: Well we were the following year.

[Part 1a 0:23:29] Lee: Right.

Shirtcliffe: Arthur Farrant was a year before us. And you see what had actually happened, so Dougie Mumford was telling me. Dougie Mumford went there a bit before me and he went

⁴ Derek Parsons. - AJS.

on the *Biscoe*. He said that the *Biscoe* went ashore with its scow and they had two or three sacks of mail for people, the personnel ashore. And one or two people came out of the hut and went through the bags and took out their mail, and left all the rest there and went up to the hut with it. And I said ‘Oh, a rather strange thing.’ and he said ‘Yea. And then somebody else would come out, and sort through and take out theirs and ah that’s even weirder.’ He said ‘Apparently they weren’t talking to each another very much towards the end, and they didn’t hit it off too well.’ And so if anybody should feel guilty, I suppose it’s the personnel that Arthur Farrant was with. Um, I don’t really know.

[Part 1a 0:24:19] Lee: I’ve been to Deception, so I do understand what you are talking about.

Shirtcliffe: Oh, you do – good.

[Part 1a 0:24:23] Lee: And I’m glad you still gave your thumbnail sketch to the recording, so thank you. Were you disappointed when you got there? How did it feel? Was it what you hoped for or was it?

Shirtcliffe: Deception?

[Part 1a 0:24:35] Lee: Mm.

Shirtcliffe: I put up with Deception. It was interesting in some ways. George asked me if, you know, what I wanted to take on apart from the Met, you know ‘What are you going to do in the rest of your time here. He made me an ice observer and said you know ‘If the weather’s fair you can go up on the ridge at the top, have a look out over the sea and record what you see, you know with respect to the ice.’ And I said ‘I would like to do that.’ and he also put me in charge of boating because I used to go out into the bay and do a little bit of fishing sometimes. And he said ‘Well you know we’ll put you in charge of the boating and the chandlery.’ (I think it was).

[Part 1a 0:25:21] Shirtcliffe: Yes, one or two things like that and because that gave me other things to do. I thought the ice obs were good. I used to walk up the back but I know lots of people like that about Deception. You can get out of the hut, walk up the back, straight out the door and up the back, up the back hut, and you can have a good look around. It’s a very good island; I never walked round the whole thing although I did have a little ambition to do so. I would like to have seen the whole lot but I was only from Neptune’s Bellows round to the back of the hut. I found it really quite interesting, and the winter ... Because it’s a depression, it’s low lying and you’ve got mountains around you or hills around you. So we had a strong wind and a blizzard and it deposited an enormous amount of snow on the, on the factory, on the whaling factory. In fact so much that when you opened the door the following morning, you had to dig your way and have a look at this.

[Part 1a 0:26:35] Shirtcliffe: Some of the snow drifts were really, you know when I say enormous Because they had chimneys going up about forty, fifty, sixty feet. Some of the

drifts came down almost from the top of the chimney and across in a big arc, right across where the plan had been. And it really was quite ..., it's so incredible, and beautiful as well in a way, and you went out and you thought 'Good God.' Instead of black ash you've got all this white snow. And everything was kind of dangling. Oh yes, that was the time when I ..., after the big blow. After the big blow we saw, I saw a stork in one of the whaling huts, uh kind of scrabbling away and I think that was the bird we thought. We went and had a look. Actually it was interesting. You see Deception, it wasn't totally dull, because one day I was just walking along the beach and I could see just stranded up above the high tide line was a sort of pale transparent looking eggs, like gooseberries. And there wasn't just one; there were millions, absolutely millions. They must have been four or five inches deep on the shore. And I picked some up and looked at them and I thought 'God, they do look like gooseberries.' So I went and told George; I was really quite excited about this.

[Part 1a 0:28:11] Shirtcliffe: Went and told George and George said 'I'll report it to Stanley or put it in the report.' And we spoke to a biologist I think at Signy over the radio. And he said it was a ctenophore, it was a comb jelly, and he said 'If you like it's called a sea gooseberry.' And I said 'Well would you believe it?' Because I was saying it looked like a load of gooseberries on the shore. And that's exactly what they were they were kind of transparent (ish), but golden-ey colour and they'd got sort of waving – not tentacles but they had waving like scales, radiating from top to bottom, and that gave out a sort of light like, I guess it would cause luminescence in the sea or bio-luminescence I suppose. I am guessing now.

[Part 1a 0:29:05] Lee: Where did the stork come from?

Shirtcliffe: Heaven knows; I don't. But after this strong wind that deposited all the snow we saw this stork. I went up to the hut and said to George 'you're not going to believe this: there's a bird – it must be three feet tall – down in the factory and it's black and white and I would say it's a stork and it's blown off course from South America or somewhere in the storm.' And he said 'Oh good' and instead of saying 'I'll come and have a look' he said 'I'll get the .303.' [Lee laughs] and I said 'What for?' [Laughs] He said 'Well, we can shoot it then.' I said 'What for? What do you want to shoot a bird for?' And he said 'Well, it's evidence then, isn't it? That we've ... you know, it's appeared here, and here it is. Whereas if you just write it down, people will take it all with a pinch of salt and say "Yes, where were you? What had you been drinking?" You see?' And I said 'Yes OK.' I didn't see any sense at that time in shooting the specimen just to prove that it was there.

[Part 1a 0:30:08] Lee: So what happened to it?

Shirtcliffe: It got away.

[Part 1a 0:30:12] Lee: Did it really?

Shirtcliffe: Between the time that I went up and told George and he got the .303 and got a few rounds out. He said 'Where is it?' And I said 'I'll show you' and we went down to where it was, but it had actually limped away or got up and we didn't see it again. I'm glad in a way that he didn't have to shoot it.

[Part 1a 0:30:32] Lee: So tell me about your move to Signy. Because you went the following year, '55.

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 1a 0:30:37] Lee: To help build the new ??? [inaudible] house? Is that right?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, yes, that was the best move ever, I think in a way, from my point of view. Yes it was ...; I went there via Stanley MET. I came out of Deception, went up to Stanley and spoke to the Met people in Stanley and then they said when you go down to Signy, apart from the MET, you're going to be busy building the new hut. Sort out something with the anemometer and a new site for the distant-reading thermometers and so on. So I said yes OK I'd keep all this in mind. So I went to Signy about a couple of months before Harold Dollman arrived, or maybe about six weeks before Harold Dollman arrived. Or...you'd have the statistics.

[Part 1a 0:31:34] Shirtcliffe: I arrived there before and there was just the existing base, living in a little hut on the top of the hill. There was a Harold Smith and an A.A. Smith and a Graham Davis and a Pearson, John Pearson and then me. And my job was to kind of look for a site. So I chose the old whaling station which was an obvious choice, because you had got this flat (ish) plan that was all heavy timbered and a couple of big barges down there, or largeish barges. One was for dumping rubbish out to sea; that was just like a float. And the other had been an ammunition barge; I suspect they had put all the explosives in there. And so I set about almost single-handed apart from now and again H. Smith or Harold used to come down and say what are you doing all this for? Don't you think we could do it an easier way?

[Part 1a 0:32:43] Shirtcliffe: And there I was trying to lift a barge with a whacking great big lever, trying to lift it up onto a four-inch steel roller, steel pipe and to get it down the plan. And eventually when I did manage to get it lifted up with a little bit of aid, uh we shoved it down the beach and got it floating. And decided it would make a jolly good jetty and build onto it, and of course the sea ice took it away, just as simple as that. Ah end of the season it went out with the ice which is a pity because we had tried all sorts of ways of filling it up with rocks and things and trying to anchor it. Harold arrived later and I thought he was an excellent fellow, as I'd always said.

[Part 1a 0:33:37] Lee: He was the base leader wasn't he?

Shirtcliffe: He was the base leader, yes and he'd been on the *Bigbury Bay*⁵ and he'd been the Yeoman of Signals and he was a Chief Petty Officer. And he'd worked on the bridge with the Captain and the First Officer. And so he had a natural sense of diplomacy, he was always polite, never rude and had a rather infective grin and sense of humour, and he was excellent to work with. He was practical; he hadn't really got a profession apart from the Navy, and he joined the Navy at fifteen or sixteen and came out when he was thirty or thirty one.

[Part 1a 0:34:19] Shirtcliffe: And he was, ah got no qualifications in civi street, so because they went round the bases he thought 'I wouldn't mind a spell there. I can gain my breath and then decide what I am going to do in the future.' So he had a word with Johnny Green, and Johnny Green said ah yes they'd really like him. They already had got him down as a potential base leader because he was older than most people and ah, I don't know – he had a kind of aura. He was the sort of person that to me, I say he was a sort of natural leader. When he did the hut, when he was building the hut with Napier and help from the rest of us he knew, he had got all the details in his head. He knew exactly... You could pick up something and say 'What's this, Harold?' and he'd say 'I'll tell you later on. I know what that piece is.' or he would tell you, and he seemed to know it all how it would all go together, this fantastic Meccano set.

[Part 1a 0:35:30] Shirtcliffe: It was a busy year. I thought it was an excellent year and by contrast..... Harold against George Hemmen, you know he was a totally different person. You could crack jokes with Harold, you could take the mick out of him, and he would always smile back, he would always come up with some sort of riposte or other. He was an interesting person and he had a fund of stories about the Navy. He had been through the war and he could tell you what it was like under fire from the Italians or whatever and I thought he was terrific. One or two other people disagreed with that, like Lofty Tyson said 'Oh no, you could find hundreds of people like him', but then Lofty was about the same age as Harold Dollman and he had been through the Air Force, and have you met Lofty?

[Part 1a 0:36:33] Lee: He is my next person.

Shirtcliffe: He's your next person, right. When he came to Signy he was about thirty and his arms and chest and face were ... had been reconstructed in many ways. He'd got lots of scars from burning, because he crashed in a Mosquito where the pilot was killed and the aircraft crashed and caught fire and of course Lofty was in there with it. And of course all the bad burns were from that era. And he thought Harold was OK, OK. He gave him a bit of support but not too much. I thought Harold was a terrific fellow and when you worked with him ...as I say because most of the hut was timber and you had to work as a team. Harold's a left-hander and I'm a right-hander, so when we were doing the flooring which was all tongue and groove, two ways. So you did it diagonally in the second layer, with felt between to stop the wind blowing up from under.

⁵ HMS *Bigbury Bay*, a frigate launched in 1944. – AJS.

[Part 1a 0:37:44] Shirtcliffe: He did the left hand end and I did the right hand end and we fitted together; you know, it was such an easy situation you see, and we got on and we chatted during the day and got to know each other. And at the end of the year, Harold decided he didn't want a second year. Well it was I suspect that he didn't get along too well with Ron Napier. Ron Napier was an old Marine (ex-Marine) and he was a bit of a heavy drinker. But he didn't have a lot of respect for the Navy and Naval personnel, so he and Harold didn't get along too well socially.

[Part 1a 0:38:34] Shirtcliffe: I spotted that jobs that Ron did were pretty slap-dash. And although he was supposed to have been one of the builders, his methods were typical like a builder in England, cutting corners all the time and I didn't approve. I know Harold didn't approve and they were due to go to Admiralty Bay to do the hut there the following summer, and Harold refused. He didn't really want to work with Ron any more because he knew instinctively perhaps, that Ronnie, when the *Shackleton* came along, he would get himself a big supply of gin for the winter and keep it under his bed and occasionally drink away and of course that's exactly what he did. Because he went to Admiralty Bay and Ron got his gin and he used to drink it and sometimes he would turn up on site and sometimes he wouldn't, sometimes he would turn up late.

[Part 1a 0:39:49] Lee: Is he still with us?

Shirtcliffe: He drowned, Ron Napier. I suppose it's ... This is what actually happened: the ship was anchored there, and they said we are sailing at midnight and at nine o'clock or ten o'clock they wanted everybody from ashore back there. Anybody from the base they wanted to get them back to the base you see.

[Part 1a 0:40:19] Lee: We are still talking about Signy are we?

Shirtcliffe: No, this is Admiralty Bay.

[Part 1a 0:40:21] Lee: Right – following year?

Shirtcliffe: Er, the end of the Signy year⁶. It was the summer of the next year, and there were a few builders. There was Ray Cooper and myself, we carried the building really, Ray Cooper as I, I suppose between us. As well as help from Colin⁷ – (can't think of his other name), you know with help from the base we got the building going. Ron used to turn up now and again and on one notorious occasion he fell off the roof and you could smell the gin on him as he turned up; he was still suffering from the night before. However, when the ship was going to leave Admiralty Bay and I was going to leave as well and we were going to say our goodbyes. Ten o'clock came and they sent all the people from the base ashore.

⁶ 24th March 1956. – AJS.

⁷ Probably Colin Clement. – AJS.

[Part 1a 0:41:19] Shirtcliffe: They came back out again in a rowing boat and tied it up alongside the ship and went down to the Fiddery and started drinking again. I was thinking 'Is this a good idea', you know. However they seemed to know what they were doing. Ron Napier was so drunk at that time he could barely stand and he had to get down the side of the ship and into the rowing boat. He got in the rowing boat and he sat on the side and he leaned back out and was saying 'Cheerio, cheerio' like that and then he fell over backwards and fell into the water you see. Then the other four or five people in the boat went across to give him help all on the same side. Whoosh! The whole damn lot capsized. Crikey, and there we were with six people in the water I think it was, or five or six people in the water.

[Part 1a 0:42:16] Lee: Including you?

Shirtcliffe: No, I was looking from the deck down and seeing all these people. Eric Broome – was it? And Mike – Mike⁸; the sparker, er bad on names. Any way these half a dozen people in the water, one of the seamen said to me 'Quick, throw them a rope.' And I said 'It's no bloody good. The water is so cold they can't climb it', so I said 'Quick, chuck them a loop and tell them to get in.' So Neil Jennings, this seaman, and I chucked the rope out and said "Get in the loop and we'll pull you up". So we got down one, two, three, four, five and of course all the people that came up were going – stripping all their clothing off and getting in the shower.

[Part 1a 0:43:08] Shirtcliffe: And Eric Broome, who was in the shower, he had a boiling hot cup of tea and was standing under this hot shower and his hand was trembling so much from the cold that he was spilling this tea down his chest. And he was [shivering sound] going like that and trembling, and all these people were really – they were suffering from the cold and the exposure. I said 'Where is Ron?' And one fellow said 'Well I think I had hold of him last of all. I had hold of the arse of his trousers and was holding him up but his head was down in the water and then when the rope came down and they said "Get in quickly and we'll pull you up." I got in but Ron disappeared then.' And so he must have released him and he had sunk out of sight and disappeared. The following morning the ship hadn't gone. They put the scow out or put the motor boat out and had a look around for any bodies. But there was nothing, so they put a little RIP up at the top of the hill, saying Ron Napier drowned in the bay here at Admiralty Bay.

[Part 1a 0:44:20] Lee: And that was 19.....?

Shirtcliffe: '54, I think, or '55 was it? No' 56 it might have been.

[Part 1a 0:44:31] Lee: Ah probably '55.

⁸ Mike Royle. – AJS.

Shirtcliffe: Probably '55 – yes⁹.

[Part 1a 0:44:36] Lee: How did that affect the rest of you?

Shirtcliffe: Right, well since I was going and the other builder had died, we were left now with three MET men, a sparker and a diesel mechanic. And I said 'Oh my goodness me, you can't go like this.' Because the hut was three quarters done and there was no glass in the windows, and if you got a blow in the snow it would fill the hut with drift, and you would have to shovel the whole darn lot out, as well as all the water damage it would do to everything.

[Part 1a 0:45:17] Shirtcliffe: So I spoke to a fellow that I knew called Shewry, Arthur Shewry, and said 'I can't face another year, three years nonstop without having a break. Would you go and do the building on base?' I think he had come up from W¹⁰ but I'm not certain. And he said 'Well like you I'm reluctant' and I said 'Yes I can sympathise with you. I'm reluctant too.' But he said in the end, 'I've made a decision; I will stop. I'll finish the hut' and he did. He's one of these excellent, reliable fellows that you find. You know they don't blow their own horn a lot, but a very reliable person. He had ambitions like me to go to New Zealand after BAS. I don't know where he went.

[Part 1a 0:46:25] Lee: When you lose a member of your team, like you lost Ron Napier ...?

Shirtcliffe: Yes?

[Part 1a 0:46:30] Lee: Does it take a long time for ... to recover ??? [inaudible]?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, yes. Yes quite a long time; it never disappears really because even now when you say to me 'What did you do at Admiralty Bay?', I can still see Ron falling arse over head out of the boat and tipping everybody else out and causing this. The thing that kind of affects me in many ways is that I knew that when he was sober he was a decent fellow. He was a decent enough fellow and he just hated the water which is odd, because [laughs] when I was at Signy and I was building the jetty, the end of the jetty, there was a little incident of a boat coming to tie up along the jetty as I was building it.

[Part 1a 0:47:30] Shirtcliffe: And it was John Bull who was in charge of the boat and he got hold of the jetty and was talking to me and his feet were in the boat, and his feet were slowly drifting away. And when he was nearly horizontal, I said 'Do you know that you are going to fall in?' And he said 'I know' [Both start laughing] and fell in. Well I was having a laugh about this and Ron Napier said 'Do you know, that's not a funny story'. He said 'God I hate water; I'd hate to fall in the water here you know'. He said 'I can't swim' and he said 'I have

⁹ It was 24th March 1956. – AJS.

¹⁰ Base W (Detaillé Island). – AJS.

this, I have this horrible vision in my mind of drowning you know'. He said 'No, not me, the further away from the water, the better'.

[Part 1a 0:48:18] Shirtcliffe: And I said 'Why were you a Marine'? And he said 'Oh well that's necessity – had to do something'. So yes and it stuck with me. I suppose I'd known Ron for a year; the other people on base had known him for about a month or four or five weeks. And I don't think they had a great deal of respect because he drank so much. So it probably didn't affect them as much as it affected me.

[Part 1a 0:48:46] Lee: Was there any ever ...? In those days did anybody say to him 'Come on now; you're drinking too much'? There was no discipline? There was no word from above?

Shirtcliffe: No, Harold kept him in line though, oh yes Harold kept him in line, Harold Dollman, on Signy, because he refused to let people go out to see the Chief Steward and buy liquor for their own use on base. He said 'You know we have got a base supply and we will bring it out with the rations every week, so if you want some alcohol you will get your ration' you see, and so he kept Ron sober by rationing. Now when Ron was in charge of Admiralty Bay, Ron was Base Leader and doing the building as well. Then of course you know he threw caution to the wind; he could do whatever he liked. So he saw the Chief Steward and bought a couple of cases of gin.

[Part 1a 0:49:45] Lee: So BAS appointed him or FIDS appointed him Base Leader even though he had a drink problem?

Shirtcliffe: Not knowing that he had a drink problem.

[Part 1a 0:49:52] Lee: Not knowing?

Shirtcliffe: Not knowing.

[Part 1a 0:49:53] Lee: Because there was no system for reporting up in those days?

Shirtcliffe: No.

[Part 1a 0:49:55] Lee: I mean today it's very strict controls, today.

Shirtcliffe: Is there? That's good, that's good news.

[Part 1a 0:50:02] Lee: I went to the Girton College induction conference in September when the new recruits are being briefed about going South and all the alcohol regulations were laid down very very strictly.

Shirtcliffe: OK, well I'm pleased to hear that.

[Part 1a 0:50:18] Lee: It's 55 years ago.

Shirtcliffe: It is, it is, you're right. Actually I am pleased to hear that.

[Part1a 0:50:23] End of Part 1a.

[Part 1b 0:0:00] Lee: Tell me about the hut at Admiralty Bay. It was just like Signy wasn't it..... the hut?

Shirtcliffe: It was identical to Signy. I knew that Harold.....

[Part1b 0:00:10] Lee: Were you building it from scratch?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, absolutely from scratch, even carrying the stuff ashore: all the parts – ciment fondu, aggregates, and everything, every damn thing. OK now I have instinctively got this feeling that the foundation should support the hut, especially down there, quite high off the ground so that you can get circulation of air underneath the hut and it will keep it going for quite a long while because it's only timber, and it's going to decay. Ron and I fell out over this aspect because he said 'No you are wasting cement; put it in as low as you can get it'. And down the end where the diesel engine was we were going to have about a four-inch slab of concrete and I said 'I don't like this idea of cutting corners' and I said 'I know that Harold didn't like it either'.

[Part1b 0:01:10] Shirtcliffe: And he said 'Well I'm in charge. Do it my way.' you see. So I said 'Right, you are in charge. I'll do it your way but don't forget that I don't like it. I don't like skimping things'. So anyway we put the foundations in, we got the flooring done and everything. The hut, the framework stood on the floor and it was going along quite well. We did have a storm and it did fill up with snow which was unfortunate because it caught us just at the wrong time. The windows were there without being glazed and the door wasn't on and so it could blow right through and deposit snow, and it's not just a bit of snow, it's one whole damn lot. And of course you've got to find a window to throw it out or find a hole or wheelbarrow or whatever. And to me that's just wasted energy, wasted effort because you've done this job and now you've got to clear out and if you are not careful the wind will blow again before you've got glass in and it will do it again. I don't think we'd got such a thing as sheets of polythene by then, clear polythene, otherwise we could have probably prevented many of these things.

[Part1b 0:02:27] Shirtcliffe: But Ray Cooper and I worked together. Of course Ray was Harold's friend from the Navy. They knew each other and because I had worked with Harold, I spoke to Ray Cooper. Ray Cooper was a very shy and quiet but a tough guy, and he just worked his way through. I found him a good companion, not entertaining like Harold but a different sort. He didn't, he wouldn't volunteer information and stories but it was his background, because he had had a very unpleasant background back in his childhood. He

joined the Navy and his life began I think from once he was in the Navy. I lost contact; oh no I didn't; it's strange isn't it? When I left BAS, I went to live in Norfolk and teach at the Norwich City College and one day a fellow came and rang the bell on the door and said 'Hello, do you recognise me?' And I said 'I've got half of a memory of you. Who are you?' and he said 'Ray Cooper'; I said 'Ray Cooper? Good God!!' He said 'I've lost the sight of one eye', but he went to Canada from BAS and he married a local girl and was trapping fur bearing creatures and living with some strange Indians. He got scurvy and that cost him a few stones in weight and the loss of one eye, but I think he is dead now.

[Part1b 0:04:22] Lee: We were back at Admiralty, building the hut, weren't we? Building it with reservations about ... Were your reservations eventually proved right?

Shirtcliffe: They closed it the following year I think.

[Part1b 0:04:35] Lee: Because it wasn't fit?

Shirtcliffe: No. They decided (was it a year or two later?)¹¹, they closed Admiralty Bay because it was no longer required, surplus to requirements; it became a refuge. So it wouldn't have mattered really, but I think I must be a bit of a puritan in a way or a perfectionist, because I had visualised the huts being lifted out of the ground and kept up relatively high, so that you can get circulation of air underneath as well, because it's timber for heaven's sake. You need to ventilate timber, keep it dry. But not so with Ron; Ron had different ideas to me. [laughs]

[Part1b 0:05:19] Lee: You left FIDS at this point didn't you?

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part1b 0:05:23] Lee: Why?

Shirtcliffe: Well you can't just keep on doing year after year, living on the bases.

[Part1b 0:05:32] Lee: So they wouldn't let you?

Shirtcliffe: They would, they would let you do three years, I didn't want to. I wanted to have a look at the Falklands in particular. So I think at this stage I went out to Pebble Island as a school teacher. Is that right according to my record?

[Part1b 0:05:54] Lee: I don't know.

¹¹ Admiralty Bay (Base G) closed in January 1961 (ref BAS website). - AJS

Shirtcliffe: You don't know – I think I did – it's not mentioned, no. OK, I went to the Falklands. I thought I would keep writing to Harold because Harold was an interesting fellow, and he kept writing to me. I did a spell in the Falklands and then went up to Montevideo. When I was in Montevideo I got a ... I wrote to Harold and said 'If you want to contact me here, this is my address.' And he did; he wrote back a postcard saying 'I'm on the way back; I'm glad to contact you because I was wondering if you would be interested in a ...? It's a big job. It's a new hut for Stonington and a hangar for the aircraft.' And I said 'Oh wow. Well I'll come along if you are in charge', you see, 'because you know we can work together', so he said 'Right, I'll sign the contract in London, if you would come and join the ship either in Stanley or in Montevideo.'

[Part1b 0:07:08] Shirtcliffe: So I think I joined the ship in Stanley and we went down supposedly down to Marguerite Bay but the sea ice was too thick, and in spite of having icebreakers smashing the ice for us, it was the year that Pearson couldn't get into Stonington Island, because he was heading that way wasn't he; was that '61? Or something like that and so we didn't get in and that was a bit disappointing. So we went back to Stanley with all the parts of the hut on the ship, and when we got into Stanley Johnny Green came and met Harold and said 'We've decided what to do. The hangar can go into store here on the *Fennia* – on this boat, this ship and the hut or what was going to be the hut we've decided to have it built in Stanley as the new MET office. So would you be interested in staying and putting it up?' And so that's what we did; we spent a year in Stanley and put it up.

[Part1b 0:08:32] Lee: How was that?

Shirtcliffe: Well I like it. To me the Falkland Islands is a place where you appreciate what freedom is really like, and the Antarctic of course. But in the Falklands nobody ever asks you what are you doing – 'What the hell do you think you are doing!!?' They don't do that in the Falklands. If you want to go and do some fishing over there in a creek over on the south coast, nobody will ever stop you.

[Part1b 0:09:07] Shirtcliffe: There's total freedom, and even better than that, I had a motorcycle and Harold and I were going out to a place called Bluff Cove to do a little bit of fishing or shooting. We had taken some equipment with us and when we got over to Bluff Cove the farmer instead of saying 'you can't come on my land' or anything like that, said 'Go up to the kitchen and tell my wife you want a drink' you see. So I thought it would be coffee but he said 'I'll be up there in a minute' you see and when he got up there he said 'Where's the rum then, or whatever you are drinking?' And they actually welcome you, they like to see people; they like to come and have a chat with you. And they are not in the least hostile towards anybody else, except the Argentine of course [Lee laughs].

[Part1b 0:10:10] Lee: So you did that at Stanley?

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part1b 0:10:13] Lee: And then had you re-joined FIDS or BAS at that point or were you working as a freelancer?

Shirtcliffe: We were still on BAS pay.

[Part1b 0:10:22] Lee: You were?

Shirtcliffe: So yes we just got our money as normal.

[Part1b 0:10:25] Lee: OK, in '60 you went to the Argentine Islands?

Shirtcliffe: I went into the Argentine Islands and Harold had made up his mind by then that his future wasn't in building; that he was going to have to think about ..., you know – he was a lot older man than me; I think he was nine years older than me. And he decided that eventually he would have to come to England, he would need a profession, he would need to stand on his feet and learn something. So he thought 'Birds, birds that's it. I'll join the Conservancy or whatever else.' So he spoke to Lance Tickell and said 'What's the future hold for me if I join the Conservancy?' Lance Tickell said 'You can come with us to Bird Island; you can ring a few thousand Wandering Albatross if you like and Stinkers and Giant Petrels and things!!

[Part1b 0:11:25] Shirtcliffe: So Harold said OK and I think it was Harold and Charles LeFeuvre (is that right?) and Lance went to Bird Island and they had this programme of ringing birds. So we parted really. We didn't part permanently because the friendship went way beyond just working together and living together in the same place. Harold and I kept in contact. He went with Lance and so I went and saw Johnny Green and said 'I understand there is an extension going on at Argentine Islands'? And he said 'Yes, you're the very fellow that we are looking for actually'. He said 'Because we can't get anybody else to do it you know. We have advertised but we haven't had any suitable candidates'.

[Part1b 0:12:23] Shirtcliffe: So I said 'I'll take it on then' and I didn't realise how big the job was. The hut was 84 feet long and the extension was another 80 coming down here now. But of course it differed from the old Boulton & Paul. The old Boulton & Paul hut was 4 by 2 timbers and tongue and groove boards on the outside and plywood or limpet board on the inside, or hardboard, and insulation in between and it was all very laborious. The new hut extension was panels 8 feet by 4 feet already plywood on the outside, limpet board on the inside and insulation between the studwork. The only problem was lifting an 8 foot by 4 foot into place and squeezing it up. So we did a little compromise. I said 'you know where there's a will there's a way; don't forget Fids are supposed to be reliable people who can you know get anything ..., set them a task and they will do it' you see. Right, now this hut had these 8 foot by 4 foot panels and sometimes they even had a window in already glazed, and you just lift it into place.

[Part1b 0:13:53] Lee: So it really was a prefab?

Shirtcliffe: It was a prefab. The piece you had to do..... all the floor was 8 foot by 4 foot sheets as well, 8 foot by 4 foot panels, insulated, and they sat in the right place, and were sort of recessed around the edge when you put a cover piece on. The roof was orthodox, or did we have panels on the roof? I'm not sure if we didn't even have panels on the roof and I had to spend one day felting the roof with bitumen, and that was it really. All the other work of course was inside; the winter work was the inside bit. But I think I accomplished that almost on my own, almost. I did have help from people on the base but they were reluctant because they had a full science programme.

[Part1b 0:14:50] Lee: Johnny Green, you mention him two or three times. His name comes up occasionally. What sort of guy was he?

Shirtcliffe: He was: how can I best describe him? He was ah, he liked to be liked. When he was in Stanley he used to organise rugby matches against the Navy when they came ashore. He was a nice fellow in many ways. I think he had chosen the wrong career with BAS.

[Part1b 0:15:30] Lee: [Laughs] How do you mean?

Shirtcliffe: Um, it didn't do him any good, BAS; it was too easy going, and he did have a tendency to drink a bit – bit too much. I admired him in many ways, but he had a troubled life, he had a troubled personal life. I think he was divorced from his wife and he drank too much. I think he drowned in the end, didn't he? Did you know that? No? Johnny Green, when he left BAS, he joined one of the *Linblad Explorers* who did trips to the Antarctic. He told people on board 'That's a skua and that a wandering albatross.'

[Part1b 0:16:31] Lee: So he was lecturing on a tourist boat?

Shirtcliffe: He was talking to the tourists about the Antarctic and his exploits there and the bird life there and so on. Apparently he was celebrating his birthday and he did a Ron Napier – say no more!! He drowned.

[Part1b 0:16:55] Lee: Did you ever have any close calls?

Shirtcliffe: Sometimes! [laughs].

[Part1b 0:17:00] Lee: Such as?

Shirtcliffe: With Brotherhood, yes indeed.

[Part1b 0:17:07] Lee: We'll come to Brotherhood in the next session.

Shirtcliffe: Yes right.

[Part1b 0:17:07] Lee: I mean you personally, was there any point in your time in the Antarctic that you feared for your life?

Shirtcliffe: No, no not really, not fearing for – well. Sometimes when you are in the field and the wind, your first experience when you are in the field and the wind is blowing 60 – 70 knots. You are wondering whether you are going to lose your tent, what will happen, but after the first two or three interludes, the first two or three, you come to accept it. That it's always like this. 'He's not panicking, he's done it before so I'll follow his lead' you know. But I did hear of an incident where Graham Dewar was in a tent. Graham Dewar was a geologist at Adelaide and I think Brian Nixon was with him and somebody else. Anyway they had this incident and I heard the details that the outdoor man had to go and secure the guy because he feared that the peg that was holding the guy on the tent was going to let go.

[Part1b 0:18:40] Shirtcliffe: So what he did, he took his ice axe and he put it through where the peg was, so that the ice axe would give an extra hold for the upwind guy. And then he got back in his sleeping bag and – ping – the ice axe came through the tent! Course it's got a shiny handle and it pulls out dead easy, and it's got sharp steel at both ends and it perforated the outer. I don't think it perforated the inner because you have got a tent within a tent. It perforated the outer and the wind got in, so it blew the inner almost shut and the outer flew off and left the inner with three men in there.

[Part1b 0:19:25] Shirtcliffe: So they had to reach up and get their trousers and everything on as quick as they could. And Graham Dewar who had false teeth put his teeth into a tin mug of water which had frozen solid. And of course when the wind blew it blew this mug away and he never got his teeth back for the rest of the year. And he lost all his geological notes that he had accumulated in his time out in the field.

[Part1b 0:19:52] Shirtcliffe: And I was thinking right now if that was me, if I had been in the field what would I do? Right well I'd have done like Nixon, a bit of a panic. I don't think I'd have put the ice axe up-wind. I'd have probably put ice cubes, lumps of ice on the valance. Because that's not going to blow away quite as easy as an ice axe, and try to weather the storm. Difficult, difficult we did have a 70 mile an hour wind at Fossil Bluff and it actually blew grit and aggregate onto the tent and [laughs] I was thinking 'Crikey, if we lose the tent what do we actually lose? Will I lose my clothing; will my anorak disappear?'

[Part1b 0:20:43] Shirtcliffe: Now Nixon, after this interlude, had to ... Because he had lost a piece of his clothing (was it his windproof trousers or his trousers?), when they rescued them and they took a sledge up to bring them back to base, he had to run the whole way, otherwise he'd have frozen or got cold! So Brian Nixon had to, in his underpants or whatever (he was dressed perfectly well down to the waist), he had to just run and run and run to base without dying. So you know, the human spirit: if you have to, if you have to do it, you can usually do it.

[Part1b 0:21:38] Lee: We'll take a break if we may, Jim.

Shirtcliffe: OK.

[Part1b 0:21:40] End of Part 1b.

Part 2.

[Part 2a 0:00:00] Lee: This is Jim Shirtcliffe, recorded at his home in Galleywood, Chelmsford, by Chris Eldon Lee on the 16th of October 2009. Jim Shirtcliffe, Part 2.

[Part 2a 0:00:13] Lee: Let's talk about your winter at Fossil Bluff next, if we may, which was with Brian Taylor, wasn't it, and one or two others? Again this was Johnny Green who interceded first. Did you want to go to Fossil Bluff and if so why?

Shirtcliffe: No, I didn't want to go. I knew it was there. We were working at Adelaide, or should I say I was working at Adelaide. We were putting some new huts up and they were these prefabricated variety: 8 foot by 4 foot panels that were already made and you just lift into place. It was really quite an interesting job and Johnny was obviously planning ahead and was wanting somebody to go into Fossil Bluff to make up the number. And he just said 'have you got your bags packed?' [Lee laughs] or something like that, and I said 'why, what's in the offing?' and he said 'I'd like you to fly to Fossil Bluff. The aircraft are up there on the piedmont' and I was saying 'really?' And he said 'How do you feel about that'?

[Part 2a 0:01:34] Shirtcliffe: I said to him 'Yes, all right. What would my position be at Fossil Bluff?' and he said 'as a G.A.' I said 'as a G.A? Just as a G.A. working with scientists and working in the field?' And he said 'mostly, in the summer, and you'd probably get yourself a dog team'. And I said 'oh right. I could be interested.' and he said 'right well, tomorrow morning' – or something like that – 'the aircraft, the first opportunity you're off to the Bluff. Down tools and everything.' I said 'Yikes! Wow! I can'; take everything; I can't take all my baggage, can I? And he said 'what you can get in the aircraft you can take with you.' So I had to leave; I had to jettison some things. I never got them back! I don't know where they are; they're still in Adelaide somewhere. But I went to Fossil Bluff and I met Brian and Sam and Rod Walker. Brian was an excellent fellow.

[Part 2a 0:02:36] Lee: Brian Taylor?

Shirtcliffe: Brian Taylor, yes, geologist and palaeontologist: excellent fellow and a good worker. He was the most amazing person because he could get through a pair of boots in about a couple of months in the summer. He wore through more pairs of boots than anybody that I have ever come across. I think it must be something to do with the terrain there, but when he worked in the field he was meticulous as well as industrious, very industrious. Ben Hodges, who you mentioned earlier, asked me at the time, could he work with Brian as his General Assistant, and I said 'well of course you can.' Yes in fact we welcome it. If anybody

says 'I would prefer to do this'...Just like Ralph Horne when he was in the field. George McLeod said 'I wouldn't mind working with Ralph. We can rub along together quite well.'

[Part 2a 0:03:49] Shirtcliffe: Sam Blake: Sam Blake was an unusual person at Fossil Bluff. He was an Irishman and [REDACTED] and he was, I suppose you could say, deeply religious in many ways. He wasn't one that prayed aloud and get under your skin but he was a practicing Christian. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] You know you didn't have too many obligations and there were not many rules. What he liked about the Catholics was that they did have dogmas where you had to do this, and you had to give up some of your time or some of your money for the Church and to the poor and to the needy and you help people when you see them in difficulties and so on.

[Part 2a 0:05:02] Shirtcliffe: Now Sam Blake used to sit on his bunk, and he was on the bunk above me, and I was on gash hand which was cooking the food and topping up the tanks and doing the various chores at Fossil Bluff. Sam couldn't just sit on his bed and read the Bible and watch you. He had to jump down and go and get some snow and fill, top up the tanks. He said 'don't you bother about taking the rubbish out. I'll do that for you' and you know he would make you feel as though you were under a little obligation to him in a way. He would get down off his bunk when he saw that you were doing what was your duty. He'd help you to do it and in exchange you had to think 'well I must do the same for him when it's his turn on. I shall have to reciprocate'. And he was an extraordinary fellow, [REDACTED]

[Part 2a 0:06:15] Lee: How was morale in the hut that winter?

Shirtcliffe: Quite good.

[Part 2a 0:06:21] Lee: Any little gaps, any cracks appear?

Shirtcliffe: I don't think so. No, if somebody said otherwise then they would have to point it out to me. Perhaps I was too busy within myself looking at what goes on.

[Part 2a 0:06:38] Lee: You were very busy because you were fixing Muskegs and trying to sort out the generators, weren't you?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, all sorts of things, yes.

[Part 2a 0:06:45] Lee: What was the problem with the generator?

Shirtcliffe: Me, the problem with the generator was me. Right. The generator was in a little lean-to to the house or to the hut, and it got damn cold overnight. It got so cold that you

couldn't crank the handle to start it, so what I used to do was take a blow lamp in there and leave the blow lamp roaring away to warm it up. And frost used to form on the crank-case of this machine and you watched the frost gradually go down to the bottom. When it got down to the bottom you could crank up and start the genny. What happened on one occasion is that the blow lamp fell over and burnt off one of the Cushy Foot mountings under the machine. It had four Cushy Foot mountings and so I burnt through one of them, and of course you can't just go round the corner and get another one [Lee Laughs]. I know you have got to be resourceful as a Fid, so my resourcefulness was sorely stretched at this stage because I had to find material as well as the kind of technology to make a Cushy Foot mounting.

[Part 2a 0:09:01] Lee: Was this a River – Patterson sort of thing?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, and you see scientifically if your absorption and the vibration are kind of in harmony with each other, the problems are modified; they don't disappear but they're modified. Ah yea that was it.

[Part 2a 0:08:28] Lee: What did you do? What was your solution?

Shirtcliffe: I had to get one or two erasers – rubbers – and glue them into this aluminium mounting. It's funny but when you are at Fossil Bluff, things like that become extremely important, that Cushy Foot mounting. 'We do need one! First effort 'I must get one'! So I got on the radio to Brian Bowler at Stonington and said 'have you heard of them?' 'Yes, yes of course I have.' 'Right.' I said 'Well, have you got one spare? You know it's very urgent, we do need one or two desperately at Fossil Bluff, so when you come down bring a couple with you'. And he didn't, he didn't know what I was talking about, and he says 'oh it's only a spring or something like that, isn't it, under the machine?' I said 'NO no, it's much more complicated than that!!'

[Part 2a 0:09:31] Lee: So did the Indian erasers work?

Shirtcliffe: Yes it did work. I don't know how well or whether it carried on working that way, and whether the next person although we did indent for some new Cushy Foot mountings, so hopefully they were all replaced.

[Part 2a 0:09:50] Lee: I've got the base log for that period and there is a lovely description in June of going outside to see the moonlight.

Shirtcliffe: Oh!

[Part 2a 0:10:00] Lee: According to the log there were times when the moonlight was brighter than the daylight.

Shirtcliffe: Yes, yea amazing!

[Part 2a 0:10:06] Lee: Describe it to me.

Shirtcliffe: Sam Blake said to me on one occasion ‘come and have a look at this’. And we went outside, I don’t know when it was but just above the mountains there was this huge full moon¹². And I couldn’t believe it; it looked so unnatural. Apart from anything else it looked to be bigger than it normally is. And so we stood there admiring this thing and its weird orangey colour, and I’d never experienced it before.

[Part 2a 0:10:42] Shirtcliffe: If I can break away from Fossil Bluff a bit and go back to Argentine Islands When I was working at the Argentine Islands I went out the new door which was at the far end of the hut and it was extremely early in the morning, about 4 o’clock. I knew the sun wasn’t coming up or anything like that and I looked in the sky and there was some noctilucent cloud. Now noctilucent cloud isn’t just water vapour up there it’s particles of something or other, dust or whatever¹³. Really way up there, miles and miles high, so I said to the Met man who was awake at the time, Gallagher. I said ‘Alec have you seen this?’ So he wandered down and had a look. He was a two year ...; he was just doing his second year, Alec Gallagher. He suffered with loss of sleep, and I said ‘Look at that. What do you make of that?’ And as we were watching it, it went from pink to grey and disappeared and disappeared altogether and the sun started to come up.

[Part 2a 0:11:58] Shirtcliffe: And I said ‘what do you reckon to that?’ And he said ‘noctilucent cloud’, and I said ‘have you ever seen it before?’ He said ‘no’ and I said ‘well you don’t seem to be all that excited’. ‘No, no’ he said ‘I know it’s there, it’s just that you can’t see it most of the time And it’s like this moon – Sam and I were standing looking at this and I said ‘this is really amazing isn’t it?’ You know ‘how can you capture this? Can you picture it? Can you paint it or photograph it? People won’t believe this.’

[Part 2a 0:12:28] Lee: So it was large and it was orangey?

Shirtcliffe: Large and orangey, yea.

[Part 2a 0:12:32] Lee: High or low?

Shirtcliffe: Low: just breaking, just above the mountains on the other side.

[Part 2a 0:12:38] Lee: Could you see the topography on the moon’s surface?

[PAUSE]

[Part 2a 0:12:45] Lee: Perhaps it’s difficult to remember?

¹² The well-known Moon illusion, the explanation for which is still debated (ref Wikipedia). – AJS.

¹³ Actually ice crystals. – AJS.

Shirtcliffe: It is difficult to remember.

[Part 2a 0:12:47] Lee: There's mention of mock moons and moon pillars.

Shirtcliffe: Oh yes, sun pillars, moon pillars, yes.

[Part 2a 0:12:52] Lee: What are they?

Shirtcliffe: Right, when you get cirrus, cirro-stratus is the most amazing thing. Cirro-stratus is cloud made up of ice particles in suspension, and of course as the winter wears on and the temperature on the surface goes down to -30, -40 these little ice particles are at the surface. You know you are walking amongst them and they call it diamond dust. If you look towards the sun, oh yes certainly if you are on a hill, if you look towards the sun, where you know where the sun is, immediately to the left and to the right and sometimes immediately above, you get these very bright and coloured spots as well. And sometimes, which is rare, there's an arc that links them up over the top as well. We witnessed that at Fossil Bluff. Brian Taylor in particular was very enthusiastic about these phenomena and very observant as well.

[Part 2a 0:14:10] Lee: Could they be photographed, or not?

Shirtcliffe: They can be. The photograph doesn't do it justice really; it's kind of awe inspiring in a way, when you see this, and it's only brief. And that's the whole thing about it. You say 'I'll go and get a friend and bring him and let him have a look' and you can't because all the time it's changing. And when the cloud changes it disappears and you say 'Well it's like the noctilucent cloud.' Alec said 'Well I know they are there all the time' and I said 'That is the first time I've ever seen noctilucent cloud'. And it was first of all quite high up, whitish going pinkish, then greyish and disappearing.

[Part 2a 0:14:59] Lee: You had a skiing accident according to this.

Shirtcliffe: Oh yes!

[Part 2a 0:15:03] Lee: Serious?

Shirtcliffe: Didn't break anything but it was a skiing accident. We were doing some practice at Fossil Bluff, and yes it was foolish wasn't it? I fell over and ricked an ankle. No it was the bones in my foot, the metacarpals, on the top of the foot? It all swelled up, but it was a matter of time. Like all things the body repairs itself given time.

[Part 2a 0:15:38] Lee: And there's quite a nice description of a particularly bad hurricane in October?

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 2a 0:15:43] Lee: This is the one where they bombard the roof with gravel and snow to make

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 2a 0:15:51] Lee: Was that a worrying time?

Shirtcliffe: It certainly was. Who wrote this in there? Brian Taylor was it?

[Part 2a 0:15:56] Lee: I don't know. It doesn't say who wrote the log.

Shirtcliffe: No, but it was that: it blew. Right well, I always thought that wind tends to funnel down certain places like through the col and down valleys. Brian Bowler had experienced this when he came down from Stonington with a Muskeg: that in certain places you could be lying up for day after day thinking that everybody is getting a gale of wind whereas in actual fact it is very localised, just where you happen to be. We went down to, I think it was the Wait a Bit Cliffs from Fossil Bluff and did we have the Muskeg at the time? I think we had the Muskeg down there and I had to ... out of presence of mind I decided to put the Muskeg on the windward side of the tent on the off chance that you could tie the guy to the Muskeg, because it's not going to blow that away and that it would break the wind a bit, but scary! When you reckon that the wind is strong enough to blow stones at you, it's pretty damn strong!! [Laughs].

[Part 2a 0:17:18] Lee: Let's talk about this terrific trip you made then, from Adelaide Island to Fossil Bluff. You trained the dogs up for this?

Shirtcliffe: Yes, from Adelaide to Fossil Bluff.

[Part 2a 0:17:31] Lee: This was 1962, I think, wasn't it?

Shirtcliffe: Yes – right.

[Part 2a 0:17:33] Lee: '63.

Shirtcliffe: 1963 OK. Yes, I kept my team at Adelaide with, I think there were two or three other teams. They were a great team called the Players. I had this belief that if you didn't take them out daily or alternate days they would, just like people, physically their muscles would lose their tone. So I used to pop my head out and shout 'Hello boys' and they would all stand up and wag their tails. You knew that they just knew. They liked to go for a run and once you started putting their harnesses on, they got so excited that you couldn't contain them. So I started taking runs out from Adelaide, sometimes over the sea ice and sometimes even further afield. On one occasion I took the tent and sleeping bag, some food rations, pots and pans box and some fuel. I thought you know if the worst comes to the worst I can always camp and then get back to base the following day or whatever.

[Part 2a 0:18:52] Shirtcliffe: So I headed off from Adelaide towards an island called the Dions, and I could see it in the distance and I thought 'I'll head towards the Dions today. Then when I've done so much time I can turn around and go back' – you see? When I'd done so much time I thought 'you know I reckon I could make the Dions' and so I got there and went onto the Dions and took the dogs and of course there were Emperor Penguins there and I didn't expect that! These Emperor Penguins were standing in the gully, and so I thought 'I'll take a picture of those.' Got my camera out; the bloody camera wouldn't work – it had frozen and so I couldn't get a picture of anything. So I stuck it back inside and zipped up and thought well, 'I'll tell them on base; I'll tell Harry Leckie the base leader when I get back' and so I then headed back to base.

[Part 2a 0:19:58] Shirtcliffe: It started to get quite dark and it started to get quite late before I got back. I could see the light on the hut. So I went back from the Dions and stuck the dogs back on the span and fed them and went up to the hut. I saw Harry, Harry Leckie, and Harry was the base leader. He was a Met man and I said 'You will not believe this, but I went to the Dions this afternoon.' 'Bloody rubbish' he said. 'Alright then,' he says 'describe it to me'. I said 'right, it's quite small; there is a gully and a big pinnacle rock here and right in the middle there and you have got a dozen Emperor penguins nesting' and he said 'that's right. It's not everybody that knows there's Emperor penguins on the Dions' and I said 'well I do now'. The following day he got Fred Gibbs to harness up his team and he went there took a few photos and came back. So I said 'right there we are. You know I did it single handed because you did it as well'.

[Part 2a 0:21:11] Lee: All this is preparation for the big trip then?

Shirtcliffe: This is all preparation for the big trip.

[Part 2a 0:21:17] Lee: Now I've got the account of that here as well and what I find interesting is this emerged because you decided to go ahead and do this because the two aircraft had been damaged and so you couldn't fly there.

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 2a 0:21:27] Lee: Is that right?

Shirtcliffe: Yes – and we'd got no air support and we couldn't get back out until they had repaired the aircraft. The other thing was we could sledge all the way back out. I wasn't really looking forward to the return journey, summer sea ice over that piece by the Dions, which ... They had already lost three people hadn't they?

[Part 2a 0:21:49] Lee: This was a 25 day journey?

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 2a 0:21:52] Lee: So what were your travel tactics? What was the plan?

Shirtcliffe: We didn't really have a plan. [Lee laughs] What we did: when we got on the sea ice – OK I'm usually safety first. We got to Marguerite Bay in record time. I think we got to Marguerite Bay in next to no time and then the following day we hitched up and headed from Marguerite Bay to Fossil Bluff.

[Part 2a 0:22:19] Shirtcliffe: We could see part of ... As we looked down we could see the mountains and thought 'that's Adelaide Island and there's the mainland; that's what we are heading for.' And from 300 miles, you could see the Batterby Range. You thought 'right well if I sort of head in that direction, when we get closer we'll recognise the landmarks and we'll head straight for it.' We had a scary moment because it was tough going with the sledges because we were all loaded up and you had to think about how many miles could you make a day. I'm not into records; I don't set out to break records but when we set out that way, I kept saying 'wouldn't it be a good idea to have a big sail up with a following wind to blow you there and just let the dogs trot?'

[Part 2a 0:23:23] Shirtcliffe: On one occasion as we got over the barrier – I think we were either approaching the barrier or over the barrier– we had a following wind and it was blowing snow along the surface. And then it got worse and worse and then worse. So we had a little conflagration and George McLeod took his team and Ivor Morgan and me, but George McLeod ... The three of us had a little conflagration: 'Well this is fantastic: we've got a following wind and everything is driving us towards the Bluff. Shall we keep going or shall we pitch the tent for the day?'

[Part 2a 0:24:05] Shirtcliffe: The general opinion was that we'll keep going and go as far as we can and then we'll pitch the tents. But of course we lost the visibility and lost contact with the others, so we went on, turned round and came back again thinking that we'd meet the others but we didn't. So we pitched the tent and spent the night. George McLeod hadn't got a tent. He'd got his team; he hadn't got a tent; I think he'd got his sleeping bag. And so the following day we got up and the wind had dropped and the visibility was amazing and we were looking around and at every little spot we got the binoculars on and said 'is that George McLeod, no is that George McLeod?' And eventually we located him and said 'that's George McLeod' and he was sort of stationary or heading for the Bluff. So we headed in that direction and he became stationary and we said 'ah it is George McLeod.'

[Part 2a 0:25:17] Shirtcliffe: So we headed towards him and eventually we met up and said 'ah god how did you spend the night?' and he said 'I got in my sleeping bag and sat alongside the sledge on its side' or something like that. And I said 'Christ you must be exhausted. We'll pitch the tent now and you can get in and doss down' and he said 'no I'm alright, I'm OK'. I said 'well we will anyway, we'll make you a cup of tea and give you a bite to eat and thank heavens we haven't lost you'. Because we could have got separated and at that stage we must have been a hundred miles from the Bluff and fortunately – I've forgotten the detail of how I

kept contact with the team immediately behind me but George must have passed me somehow and when I turned around and went back, I missed him but met the others. When day dawned, well you don't have to make many mistakes down there before you get a catastrophe. It's a bit like with Bro: one little mistake and before not too long you're in

[Part 2a 0:26:36] Lee: According to this, when the storm abated you discovered that you were only a hundred yards from the other tent, but McLeod of course was not to be seen.

Shirtcliffe: No! A hundred yards from the other tent? No, we didn't meet up with them then! Well that was luck, that was sheer luck.

[Part 2a 0:26:51] Lee: Yes, camped a hundred yards from one another not knowing where the other one was?

Shirtcliffe: So it could have been a catastrophe.

[Part 2a 0:26:59] Lee: 'McLeod had built a shelter for himself with ice blocks, centred around the other sledge.'

Shirtcliffe: Yes and he just sat in his sleeping bag or whatever.

[Part 2a 0:27:09] Lee: 'He made a roof of snow blocks set on skis and ski sticks and a [incomprehensible] lamp was lit to provide heat.'

Shirtcliffe: Do you know that George McLeod is one of the most resourceful people? [Lee laughs] He is amazing.

[Part 2a 0:27:22] Lee: Clearly. Were you frightened then?

Shirtcliffe: Oh not so much frightened as worried about reputations, because you know when you think if we had lost George altogether, I would feel pretty bad about it. And then Johnny Green would have known about it even if he never spoke to you about it, and the rest of the staff.

[Part 2a 0:27:46] Lee: A persistent problem seems to be coming up against pressure, pressure ice I presume? Ridges of pressure ice, where the ice had been pressured into rising.

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 2a 0:27:54] Lee: Did you have any particular way of getting around that problem?

Shirtcliffe: No not particularly; it makes life a bit harder. The pressure is not immense. You're only looking at up to twelve feet sometimes. I was talking to Ivor Morgan one day when we had stopped and pegged the teams and he was standing, still had his skis on, and I

was talking to him and he disappeared. Fell down a hole about three or four metres down below me as we were talking. We could have both gone down there!!

[Part 2a 0:28:30] Lee: He fell into the water, didn't he?

Shirtcliffe: No, no, he just went down into this crevasse; he still had skis on when he hit the bottom and I thought well crikey, amazing, amazing.

[Part 2a 0:28:43] Lee: [Quoting from report] 'He fell into a thinly bridged gap, into water and slush.'

Shirtcliffe: Who did?

[Part 2a 0:28:49] Lee: Morgan.

Shirtcliffe: No slush, no water – is that what it says?

[Part 2a 0:28:53] Lee: 'Fortunately we were carrying a climbing rope' – and I guess you were able to get him out.

Shirtcliffe: Yea, he was almost able to get himself out. I didn't think there was any water there.

[Part 2a 0:29:05] Lee: Oh well, that's what that base report says.

[Part 2a 0:29:09] Lee: When you got there, what was it like to arrive, were they glad to see you?

Shirtcliffe: There was nobody there.

[Part 2a 0:29:16] Lee: Oh right [Laughs].

Shirtcliffe: It was empty, Fossil Bluff. We were the staff [Lee laughs]. Yes, it was amazing in a way because you get to Fossil Bluff and you think 'Right this place has been standing there now for six months unoccupied or longer and here we are, ready to do the work.' And the aircraft had been damaged and so we hadn't got any – really you're on your own devices. So I think Ralph Horne was with us wasn't he, at this stage? Ralph was going to go and do some geology and George McLeod said 'I'll be his outside man, his G.A.'

[Part2a 0:29:56] End of Part 2a.

[Part 2b 0:00:00] Lee: I know you worked on Halley for a while. I'll leave that out for the time being because there is so much that I want to talk to you about, if that's all right?

Shirtcliffe: Yes OK.

[Part 2b 0:00:11] Lee: Clearly what stands out in your memory are some of the major events such as the Trans Antarctic Expedition.

Shirtcliffe: Oh yes, the TAE.

[Part 2b 0:00:18] Lee: What was so special about that for you?

Shirtcliffe: That it was ours; it was British.

[Part 2b 0:00:24] Lee: You weren't directly involved?

Shirtcliffe: No, nothing at all. Not in the least.

[Part 2b 0:00:28] Lee: What were the ripples that reached you?

Shirtcliffe: It was Sir Vivian Fuchs was doing the TAE and we used to listen to it on the radio. What I used to think was 'this is good for BAS', because when I joined the British Antarctic Survey or FIDS, nobody knew what you were doing, nobody had heard about it. They had this office in Victoria was it? In London and it wasn't anything like as large as it is today; it was a tiny organisation and that's what I liked about it. It was a handful of people, in the London office maybe ten and you knew them all and it was like a sort of family and you could talk to them all. Sir Vivian Fuchs was very approachable and you could always get things done by discussion and reasoning. There was a Derek Gipps and a Bill Sloman who I knew quite well on the staff – they used to wangle things. When the TAE started, when Sir Vivian went on the TAE, I thought 'That's good. The British are going to do it and he will get publicity. It will be in the papers and on the radio.' We used to listen to it at Signy, listen on the radio and say 'where is he now?'

[Part 2b 0:01:57] Lee: On the Goon Show do you mean? Or.....

Shirtcliffe: It used to come up on the BBC as well.

[Part 2b 0:02:03] Lee: The proper radio.

Shirtcliffe: The proper radio yes. The Goon Show, well yes it did discuss details like that. And the fact that Sir Edmund Hillary had driven a tractor there first and had been a bit critical.

[Part 2b 0:02:20] Lee: So the average Fid was quite excited was he, by what Fuchs was doing?

Shirtcliffe: Yes slightly interested. I thought there was not really quite enough interest amongst the Fids, but our base was. We used to say 'how are they doing, what's the latest on the TAE?' I even bought the first day cover stamps of the TAE!!

[Part 2b 0:02:48] Lee: You also mentioned the signing of the SCAR treaty¹⁴, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research. What was so significant about that for you as an ordinary Fid?

Shirtcliffe: Right, OK. Well when I first went down, when I first went to Deception, I was in charge of chandlery and in the workshop, there was a zinc stencil and a brush and some black paint and so on, and it said *British Crown Territories*. One of us was supposed to put notices up every so often around Deception, and wherever we were, a note saying 'this is British Crown Territory; beware you are trespassing if you are a foreigner'. So I said to George Hemmen 'Is this a joke or is this serious?' and he said 'Oh this is serious. Yes we are supposed to put this notice up to keep the Chileans and the Argentinians in their place' you see.

[Part 2b 0:03:56] Shirtcliffe: I said 'well crikey they are only human like us you know' because when they come across, when the Argentines came over to meet us in a social way they had a doctor and a base leader and a senior Met and so on, and they spoke English, very good English. And I thought 'Why can't we get along with these people?' Incidentally, ██████████ thought they were not very worthy citizens and he used to refer to them derogatorily. And I used to say 'Ah that's ridiculous. They are only like us, and we are all working in the Antarctic, and why should you dislike them because they're another nation?'

[Part 2b 0:04:48] Shirtcliffe: So when the SCAR treaty was signed, I thought 'thank heaven for that.' And the IGY, the IGY was the first time that all nations had actually got together under the same roof and were working on a project. Although it was probably meaningless, at least it showed that we could get together and you didn't have these silly little squabbles. And so when they signed the SCAR treaty, that the Antarctic was ... you are not going to test weapons or exploit the minerals, that it would be left as the Antarctic and if necessary clean out all the rubbish that we had left there, I thought nobody could object to that. 'That's a good move', but when they started saying 'well the dogs have got to go as well' you say, 'of course yes it's bound to affect you that way, whereas the gasoline skidoo is not really as good as the dogs.'

[Part 2b 0:05:56] Lee: Do you think that the SCAR was watertight at that point?

Shirtcliffe: It appeared to be.

[Part 2b 0:06:01] Lee: There were no loopholes or gaps?

¹⁴ Actually the Antarctic Treaty. – AJS.

Shirtcliffe: Well I was unaware of them; are there gaps?

[Part 2b 0:06:08] Lee: No, I was just asking ...

Shirtcliffe: Well I was unaware. I thought anybody who sensibly read the document and then signed it was a bona-fide member of the society. It's such a large area. Why shouldn't you have more than one nation show an interest in the area?

[Part 2b 0:06:25] Lee: Were you sorry to see the dogs go?

Shirtcliffe: Well they didn't disappear when I was down there, but yes in a way, but it is inevitable. They came from the other end of the world to get to the Antarctic. They came from the Arctic to the Antarctic although they are a natural way or a good way of getting around Dog sledging is a good way of getting around in the Antarctic. You get a good response from dogs which you don't get from any other piece of gasoline equipment. You know a tractor never shows that it's pleased to see you, nor a skidoo.

[Part 2b 0:07:11] Lee: [Laughs] You were amongst the first men to try the skidoos, weren't you, when you were at Halley in the '60s or '70s?

Shirtcliffe: Yes '60s, '67 wasn't it?

[Part 2b 0:07:22] Lee: Apart from the fact that they didn't wag their tails, how did you take to the skidoos?

Shirtcliffe: Well I thought it was – I wouldn't like to have driven one because with a dog sledge you get behind and you are pushing and you are running and you are doing things. You are expending a fair bit of energy and at least you stay warm, whereas if you are sitting in a skidoo behind a screen, pushing and pulling or steering with a steering wheel, it's got to be a cold pursuit. It's like the skidoo as well. They found at Halley Bay: when you tow a sledge, that if you can't get all the men in the Muskeg, somebody has to sit out at the back and he is the poor bugger who gets all the snow falling on him and gets damn cold for a while unless he's prepared to run. But he was the sole survivor of that incident when the Muskeg went down the crevasse, the man on the back of the sledge.

[Part 2b 0:08:32] Lee: Was that on your watch or.....

Shirtcliffe: No, no, that was ... I'm not quite sure what year that was: '64 or something like that¹⁵. The skidoo, one of my experiences with a skidoo was quite funny really. I noticed quite early on that the skidoo has got its skis out to the side, and very low centre of gravity

¹⁵ October 1965. – AJS.

because your motor is down there and it's got a friction clutch. In other words the faster the revs on the engine, the better grip the clutch has got because it's centrifugal. The centrifugal clutch you don't operate by a lever; but it's just by the revs of the engine. We had an incident at Halley Bay and I was talking to Ricky Chinn and we heard the Muskeg coming and I said 'Oh this is Joe Porter; he's just been up to the other base and he's bought back that spanner or whatever it was, that piece of equipment that I want'. And as we were talking this skidoo went past the door, empty, and carried on out into space, carried on into the bondu.

[Part 2b 0:09:54] Shirtcliffe: Eventually Joe Porter turned up and I said 'Was that your skidoo that has disappeared out there forever?' and he said 'Yes. I do feel bloody silly, but I was going over some sastrugi and it tipped me on its side and while it was on its side I fell out and while I was pulling myself together it righted itself and went off'. You see because the engine was running so fast the clutch was gripping. He said 'I ran after it but it was going just a bit faster than I could run so I couldn't overtake it and stop it so I just said 'oh to hell with it'. I don't know what to do now but I feel a proper berk because this thing has made me look damn silly.' And of course he apologised to Ricky and Ricky was furious. I could not see why Ricky was so furious because to me it seemed like a funny incident.

[Part 2b 0:10:48] Lee: Ricky Chinn?

Shirtcliffe: Ricky Chinn but then Ricky is ah.....

[Part 2b 0:10:52] Lee: What happened to the skidoo in the end?

Shirtcliffe: Right well by some strange co-incidence I went to a reunion at Cambridge and Ricky was there and we were talking. And there was a skidoo that people were looking at and going round, and I sat on this skidoo and I said 'You know these things, they're weird aren't they? They have got a very low centre of gravity and they kind of right themselves (like King Tut)'. And I said 'I wonder whatever happened to the one that Joe Porter ...' I said as far as we were concerned it just went on for ever and ran out of fuel and that's it. And a fellow there who was a civil engineer while I was down there, or he was a glaciologist while I was down there but he is working for a civil engineer now, he said 'oh no, it was found, it ran out of fuel and it was over on such and such a place' and he mentioned the place. I said 'how did they find it?' and he said 'Just sheer fluke, Somebody saw this spot over there in the distance and trained binoculars on it and 'oh it's a skidoo' and they decided to go and get it.

[Part 2b 0:12:07] Lee: Were they modified after that to stop them from running off?

Shirtcliffe: They should have been, shouldn't they?

[Part 2b 0:12:14] Lee: You don't know?

Shirtcliffe: I don't think so.¹⁶

[Part 2b 0:12:16] Lee: OK Right, while you are talking about Halley let's talk about this evacuation of John Brotherhood?

Shirtcliffe: Oh Brotherhood yes.

[Part 2b 0:12:25] Lee: The doctor who What actually happened? I have heard other accounts of this but I would like to hear yours; what actually happened to him?

Shirtcliffe: What happened to him, yes well we fell off this – we were looking for – we were doing a circuit, a circuitous route.

[Part 2b 0:12:43] Lee: He was doing human physiology tests wasn't he?

Shirtcliffe: Yes that's right.

[Part 2b 0:12:46] Lee: What was he doing?

Shirtcliffe: It's oxygen and CO₂ : how much energy you expend; this was his programme, human physiology. You had to wear a piece of gear over your head and he was trying to measure how much oxygen you absorbed and CO₂ you expired and he needed to take your weight periodically, I think it was on a daily basis and your food intake. He was trying to relate one to the other and of course with this thing over your face, with this hood on and he is measuring your breath. We knew it was a white out condition or at least I knew it was a white out condition and I was not very happy about doing this circuit. However I knew it had to be because everybody else had been worked on and I said 'OK come on then let's do it now and get it over and done with'.

[Part 2b 0:13:50] Shirtcliffe: When we got to the ramp down onto the sea ice to complete the circuit, we got disorientated and I took my hood off and so had Bro and we were standing and looking around and trying to get our bearings and saying 'Where the devil are we then?' And Bro said 'I think that drum over there marks the route down to the sea ice. You see that's the ramp surely'? We were looking out and then the cliff that we were standing on, or this bit of snow we were standing on gave way and we just fell down onto what was the sea ice underneath. All broken it was because I dare say the corniced edge, bits had fallen down onto the sea ice below and made a few pinnacles, because as I fell, one leg went down into softer snow and the other one stayed on the surface.

[Part 2b 0:14:52] Shirtcliffe: Whereas he was unfortunate. As he landed he doubled up and one of his knees hit him right full in the face. And we both took a little bit of time to recover.

¹⁶ 'Kill cords' were used later, to avoid this problem. – AJS.

I said to Bro ‘how are you?’ and he said ‘oh crikey I’m not too good, how are you?’ and I said ‘well I’ve done something to my ankle but I’m not sure what; ah how are you?’ And I said ‘crikey your face is a bit of a mess isn’t it?’ He had put his teeth right through his lip, and I said ‘right you are the medical man; what do you recommend, what do you think?’ He said ‘well we can’t make it back to base like this’ and I said ‘no so I’ll pitch the tent, get you inside and get a meal going or whatever else and since we have got no radio we will just have to wait because they know where we are on base. We’ll just have to wait for somebody to come and get us if the weather improves’.

[Part 2b 0:16:04] Shirtcliffe: So Bro was saying ‘if you open the medical kit you’ll find this’ and he was giving me instructions on what you are to do. He said ‘it’s not serious; this isn’t serious. It’s only my teeth gone through my lip’. He didn’t look too good, I’ll say that, but I said ‘We’ll get you in your sleeping bag.’ I got the tent round him or got the tent up and dragged him in and stuck him in his bag and so on. Then we just lay up there for a day or so.

[Part 2b 0:16:43] Lee: Because the weather was against you?

Shirtcliffe: It was against us and I knew nobody would come out looking for us because the white out conditions had got even worse. White out is where you have got no blue sky you see and this got even worse with surface drift and totally overcast. The first bit of blue sky we heard a voice, somebody saying ‘there they are’ and it was Dave..... what is he called? John Goldsworthy and David¹⁷, the carpenter fellow that we took with us, he spotted us and eventually he got a skidoo and took Bro back to base you see? And me, took us both back to base. Ricky had obviously been in touch with London and Sir Vivian, and put the situation to him and he asked for help from Pole Station.

[Part 2b 0:17:49] Lee: Who decided that Brotherhood had to be evacuated?

Shirtcliffe: I should think London Office, I should have thought.

[Part 2b 0:17:56] Lee: His injuries were quite serious, then?

Shirtcliffe: It was his back that was the problem, I think.

[Part 2b 0:18:02] Lee: Ah.

Shirtcliffe: Because he kept saying ‘I think I’ve damaged my spine’.

[Part 2b 0:18:08] Lee: Right OK, I understand.

¹⁷ David “Fanny” Hill. – AJS.

Shirtcliffe: As far as I was concerned it was all around his face because he hit [makes a slapping noise] and I thought 'Well, whatever he has done to his back, it must have been just the pain or whatever.'

[Part 2b 0:18:23] Lee: How was the airlift done? What happened?

Shirtcliffe: The Americans flew over and we tried to indicate wind direction to them. They brought over a Hercules. We made a gadget to fire cocoa into the air and create a cloud of dust that would drift down wind to indicate the wind direction to them. Anyway it's such a large craft it just came in and landed. It didn't need really much about the weather; it just came and landed. That was it; you had Americans everywhere! [Lee laughs] They came in all their polar gear and Christ some of our fellows were wearing just stuff like this [Shirtcliffe indicates his current clothes] and they still had their duvets and big gloves and heavens knows what else on in the hut! They were really quite amused. They don't look at it the way we do; they are sent. They don't volunteer to go to the Antarctic with an aim in mind; they are servicemen and they are doing their stint.

[Part 2b 0:19:48] Lee: So the air rescue was actually organised quite swiftly and quite efficiently?

Shirtcliffe: It was, quite swiftly. They took him on a sledge out to the aircraft and loaded him aboard.

[Part 2b 0:19:59] Lee: To New Zealand?

Shirtcliffe: And he went to New Zealand. I don't think it was nonstop to Wellington but it would be ... where would they refuel¹⁸?

[Part 2b 0:20:07] Lee: Did you get a replacement doctor?

Shirtcliffe: No.

[Part 2b 0:20:11] Lee: So how did you cope?

Shirtcliffe: Nobody was ill without a doctor [both laugh]. Without a doctor: we didn't have a doctor at Fossil Bluff or a dentist and nobody was ill.

[Part 2b 0:20:25] Lee: The other accident I would like you just to tell me about is, it concerns ...

Shirtcliffe: George?

¹⁸ South Pole and McMurdo station. – AJS.

[Part 2b 0:20:32] Yes, George Horne?

Shirtcliffe: Oh George and Ralph Horne, ah yes George McLeod. Right. Well this was the notorious occasion we went to Fossil Bluff and George is a mountaineer and he is very hardy and he is very resourceful, tough and resourceful – excellent fellow. Whereas Ralph Horne, is the geologist, a different kind of fellow altogether but he needed a General Assistant to look after him in the field. So I was at Fossil Bluff and you turn on the radio at specific times during the day. I turned on the radio and said ‘can you hear me Ralph?’ And this voice came in and interrupted and said ‘is that Fossil Bluff’ and I said ‘yes it is’ and he said ‘it’s Ralph Horne here’ in his chatty sort of way I said ‘oh yes, what’s up Ralph?’ and he said ‘George has fallen down a hole.’ I said ‘Really? What down a crevasse?’ and he said ‘yes’ and I said ‘oh my goodness; is he hurt?’ and he said ‘I don’t know.’ I said ‘Have you shouted down the hole to him? Can you see him?’ I said ‘give me some details’ so he was trying to get a few details and he then said over the radio ‘we might need help.’ I said ‘I’ll come out. I’ll come out immediately. I will just down everything, and I’ll load up the sledge and I’ll come out.’ And I said ‘where are you?’ and he gave me the directions of where he was, so I got out there. Before I got there George had shown a bit of resourcefulness and had urinated on his gloves and pushed them onto the ice cliff and used that to climb up inside of this crevasse and climbed out himself.

[Part 2b 0:22:46] Lee: I’m not quite clear; so you wee on your gloves?

Shirtcliffe: You wee on your gloves which makes them wet and he then [sound of something being knocked over] he got up as high as he possibly could and then he forced them onto the ice cliff. And then he used that with just sufficient leverage to pull himself up and to lift himself out of the hole, because by the time I got there he was out.

[Part 2b 0:23:09] Lee: Was that part of the classic crevasse rescue training of the day or was just him going ...?

Shirtcliffe: I think he had heard of the story of John Cunningham with Duncan Carse on the South Georgia Expedition where he lifted himself out of a crevasse, John Cunningham did by a similar technique.

[Part 2b 0:23:33] Lee: So this legend came to the rescue.

Shirtcliffe: It was a legend yes, and so George McLeod must have thought ‘Well if it did it for one, it must do it for another.’ It stuck just enough; not hard but just like a bit of super glue.

[Part 2b 0:23:47] Lee: So he was already out when you got there?

Shirtcliffe: He was already out but he was kind of sitting looking unlike George, not so perky as he usually is. I said 'Crikey, I was going to pull you out of the hole' and he said 'yes I managed to get out on my own you see' and I said 'yes I can see that'. I said 'Right, there's only one thing I can do. I'll take you back to base and you can – we'll get you out as fast as we can, we'll fly you out'. But I said 'the problem is we have got no aircraft; we can't fly you out to get you help, but anyway if you rest up at base you will start to feel a bit better'. So I said to George 'if I put you in your sleeping bag on the sledge and tie you down a bit we'll go off to base' you see. So my dogs were looking kind of frisky and leaping around and making all sorts of noises.

[Part 2b 0:24:56] Shirtcliffe: I just went click with my one ski, just did one click which they must have thought was the order to go and they all leapt forward and pulled the picket out and went. I said 'STOP!' Or words to that effect: not 'stop'. I was shouting in whatever language they used to stop them and they took no notice; they just carried on running. Whereas George then had to wriggle out of the sleeping bag and apply the brake and that's when he said ... I walked up there and I said 'I'll murder you (the dogs)' and I was so angry I was going to murder them all and so I was cursing the dogs from half a mile away. And George said 'don't make me laugh, whatever you do don't make me laugh' [he says laughing].

[Part 2b 0:25:44] Lee: He had damaged his ribs hadn't he?

Shirtcliffe: He had damaged his ribs, I don't know whether he had broken them or just bruised them but he was in agony if he inhaled a deep breath and so on. So I had to get him to base. But that was really quite funny.

[Part 2b 0:26:03] Lee: How was he treated? Was he sent away or was he treated on base?

Shirtcliffe: He stayed on base until eventually an aircraft took him away, I think the aircraft took the dogs as well up to Adelaide and then away. I haven't seen him since. I think that was our last time we ever spoke.

[Part 2b 0:26:23] Lee: There are a couple more things to ask you about before we stop.

Shirtcliffe: Yes.

[Part 2b 0:26:28] Lee: This story about flying with an Argentinian pilot to Stanley race course. First of all, what on earth were you doing sharing a plane with an Argentinian pilot?

Shirtcliffe: No, what does that say? Flying with an....?

[Part 2b 0:26:44] Lee: [quoting from report] 'Once when Jim Shirtcliffe was flying with an Argentinian pilot in a small aircraft to the Falklands, they managed to land on Stanley race course.'

Shirtcliffe: He did? No what it was: I was working in Stanley and Sadie Clements (I was living at Sadie's and Clem's house), she worked in the BAS office and she came home and said 'do you know we have had telephone calls from West Falkland all morning long, that there is an aircraft flying over the west'. And while we were sitting having lunch we heard this little aircraft come over and she said 'that must be him', and so what he did, he landed his aircraft on the race course and put an Argentinian flag and a protest note and heaven knows what else he tied onto a fence there.

[Part 2b 0:27:37] Shirtcliffe: He was getting back in his aircraft and he was still in his aircraft. He had got back in his aircraft and was getting ready to take off having left his protest. I, meanwhile, had run all the way from Clem's out to the race course and down and across to the aircraft and I said to him 'are you having some sort of difficulty or other or are you in trouble?' And he said 'I've left my protest over there', you see, and I said 'what's it all about, what's going on?' and he said in broken English that he was going, that he was off, he had done what he had come to do: he had left his protest note.

[Part 2b 0:28:24] Shirtcliffe: So I was at a loss really; what do you do to a fellow? I could have scrambled in the aircraft alongside him or whatever, sabotaged his aircraft but what if I was in the wrong, that I had deliberately caused damage? Anyway a few things entered my mind and I thought 'well what is to stop him just going?' Oh he told me his name was Fitzgerald, and he had obviously got Irish blood in his veins somewhere and he just took off and flew back to the Argentine. It did occur to me since, what if I had actually dragged him out and.....

[Part 2b 0:29:06] Lee: Arrested him?

Shirtcliffe: Arrested him. Would there have been a war?

[Part 2b 0:29:10] Lee: What year was this?

Shirtcliffe: It's got to be in the '60s hasn't it, the year of the..... When the C4 was taken across to the race course and they spent a few miserable nights out in the open didn't they – the Condor Commandos – what year was that? That was the '60s wasn't it?

[Part 2b 0:29:37] Lee: So you let him go again?

Shirtcliffe: I had to let him go yes. I didn't fly with him, whatever the report says.

[Part 2b 0:29:46] Lee: Well it's Norfolk Museum's website.

Shirtcliffe: Oh was it, oh Norfolk Museum, oh dear.

[Part 2b 0:29:50] Lee: Slightly incorrect?

Shirtcliffe: Twisted, slightly incorrect, yes.

[Part 2b 0:29:54] Lee: Never believe everything you read.

Shirtcliffe: No or see, sometimes.

[Part 2b 0:29:58] Lee: You left, eventually left BAS and I don't know quite when that was, I guess that's going to be in the '70s. After a couple of seasons at Halley building, working on Halley II and you went to do a Bachelor of Science and Environmental Sciences?

Shirtcliffe: Environmental Engineering.

[Part 2b 0:30:16] Lee: Where was that?

Shirtcliffe: That was the Masters, is this?

[Part 2b 0:30:23] Lee: No, Bachelor of Science.

Shirtcliffe: Oh the BSc at UMIST in Manchester, that was.....

[Part 2b 0:30:30] Lee: What led you to do that?

Shirtcliffe: Well the hut, the hut at Stonington was designed by a man at Crown Agents, called Baldwin, and we got quite chummy, Colin Baldwin and I, and we got along very well together. In fact BAS took him down to the Antarctic just to let him see what sort of conditions he was designing his buildings for. I thought that the grillage was just a waste of money because when I went to school we did an experiment, regelation, which is a wire cutting through a chunk of ice and then the ice is still together when you have cut right through with your wire. This was all to do with the melting point of water and the pressure you apply. And so Colin said 'why are you against the grillage?' and I said 'this problem of regelation is not going to go away; you know the weight of the hut will slowly push the grillage down'.

[Part 2b 0:31:51] Shirtcliffe: He said 'You should get yourself a few qualifications and come and join me in the office.' I said 'yes that would suit me actually, to work in the Crown Agents. When I go to England I'll take a National Diploma or National Certificate and see what happens.' So I went to Brixton School of Building and at Brixton they said 'why don't you go on and take a degree in the subject?' and that's when I thought 'well I haven't really planned this but you know there is no reason why I should not give it a try' and so I did. I went the whole hog and went to Manchester and I took a degree.

[Part 2b 0:32:36] Lee: This wasn't building science; this was environmental science wasn't it?

Shirtcliffe: It is building; it was building technology. The Environmental Engineering was my Master's degree which I did in London later. Environmental Engineering is heating, lighting, ventilation or air conditioning – anything that man does to create an environment which is habitable.

[Part 2b 0:33:07] Lee: So having learned how to build huts in the Antarctic, you subsequently found out, got the qualifications to do the real thing.

Shirtcliffe: I got the qualifications later to say that you were getting it right [Lee laughs]. Given another few years.....

[Part 2b 0:33:19] Lee: I'm sorry, I understood it was environmental science which I thought was to do with biology and ecology.

Shirtcliffe: No, no building science and technology. In fact one of my qualifications is AMIST – that's an Associate Member of the Institute of Science & Technology.

[Part 2b 0:33:37] Lee: And did that shape your future career then?

Shirtcliffe: Yes it did because I got married and my wife was teaching and the building industry was pretty badly affected at the time; they were paying people off. So I went into teaching and I found that quite easy at the start. Because I suppose it came too easy, too natural in a way, having done it. Having done some building and learnt from being on the spot doing it. You then go and look at it scientifically or perhaps rationally and say you know 'what did I do wrong or what did we do right?' Well building in England is different from building down there because you use bricks and mortar here and you have a rising damp problem here whereas in the Antarctic you [laughs] you build, hopefully you build to last. In many cases you do the damp proof course which you introduce into bricks here; down there you put it under your timber support.

[Part 2b 0:35:11] Shirtcliffe: But it still goes that if you lift everything out of the ground and you are not in contact with the ground, the timber has got an opportunity to dry out, you can prolong the life of the hut. Incidentally, my job at BAS was never a permanent job; it was always the building officer or the officer in charge of building would only get a job if they were thinking of building something. So if there was nothing coming up in your department, they wouldn't renew your contract.

[Part 2b 0:35:50] Lee: Now you are almost 78, how do you look back on to your BAS years, your FID years? How do you rate them over your 78 years of experience?

Shirtcliffe: Interesting. I think my years spent with BAS, God I learnt so much. I must have been awfully green when I first went down. Because I was born in Middlesex and educated in London, I didn't really know anything as wild as Stanley and the Antarctic until I actually got

there, and the amazing thing is that you can adapt yourself and cope with it all, and learn lots of tricks while you are down there, learn what is right and not give up.

[Part 2b 0:36:42] Lee: You learnt to cook didn't you?

Shirtcliffe: I did yes; I still do really. Yes, George Hemmen said to me when I first went to Deception 'you are on cook next week' and I said 'oh OK yes', thinking that you open a few cans and warm it up and so on. He said 'On Monday we want some bread' and I said 'bread!! bread? but you buy that, don't you, bread? How do you make bread then for heaven's sake?' and he said 'all the instructions are on the bag of flour' and I said 'show me a bag of flour then. Where are these instructions?'

[Part 2b 0:37:30] Shirtcliffe: So he gets this bag of flour and it says if you are going to make a loaf of bread, this is what you have to do. And I thought 'ahh crikey; I have got to do all this and put the yeast in and nurture it and keep it warm and you keep proving it.' Any way eventually I thought 'you know what I have got to do, I've got to learn how to do this really well and I can compare my performance with other people's.' Lance Tickell and I sometimes used to compete about who could make the best rolls, and Peter Cordall. And I got to make a decent loaf of bread and rolls and whatever and a meal, and I used to cook penguins and things like that, seal meat and penguins. I got quite proud of the fact that I could [laughs], I could knock out a meal.

[Part 2b 0:38:24] Lee: It's lunchtime Jim. Thank you very much indeed.

Shirtcliffe: Shall I knock out a meal?

[Part 2b 0:38:29] Lee: Yes!

[Part 2b 0:38:30] End of Part 2b.

ENDS

Possible extracts:

- The FIDS interview. [Part 1a 0:03:56]
- The Stanley Met Office. [Part 1a 0:10:32]
- Burying Arthur Farrant's body at Deception Is. [Part 1a 0:15:53]
- Using explosives to dig a hole. [Part 1a 0:18:59]
- Reactions to Farrant's death. [Part 1a 0:22:03]
- "Sea gooseberries" and a stork. [Part 1a 0:28:11]
- Harold Dollman remembered. [Part 1a 0:33:37]
- Ron Napier's drowning. [Part 1a 0:38:34]
- Building the hut at Admiralty Bay. [Part1b 0:00:10]
- Building a different type of hut at Argentine Islands. [Part1b 0:12:23]
- Johnny Green remembered. [Part1b 0:14:50]
- Brian Nixon loses tent and teeth in a storm. [Part1b 0:18:40]
- Brian Taylor and Sam Blake. [Part 2a 0:02:36]
- The damaged generator mounting at Fossil Bluff. [Part 2a 0:06:45]
- Mock moons and moon pillars. [Part 2a 0:12:47]
- Visit to the Dion Islands. [Part 2a 0:18:52]
- Eventful journey from Adelaide to Fossil Bluff. [Part 2a 0:21:52]
- George McLeod nearly lost. [Part 2a 0:24:05]
- The Trans Antarctic Expedition. [Part 2b 0:00:28]
- Dogs versus vehicles. [Part 2b 0:07:22]
- Joe Porter loses a skidoo. [Part 2b 0:08:32]
- The John Brotherhood accident at Halley Bay. [Part 2b 0:13:50]
- Using pee-ed on gloves to escape a crevasse. [Part 2b 0:20:32]
- A runaway dog sledge. [Part 2b 0:24:56]
- An argentine plane lands on Stanley Racecourse. [Part 2b 0:26:44]
- 'How do you make bread?' [Part 2b 0:36:42]