

## THE STONINGTON FIVE

Group interview: The Stonington Five recorded by Chris Eldon Lee on the 6th of November 2009: AD6/24/1/59. Transcribed by Allan Wearden, 24/10/2016.

[0:00:00] Lee: This is a group interview with five members of the 1968 Stonington base team, recorded by Chris Eldon Lee at the Marguerite Bay reunion at Bowness on Windermere on the 6th of November 2009. The interviewees are from left to right Phil Wainwright, Ian Sykes, Ian Smith, Ken Doyle, and Edward Madders, the Stonington base team of 1968.

Wainwright: Phil Wainwright, place of birth Stoke on Trent 14th of June 1945.

Sykes: Wetherby Yorkshire, Ian Sykes 10th of January 1943. ?

Smith: Ian Smith, Westbridge Nottingham 29th of June 1944.

Doyle: Ken Doyle, 10th of September 1932 born at Hoylake on the Wirral.

Madders: Edward Cresswell Madders from Altrincham born 19th of May 1941, 0840 hours!

[0:01:16] Lee: But you're known as Chris is that correct?

Madders: That is correct, I'm known as Chris.

[0:01:19] Lee: And you were all at Stonington in the winter of '68.

All: Yeah, we were!

[0:01:25] Lee: Why?

Wainwright: Why? Me? Because I went down as a surveyor having been interested for years and years guided that way from university, and also guided that way because I knew Malcolm Phelps who was first mate on the *Biscoe* and he wanted me actually to go down as an AB. And I eventually went down as a Fid, which bitterly disappointed him!

[0:02:01] Lee: What's an AB?

Wainwright: An Able Seaman on the *Biscoe*, so that's why I was there.

[0:02:08] Lee: What's your first knowledge of the Antarctic, when did you first become aware that the Antarctic existed Phil?

Wainwright: Oh blimey, I guess it was school time and then it built up at university and meeting people that had been down, because one my tutors was, he'd been a Fid at Signy in the early days and that sort of fed the feeler if you like.

[0:02:35] Lee: Who was that?

Wainwright: Derek Mailing, and he was down there 1948.

[0:02:43] Lee: OK. Ian what's your first knowledge of the Antarctic?

Sykes: Well actually I was in the RAF for some time before I went down and I got shortlisted to go on an expedition to South Georgia. I didn't actually go at the last minute, didn't get the chance! And then I finished up as a climbing instructor and sort of outdoor schools and things and I was quite pally with Johnny Cunningham, who suggested that I would like it. And I applied not really thinking that I would get it, but I went down as a GA to Stonners.

[0:03:17] Lee: Was it an easy interview?

Sykes: Well it seemed it at the time, I was expecting much more of a grilling and I was actually surprised that it, I'm trying to remember who it was, I think [Others: Bill Sloman!] Bill Sloman and a couple of others who I found that I liked immensely, and he was very friendly and I was surprised also afterwards that the people I'd put down as referees, they'd actually phoned up and spoken to them afterwards, which in those days it was pretty unusual and so I realised they'd actually taken me more seriously than I thought! And when I heard that, I thought, you know 'I've got a chance, I'm going', and also in those days money really wasn't a target, in fact I think it was £500 a year but I would have if I'd had to pay! [Much laughter!]

[0:04:12] Lee: How about you Ian Smith, what's your first memory, when did you become aware that the Antarctic existed?

Smith: Well, what I can first remember is that I went on holiday to Charmouth when I was 10 and found ammonites and became interested in geology and then in 1957 there was the International Geophysical Year and I didn't quite understand the connection between and geology. But I realised 'Wow, they do science, which I'm going to do!' I had to do science and it was going to be geology and gradually the two things came together and so since 1957 I thought 'I can do what I want to do, and I can go to the Antarctic!' And I mean, I didn't have any of the experience of climbing that Ian did, I became interested in outdoor pursuits rock climbing was the other passion, and you know you get these things and there is only one thing to do wasn't there, it's what we had to do!

[0:05:18] Lee: Did you see an advert somewhere, how did you get to apply?

Smith: Well do you know a chap called Peter Kennett, who was the geophysics a couple of years before me I think? I met him socially, we lived in the same place, and I can't really remember exactly what I saw that I responded to! But I remember the interview, but I was rather privileged as I actually joined a year earlier and was paid £997 [Many groans!!] to go to Birmingham University and do a MSC, because they didn't have any geophysicists! So I did my degree and was interviewed to spend a year at Birmingham University, and I was interviewed by late lamented Don Griffith who was the Professor of Geophysics, who did many years of Antarctic marine survey, and Bill Sloman, and again it was a fantastic interview, I remember thinking these are really good people!

[0:06:15] Lee: Ken Doyle what was your first inkling of the Antarctic actually as a real place?

Doyle: I think it was going back to sort of reading travel books as a kid, I read *Scott of the Antarctic* things like that, I can remember seeing the film when that came out.

[0:06:33] Lee: John Mills, [Doyle: Yes.] John Mills film!

Doyle: But of course it was just a distant place, I never really ever expected to get the chance to go too!

[0:06:44] Lee: So how did the opportunity arise?

Doyle: I was in the mining industry and in 1965 there was some jetties going to be built at two of the bases, and there was an advert in the *Colliery Guardian* which I used to get, saying they wanted somebody to use explosives in the Antarctic and it was going to be a 7 month contract. So I thought 'Sounds interesting, I'll apply, won't stand a chance'. Like everybody else had an interview in London and which was very informal think everybody agrees, Bill Sloman and I forget the other man, the one that was in charge of supplies?

Others: [Various answers very hard to hear!]

Doyle: No.

Smith: Maurice Sumner that was at mine?

Doyle: No it wasn't Maurice Sumner it was another one. [Smith: Ted Clapp?] No, he moved off to another branch of the civil service eventually, forgotten his name. It was sort of very informal and I always remember at the end, where they said 'You have never asked what the wage is!' And I said 'No I didn't, did I!?' [Lots of laughter!] And they pushed me out for a medical and said 'We'll let you know in a couple of days', and I found out I'd got this post, which was for only really for a summer building job. When I joined the ship eventually, in October I think it was, *John Biscoe* there was delay because of engine trouble and one lad had gone home and decided to change his mind, so we set off without him! And on the way, I thought 'Is there any chance of staying on, beyond that summer building job?', and eventually they said 'Yes', and I was able to go to Stonington for the winter of '66, and then I'd enjoyed it so much, when I went home, I think I'd been home 3 days when I wrote off to the Survey to see if I could go back. Which, is why I was back in '68, the same time as these lads.

[0:09:05] Lee: Thank you. Chris Madders when was your first knowledge of the Antarctic?

Madders: Probably reading Scott's book actually as a youngster. Fortunately I had some advantage over a lot of people, as I had been travelling a lot before I actually went to the Antarctic. I'd been in the Merchant Navy as a radio officer, travelled quite extensively for three and half years, anyway I decided I thought I might be missing something ashore. So I thought I'd go and work ashore for two years! I studied working ashore in a steel works, and electronic mechanic in Sheffield, and I saw this advertisement in a radio magazine, no it was

*Short Wave* magazine actually, you know they required radio operators in the Antarctic so I thought, 'Well, why not!?' You know I might just as well, I was interested in the place and I wanted to travel again, which I might point out I'm still doing now, I'm nearly 69 now and I'm here there and everywhere! So I went down to the interview and like the other gentlemen say, it was fairly informal thing, Bill Sloman, and I didn't think I'd ever get the job but I did! and off I went. I will say one thing I thoroughly enjoyed it and I learnt a lot, and it has really opened my eyes you know, coupled with all the other travelling I have done, it has extended my knowledge considerably, regarding people and everything, and that's the reason I went down been rewarded with the experiences of the Antarctic, and also coupled with all my other travelling experiences! I went back to sea again after I had left the Antarctic and as I say I am still travelling now, as I get older I become more interested in history and everything associated with it.

[0:11:04] Lee: Just going back to this informal interview, did any of you ever suspect you were being psychologically grilled at that interview to see how you'd cope being in the Antarctic?

Wainwright: Not at the time, but later on I went back for another winter and I was involved in some of the interviews, and it was only then I actually realised how clever they were! And although they seemed like a nice friendly informal chat, there were very pertinent questions lobbed in at specific times, and there were people noted down the responses to those, so only realised later, that's interesting!

Smith: That's interesting, yeah, my feeling was they weren't asking particularly focussed questions on psychology, and we'd heard that the US Antarctic research program people were being given psychological tests and all this sorts of things! We weren't we were just asked, 'Why do you want to the Antarctic?' [Others: Yeah.] So it's quite interesting the different focuses!

Sykes: I think the same, other than the fact that I was rather surprised, it was the bank manager at the time, one of people that I asked as referee's who I knew very well actually and he told me of it, that they'd been on the 'phone for about an hour talking to him! And I was absolutely flabbergasted you know!

Madders: That sounds as far as I was concerned, the referees that I gave got forms to fill, how many times does he change his socks, does he smell all sorts of things like that! And these were the responses I got from the referees that I had given! Going back to the interview, as far as I was concerned they never asked me, they never asked to see my qualifications even, I mean I did have qualifications because I'd been to sea as a radio officer, but they never asked to see them, they just assumed that what I put down on the form I had actually got! I mean I could have been anybody and I think as far as, there was one thing that I thought which was rather odd as the interview came, it was getting pretty late by the time I finished the interview, and they gave me, I had to for a medical and I was given instructions how to get to the hospital, I can't remember where it was now, all verbally you have to get this bus and then that bus. But what I did I went outside and got a taxi! [Much laughter!] Very true!

[0:13:49] Lee: Ian when you got there, was the mix right, I mean in your year, are we talking about '68/'69 that you were there?

Smith: '67/'68, we all I think went down on the same ship, apart from Phil [All: Yeah] Didn't we, we all met on the *Shackleton*?

Madders: Yeah, I got off early because I was shipped in early, yeah.

Sykes: Some of us went on to the *Perla Dan* and went down the Weddell Sea to Halley Bay!

[0:14:23] Lee: When you got there, were they right?

Smith: There was one person, who stood out!

[00:14:27] Lee: In what way?

Sykes: Ken Portwine!

Smith: Exactly!

Sykes: He was a youth hostel warden, from Coniston in fact a very nice guy, but he was different and in fact it turned out he was very ill and he was.

[0:14:43] Lee: In what was Ken different?

Smith: He would retreat, I think it was depression really, it was that sort of, don't know what that quite meant, you wouldn't see him for several days and very reclusive and I gather, you know after the event that's one of the symptoms of ulcerative colitis which was his problem!

Sykes: I was quite friendly with him on the boat, I liked him really, and he knew people that I knew.

Smith: Oh, great character!

Sykes: Which was a thing so, but he was definitely behaving rather oddly even on the boat going down! And I think we all understood the captains of the ships, you know in our case Frosty, had an awful lot of power in the Survey, so if they realised there was anything like that they did actually fish odd people out.

Smith: Yes, that's right!

Sykes: But!

Doyle: When they were able to I went the second time as King Fid, which was because I'd been before in charge of the others, and I was supposed to talk to the captain and say 'Well', and he'd say 'What about such & such, how do you find him?' And oh you know, I'm not very good at picking people, I would like that, but I did what I could to say how I felt they were, but there was only one.

Sykes: Bugs McKeith was another one?

Madders: Yeah, he got off the ship didn't he?

Doyle: There was always this possibility of being sent back if they weren't fitting in, being sent back from Stanley. Now there was only, who else did we mention? No I'm not going to mention any names, but at the time this did happen, one lad I gather was on the point of being sent back from Port Stanley. It was just the way he was, I'm not going to mention his name at all [Others: I know who you mean!] it doesn't, without realising it he got peoples backs up, but it was just his way of speaking, asking questions, making silly statements and eventually they thought about it, and I believe the ingoing base commander at Halley Bay said 'No! Send him, Halley Bay's a big enough, [Was it 40 people who were there? Something like that], there big enough to swallow him up, we'll sort him out!' But that's the only time I heard of anyone being on the point of being sent home.

[0:17:27] Lee: So the selection process continued on the ship?

Doyle: The process continued on the ships.

Wainwright: You have to remember that we left Southampton in September '67 and we didn't reach Stonington until March '68! [Lee: So 6 months?] We'd been everywhere, we'd been to all the bases, we'd seen all the bases, we'd worked cargo, we'd seen volcano's exploding, all manner of things! And all that time, I guess we'd been monitored by everybody, by the captains, by people in Stanley, but by the end we'd all been.

Madders: I missed out on that Phil, because if you remember in my case the previous year, the diesel mechanic and radio operator had been killed at Stonington Island.

Wainwright: Yes.

Madders: So what happened to me was, being that they wanted a radio operator at Stonington Island and I was going down as a radio operator, so they wanted me down there. And I often wondered if this was part of the process assessing you. The ship went to Signy Island it did the relief of the Signy Island base, and these other gentlemen here, they went to South Georgia, Halley Bay and here there and everywhere! But in December, this was 1966 I'm talking about now, I know you want to talk about '68 basically, but...

[0:18:57] Lee: It's alright go on.

Madders: So I was taken to Palmer Station on Anvers Island, I was on the *Biscoe*, actually I was informed in the bar that I was being sort of disembarked at Anvers Island at Palmer Station. There was myself and Rod Ledingham there was the two of us and we were flown to the top end, to the northern end of Adelaide Island and where we, I forget who actually met us now, I think, I can't remember their names and we were taken back by Muskeg, by sledge down to Adelaide Island base which is about 90 miles down there. And then I was flown then from Adelaide Island, you know this was the following day to Stonington Island and the aircraft landed on the North East glacier, and I always remember that I was met by Dave Mathews and a dog team, so I was dumped in at the deep end! So I basically arrived, I was taken off a nice warm bar on the ship, dumped on an ice piedmont at Adelaide Island and

arrived at Stonington Island and met by Dave Mathews and from there on I thoroughly enjoyed it ! I know John Noble, who unfortunately is not with us any more, he took me out the day after I had arrived. I was alright I'll say it, knackered! Because it was quite a large transformation for me, and he took me out towards Neny Island on with his sledge like and then I just sort of settled into life at Stonington Island, so I down here at Stonington Island probably two months before the rest of them arrived. So when they all came down, I felt as though I'd been there for years!

[0:20:48] Lee: Alright let's just go back to the story of Ken Portwine then, how did - he obviously slipped through the net on the way down - how did the story evolve from there, how did it unfold?

Smith: He went to Argentine Islands, that's where he went to, he was the cook [Madders: The cook, yeah.] and I understand, the gossip we, well we know a little bit about it because Mike Holmes was the doctor who was wintering with us, and there was radio communication between Argentine Islands and us as things evolved. But I understand the problem first materialised when they were running out of toilet paper! Do you remember that, yeah?

Madders: That was the first idea.

Smith: So they kept watch on the toilet, [Madders: Yeah, yeah!], at the beginning and it was poor Ken! He'd I think you know squitted blood and had a pretty rough time, but he wasn't talking to anyone and you know in his shell! And I think they, the base leader, I can't remember, cosseted him and...

Madders: Was it Dudeney?

Smith: Yes, of course it was!

Madders: It was John Dudeney, base commander at Argentine Islands.

Smith: And then I think got on to Mike. I don't think Mike said anything that he shouldn't have said to us, but I mean we knew there was a drama!

Madders: A lot of it was conducted, I mean I will say this, I might as well it all happened in the past, some of it was conducted in coded messages, and there was a lot of very technical medical jargon used! I set up some skeds with Argentine Islands where we used reverse side band so that the sledge parties couldn't hear what was being discussed, and it's all in the logbooks here anyhow, because I recorded it all in the logbooks, but there was a lot of talk went on and in some instances I know that Alistair McArthur, I set him up with radio links with Argentine Islands and even I didn't listen in to what was said so.

[0:22:36] Lee: Who is Alistair McArthur?

Madders: He was Base Commander at the time.

[0:22:38] Lee: At Stonington?

Madders: Yeah.

[0:22:39] Lee: So poor old Ken was at Argentine Island, and you were trying to deal with it remotely?

Madders: Yeah, that's right, they didn't have a doctor!

Sykes: Another interesting thing that it's all in the past, but they had these you know what the ships called the '*Goon Show*' at night we used to radio in, and they were the days, the very early days when we were on voice, I think prior to us everybody was on keys? [Madders: Keys, yes.] We had these terrific, what was in those days fantastic radios, these Squad Calls. [All: Squad calls yes!] So we could hear, and you could also hear the tuning signal of other people tuning in, and it was, there was quite a funny side to it. You know in the evening we would tell everyone where we were and tell everyone what was going on, with the usual chit chat. And then Mike Holmes or somebody else would come on the air and say 'We have got a private sked with Argentine Island over the Ken Portwine situation and would everybody go off the air'. And you could hear the tuning signals coming up as all the different sledges were tuning up to listen! And then when it was all over, there was all sorts, poor Ken was thinking they were trying to kill him, lots of really nasty things, 'They all hate me!', and this sort of thing, and then when the sked was finished and a few minutes had passed, and then a voice would come on the air, and did you hear that!? And we all, it was a kind of a macabre thing, but it was a long way from us in some ways!

Smith: I was getting confused with the *Protector* which came down, but that was the next year for another incident. They took an ice breaker out of dry dock in B.A. was it?

Madders: Yes, the Argies.

Smith: Came down and to the ice edge but flew him?

Madders: It was the *General San Martin*!

Doyle: There was another one that tried?

Wainwright: And that was an Argie, was it?

Doyle: Argentinian yes.

Wainwright: And they landed on Galindez Island.

Sykes: It was a Beaver!

Wainwright: And did they land a doctor, and they loaded Ken?

Smith: This was in the middle of the winter!

Wainwright: Yes and the plane crashed on takeoff!

Sykes: It hit an ice berg on takeoff!

Smith: But nobody was injured!

Wainwright: So this saga kept just going on and on!

Smith: What happened after that was there?

Sykes: Well they then got an Argentinian doctor on base and he...

Doyle: Was it from Esperanza?

Sykes: Yeah, and he looked after, and in the meantime the *Endurance* got within helicopter range and finally lifted him and the Argentinian doctor off, and BAS really wanted to fly Ken back home to UK to be operated on, but the Argies insisted in him going to Buenos Aires.

Doyle: Was it the *Endurance* or was it an Argentinian ship?

Madders: No it was an Argentinian ship!

Sykes: No it was the *Endurance*!

Madders: Are you sure?

Sykes: Well that's the impression I got! [Note: All rather a free for all, but the fact is it was the *General San Martine*!]

Smith: I wonder if we are getting mixed up with the next year!? [Several voices: Could be!]

[0:26:02] Lee: Anyway he was helicopter off!

Madders: Yes it was the *General San Martin*!

Sykes: Anyway there was a fair bit stamash about it, ultimately it went to Buenos Aires where they operated on him and he died!

Smith: Second operation wasn't it?

Sykes: Yeah, it was tragic you know!

[0:26:17] Lee: When something like that happens, what does it do to base morale, he wasn't on your base?

Sykes: For us, I don't think it affected us much, did it?

Doyle: No it's probably true!

Sykes: I think they split up Argentina, I think there was a lot of trouble on the Argentine Islands. [Smith: Was there?] And they split! Were the likes of Barrie Whittaker and whatnot, were they not at Argentine Islands?

Madders: I don't know, I haven't heard about all this.

Doyle: I don't know where Barrie was.

Sykes: I'm pretty sure that they split them up, because there was a fair degree of unpleasantness [Smith: Oh really!] and a few went to Adelaide, don't think we got anybody.

Smith: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Doyle: Because of all the extra work, they were scientists trying to do their job and they'd got to knock off [Smith: Yes of course!] to act as nurses and all this sort of thing! And you know it's probably put a certain amount of pressure on them.

Wainwright: I think the nursing care was intense! And that used up two or more people full time!

[0:27:23] Lee: And because he didn't declare his illness before he went south?

Madders: He probably didn't know about it then.

Wainwright: He probably didn't!

Smith: But it's possibly the interesting thing the critical thing is, he was the cook and of course he was there just to produce the food! But because he was taken out it made a real difference, whereas if had been a met man it probably wouldn't haven't made such an impact on the base!

[0:27:43] Lee: I don't want to spend the whole of the interview taking about tragedies, but while we are on that subject, you came in on the loss of Tom Allen and John Noel didn't you Ken?

Doyle: Yes.

[0:27:53] Lee: What was your connection with that event?

Doyle: I was. Well they'd both gone out, BAS has always accepted the fact that there were people with an outdoor background, outdoor interests and if they could run a holiday trip let them, I think that was BAS's attitude wasn't it really? And they went out on a trip, borrowed somebody else's dog sledges, got into bad weather and we realised after a bit they hadn't reported in for a long time, I think it was going on for two weeks! That was against the rules, if you were - what was it? - if you hadn't been able to contact base for four days you were supposed to turn back!

Madders: Every day I used to do it, [Others: Yeah, every day.]

Doyle: But nobody worried particularly, because it had been bad weather and they were both experienced. I mean Tom Allen had been up in Norway, he was really was an outdoor lad, and the other lad, John Noel, had done a lot of climbing snow and ice work! Eventually they thought this has gone on too long and two of them went out to follow, they knew where they'd called in from last and - who was it? - Marsden, Neil Marsden and Keith Holmes went out and found, they went over the top of a bit of a pass over the glacier, there was the dog team buried and Tom Allen was lying half covered in the snow at the side of the valley!

John Noel was his shoulder and his head was up out of a snow hole, looking towards Tom Allen and so the two that found them straight away turned, (this was getting towards the winter, we were down to, what, four or five hours daylight? - well not really daylight, sort of half light), they came, rather than go on to the radio and say anything which, apparently Port Stanley people have a lot of short wave radios, and they listen as a hobby they listen in to the sledges, anything they can get!

Madders: That and the record programmes! [Lots of laughter!]

Doyle: So Keith and what's his name [Smith: Neil!] Neil decided to head back for base, they did a quick rundown and finished up practically in darkness coming down the North East glacier to tell what had happened! Then it was in the hands of the base commander, Terry Tallis, who was sending coded messages off to London, and they decided there would be an attempt to bring the bodies back to base. This was done by Keith Holmes, Neil Marsden, Ian Ross and myself. I know personally, I knew this was coming and was regretting it for days beforehand! Ian Ross, Ian Ross had been the year before at Halley Bay, there had been 2 men went down in a Skidoo [Note: It was a Muskeg tractor.] and Ian Ross was following along behind, with a dog sledge, was it two or three? Doctor, anyway they were killed!

Smith: He was left alone!

Doyle: He was left alone with the dog team, who had been so used to following on behind this Skidoo and having a nice easy time of it! I gather he had a real problem to get them to work and take him back to base, they changed him over to our base didn't they?

Smith: Yeah.

Doyle: To Stonington, he was, although I shared a tent with him on that particular trip he never spoke much about it. But I mean it must have had a heck of an effect on him. The four of us set off with - did we take a? - no, we took enough for four teams and three sledges because we knew there was a sledge out there, which we were hoping we could bring back. Then it was just a case of putting the bodies on the sledge and bringing them back to base and putting them in a big sort of stone cairn, a stone cairn and eventually it was concreted over when, the following summer! It just flattened the feeling midsummer was coming up, which is usually, well a sort of a holiday, holiday, Midsummer Day, you always get dressed up and have a meal, it just flattened it!

[0:32:58] Lee: They were Stonington men were they?

Madders: Yeah, yeah.

[0:33:01] Lee: Stonington men these two!

Madders: Can I just say something here, as I say I was shipped in a dump you in sort of thing, and I got to Stonington Island and I had heard about this story actually, but I didn't know much about it and there was a release in the press in this country about what had happened, but it wasn't the truth that went into the press release!

[0:33:25] Lee: What did the press release say?

Madders: The press release said they'd been hit by flying rocks or something! And the story is, yes there was a press release about it because somebody mentioned it to me before I went down, and it wasn't mentioned to me till I got to Port Stanley basically, and the full story of what, well I didn't even know the full story till I met Ken and obviously we knew about it then, but I did find that when I got on to base, I was made very welcome, but there seemed to be a rather strange atmosphere on base. And obviously as I've got older, I appreciate now why this was done, why I mean I was sort of welcomed with open arms, and I'll say one thing now and I'll say it now here. Dave Mathews he was very good to me and I really respect him for coming up to me, take me down and John Nobel and people like that who were there on base, even Terry Tallis who we, you know we used to have a bit of fun, he brought me a cup of tea up the first morning! And I'm sure he never did that with anybody else! [Laughter!] But I will say one thing I really appreciated how, because I was really dumped in at the deep end!

[0:34:39] Lee: Well you were replacing one of them!

Madders: Yes I know, but at the time I didn't appreciate it, but as years have gone by, and I wanted this to be recorded, I have started to appreciate it and that's my feeling!

[0:34:49] Lee: Lets go on to happier subjects. What was Stonington like in 1968, paint me a mental picture of what it was like?

Sykes: Well I think we had what they call a good year, because we had no accidents of any kind and in fact in the two & half years I was there. And most of us got on extremely well, it was one of those, the thing about Stonington is it is a beautiful place, the most wonderful sights!

[0:35:29] Lee: What stays in your memory after all these years?

Sykes: I think for me, it's a tiny island, it is only 400yds by 200yds something like that, but it is surrounded by mountains and actually for Neny Island which is a mountain sticking up out of the sea, and this Roman Four is absolutely startling, and this beautiful bay with this mountain and massive glacier about 10 miles wide, the North East Glacier coming down pouring on to the island and...

Smith: So it really wasn't an island, was it?

Sykes: It wasn't a true island then, but it is now, but in those days there was the ramp that ran on to it, and well to me, I still think of it as the most beautiful place I've ever been!

Smith: What a privilege!

Sykes: It was a real privilege, there was what, 60 or 70, there must have been 150 dogs or something like that and 60 or 70 pups at any one time there, so the whole island, in summer it was just covered in blubber!

Wainwright: When ships came in, people knew people that were visitors would come ashore and they'd say 'What's that dreadful smell!?' But it was the whole island, I can remember [Smith: Was that us that smelled!?] Yes, probably! [Lots of laughter!]

Wainwright: The whole island just reeked of rancid seal!

[0:36:50] Lee: From feeding dogs?

Wainwright: Yeah!

Sykes: Even our water was full of dog shit and that!

Madders: Yeah, when you emptied the tanks, turds lying on the bottom!

Wainwright: Do you remember one time, we used to melt water and we use to cut up blocks of seal!

Madders: And I used to drink that!

Wainwright: And we've cut blocks of snow from the drifts, and how it happened exactly I do not know, but somebody, one of us cut a block and it went into the big copper melt water tank, and that block held an entire penguin!! And the water was coming out a bit oily, somebody lifted the lid and there was a dead penguin floating around in the tank!

Madders: It's a wonder one of us didn't get it out and cook it or something!

Smith: I always remember a block with a black line in the middle, a dog turd! But I didn't knowingly put it in, but it was certainly in the snow we were cutting!

[0:37:51] Lee: So hygiene was not your strength then?

Madders: Oh no, definitely not! [Lots of laughter!]

Wainwright: Because there were so many dogs we had lots and lots of pups and from three months to six months, the pups ran wild! And they were in and out, up to all manner of mischief, the place was just bedlam!

Sykes: It was a place of dogs, Stonington was a dog base!

Madders: To sum it up, Stonington Island base was the last greatest working dog sledge base on the face of this Earth, and I mean working!

[0:38:30] Lee: How many men were there?

Madders: Eleven!

[0:38:32] Lee: So do you?

Madders: Thirteen.

Wainwright: Sixteen in my last year.

[0:38:40] Lee: So why does a handful of men need so many dogs?

Doyle: Well there was nine in a team, yeah.

Smith: So how many team did we have, I can't remember?

Madders & others: Twelve teams including the Rabble.

Smith: Because not everyone had a team.

Sykes: Because there was a mixture of GA's, all the GA's had a dog team, and most of the scientists had one as well, so you know there were a lot of dogs, and another odd thing about Stonington was very rarely in the year was the whole base there! There was quite a small base, so in the summer there was really only radio operator and, [Madders: The radio operator and the diesel mechanic in the summer], doctor, maybe 3 people and in the winter, I mean we were out over Midwinter.

Smith: Of course you were out in Horseshoe.

Sykes: So of course, BAS supplied booze, there was bottle of whisky every week I think?

Smith: And there was the ships' rum, do you remember in the big...?

Madders: Oh the big crocks!

Sykes: So of course with so few people there it built up into huge amounts, and we used to use gin to clean the windows! [Laughter!] We did, and there were that many tins of ham and stuff like that, that was insulation in the floor! [Laughter!] So it was a very cheerful base!

Madders: How about corned beef for the pups, do you remember those tins, loads of great tins of corned beef!

[00:40:05] Lee: And you'd feed it to puppies would you?

Madders: Actually we shouldn't have done. I found out in later years I shouldn't have done it but you know as you get older you learn these things! Anyhow we fed it to them.

Smith: Did we feed them chocolate?

Madders: No, no you mustn't never feed any dogs chocolate!

Smith: I'm sure I did!

[0:40:22] Lee: Was it possible to get any peace and quiet there?

Smith: Yes!

Doyle: There was the evening howl wasn't there?

Sykes: The drivers used to howl with the dogs as well, I mean you can imagine what 150 dogs at any one time was like when it went off, it was the sound of a lifetime!

Smith: That is the one of 'THE' sounds!

Sykes: All the rest of my life I will hear it!

Smith: You would just hear it start off couldn't you, and then it swept through and away and it ended!

Madders: Abruptly!

Smith: Absolutely extraordinary!

[00:40:51] Lee: When did they do that?

Sykes: Every day more or less, they were happy you know, just having a sing!

[0:40:55] Lee: Oh right!

Wainwright: But the pups took a while to learn how to end it and there was this magnificent howl of 100 odd dogs, which would end except for a little 'whooh'! And you could see the pups looking round and thinking oh god, what have I done!

Smith: But you could enter it. I can remember this was at Horseshoe it was at a slightly different time, the same thing I was out near Lagotellerie, what was the point anyway I was on my own?

Madders: Camp Point wasn't it?

Smith: Camp Point, no,no, that was the one farther south.

Madders: No, never mind go on.

Smith: Well I was out there a couple of miles from the base, by myself and I'd stopped to take a reading or something and I could feel this tension in the dogs, and I went 'A-whooh!' And they all started, and you know you are part of the team, it's an amazing experience!

[0:41:56] Lee: Did you ever work out how it was they all knew when to stop?

Wainwright: No!

Smith: The end of the song!

Madders: [Lots of laughter!] You may well be right there, I guess!

[0:42:05] Lee: It's a very good point, did you at all try to analysis this song, like a whale song?

Sykes: I think we all became rather doggie as we progressed? [Several: Dog howl's! Then laughter!]

Sykes: I think leaving Stonington, I mean we could go out for four or five months at a time on a dog sledging trip and maybe two or three of you together, and you kind of run out of,

you know three weeks out with somebody and actually there's not an awful lot more to talk about. But we talked to dogs the entire time and you started to, for instance I remember I wanted to be able to smell bitches going on heat! It sounds really silly, and you think, 'Oh fuck! There's going to be trouble with the dogs trying to get at them!' And things like that, I've seen a man get down and bite a dog in anger! I've done it, you could thump them, they're so tough that it didn't really hurt, but if you bit their ear you know they're really upset about that!

Smith: Yes, that was good strategy wasn't it, because you were being a real dog!

Sykes: Yeah joined in!

[0:43:23] Lee: The other sounds I suspect you heard from time to time was Ken's explosions!?

Doyle: No, that only went on in the summer! [Lots of laughter!] Sorry what?

Smith: There were other explosions!

Madders: These were the beans in the oven not taken out of the tin!

Doyle: That was a summer job which we started off at Signy building a jetty, then we moved down to Adelaide Island building another jetty and the idea was, there was a gully. Adelaide Island was always a problem for the ship to unload. They had to transfer it to boats, like a big inflatable that the coal bags used to into. [Somebody: Scow!] The captains always hated, I think I get the impression they always disliked Adelaide Island. Because currents sort of swept past it bringing icebergs in and didn't like to linger there! [Others: Iceberg Alley it was called!] So there was, the idea was this gully that they used, I was supposed to blow up these rocks down, and then we sort of built it up into a sort of platform and then they could load it and get a tractor or something and run things up, speed everything up! So that was my job, I know what's coming now!

Madders: We all know what's going to happen now! [Lots of laughter!]

[0:44:49] Lee: The question is did anything ever go wrong?

Doyle: Once! [Lots of laughter!] This particular time - it gets more hilarious as it goes on! - the Governor, Sir Cosmo Haskard, [All: Lots of comments! He was often known as 'Cosmic Mudguard!'] he was visiting his domain which included various bases, and he'd gone out with Len Mole the base commander and the doctor to visit some off shore islands where there is a lot of birdlife. Anyway I was sort of lugging some explosives in and they were plastic explosives, which I wasn't used to, we lost some in damage to the *Shackleton* and I'd scrounged these from one of the navy ships. So I did this and somebody said can 'I take photographs?' So I said 'Yeah, alright, if you keep well back up out of the way!' So I lit this thing and I went strolling back, you know nonchalant to behind this shutter of rock thinking 'I'll be well out of the way here', and unfortunately a piece of rock went straight up in the air came down and caught the tip of this piece I was sheltering behind and a little bit shot off and

cracked me on the nut! So of course everybody gathered round me and oh yeah, I didn't pass out of anything it was only a small thing, but it was bleeding, so that started 'Where's the doctor? Oh, the doctor's out with the Governor there'. There was lad George Green I found out once when I playfully tapped him, he was a former REME boxing champion, a staff sergeant in the REME and I playfully punched him you know, and he not so playfully punched me back, I never did that again! Anyway he said, 'I'll stitch his head, because we are not going to have a doctor next week and I need the practice!' And I said 'You're not coming near my head', or words to that effect! And so they sent another lad out to get the Governor back. Now somehow Fids always used to muck things up, there was always some chaos, or a sort of a *Goon* like sense of humour! Now Mike Warr set off with one of the dinghies, the other was out with the Governor, and of course he hadn't filled the tank up! It had a little outboard on it, a little Seagull outboard, and he hadn't filled it up, so half way across it conked out! And of course he hadn't bothered to put oars in, [Laughter!] so he stands up and starts waving and across at the islands the Governor said 'What's that fellow waving at?' He spoke a bit like that, he was one of the old Diplomatic Corps, [Laughter!] 'Who's that fellow, what's he waving at?' Mike Warr it was, and what's his name, the base leader? Len Mole, 'Don't know sir!' So they waved back to him! And eventually they realised that there was something going on, came back and the doctor insisted in stitching my head up and then said, 'Right it's beer night tonight but I'll give you an injection and you better not have any beer!' [Lots of laughter!] Which I thought was wrong, anyway but that's the story. I got a mention of it in Sir Vivian Fuchs' book and they'd even of it, (at what's that American base?), Palmer Station, on the way out we stopped there and they laid on a film for us, and one came up to me and said, 'Are you that one that cut his head?' It was just unfortunate, in those days you didn't have things like hard hats or anything like that you just went behind a rock!

Madders: We had our heads didn't we?

Doyle: So I know what's his name was asking about that, Allan Wearden, yeah, saying 'Is this true?' He'd heard bits of it, but that's it!

[0:49:12] Lee: The weather at Stonington was fairly notorious wasn't it, for unreliability?

Doyle: Could be winds couldn't it!

Smith: Could be winds yeah!

Doyle: I remember once I was out on dog feed, and for curiosity I saw, we always used to watch the Plateau at the back didn't we? [Madders: Yeah, Spinridge.] Spinridge, and looked at it once and I thought, 'Well its coming off', it was 20 minutes afterwards it was blowing a gale.

Madders: Yeah, naught to 70 knots in 20 minutes!

Smith: Katabatics weren't they? Katabatic !

Madders: They were katabatics, [Doyle: Good word that!] they came in the wake of low pressure areas!

[0:49:46] Lee: So did that affect your working, if you knew that you could be swamped in 70 minutes, 20 minutes?

Madders: 20 minutes yeah.

[0:49:53] Did that affect how you planned your work?

Sykes: Well the other thing is, there wasn't an awful lot of actual technical work going on at Stonington, scientist writing and things, because mostly it was a field station, so when certainly for us GA's we were sort of just building up sledges and things like that in the off time, you'd have been doing...

Smith: Scientific work, fanning around!

Sykes: Fanning around!

Smith: I had a bloody dog team to look after and a sledge to pack, come on! [Lots of laughter!] And my scientific work to do, you could spend your time looking at dirty pictures most of the time!

Sykes: Oh I did!

Smith: Well what's Sykes doing? His canoe!

Madders: What's these dirty pictures then Sykes?

Smith: No well its Ian's story really, did you have a plan?

Sykes: Yeah I...

[0:50:37] Lee: You built a canoe?

Sykes: Yeah, I'd been an instructor at Outward Bound's you know, we'd actually built canoes. They were Clyde's a canvas boat that I'd built a few before I went down, and I actually brought a set of the drawings down with me, so I'd a pretty good idea how to do it. So I got some of these drawings and modified them and built a one man canoe and it was a great project, one of these things, I managed to strip wood off one of Fuchs' old huts and there was plenty of ply wood kicking about the base, and stuff like that. Used sledge canvas, sledge back canvas to cover it and painted it up to dope it and it came out quite nicely!

Smith: Yeah, oh lovely.

Sykes: But the amazing thing was when the paddle that I made out of a tent pole and some ply wood at the end, and the first day I went out and had a life jacket on and the usual and went out for a paddle in it, well you know and paddling along very you know and I thought 'I fancy a lean over turn with this thing', and the paddle, the blades snapped off! And I was in!

Smith: I've got a photograph of before you went it.

Sykes: Yes, and the thing was I managed to, because I'd spend weeks building this bloody thing, so I sort of managed to get out on to a floe and thought Christ I'm going to lose it! I managed to jump back in again and get the canoe, and get it out! And it was great, it was good for sealing, and we used it in the summer for that and Ally [Smith: Skinner?] yeah tried, McArthur I think tried to ban me using it, I think he got a bit nervous, you know accidents and things.

Madders: He was, yeah.

Sykes: I just refused him and kept going and the other story about that canoe is that I was going to take it home, it went onboard the *Biscoe* when finally picked up to go home and we landed up in Argentine Islands, which was beautiful, beautiful place, I sort of grabbed the canoe and went off out in it, and the base commander there got very shirty about it, 'I don't fancy this', but Bunny Fuchs was down and he, I'd just taken this thing out and was having this trouble with the base commander you see, and Bunny came over, 'Can I have a go with the canoe!?' [Lots of laughter!] So off he went paddling up through the bergs and things, and it seemed like a bad thing to take it away, so I actually left it at Argentine Islands, and I think they used it and I've actually found out some history of what happened to it since, but I haven't heard anything about it, but there are other pictures of it you know.

[0:53:23] Lee: We were talking about the winds and the bad weather, and I think you have a story to tell Phil about farther down south, a long lay up?

Wainwright: Oh yes, this is when Ian and I were in the fjords that first autumn, we were on a survey party and we sledged, we'd been landed by the *Biscoe* on the Jones Ice Shelf, well landed on a beach next to it, the Jones. And we had a hell of a job getting off that, getting organised and then we were going up the Hind and over the Antibes to Lallemand and the weather was just atrocious! We'd got to the foot of Mount Athos and had you gone down or...?

Doyle: We'd gone down the other side, yeah.

Wainwright: And we were 18 days?

Sykes: There were two 11 day lie ups and one 16 day lie up! In one winter trip, the thing was it was our first sledging trip, so we didn't know any different! It all seemed pretty ordinary to us, but Derek Postlethwaite who was running the show was pretty horrified! In fact, I heard afterwards that they were very anxious of us in London office and a few years later, when they packed in the dogs, that was one the sighted trips that they used! And I was very upset because we were having a great time, it was no big deal for us! But back in London they were hearing about us, stranded and having to dig out and we'd made various attempts to get back off the island! Which didn't work, but it never seemed particularly outrageous to us.

Smith: No, from base I think we were keeping in contact with them and don't think there was ever any sense of worry about it.

Sykes: No.

Wainwright: But there was one very curious incident there. We were camped at the foot of Mount Athos, Ian had a dog called Athos in his team and lying up we listened to the radio and there was a horse running in the Grand National called Athos! And we thought Good Lord this is it, so...

Sykes: Well we got on to the radio to Stanley and [lots of laughter!] we put a tenner on to win, and it bloody won!! It won, and then we discovered they'd never put the money on, or they swore blind they hadn't put the money on it!

Madders: I wasn't radio operator there!

Sykes: I think you were! [Madders: No-no!]

Smith: That's why he's so wealthy and goes swanning round the world!

[0:56:18] Lee: That's quite a step from the field like that?

Sykes: Well the way we were in contact, with the outer world was, the Squad Calls were brilliant, so we could speak through, and I think it, I think it went from Adelaide at that particular point, we'd radio through to Adelaide and they'd telex it, I think was it telex?

Madders: When was this was it '69 Ian, was it?

Sykes: Sixty nine.

Madders: Well they only got telex into Adelaide.

Smith: Sixty eight!

Madders: Sixty eight was all, was still all done on the key!

[0:56:55] Lee: Was placing bet a common experience?

Sykes: No absolutely not, just a total coincidence.

Wainwright: Just this.

Madders: I never remember doing that.

[0:56:58] Lee: Well how much should you have won?

Sykes: Well it was a lot, you have to remember it was jumping. There was another interesting thing that happened in the same place a bit later [Smith: Yes.] and I'll try and tell the story as I saw it. We, we'd lost the sun by this time, we were stuck, we missed Midwinter, we couldn't get back so we midwintered out at Blaiklock field hut, and we were working as 2 separate units about, what, 10 miles apart something like that at either end of the Jones Ice Shelf, some people not as far as that, and on the particular day, I always get mixed up as to who was with who, but we sledged by Moonlight on a beautiful night across

to meet up with everybody and there was a good reason, and I always remember it coming with the dogs, the dogs got a sniff of the dogs over at the other side and we had this fantastic run in, and as we got there normally you would see to your dogs right away. But on the particular instance, we pulled up picketed the dogs quickly and jumped into the tent and we listened to Neil Armstrong land on the Moon! And it was the most stunning [Smith: Absolutely!] absolutely amazing thing, because it was this great big full Moon shining wasn't it?

Smith: Yes, it would have been, 27th of July 1969 and there was, well I'd gone across with Brian Galgate was he my GA, we met Rod Pashley and Ian Curphey on Adelaide, we'd come back through Rothera and across Laubeuf, (is that the north- south fjord?), on to the Jones and we saw this tent ahead, and that was you. Or was it you and me?

Sykes: It was you I, actually!

Smith: I'm sorry Ian, that's right and who was it in the tent?

Doyle: It must have been '69.

Smith: '69, yes it was the Jones it was the same case.

[0:59:05] Lee: How did you hear the Moon landing?

Smith/Sykes: On the radio!

Smith: A short wave radio, we were listening to the broadcast on *World Service*. [Others: Yeah, *World Service*!]

[0:59:13] Lee: Was that a regular, were you able to do that all the time or did it depend on the atmosphere?

Sykes: We used to listen to the *World Service* and radio the *Gospel Voice of Ecuador* and...

Smith: Oh, good lord!

Doyle: And Mozambique was a music one.

Sykes: And *RSA*, Radio South Africa.

[0:59:33] Lee: Just remind me how it felt to be lying in a tent in the middle of the Antarctic and looking at the Moon and thinking there's a bloke up there!?

Smith/Sykes: Extraordinary!!

Smith: I think we felt as remote as they did almost, or at least I did!

Sykes: Yeah, in fact they'd got a really good map of Moon, and where we were nobody bloody knew well where we were! [Lots of laughter!]

Smith: I always remember that, it's one the things that sticks in my mind!

Sykes: You know, the odd thing I've had with it, because we were there on two or three occasions in the same place, I got a bit mixed up as to who I was with?

Smith: Yes, well you've seen that happen right now.

Sykes: Yes, that's just happened again!

[1:00:08] Lee: So it sounds like you had good communications with the rest of the planet?

Smith: We had, (was it every two months?), we got a letter from home.

Madders: Every month you got 200 words out and 100 in!

Smith: Twenty words!

Madders: No 200!

Sykes: I thought it was a 100.

Smith: It wasn't very many, apart from George Kistruck with his IQ of 2000 said, 'Well strap the words together and make the words very long', and so he had huge communications from his parents! [Lots of laughter!]

Madders: Is that right?

[1:00:38] Lee: Well I'm thinking of world events, there was quite a lot of turmoil in the world about that time, wasn't there?

Sykes: Oh we listened in to the radio all the time, I mean we were radio freaks I don't know about everybody else. I can't stop listening to the news now.

Wainwright: We used to string out two aerials, one would be the dipole for the squad call and the other one would be a long aerial for little..... Decca.

[1:01:05] Lee: Radio receiver [Wainwright: radio receiver!] and that was important to you?

Several people: Oh yes!

[1:01:12] Lee: You couldn't just turn your back on the rest of the world?

Several people: Oh no!

Smith: There was, the BBC broadcast occasionally to us and I can remember the name.

Several people: Oh yeah, a special programme!

Madders: *Calling Antarctica!* And they had this woman and she, (what was she called?)....Maggie Clews! [Smith: That's right!] And she had this come to bed voice, so we were all absolutely in love with her! And I always remember that we wrote a letter to her, I think Chris must have radioed it, to say 'You know we all love you Maggie Clews and please can you send us a picture, you've got a fan club in the Antarctic'. And the photographs came

down the following year [Smith: They did!] and she was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous!! And then we heard that she'd got married and everybody was very upset!

Doyle: We used to get messages sent which they broadcast on Port Stanley Radio [Madders: that's right yeah.] I know my parents went into Manchester, to record a message to me. And then was it every month?

Madders: Ah, BBC did it on the overseas service.

Smith: So you heard from your parents?

Doyle: Yes!

Smith: Oh did you?

Doyle: When that would happen yes, I mean you would see blokes sort of cringing in case something stupid or embarrassing was said by the parents! Yeah my parents went over to Manchester to broadcast this thing, and made them welcome and I don't know what used to happen, was it *Calling the Antarctic*?

Madders: Yeah, *Calling the Antarctic*!

Smith: Well, mummy and daddy never did that for me!

Madders: No they didn't! I used to have to read the air letters out.

Smith: Yes, air letters, that's what they were called!

Madders: Yeah, air letters you used to get 200 words a month, I think out and a 100 words a month in, and I had to read them out to the field sledge parties.

Sykes: Well I never got that, you must have abridged them.

Madders: Well, I had to do in certain cases!

[1:02:55] Lee: What was the Midwinter like there on Stonington?

Smith: Can't remember! [Loud laughter!]

[1:03:01] Lee: So yes, the answer is that it was good!

Doyle: Everybody got dressed up.

Sykes: When we got stranded on the Hind Glacier at Blaiklock field hut, we wrote a play! [Several people: Yes that's right!] Which we put on at Stonington where we'd a belated Midwinter and I can remember except the entire cast was drunk!

[1:03:25] Lee: What was the play about?

Sykes: It was called *Seal Morning* wasn't it? [Lee: *Seal Morning*?] Yes it had, oh it was...?

Wainwright: It had Doyle and Chris Elliot being prosecuted for sealing and there was all manner of...

Madders: We had two Midwinters one year, do you remember that, I think it was 1968? I think that was the one wasn't it as so many people were out and McArthur decided we'd have two Midwinter's and I've got photographs of that.

Smith: Yes that's right!

Madders: Yeah, Midwinter 1 and Midwinter 2.

Doyle: Because we were back late weren't we?

[1:04:05] Lee: Ken do you remember anything special of Midwinter '68?

Doyle: Sorry what?

[1:04:10] Lee: Did you do anything special to help everybody celebrate Midwinter in '68?

Doyle: Not if I could help it no! [Laughter!] Don't think so.

Smith: I think one other thing we ought to talk about is...

[1:04:21] Lee: Did you not take presents for them?

Doyle: Presents?

Madders: Yes we did!

Doyle: Oh, yes we did! Somebody going back down the Survey backed us up with it, in fact you had one of those things didn't you? You'd go round a few of the parents, say, telling them about this Midwinter do, and would they like to send small presents. This was signed by me in this particular case to say I would make sure these particular presents, hidden away in my equipment and then when Midwinter came I would hand them out! Which was a sort of nice surprise for everybody else on the base. I think I got one, I think I got one from mine.

Madders: Everybody did it every year.

Doyle: Every year yes, just something small a little token which they could pull out and on Midwinter Day, which was the sort of annual holiday, if that's the right word, you know they got something different!

[1:05:26] Lee: Ian Smith you were trying to say something?

Smith: Well I was just going to mention the music, which was very important to many of us. I mean there's someone we haven't talked about who was called Pedro. Do you remember Pedro?

Sykes: Francesco!

Smith: Francesco was it, well Francesco liked a drink, didn't he!? [Lots of laughter, Doyle! Ah!] This was Ken's guitar and he used to pour beer into this guitar!

Doyle: I didn't pour it in!

Smith: Yes, you did I've got a picture of you doing it!!

Madders: He was just acting for you!

Doyle: It was quite an amusement really!? [Lots of answers!]

Wainwright: We had a piano, yes!

Smith: A piano!

Doyle: Yeah, behind the bar it should have gone to Halley Bay!

Madders: Piano!?

Doyle: It should have gone in 1965 to Halley Bay, there was a doctor, a Scouser, who managed to get hold of this player piano, the old style, you press the pedals and it was supposed to puff air and a thing would roll around.

[1:06:36] Lee: Pianola!

Doyle: Yeah, now after that accident where a Muskeg went down at Halley Bay, they were short of a doctor so this lad instead of coming to Stonington he was shoved into Halley Bay! [Madders: Poor chap!] So the piano still came to Stonington! Now this thing, I remember, oh it must have been a terrible state, it was the actual, we'd no things for it, these tunes [others: no rolls!] and I thought there must be some way of doing this. Had you arrived then?

Madders: Oh, I'm sure I had.

Doyle: Well I borrowed a spanner and tuned this piano up [Madders: No I hadn't!] and a spanner turning round the keys until it got to approximately a tune, it was quite good!

Smith: You know that's extraordinary, I have got a pianola at home!

Madders: It will be worth a lot of money!

Smith: No idea, I have completely forgotten why I bought it!

Doyle: You pinched it from Stonington! [Lots Abuse and answers!]

[1:07:40] Lee: You have 5 minutes left. Just want to know, to say anything which I have to ask you?

Smith & others: Cape Jeremy! Oh no!

[1:07:51] Lee: Go on Ian, this is Ian Sykes?

Sykes: Well I think it was the Puffball Islands one of the aircraft had crashed the previous summer.

[1:08:03] Lee: This the Porter?

Sykes: The Porter and these boys got landed at Fossil Bluff for the winter, supposed to be going home you know and there they were stranded! And so Fla and his group set off rather earlier than they would normally go and try and get down to the Bluff and relieve it.

Smith: Ally McArthur, Laurence Willey, me and Shaun Norman.

Sykes: And the four of them set off and it was glorious weather, we'd got the sun the sun had returned and lovely spring and off they went! And of course as soon as they got over the safety column, round past Terra Firma Island the weather sort of clouded a bit, there was a big blow came out of what was it called?

Several people: The Wordie!

Sykes: Down windy valley and the next thing, from my point of view was, Fla will tell his side of it, from my point of view we had this radio message that they were on sea ice, they had crossed a number of leads and that it had opened up behind them and they had a feeling that they were on the move! Well they were on the move and big panic, very few people had gone drifting off on sea ice and returned! So Ken and myself and Thwaite was it? [Others: Thwaite!] The 3 of us, we loaded the sledge with a dinghy, and we set forth to go and, I think the good thing for me was up to, because of the previous accident the earlier years, Ally McArthur through being very cautious and we were only sledging in extremely fine weather! One of the reasons probably why these 11 day and 16 day lie ups we had up the Hind, we could have probably travelled but the policy was go carefully, [Others: It was!], but on this occasion, we were going like, I think that was the first time I realised that we could actually travel in much worse weather, we really started plonking it on! Anyway as it all turned out from our side of it, we got down, I think we camped at the Debenham Islands was it?

Doyle: Debenhams?

Smith: No Terra Firma!

Sykes: Yeah, Terra firma?

Others: Lots of disagreement?

Sykes: No there was little Argie base there, there was a little Argentine base there.

Smith: Well that's the Debenhams, which is to the north!

[1:10:42] Lee: Well anyway?

Sykes: Well anyway we went on past and then we crossed a couple of leads and got, sledged across and there was water sky all over the place, when you get the leads reflected on the clouds. So we knew there was open water about, but as it turned out the farther south we got

the better the weather got and finally we got to the Puffball Islands, just at the same time as you arrived.

Smith: Yeah, we turned back.

Sykes: And all was well by that time! The leads and things were closing up so it wasn't the big epic we'd turned out, but we gave up the idea of trying to get to the Bluff and headed back!

Smith: I think the interesting things was, we'd been talking on the radio to Chris and you'd got on to London and they'd looked at satellite photographs and they could see leads, they could see ice bergs and leads opening up, and suddenly the skies and man on the Moon next year! And suddenly technology was helping, but it was quite, a very stability experience! We were on half rations, I can remember seeing a pod of seals and my mouth was watering! [lots of laughter!]

[1:11:52] Lee: Best years of your life?

Everybody: Absolutely, no question yeah!

Smith: I remember that scene as we away on the *Biscoe* and a little knot of men on the ice, Stonington in the background and the North East coming down, fantastic! [Others: Yeah!]

[1:12:06] Lee: Thank you gents!

NOTE: Due to the amount of people involved in the interview, sometime several people answer at the same time and it becomes rather garbled! But some very interesting stories do come out during the session and that it was worthwhile doing.

Interesting clips:

- The loss of Tom Allen and John Noel. [0:27:53]
- Dead penguin in melt tank! [0:36:50]
- The evening dog howl at Stonington! [0:40:51]
- Ken Doyle blowing up rocks! [0:43:23]
- Building a canoe on base. [0:50:37]
- The Stonington piano! [1:05:26]

