

DENNIS GOLDRING

Edited transcript of interview with Denis Goldring (identified as DG) conducted by Chris Eldon Lee (identified as CL) at his home in Guisborough, Teeside, on 23rd May 2010.
Transcribed by Alex Gaffikin 22nd September 2012.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:14 sec] Denis Goldring: Denis Goldring. I was born on the 30th June 1932 and my place of birth was Brentford, Middlesex, 77 at the moment.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:27 sec] Chris Lee: What did your father do?

DG: He was an engineer. A ventilation engineer. He died very soon after I was born actually, virtually a day or two after I was born.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:47 sec] CL: So that must have shaped your childhood somewhat?

DG: Oh yes it did. Very much. Obviously my brother and myself, my brother was 4 years older than me, we were brought up by my mother and obviously we never knew our father.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:01:07 sec] CL: So what kind of schooling did you have Denis?

DG: Well we went to a Dame's. My mother moved, Brentford, Middlesex, West London, and in 1934 she moved down to North Devon and made her home there operating as a small guest house. We went to what was effectively a Dame's school for a few years and then we went to a place called the Royal Commercial Travellers School. For some reason. My father was an engineer but he must have been involved in the sales side of Keith Blackman and co. and somehow or other they got us into this free school, the Royal Commercial Travellers School, which is where we were educated until we were 18. Then went to Bristol University. My brother went to Bristol in 1950 I suppose, no it be '49, he did his National Service, I followed him there, one year behind, and he started doing a course in geography, changed to geology. I was already interested in geology so I chose to go to Bristol as well, and took our degrees and both did PhDs in Bristol. Those were balmy days you know, we were so lucky.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:03:12 sec] CL: How do you mean?

DG: Well in terms of things like grants for instance. My brother would have had a government grant for having done his National Service. I had a Devon County Council grant. The grant paid tuition fees and our living costs 100 per cent. And think of people now having to cough up, and having heavy debts around their ears for years. That early 50s was the start of a really golden age of university education I reckon, and gradually fallen away to the present state where far more people go to university but I think saddled with debt and a lot of them not really getting jobs anywhere near what they are educated for. I mean the poor girl who's doing this alum [phonetic] work – did it on a poor salary compared with what she should be in the equivalent time back in the 50s.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:04:38 sec] CL: What drew you into geology, what was your interest or how was your interest engendered?

DG: I was always interested in geography and thought that it was a related subject – that would be probably how it got there. My brother got there slightly differently, he was also interested in geography and was going to be a geography teacher but decided that the geology department was a much better and smarter department, so after one year he moved course. Which is another thing which people don't seem to be able to do now incidentally.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:05:28 sec] CL: So was geology something of a passion?

DG: Well it became a passion very quickly. By the time we were taking our BSc's we were well established as wanting to be geologists.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:05:44 sec] CL: Can you think why you were so passionate about it? It seems like it is a very historic subject.

DG: Oh just the interest in it. Also living in north Devon was a suitable place where there was an awful lot that needed to be done in terms of research and so on. I would say, gradually acquired this. Obviously when I went up to University I wouldn't have been so. But even then, my brother had got interested. We were mucking about on the beach at Westward Ho! doing some field work and that seemed to take over – we needed to get that done. The net result was that I never, for instance, attended the fresher's week, that sort of thing – it had already taken over our lives really, so anyway no problem with that. Been with us ever since. Well not with my brother. My brother unfortunately died four years ago, which is rather sad but that's by the by.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:06:58 sec] CL: So was it the investigative side of it that fascinated you? Or just dealing with something that is so ancient?

DG: Oh it's the investigative, the research side. We could easily have gone into some other subject; geography or history for instance. I would never have been so good in physics for instance or chemistry because of the need for having good mathematics. Geology didn't need very much in the way of mathematics in those days – well it probably does now. But one gradually acquires these things.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:07:49 sec] CL: What was your first brush with the Antarctic? How did you first become aware of it?

DG: I got my BSc in 1953, the Prof. had lined me up to do research already by then. In those days you could carry on out of the same university in fact it was normal practice. So for the next three years I was doing a PhD on structural petrology: fieldwork up in North East Antrim and a lot of laboratory work at Bristol. Come towards the end of that I am still 24 looking around for a job but expecting of course to do National Service. The Prof., again in those days talking about this golden age, the Prof. regarded it as part of his job to get you a job – think of that! He casts around, he works out what he thinks you would be good at, and offers you something. He'll only offer you one or two chances, he's not going to go around, but he is going to find you something. Sir Raymond Priestley comes round – who was with Scott of course, very old man by then, at that time - well I don't know probably younger than I am now, anyway he was old – recruiting for FIDS, sees the Prof, the Prof. then looks

through his list of students and, 'Oh, Denis Goldring, I think he might be interested, I think he would be suitable'. So I then had a short chat with Sir Raymond Priestley, I'm not particularly interested myself. Sounds too much like Scott.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:10:20 sec] CL: You mean too dangerous?

DG: Yes. Well not dangerous so much as rough. You know, living on... being cold this sort of thing, not having enough to eat, blah blah. But anyway the net result was that the FIDS sent me the application papers. I filled them in not expecting to get any sort of job, because I hadn't done much in the way of sports at university, not a lot. I'd certainly not done any mountaineering, and not even done a lot of field geology. Although we had been away in the summer up in Northern Ireland for a couple of months, which I suppose is a fair comment. I then made the application. Called for interview. I'd been interviewed by one or two others, for instance I thought I might want to go in the British Geological Survey or the Colonial Geological Survey, but they were at that stage – were only taking people, if they had accepted me – then I would still have to have done the National Service first. So from their point of view, having to wait two years in order to recruit somebody is obviously something of a dead loss if other people are more available to them. So anyway the FIDS. Had an interview with FIDS. A pretty poor sort of interview. There was a very clever fellow next, also being interviewed next to me, who was very glib, had tremendous mountaineering experience, done a lot of field work etc. etc.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:12:25 sec] CL: Do you recall his name?

DG: No. I don't want to. But I don't know it anyway. But this fellow, he then proudly said that he was communist. And he didn't get any job.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:12:43 sec] CL: So you were interviewed not just singly but as a group?

DG: It was a group, yes. There were about three or four of us.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:12:53 sec] CL: Were there single interviews as well?

DG: Oh, no, the interview wasn't.... we were waiting outside in a waiting room and then interviewed singly. But he very clearly made sure that they knew he was communist. I don't know why, but that was a passport to not having a job in fact, in those days. But I had an interview. I don't know who interviewed me but certainly Ray Adie, was one of the people, would have been civil service god-wallahs I imagine. I was then taken into another small office where I had the real interview.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:13:33 sec] CL: Oh yes?

DG: Johnny Green. He says, 'Can you cook?' 'Oh yeah I can cook.' 'The dogs are very fierce you know, what are you like with dogs?' 'Oh I'm scared stiff of dogs.' 'OK', he says, 'we'll inform you in the usual sort of way but you might as well go along and have your medical today.' I wasn't expecting to pass the medical.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:14:10 sec] CL: Was there a reason for that?

DG: Oh yes. On the beach at Westward Ho! doing this field work we had done a lot of auguring. This is a twisting movement. And I had twisted somehow my gut slightly, not to the point of needing to go to the doctor but I didn't think that I would be suitable to go to the Antarctic with this condition. This doctor was another very old man. Asked a few questions. Very poor informal medical interview, nothing like what I'd had once or twice with the university medical team. Anyway I then get a letter, not very long after, probably within a week or two: 'Accepted, please report to Ray Adie at Birmingham University at the earliest opportunity.' 'Sorry I can't, I'm writing my thesis.' 'Ah!' Eventually Adie persuades me to come by the 1st of November. I think. All this interviewing was done probably back in August, I would guess. So I then join three other geologists at Birmingham. Birmingham University had just been set up. Ray Adie had just been appointed, this was his first. The geologists who were already in the Antarctic had suddenly come under his jurisdiction and they did not like it.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:16:11 sec] CL: Why was that?

DG: Interfering with their ability to do what they wanted.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:16:17 sec] CL: So he was trying to direct their program?

DG: Yes, that's right. Program Director. That was part of his job obviously. The four of us were his first candidates who he had complete control of. He was a little bit disgusted with me I would think because of not wanting to join him immediately.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:16:39 sec] CL: So you had to write your thesis in double quick time did you?

DG: Well I'd been working on it – there was trouble getting it typed in those days. Obviously the thing had to be typed up properly. The final date was the 1st October or 30th September I suppose. I was given a couple of week's grace, something like that. It had to be in, otherwise it would be six months delay and got in on time before 1st October but to then to have had the oral examination which must have taken place in October as well. But I certainly got to Adie, to Birmingham, and had about six or seven weeks there before the ship sailed.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:17:42 sec] CL: Let's back track slightly if we may. On reflection do you think that the job was yours anyway? That your professor, do you remember your professor's name?

DG: Whittard. Frank, Fredrick, Fred Whittard.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:17:52 sec] CL: Do you think he had already swung it for you before you went for the interview?

DG: I would think so.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:17:59 sec] CL: Because it sounds very relaxed doesn't it?

DG: Yes it does indeed. I would have said he probably wrote me a good reference.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:18:10 sec] CL: What did you make of Ray Adie as a person?

DG: Well at that time we rather liked him. In fact I always liked him actually. I never fell out with him. Lots of people fell out with him one way or another. They didn't like the interference that there was with him. He was extremely good and had a very high standard of writing reports and such like, presentation, which was a good thing from his point of view but it upset a lot of other people. I think he could have possibly done rather better in some ways and brought some more guys who were disappointed with him out of... could have got them working properly. Certainly one or two of my friends, I would say that. But personally there was never any problem.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:27 sec] CL: Had you had any desire to go south to the Antarctic before that point?

DG: No, No.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:32 sec] CL: So it wasn't Antarctica that attracted you, it was the job?

DG: It was the job, yeah. I was being taken on as geologist. I was being paid 500 odd pounds a year and all found, and then of course in the back of mind I suppose would be the fact that when I got back I'd be over 26 and not liable to National Service.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:32 sec] CL: So was that a major factor? Was avoiding draft a major factor?

DG: No it wasn't a major factor, but it was convenient. And certainly other people, Prof. for instance, would certainly thought it. You must also bear in mind that within a year or so of my getting back National Service had been abandoned anyway so there were obviously a lot of people who were very fed up with it, even the army itself didn't like it, so... [laughs]. But it was certainly a convenience for me. But I always thought that I was going to do National Service.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:20:30 sec] CL: The reason why I am interested is you are the first person I've interviewed who has mentioned it at all. I wasn't aware of it, that you could avoid National Service by joining FIDS.

DG: Oh yes, one of the few ways that could be done, and I don't know whether anybody else, a fair number of people, it must have affected some of the other people that were with me. I would have had the advantage of three extra years having done my PhD. But as I say we are in the period; my geological colleagues they would have had to have done National Service. But of course by the time they had done their PhDs and so on, it had disappeared anyway. And within a year or two. So it's affecting only those, particularly the two or three years I would guess, when FIDS was recruiting more and more people. Up to about 1950, 51, 52 they didn't really recruit a lot of people. You would probably find a few other people who it affected in the way that I am telling you but not many.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:22:02 sec] CL: Strange phrase but did you warm to the idea of going to the Antarctic, or were you still dispassionate when you left?

DG: Not particularly, the key thing was I had a job and I was going to be a geologist, I was going to be a working geologist. That was really the key thing to me. I was not interested in the slightest in the Scott sort of attitude of going to the Antarctic for the derring-do of it. Not at all.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:22:46 sec] CL: So how did you get on? First of all how much preparation did they give you for that side of the job if you like, the Antarctic?

DG: Well we were the four of us, there were four of us up at Birmingham and Adie kept us very much under his wing. We never went to the London office; we did go to the Ordnance Survey office. We went to Cambridge Polar Research Institute one day where Adie himself had done his PhD and worked for several years of course. And he prepared us for going to the Antarctic. Got us to read a number of books on the Antarctic, like Kevin Walton's. That sort of thing. And he gave us mainly geological training actually. I guess he was busy with his own work because he sent us out doing geological mapping in the Lickey Hills most of November.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:24:18 sec] CL: 10 years later they were still doing the same thing you know?

DG: Yes, I would guess so.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:24:22 sec] CL: He always had the same project.

DG: Same sort of thing yeah. One of the things he did do was he equipped us fairly well. We had a huge tin box which weighed a tonne full of various hammers and books and all sorts of things. Everything the geologist should need short of a microscope, but including things like cameras and so on, or a camera, which was our personal gear. Bits and pieces. That ruler there was from that, few things left. He never gave us very much in the way of... well we did some survey training as well. But yes it would be very much the same as what people did in the succeeding years, we just happened to be the first.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:25:27 sec] CL: Crevasse rescue? Health and safety, any of that? Nothing?

DG: I don't remember anything, no. I don't think there could have been. He sent us to the dentist, I remember that. I certainly, when I got down to Antarctica, was still absolutely green.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:25:55 sec] CL: Looking back on that again, do you think that was a dangerous scenario, sending untrained men down to the Antarctic wilderness?

DG: Yes of course it was. But we were just men weren't we? Flying the flag actually.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:26:14 sec] CL: Oh really? You think that's why you went?

DG: Oh yes.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:26:17 sec] CL: Can you elaborate on that Denis?

DG: Not really, there's not a lot of absolutely direct evidence for it but the general gist of how things were done at the time I was down there was such that this was really what one came to believe. Certainly it was the time when there were possible troubles with the South Americans for instance. The attitude of FIDS and Falklands Islands and so on, and the ship. It's an impression really rather than anything specific. But I mean they were quite happy that people should do geology, but they were also quite happy if somebody didn't do any geology. Because there were people who went down as geologists who virtually did no geology the whole year. Which you know was fate in a way but to some extent you know it could probably have been avoided.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:27:41 sec] CL: They didn't do any because they didn't want to or they couldn't?

DG: They couldn't! Because they couldn't. Because they were put for instance at a base where there was no geology to do or where it was all done. People were, just unavoidably to some extent perhaps they had some choice, they could come back, I think one fellow came back to the UK actually, then went back the following year. But this sort of thing obviously FIDS would have claimed that it was beyond their control. Which largely it is. But there was a very big emphasis on the political side; I don't think there was any doubt about that.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:22 sec] CL: So were you given any training for that then? Were you given arm to arm combat training?

DG: Oh no, no, no, there was nothing... it wasn't in that sort of ballpark at all, no.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:38 sec] CL: So when did you sail and what ship were you on?

DG: We were on the *John Biscoe*, it was her maiden voyage. She was brand new and the amusing thing was that I put my suit in the wardrobe in the cabin and a day or two later took it out for some reason or another and it had got wet paint all over it. It hadn't dried because obviously it was in a confined space. But yes, she was straight down from Glasgow, Dumbarton.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:29:15 sec] CL: Brand new?

DG: Brand new, absolutely brand new.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:29:18 sec] CL: Not a conversion job?

DG: No no, it was brand new ship. Replaced the first *John Biscoe*.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:29:24 sec] CL: What did you make of her?

DG: Oh we were very pleased. I think everybody was pretty pleased, all the way through. Had one or two little spots of bother perhaps with the engine or something. We were

supernumeraries, were soon put down to painting the ship. Apparently needed painting even though it was brand new, so that's the way of things.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:30:00 sec] CL: ???[Unintelligible]

DG: This was late November.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:30:04 sec] CL: 55?

DG: 55 yeah. No 56, late 56.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:30:12 sec] CL: Did she handle the seas well?

DG: Yes, well as I might have expected it. A lot of people were very sick but I just went off my food. There was a supply of cornflakes, milk, sugar, toast and marmalade, butter and marmalade. And I more or less live on that rather than trying to eat the ship's fare. Which was typical ships' fare, you could have been on the Irish passenger ferries you would have got much the same. Didn't think there was any complaint about that. She was a lot better sailor than the flipping Irish passenger ferry, I can tell you that as well. I used to go Liverpool Belfast - steerage. It really had to be seen to be believed. Especially on the day after the Grand National.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:31:24 sec] CL: So what was your journey? Did you call in at Montevideo?

DG: We called in at Monte yeh, just to... we were in a hurry.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:31:32 sec] CL: Why was that?

DG: Oh, the Duke. The Duke was doing his round the world voyage in *Britannia*. *Britannia* was not suitable to go into the Antarctic, well not very far into the Antarctic. And the *John Biscoe* was due to meet up with the Duke, scheduled for about New Year's Day, something like that, roughly, and so she had to be there.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:32:13 sec] CL: At Stanley?

DG: No at Base W actually. We spent only a day at Monte. We spent Christmas at Port Stanley, we were about three or four days there, we were kitted up of course. But only a very few days and then we were off again and the first stop was Anvers Islands. I was put ashore with several others. They had to get rid of the Fids on board, so a whole lot of guys. I was due to go to Anvers Island as Geologist, replacing Peter Hooper. And the ship only stayed... it just got us off, didn't unload any stores or anything like that, and within the hour it had gone on. Presumably it was late to meet up with the Duke. The Duke then and his group, party, courtiers or what have you, went on to the *Biscoe*. Some Fids had been left on board like one of my colleagues Nigel Proctor, I think all three geologists stayed on board actually. The Anvers Island base was only for six people, but there were about 15 or so of us there. Anyway, the other three geologists stayed on board. They stayed with, and had a good view of the Duke's set-up, right the way through his visit, up through the islands.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:34:30 sec] CL: So what was it like, what was the overcrowding at Anvers Island like? Were you camping out?

DG: No, we were mostly up in the attic actually. There was room to sort of bed down somewhere. The Duke appeared a few days after I had arrived. They'd spent a lot of time, well I'd spent a lot of time, cleaning up the hut and the area around. Getting rid of the filth around the base etc etc. The Duke arrived. We were under strict instructions that we were going to be as... very very green obviously, be kept in very much in the background. We were allowed to shake hands with the Duke but that was all. It was the others who gave him his sledge ride, took him up to the various bird breeding colonies, Anvers was a good place for that. And some guys came up at some point; the Duke had gone up the hill to presumably see something like the petrels or skuas or something like that and guys came up. Somebody phoned him from Buckingham Palace so they had to get off the ship, go ashore and cart this fairly heavy gear up the hill to so he could answer the flipping phone, presumably the Queen! Might not have been. He was very relaxed, we didn't really need to have cleaned up the base, you know. He had a cup of tea or something in the base, with the Base Leader, Peter Hooper, he can tell you all about that if you haven't interviewed him yet. You have? Right. I am just telling you a story about somebody who wasn't particularly involved, who was kept very much in the background.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:36:59 sec] CL: Let's move on then cause that's not fair. When did you find out that you had to go to Detaille instead?

DG: Well virtually a day or two after that Peter Hooper says, 'let's get to work'. It was a beautiful summer, plenty of fine weather. We were using dinghies to get out to these little islands and I was helping him do the geology. He had done a fair bit through the winter, but I guess not a lot. Most of his work was done by dinghy, and in the summer, so I was helping him with that. He then sent me out to the Joubin Islands which is about a couple of hours in the Wynne-Edwards launch out to the west. He left me there eventually. I was working out there again doing a fair bit of geology so virtually before Nigel Procter for instance had even landed, I had done something like two or three weeks solid geology. Now that's more than a lot of people ever did whilst they were in the Antarctic.

And then news comes that I was to be transferred to Base W. I was out in the Joubin Islands and I said, 'Oh you know I might as well carry on here whilst I can. There was no definite time it was just that Adie had said that I should transfer so I carried on working about another week, it was probably about the end of, I've got all the dates but I can't remember them specifically, about the end of January, early February I guess when the Captain of the *John Biscoe* said, 'I want this fellow, he can't be out in the Joubin Islands, he must be in my ship, I'll be calling at such and such a time.' And he actually comes in and his launch, the *Biscoe's* launch comes and collects me so obviously there was a bit of requirement from Head Office, he was under orders there I would guess.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:39:29 sec] CL: Do you know what the rationale was?

DG: Well they wanted a geologist at Base W. It was fairly essential because it was a new base it had only been open the year before and also the geologist had suddenly resigned, Hedley Wright, who was due to stay there the following year so this was a great stroke of luck for me.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:40:02 sec] CL: Why did he resign, do you know?

DG: No. There was trouble. There was trouble both with head office, with FIDS that is, and with Port Stanley, or probably Port Stanley, so trouble on the base as well. So you'd have to ask him why he resigned.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:40:31 sec] CL: So you stepped into his shoes, to pick up the work he was doing?

DG: Doing. That's right yes.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:40:34 sec] CL: Why is doing geology in the Antarctic so important?

DG: It's a new thing. What we were doing was a geological reconnaissance. Exploring new territory where nothing has been known before. So everything is effectively new. We were under orders to look for mineral deposits, look for signs of.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:41:04 sec] CL: Commercial ones you mean?

DG: Oh yes. Oil, this sort of thing. This was all part of the thing. But most particularly it's the basic geology which you need to know and that will eventually possibly lead to the possibility of economic deposits. You could say there is an academic science in itself. But most of all geology is in the service of man I would say, not really very much cop without that.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:41:47 sec] CL: So what were you looking for particularly? What were your tasks?

DG: Just reconnaissance geology to look and see what the rocks were. Study them as far as possible. Collect samples for later study back in Birmingham.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:42:02 sec] CL: So what were you finding in Detaille?

DG: Well when we got to Detaille very much the same as the geology all the way down the Peninsula is roughly rather similar. But as an area – 100 miles by 100 miles, probably a bit less than that – the detail of that was what was necessary. So if you look at the geological map you know you got a part which is effectively my work

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:42:44 sec] CL: Were you finding anything which surprised you?

DG: Oh yes.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:42:50 sec] CL: Such as?

DG: In Detaille a lot of the rocks were igneous rocks. Particularly various sorts of granites and there was quite a lot of those which are still unique in fact I can't really understand why people haven't gone back and studied them further.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:43:13 sec] CL: You mean rocks that hadn't been found anywhere else?

DG: Oh yes. Other rocks were rather similar but certainly there's one group of islands which it would be well worth while going back to now, particularly with modern equipment and so on. It's quite surprising nobody appears to have been back. In fact that whole side of geology is rather declined. But you know effectively I have done the geological survey. Done what people did in the 19th century geological survey of Great Britain. George Barrow did a survey of the area around between here and Whitby. Same basis. He's published a memoir, published geological maps which are available, which we still use. All we can do is just improve and amend them a bit. So you know that applies. My and other people like Robin Curtis's or Peter Hooper's report stand as the geology of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:44:40 sec] CL: Did you think about why, did you theorise about why the rocks there should be so different from anywhere else?

DG: Oh yes. You know it's part and parcel, that goes back to any studies of geology. It goes back to things like Scott's geologist Raymond Priestley.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:44:58 sec] CL: What were your thoughts at the time?

DG: Well that would be very very complicated. But we were up in the forefront of the science of geology basically, there was a big argument going on at the time about the formation of granite type rocks.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:45:20 sec] CL: Is it granitisation?

DG: It's the theory of granitisation yes and there were a lot of people who regarded themselves as granitisers at the one end saying virtually that something could be made, you know, this table could be turned into granite, alchemy almost. And there were other people who said that no it was formed as magma that was actually intruded into the country rocks and at that time this argument was raging and Peter Hooper appeared to be a granitiser, now he tells me that he was just pulling my leg. Adie was very much the other way, he was downright magmatist. I had been taught by my supervisor Professor Coles Phillips who was also at Bristol that there was a sort of half way, nearer to being a magmatist than a granitiser but it was an intermediate position. And eventually Peter Hooper comes out with more or less that sort of position as well in his report. Which when we were at Anvers of course, he was still working down there and he came back and did a couple of years research at Birmingham under Adie well Adie certainly wouldn't have allowed him to publish a report which was granitising. I am sure it would never have got past him.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:47:09 sec] CL: In a nut shell granitisation was what? Was the idea of?

DG: Was the idea of turning an ordinary rock into a granite, you had to add certain elements like more aluminium say, or silica but essentially this could be done by dissemination of the element through the solid rock with heat and pressure and so on. And you know this has been proved to be something which may happen very deep down inside the Earth but doesn't normally happen under most geological circumstances. Mostly magmas formed and it then wells up through the crust and then in the case of granite it solidifies underground, in the case of the Iceland volcanic, volcano it blows and comes out of the surface. That's it put very very simply.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:48:19 sec] CL: Did you look for and find fossils?

DG: No but wouldn't expect to do so.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:48:26 sec] CL: It was all volcanic material?

DG: All volcanic or intrusive, bar igneous rocks. Obviously there were certain parties down in parts of Graham Land, people who were down say in Alexander Land or James Ross Island for instance - rather different kettle of fish. They've actually got sedimentary rocks, they've got fossils to look at, a different style of geology and - oh dear what's the name of the guy? I've forgotten - was with John Smith in Alexander Land a few years after me, but he made a very very good job of studying the Jurassic succession in Alexander Land. Somehow seemed to have fallen out with Adie for some reason, I don't know why. Perhaps I've just forgotten.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:49:45 sec] CL: Let's talk a bit about how it was down there. Obviously a lot of the work was done in the field, so you were forming work parties to go out into the field, you were sledging with dogs I guess at that time,

DG: Oh yes.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:49:59 sec] CL: How was that for somebody who had never climbed a mountain? How was that?

DG: Well the key thing about Base W, I mean I arrived at Base W sometime in February I suppose.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:50:14 sec] CL: Third of May.

DG: No it was earlier than that.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:50:17 sec] CL: Earlier than that OK.

DG: Wouldn't have been as late as May.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:50:23 sec] CL: Sorry, third of March.

DG: March and the key thing was the Base Leader Angus Erskine, charismatic chap, Lieutenant Commander, already experienced and with some very good new ideas and the first really key idea he had, as far as I was concerned, was not to adopt the standard FIDS practice

of having dog drivers and surveyors and geologists. What he said was, 'the surveyors and geologists will be the dog drivers', and that enabled the other members of the base, who were mostly meteorological assistants to come out with the drivers and be able to do survey and geology. Otherwise you'd have been limited to the dog drivers, and the surveyors and geologists. A small thing but that made a heck of a difference to me, 'cause I was going to be a dog driver. We arrived at Base W, all the stores, the usual thing, a certain amount of time. Angus was very keen to get sledging straight away, the dogs hadn't been out for many months because W was prone to the sea ice going out. It was on a little island in the middle of a fjord. Very very liable to katabatic hurricanes, so a small refuge hut was built on the main land about 10 miles to the east.

Angus, he organised that there should be this autumn sledging party. Four of us, 21 dogs, we were very short of dogs. The previous year there had been some pups but for one reason or another all bitches so he had I don't know, something like eight or nine bitches on the base. He'd bought some extra dogs down with him, dogs which other people didn't want incidentally so they were a poor lot. Including some which they didn't want for one reason or another particularly Bodger and Fluke, who'd been the trouble of Captain Anderson at Hope Bay. So anyway he was going to train the dogs, do a bit of autumn sledging, get things started. Then when the sea ice formed, we'd go back to base and we could then do quite a lot of survey from the base. And of course you know that forced me into getting properly organised and he provided the training obviously. He's already trained etc. etc. The fourth person was John Smith who was a Met Assistant, he'd spent a previous year I think at Signy. And so Jim Madell, the two surveyors, myself, with three teams proposed. Obviously Angus and Jim Madell were going to have the two dog teams and I was left with the girls.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:54:50 sec] CL: What was your team called?

DG: The Girls.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:54:54 sec] CL: Did you take to it?

DG: Oh yes. They served me extremely well. I mean they had their foibles, they were only a very light team of course but we were only operating in, we were never really very far from base. We weren't doing this sort of Scott / Adie-type, Fuchs-type activities you see, or at least I wasn't. Some of the others wanted to do that. But anyway we got the three teams more or less trained up in that period. Had our ups and downs. Angus wanted, the people the year before had managed to get up onto the Plateau, Murphy Glacier, we emulated them. Got ??? [Unintelligible] dog and the sledge rations up onto the plateau. Angus and Jim Madell then made a journey down to Base Y, left us to do a bit of geology and get back to the refuge hut. Which we eventually did then waited for the sea ice to form, which it did eventually and got ourselves back to Base.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:56:34 sec] CL: Well Detaille had a reputation for having unreliable sea ice.

DG: It was extremely unreliable.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:56:40 sec] CL: Did it hamper the working parties? Was it a constant problem?

DG: Yes it was – well no. It had been a problem the year before. We had to wait quite a long time at this refuge to get back. The sea ice did then form. I then went out for a couple of weeks or so with John Thorn to Hanusse Bay. I never kept very good records of what anybody else did or what happened at Base. So my own record is always usually just me and one other person. We then came back John Thorn taught me an awful lot as well about how to maintain equipment, which Angus wasn't quite so good at. I then went out on a sledging trip up to Darbel Bay again for two or three weeks, we probably had about a month's rations on the sledge I would think which was about what the girls were capable of. By that time we had nine girls rather than seven and this was with Ossie Connochie who was the radio operator - radio operator going out sledging, unheard of! This was Angus's big idea that the dog driver was there to take him.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:26 sec] CL: Who operates the radio whilst he was out in the field?

DG: Oh that was a difficulty and as you'll see it became a huge difficulty. Well the others could operate the radio, just, but they got a lot of help from Base Y, from what I gather. Restricted things, sort of minimised things. Obviously wouldn't have done anything like the amount of radio traffic that Ossie had done. Anyway we went out, we got up to the Darbel Islands and at one point or another discovered that he wanted, he was filming. So he was making a cinefilm of me! Unfortunately in the Darbel Islands we went into thin ice and the whole back of the sledge collapsed into the water, lost his cine equipment which was on the back, of course all camera equipment usually hoisted on the back of the, on the handle bars.

Anyway then we went on round doing a bit more geology. Started back to Lallemand to Base W got round onto the corner Cape Rey between Darbel Bay and Lallemand Fjord. Came up against a crack or lead about four or five feet wide, easily bridgeable by the sledge, get the dogs to jump over it. Didn't like that. It was getting late in the afternoon, go back a couple of miles, camp, set up our camp. Wake up in the middle of the night and I'm all wet because I'd gone through the sea ice with my heat of my body. But anyway not to bother about that. Get up. Pack up. Go back to the lead. It's now probably about 20 or 30 yards wide, no chance, and rapidly disappearing into the distance. So we obviously, I think we then got up onto an iceberg something like that. Get a better view. Found there was open water out beyond Cape Rey and into Lallemand Fjord. No chance. So go back to the Darbel Islands. Darbel Islands, the ship had put a cache of stores there which we could live off with help from killing seals. Incidentally we had no gun or anything, the easiest way to kill a seal is bop it on its nose with a geological hammer, did anybody ever tell you that? Much more a better way than shooting the poor thing.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:01:52 sec] CL: More efficient?

DG: More efficient. They just collapse. You don't put a knife in them. A lot of animals that's an easy way to kill them. Not that I'd do it now, it's amazing what you did then. People liked to shoot. There were guys on base who really wanted to spend time using up the 303

ammunition. But anyway. So anyway we ensconced ourselves on the Darbel Islands. Then made an effort to go north to Base J again came up with open water quite close to Base J, it was only a few miles away, there was no chance. So retired to the Darbel Islands still doing some geology. Might as well collect the samples whilst we're about it. See what was what. And lie up until the ship would come, we hope within two or three months. In fact because of one thing or another it was delayed more than that. Lying up in camp every now and again. We were in the midst of an adelic colony as well so there was quite a lot of noise, the dogs were there kicking up a fuss every now and again if a penguin got anywhere near them, terrific row going on. There was Angus and John Thorn! And they had made what I think is this amazing journey up from the refuge hut, up the Murphy Glacier, onto the Plateau, northwards along the Plateau, down a glacier, down into Darbel Bay.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:03:57 sec] CL: Looking for you?

DG: Coming for us – yes! Looking for us. They were expecting to find us at, I think Angus expected to find us actually on the mainland very close to the Darbel Islands. Which I suppose in retrospect I could have done. I could also have, bear in mind that as the dog driver I was totally in charge of that sub-group. Incidentally we didn't have a radio with us. There was a shortage, I think there were only two radios for the two surveyors, sledge radios. So I never went out with a radio that year. But anyway they were looking for us yes not having found us at the bottom of the glacier, they came out to the obvious next spot the...

Disc 1, Track 14 [1:05:11 sec] CL: Depot?

DG: Depot at the Darbel Islands. Found us. And we obviously packed up straight away, got us going and we all sledged back the same way round to the refuge hut. Open water of course, no chance really of getting back to base until the ship came. So I was actually out five months then eventually got back. The ship didn't come because it couldn't get through the heavy pack.

Disc 1, Track 14 [1:05:48 sec] CL: So the four of you were off base for that length of time?

DG: Yes, part of the time we were doing Angus's film have you seen the film? Probably. A few years ago now BAS published a DVD with parts of it is to do with conserving the area and taking all the equipment, removing everything all the waste and dismantling Base J in particular. But the fourth part is Angus's dog - he was very intent on making this film of teaching people how to drive dogs, in the FIDS style. So Ossie Connochie, John Thorn and myself, he was taking the film obviously, the other three of us are the stars, well the dogs are the stars.

Disc 1, Track 14 [1:07:05 sec] CL: Talking of films, let's take an intermission now.

Disc 2, Track 01 [0:00:05 sec] CL: Would you say the second year was happier than your first year?

DG: It was fantastic.

Disc 2, Track 01 [0:00:20 sec] CL: Why was that?

DG: The amount of work that was done. I'd had a pretty good first year but the second year was out of this world. The ice formed, there was a southerly hurricane and the ice did not go out. Obviously, knowing the background, I was convinced that it wasn't going to go out. No way would it go out; that enabled us. A second thing was that aerial photographs had arrived, done by Hunting's surveys the previous summer. The new Base Leader/Surveyor Brian Foote had put these together and had produced an approximate, well a fairly good but not the final edition sort of thing, but a good map of the area including the very big area now called Crystal Sound. And so these were factors which would enable geology to be done over that whole area by sledge - there would be no other way of ever doing it. Even now it would be difficult to do; I mean it would need the flipping research vessel to be standing by the geologist, with his dinghy, all the time. And they just haven't got the amount of money to do that. So everything was there to get a lot of geology done and it was done. And this enabled a really good appreciation of the Loubet Coast effectively. Geology and, well of course the survey could have been done later as well with modern methods but a lot of credit to Brian Foote as well.

Disc 2, Track 01 [0:02:50 sec] CL: So can you compare the qualities of Erskine and Foote, the two guys?

DG: They were very very different.

Disc 2, Track 01 [0:02:57 sec] CL: In what respect?

DG: Well Erskine was a polar explorer basically.

Disc 2, Track 01 [0:03:07 sec] CL: In the heroic period?

DG: Yes but also with a very good dash of being able to take in the needs of lesser persons. Extremely good, very charismatic as well. Brian was a very very good surveyor, he'd been on the Ordnance Survey UK. He was effective as a Base Leader he was more picky about keeping the place clean and tidy for instance. And he also was interested in doing good sledge journeys and so on. He didn't want to have much to do with dogs he preferred to go back to the old system of having a dog driver. But in his way he was very effective. I think the Base, everything went well on the Base with him. Without having this charismatic set up.

But with the ice conditions changing as they did then obviously Angus wouldn't have been so effective in that second year. He would have been wanting to go on a long Plateau journey, I am quite sure. That was the sort of thing which people still wanted to do in the second year - there was a lot of preparation work. Brian was intending to do a long lengthy Plateau journey northwards to parts of the Plateau which hadn't previously been reached. Which a small party eventually did, but I persuaded Brian to stay on the sea ice. Because it became so obvious that that's where the scientific work could be done then. And probably wouldn't be another opportunity in the future. And of course it would be we, us, who would be doing it. For our own personal benefit.

Disc 2, Track 02 [0:05:39 sec] CL: So the sea ice gave you access to all the cliffs and the coastal rocks?

DG: Well yes but particularly these little islands, the place is absolutely dotted, like Anvers, it was dotted with small islands. Mostly covered with little ice caps but with rocky outcrops around. And it gave us access to hoards, literally hoards of those. Initially I was out with one or two of the Met Assistants and again the Radio Officer Colin Johnson and Paddy who was one of the Met Assistants working. That went on, then Brian was more interested in doing, he was also doing the surveying at the same time, but he was also getting a third group of people to get depots laid up the glacier to get onto the Plateau. He was intending to go on a Plateau journey and it wasn't until quite late, probably November that I, in my opinion, I persuaded him to change his mind and alter the arrangement so that he and I stayed as the team on the sea ice and the other group went off on their Plateau journey. Which I think was probably the right thing to do.

Disc 2, Track 02 [0:07:20 sec] CL: How much geology could you do back in the hut once you'd got your samples together?

DG: I never had time really to do much in the hut. I could have done some, I probably should have done more but I was literally always busy. Well we didn't spend any time in the flipping hut. That year, once we were out, we eventually got back to Base sometime in, we were out roughly July to January. With very very short periods in the hut.

Disc 2, Track 02 [0:8:01 sec] CL: So how was that? Again here's a chap who'd never done any mountaineering and how was it that you spent so much time away from the security of base, you were in the field for such a long period of time?

DG: There was no problem. Not mountaineering no. Well the sea ice was fast - one was merely camping as you would in the UK. And one was dog sledging but there was no great problem with that. I mean obviously there was a fair bit of bad weather and lying up time. We did have our problems. We certainly got extremely tired at times because there being 24 hour more-or-less daylight and we had to travel at night because of the harder snow conditions - the surface would harden up a little bit. But there wasn't enough light to do the geology so you had to do the geology, the survey during the day. Between the two of those, if it snowed for a day or two and we had to lie up, so much the better because then we got a good night sleep. Or a good day's sleep I should say. We were very tired when we eventually got back to Base, I must admit. And obviously the ship was going to pick us up and take both Brian and myself and several of the other people on Base back to the UK. And we were thinking that the ship might arrive in late January so we came back to Base in late January. And I think at that point certainly I was tired and probably getting a little bit cheesed off. And looking forward to getting back home. And of course the ship did not come.

Disc 2, Track 03 [0:10:19 sec] CL: Well I was going to ask, we can talk about that now if you like - the escape from Detaille, tell me about that process then. The ship was due in March I believe, is that right?

DG: Well it was due probably, hopefully in late February.

Disc 2, Track 03 [0:10:33 sec] CL: Is this the *Biscoe* again?

DG: *Biscoe* yes.

Disc 2, Track 03 [0:10:36 sec] CL: What went wrong?

DG: Sea ice. The pack. And then the fast ice in Crystal Sound and in Lallemand Fjord and Darbel Bay. So eventually when the ship did get to about 25 miles away with the help of an American icebreaker, *Northwind* and *Edisto* too – which had already been helping it actually, or at least one of them had. When it did come they were out at the Sillard islands, about 25 miles out. And then, ‘right we will resupply the Base’, and, no, the first thing they do is a whole group of people who were due to take over from us arrive, numbers on the Base virtually goes up to 16, 17, 18 even more perhaps temporarily and they start trying to get the stores about 25 miles to the Base – a years’ supply – using a helicopter. Now helicopters in those days were very poor, little things, take only one or two persons, very small load, proved pretty useless. Dog sledges weren’t up to the amount of material and I know they had a tractor pulling a bigger sledge which also wasn’t up to the job. So there was no way that the Base was going to be resupplied. A lot of argy bargee between the ship, the captain would have been in overall control of it I’d imagine, the Base Leader Brian and the SecFIDS in Port Stanley. Obviously there were various plans afoot to how you could let people spend the whole year camping. And sort of close the hut down which were eventually decided as not being satisfactory. So time went on - several weeks mucking about - and eventually the decision suddenly to abandon – which was done.

I should say that there was a key reason which nobody seemed to want to know about as to why. The key thing was that there was not enough anthracite for the hut to be kept warm that whole year, there was very little anthracite left on Base. Now the Base should have had a whole year’s supply of anthracite that was the rule, i.e. so there was one year ahead and SecFIDS insisted that this was so, that ‘the Base has a whole year’s supply of anthracite you know what’s the matter? You don’t need any more anthracite.’ Brian Foote said, ‘we have no anthracite’. Now why was this? The reason was - that seemed to have got lost in the mist - is that when I first arrived at Base W they unloaded a whole year’s supply of anthracite into the scow and loaded it down and water flowed over it and it capsized and all the anthracite fell out into the sea, we lost a year’s supply in one moment, but two years before you see.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:15:34 sec] CL: And nobody had told?

DG: Well SecFIDS - this had not got recorded. Two years supply should have been unloaded rather than one, and that’s how it had actually happened.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:15:50 sec] CL: So Brian Foote had his way did he? His argument prevailed?

DG: His argument prevailed, yes of course. People realised there wasn’t, it didn’t seem practical that people should live in tents all year. So Brain Foote’s way prevailed and the

Captain decided that the Base had to be [evacuated]. Of course that's then done in a rush so you were told to virtually close the place down within a matter of 24 hours, something like that.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:16:25 sec] CL: The *Biscoe* must have been stuck out at sea, in the ice for quite some time.

DG: Oh yes, weeks, yes. Two or three weeks, I wouldn't like to say - you know I'd have to look up the diary to check that.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:16:37 sec] CL: Once the decision had been taken to...

DG: Once the decision had been taken to – no decision, various options thought about, various tries to resupply, an argument going on about anthracite, which is finally resolved – that there isn't any – and then a decision, either by the Captain or SecFIDS to abandon forthwith - meaning quick. So the place is left more or less in a state of operation, as you've seen in these pictures.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:17:18 sec] CL: So you all sledged out to the boat?

DG: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:17:21 sec] CL: And the men who were going to take over from you?

DG: Including them – the whole bally lot. We took out, well obviously, not even all our personal belongings.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:17:39 sec] CL: You took your samples, I presume?

DG: I took my samples yes. A load of samples came out. I left a case full of personal clothes for some reason or other – when I got back I claimed on the insurance. I got £30. A year later they actually came back. But the insurance company didn't want to know. I also left some quite important notes, inadvertently, I thought they were on somebody else's sledge. Which was a bad mistake on my part. You look after your own things. And when we got out to the ship they weren't on – he hadn't got them. They'd been left at the Base. He'd brought some other thing instead. So that was a bit unfortunate – but again I got those back one year afterwards so it didn't actually matter.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:18:39 sec] CL: So somebody got to Detaille the following year briefly?

DG: They got briefly to Detaille the following year and collected some of this gear - why they didn't completely take all key things out of the Base I don't know. They left all this reports and things lying around – seems a bit strange – they had the opportunity to do so.

Disc 2, Track 04 [0:19:11 sec] CL: There was an incident when you got to the boats when one of the dogs decided not to come with you.

DG: Yeah – I knew nothing about that. We got to the ship, there's the two icebreakers also there. The *Biscoe* was very crowded, obviously, so quite a big group of us. They got all the

dogs on board the *Biscoe*, they then allocated a group of us to go on the *Edisto*, an American Icebreaker, got up onto the *Edisto* and they showed me to a bunk and I went to sleep. And about 14 hours later, woke up, and got out on deck and found we were up near Base F, you know up in heavy pack with the *Edisto*. I'd been told about that later. Steve I think it was and the amazing journey to Horseshoe.

Disc 2, Track 05 [0:20:18 sec] CL: In the base reports in '57 and '56 it had been suggested as early as that, that Detaille wasn't a viable base really – so was it inevitable that it would be closed down?

DG: Well we considered, we were expecting for it to be resupplied, and you know we'd made all the plans for it to be an effective sledging base – the sledging activities were going to be mostly moved to the refuge hut and there was a viable route up to the Plateau which there wasn't for a long way up farther north – they had tried to get up to the Plateau in places and failed, so we had a viable route. And Angus had arranged for us to be set up in Darbel Bay as well on his second route up to the Plateau, he had two good routes onto the Plateau. So for doing the work on the Plateau and getting over to the east side of the Peninsula, there were good possibilities. Now admittedly there wasn't much geology to do on the west side – I'd virtually cleaned it out because of the good conditions – but getting over onto the east side would have been quite a big thing to do. I would have said that Base W had possibilities. On the other hand of course the ship was having trouble – well it hadn't had trouble previously, the reason being that the ice had gone out. Having the ice staying in and the ship not getting there was a new one on them I think.

Disc 2, Track 05 [0:22:20 sec] CL: So was it a surprise then to learn then that Erskine in his end of year report recommended the closure of the hut in '57?

DG: Well he would have recommended it on the basis that yes the hut was unreliable – yes very definitely at that stage. But he wouldn't have recommended – he I'm sure would have wanted refuge huts at Darbel Bay and the one on the east side of Lallemand Fjord, continue to be used. He had plans for Darbel Bay hut – or super refuge I should say. So I think you are thinking of two slightly different things. Detaille Island was very unsatisfactory site for a hut, yes, but the area needed to be looked at and we had two good accessible ways onto the Plateau with a possibility of getting over onto the east side, which we'd hardly touched. Adie had just gone past down there and collected a few samples here and there but not very much.

Disc 2, Track 05 [0:23:35 sec] CL: One or two specific things to ask you about if I may Denis – you had somewhat of a lucky escape quite early on in the time you were there, you had to spend two nights in a snow hole, and that was with John Smith as well?

DG: That was with John Smith, yes.

Disc 2, Track 05 [0:23:51 sec] CL: There seem to be two John Smiths in the Antarctic? [Note by Andy Smith: There were two Met men called John Smith. The one here (JP Smith) was at Base B (not H) in his first year, then W with Goldring in '57, then 1961 at Fossil Bluff. The other one (JA Smith) was at Halley Bay in 1958 (with IGYE) and stayed on for the first year

of FIDS at Halley (1959) Note by Alan Carroll: There was another John Smith around this time – a DEM at Deception in 1954, and Lockroy in 1956.]

DG: Yes, well he went down there twice.

Disc 2, Track 05 [0:24:00 sec] CL: This was the same chap who was at Fossil Bluff?

DG: Yes, it's the same chap. I think he spent the first year at Signy Island, second year at Base W, and then he came down a few years later – and spent the year, more-or-less at Fossil Bluff, so I think for just one year.

Disc 2, Track 05 [0:24:22 sec] CL: I know who you mean. So tell me about these two nights in a snow hole?

DG: Angus and Jim Madell had left us to do some geology and then make our way back to the Base so we made our own way back down the Murphy Glacier – we did a bit of geology on a nice fine day and then got caught in a storm, which made us lie up for something like eight or nine days. Went onto half rations, this sort of thing. Then on a pretty bad day, set off back down the glacier. Got so far, looking for a small depot. Couldn't find it. Camped and then made a bad mistake of taking a dog team out – which was already tired and had been on half rations – looking for the depot, away from the tent. Found the depot, which was just sticking up a few inches. A tent pole, the flag pole, which we'd put there, something like 5 or 6 feet of snow on top of it. Dug it out and then of course we just couldn't get back to the camp. Which was only a mile or so back I imagine – so we spent a couple of nights out. We were very lucky in that the conditions were; it was a northerly so not all that cold, probably minus ten, about 20 Fahrenheit, something like that. It was the southerlies get really cold. Managed to dig ourselves in and eat some. Couldn't open our own ration boxes, cause we didn't have the tool to do it, what do you call it? Spanner thing that you used to get the wire off? But we could open the dog boxes so we ate some NutriCan. It cleared up sufficiently after a couple of days. And we managed to find and get back to the camp – and that was snowed up by the time we got back. But I think we were lucky.

Disc 2, Track 06 [0:27:01 sec] CL: Did you think you were lucky at that time, or were you concerned for your safety?

DG: Not particularly, no. No I don't think so. I don't think it was no different to someone being up on Striding Edge or somewhere in a bad storm. In fact better than that – because at least we had some reasonably dry gear and windproofs and so on – so I don't know what might have happened. We were on the whole lucky. If it had got a lot colder then we should probably have been in Queer Street. Course we were trying not go to sleep, this sort of thing. We were pretty cold by the time we got back to the camp. Certainly shivering a lot. I think we might even have been OK. We should never have left the camp. The tent and the sleeping bags was the all important thing. We weren't all that far, we were about 20 miles or so from the refuge hut, so we could probably have skied walked back, I think John had broken a ski, so I think that was probably wouldn't have helped – we probably would have walked back to the refuge hut.

Disc 2, Track 06 [0:28:47 sec] CL: Was there a dressing down for your mistakes when you got back?

DG: Oh no no.

Disc 2, Track 06 [0:28:55 sec] CL: No Base Leader inquiry?

DG: No Angus, I at least, I don't know about John, but I came back saying, 'this adventure', you know it was like a Scott-like activity. And you had to write a report and it would go into the monthly report for FIDS. Angus said 'Oh no no you mustn't do that, it will upset your parents, you see, relatives'. So we did actually write a report but that never went, as far as I know, back to SecFIDS and I would guess Fuchs got hold of it later on because there is mentioned in a book about it – it's a trifling thing – you must realise I mean that three guys were lost the following year.

Disc 2, Track 06 [0:29:52 sec] CL: Well I was going to come to that next. What are your thoughts on the loss of Dave Statham, Stan Black and Geoff Stride on the sea ice round the Dion Islands?

DG: Well I don't know what happened there.

Disc 2, Track 07 [0:30:04 sec] CL: Was it after your time?

DG: No, it was in our second year. The sea ice was in the process of forming, it was before the great storm I was talking about, and the sea ice in Lallemand Fjord and come and gone three or four times. And each time people were keen to go out. You could go out and do a bit of sledging even around the Island, sort of circling round up to a mile or so out and shoot the odd seal, that sort of thing. But when it come to actually going out on a journey, no! I suppose I was probably the most experienced person on the Base more so than Brian for he'd spent the year at Anvers, and if anybody was to go out on the sea ice they were not to camp on it. That was most important. So you know we were pretty horrified when we learnt that these three guys had disappeared. We, Brian, wanted to help as much as he could and we had another, a sledging party from Base, like the previous year this group had been put down refuge. That second year a group had been put down, taken by the *Biscoe* and put down at the south end of Lallemand Fjord and they were going to back to Base Y refuge hut and they were there. They actually helped in looking for the people who had gone out to the Dion Islands. Help the other Base Y personnel.

Brian also said that we must help so we immediately, I went down into the South of Lallemand Fjord, Brian went into Hanusse Bay but on the extremely off chance that we might find for instance dogs and throw some light on this. I don't think there was any chance of finding the people. They had gone out in really a very different direction. There was a place called The Gullet between Adelaide Island and The Arrowsmith Peninsula which is nearly always open water and I don't think anyone would have got through there. So we helped a bit but we weren't out very long, about a week something like that, but we very carefully camped on islets, on solid rock. We reckoned that we'd be reasonably safe up on a little island well not very much above sea level, but probably sufficient. And not on the sea ice.

And then it was after that that there was this huge storm and the ice did not go out and it was at that point I realised that things had changed and we'd be OK. And from that point we camped on sea ice. And we even went out to the Biscoe Islands to the Chilean refuge hut out there – much to Brian's... he was very upset about that.

Disc 2, Track 07 [0:34:05 sec] CL: Why was that?

DG: Well going into a foreign – an enemy's – refuge hut it was obviously as Brian, Base Leader, it was against the political rules. Down there it seemed to be a bit different.

Disc 2, Track 07 [0:34:33 sec] CL: Was there any discussion about the three men, afterwards not exactly a post mortem but what went wrong and why – how this should be adapted for the future?

DG: Oh yes, very much so. But we'd got our rules by then effectively. You did not go onto the sea ice until you were reasonably assured that it was going to stick. Certainly in Lallemand Fjord and anywhere else for that matter. They had virtually the same sort of set up really. I mean they should not have, they must have either camped on the sea ice or camped on a very low beach or something like that – where they would be subject to the sea. But I am just... We tried to help as much as we could. Our sledge party that was down in that area did help quite a bit – John Rothera was with that little group. Who later has become so famous, his name.

Disc 2, Track 08 [0:35:40 sec] CL: Did it leave a pall over Graham Land, that incident? Did it change the mood on your base?

DG: No. No people seemed to get over it very very quickly. I think if the sea ice had continued to be like it had been in previous years, there would probably have been a problem. But with the sea ice being so good – and people were most intent on making these Plateau journeys – that seemed to be what most of the people wanted to do. Plateau journey was something which was a bit of a fixation.

Disc 2, Track 08 [0:36:38 sec] CL: You didn't do any breeding of dogs.

DG: Oh yes we did.

Disc 2, Track 08 [0:36:41 sec] CL: I thought you had a new policy at that point – of no breeding except at the central point?

DG: No, that was being set up. It started, two of our bitches were going to go to a breeding centre. I should say that I would guess that virtually 2/3^{rds} of the conversation at the Base was to do with dogs. And dog things including of course breeding things.

Disc 2, Track 08 [0:37:23 sec] CL: So there had been discussion about this plan to do central breeding? Was it well received?

DG: Oh yes it was, on the whole.

Disc 2, Track 08 [0:37:31 sec] CL: Why was that?

DG: I don't think I can really remember too much about that – I mean by that time we had a huge number of dogs. We had something like five nine dogs teams. We had gone up from this poor something like 21 plus a few when I started, in the previous year even fewer. Up to something over 40 or so. So there was plenty of discussion about that – most of the breeding was inadvertent breeding. Dogs getting loose. Just why a breeding centre was necessary...! [Laughs].

Disc 2, Track 08 [0:38:22 sec] CL: They can manage without can they?

DG: Well dogs can manage all that themselves, perfectly well! But anyway we like to think we were going along with it. Certainly there was scope for improvement of the dogs. In particular the trait of being timid was my main problem. There were five bitches that had been born the previous year when the hut was being constructed and they had been more-or-less let loose to find their own way of things whilst people built the hut and got things going – weren't really brought under human control properly for that whole time and they ended up being, two or three of them, would get loose, run off and not come back. Very very timid of people which dogs shouldn't be etc. etc. so up on the glacier for instance there was one dog Milly she was very adept at getting out of her harness and find any way escaping and going buzzing off and distracting the team this sort of thing. To try and avoid that particular sort of trait was something which was a long term thing. Not something that I could cope with – but it obviously something that FIDS should have paid attention to. There were other traits as well. Like having nice big burly dogs like Bodger and Fluke to pull big heavy loads.

Disc 2, Track 09 [0:40:05 sec] CL: There was a note in the paperwork that I sent about Minerva giving birth to six pups. They all died.

DG: Well yes. This was up in the glacier. John Smith and I had this couple of days out on the ice and there had been inadvertent mating with the dog getting loose when Minerva was on heat, earlier when we were at, in the vicinity of the refuge hut. I think another dog had been taken back to Detaille earlier when Ossie Connochie and David MacDowell had come over at great personal risk, over in the dingy from Detaille to the refuge. But it wasn't possible to leave Minerva obviously at the refuge, neither was it possible to take her back to the base so she came with us on Angus's Plateau journey and gave birth on the Plateau in the middle of a nine or 10 day blow so there was just no chance for them. Sad that but I don't know – there was no other decision that could have been made. I didn't make any decision, it was Angus who was in charge. But I would have done the same if I'd been him. There was nothing else that could have been done really, or, not to go.

Disc 2, Track 09 [0:42:19 sec] CL: Well quite. Were there other field incidents that you recall? Dodgy moments or odd moments?

DG: Not really – not a lot. There were often quite amusing incidents. Well as I said, Ossie Connochie discovered very quickly that he was going to make a film – I have never seen this film – it must exist. But for some reason or another – I have never contacted him – of course

he came away the year before me. What happened to the film I don't know. But we were going to sledge out to Darbel Bay, first night we distrusted the sea ice so camped up on Mist Island about 10 miles north of the base hut and I was busy 'well I going to make a film of you making camp' – instead of - two of us were supposed to make camp. Which admittedly he did later on, to be fair to him, but that particular, I was doing the whole job, of erecting the camp, feeding the dogs, doing everything, he's busy filming this. At some stage or another I walk backwards, presumably to put in a tent peg or something, and promptly fell into a crevasse backwards. Apparently this is uproariously funny - according to my brother, who did see the film.

On another occasion, I mean this often happens actually, but Brian and myself, sledging along, on our skis each side of the sledge, dogs going along, a nice hard surface. And suddenly I slipped or something and left Brian with the dogs going, 'stop stop stop!' All you got to do is sledge over smartly and they will stop. But he just went on and on into the distance and there was me, ending up about half a mile behind, shouting and cursing the Base Leader. Which he didn't much like, but we got over that.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:45:15 sec] CL: Brian Foote in his reports mentions quite a few shortages that he was finding frustrating and cause of stress he thought to the camp. Short of rope, ice axes, harnesses, safety gear and also a shortage of seals as well because you had so many dogs. Do you remember those problems?

DG: Yes. Well I can remember him complaining about the shortages. I don't know how they had arisen probably because FIDS hadn't supplied enough. I would guess. I mean, looking at it now, they were on obviously a budget and certainly there were shortages of ice axes – we were probably doing so much sledging that FIDS just hadn't allowed for all this. They might have done at Hope Bay but Base W was regarded as a meteorological base as well. The seals was a problem, there just weren't enough seals turning up in the vicinity of the Base and obviously, although we had a dingy, the dinghies weren't very satisfactory. The Seagull engines – there was something wrong with them and I've forgotten quite what it was. They were always conking out in one way or another and there were few seals, the seals just didn't seem to like to come near our Base. The *Biscoe* would shoot: they actually shot 50 or 100 seals and bring them to the Base. I've got a note about even at Anvers Island, going out and shooting seals and they were for Base W which had a shortage of seals, and of course the large dog population grew. He was quite right to make those comments.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:47:34 sec] CL: Do you think these shortages generated stress in the party or the hut? Or was it all very relaxed?

DG: I don't know. I don't know much about the other people in the hut. There so little, in the field so much with one person. Certain there was an awful lot of argy bargee in that period when the ship was close but before that everybody seemed to be reasonably happy. As Base Leader it was his responsibility to draw attention to any shortage – I think I would have done the same if I was him. But I was not the Base Leader so I wasn't worried too much about shortages, particularly shortages for the following year.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:48:34 sec] CL: For somebody who wasn't that bothered about going, how would you rate the Antarctic as an episode in your life?

DG: Oh I enjoyed it, very much. I never wanted to go back again. I wouldn't have done what John Smith did. But you can never tell just what was going to happen down there.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:49:01 sec] CL: Do you think it shaped your life? Or changed your personality, your attitude in any way?

DG: I wouldn't have said so, no. I would have said not.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:49:19 sec] CL: So you came back and had a couple of years writing up your results?

DG: No, one. One year, but I had my PhD already so I didn't need to do more than a year writing up and providing what is now a classic report. Like others of that vintage; Peter Hooper's or Robin Curtis's and so on. Get back to what I originally said; very lucky to be able to do that. If someone comes down and re-does it now which could be done, they'd see everything very different and so on but that would be the classic report. I am quite happy with that. Any mistake – and there are hoards of mistakes, inevitably, can be glossed over just in the same way that Sir Raymond Priestley's work can be glossed over.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:50:21 sec] CL: You were looking for a job then when you finished your reports?

DG: Well yeh, looking for a job a year after I got back, in 1960.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:50:36 sec] CL: What happened?

DG: I was looking around, got The Prof, get back to The Prof, find you a job. One opportunity; Canberra Australia with the Geophysical Laboratory. Didn't like that much, so 'OK he's done his job, he's tried to find you a job. That's it'. Which, think of that in comparison with what happens now? Don't suppose the Profs even know my grandson, probably hasn't even met him but such a difference.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:51:16 sec] CL: So where did you get to work?

DG: Well I tried one or two other places, I would have liked to have been a lecturer, so I tried a lectureship for one or two places but then there was an offer of a job with the United Steel Company with a guy called Dr Bill Davies up in Rotherham. A definite offer. My salary had then gone up with FIDS gone up to £700 a year, with the PhD that had happened in the Antarctic. It was quite amusing 'cause every now and again coded messages came for the Base Leader, so he was out sledging and I was at Base for a little while so it was my job to decode the message, decode a message at great length, taking ages and ages to do it and it ends up 'Denis Goldring to receive £200 increase salary' or something, like playing Monopoly! Very nice. But there was an offer for a job for about £1000 a year which was about an assistant lecturer's salary, a bit more actually with United Steels at Rotherham.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:52:59 sec] CL: Using your geology?

DG: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:53:02 sec] CL: Looking for iron ores?

DG: Yes well it was basically using my petrology. We were going to look at all the rough stuff that metallurgists don't like looking at – they only like looking at stainless steel or alloys if possible - that's their sort of University upbringing. So anything like coke, coal, slag, iron ore, limestone, anything, all the raw materials that came into United Steels and the materials going in as far as the blast furnace or even out of the blast furnace, like slag and so on under his wing. So I wasn't going to be a field geologist I was going to be somebody who was basically looking under the microscope, with some field work. But more importantly a reasonable salary, a proper pension of course, not that I took any notice of that at that time. But I thought I might eventually become a lecturer but I've always just stayed with the steel industry.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:54:20 sec] CL: There is news now that Detaile is to be preserved as a monument – you alluded to it earlier – with several artefacts from your era still inside there.

DG: Well they are, yeah.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:54:32 sec] CL: How do you feel about that?

DG: I'm quite happy. I think, I hadn't realised that there were any official documents - there might not be. I mean a lot of the documents might just be Met data sheets or something like that. Which are not really relevant but I would have thought that somebody should remove, have a look through any documentation that was there, because any Tom, Dick and Harry can go and visit at the place can't they?

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:05 sec] CL: Well they have to get there first.

DG: Well yachts come in, there has been quite a number of yachts over the years – it's quite possible to get there. So, but otherwise it's alright. I wouldn't have minded if it had just got lost quite honestly. Doesn't really matter much to me.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:30 sec] CL: You kept a diary Denis whilst you were down there? Tell me a bit about the writing of the diary, what were you recording? Recording your finds or your personal feelings?

DG: Not much about my personal feelings at all, it's about mostly just events, the weather at that time, that sort of thing. What happened. I do know when I was out, and where I was, there's the field notebooks as well which of course are held by BAS, they recall all the geology and they were given up at, I have never seen those again. Since I left Birmingham. And cause the report was written, I have never done any further work, never had the opportunity to anyway. Neither has anybody else, which they might have done, they might have worked on my samples.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:56:50 sec] CL: But the diaries, they were left at Detaille weren't they?

DG: No, there's no diaries at Detaille. I think there's probably reports. We always wrote reports. We wrote sledging reports so for instance, and sometimes special reports and so there would be a hand written one of these and then we would have typed, in some cases typed them up. There would be a few carbon copies. I think it would be that sort of thing. They would not be any actual diaries.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:57:46 sec] CL: Well we will stop the conversation here and I am going to pass you two pages photocopied from notes or notebooks that you left at Detaille and were rescued in the 1990s by Antarctic Heritage Trust which were then brought back to Britain at that point. And there they are. And there is a typed up version in Bergy Bits.

DG: This was published earlier this year wasn't it?

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:58:17 sec] CL: So these aren't diaries? These are notebooks at the time?

DG: There is a gap in the diary, and I think that's probably what this is.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:58:17 sec] CL: Well there you are Denis, there's your missing ???[unintelligible] thank you very much.

Nearest time code	Interesting notes
Disc 1, Track 2 [0:07:49 sec]	Sir Raymond Priestley who had been with Captain Scott, recruiting for FIDS. Andy Smith says: Priestley was born in 1886 so would have been 67 in 1953, 10 years younger than Goldring at the time of the interview. He was with Shackleton (on the Nimrod expedition) and well as with Scott.
Disc 1, Track 3 [0:12:53 sec]	Being interviewed by Ray Adie
Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:32 sec]	Going to Antarctica to delay doing National Service
Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:38 sec]	Maiden voyage of the <i>John Biscoe</i>
Disc 1, Track 7 [0:31:32 sec]	Duke of Edinburgh and <i>Britannia</i> in Antarctica
Disc 2, Track 03 [0:10:36 sec]	American icebreakers <i>Northwind</i> and <i>Edisto</i>
Disc 2, Track 03 [0:10:36 sec]	The evacuation of Base and the incident of losing a year's worth of anthracite fuel into the sea
Disc 2, Track 05 [0:24:22 sec]	Spending two nights in a snow hole
Disc 2, Track 06 [0:29:52 sec]	Loss of Dave Statham, Stan Black and Geoff Stride on the sea ice

Nearest time code	Clips
Disc 1, Track 2 [0:08:31 sec]	Sir Raymond Priestley comes round – who was with Scott of course, very old man by then, at that time - well I don't know probably younger then than I am now, anyway he was old – recruiting for FIDS, sees the Prof, the Prof. then looks through his list of students and, 'Oh, Denis Goldring, I think he might be interested, I think he would be suitable'. So I then had a short chat with Sir Raymond Priestley, I'm not particularly interested myself. Sounds too much like Scott.
Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:41 sec]	We were on the <i>John Biscoe</i> , it was her maiden voyage. She was brand new and the amusing thing was that I put my suit in the wardrobe in the cabin and a day or two later took it out for some reason or another and it had got wet paint all over it. It hadn't dried because obviously it was in a confined space.
Disc 1, Track 7 [0:35:23 sec]	We were allowed to shake hands with the Duke but that was all. It was the others who gave him his sledge ride, took him up to the various bird breeding colonies, Anvers was a good place for that. And some guys came up at some point; the Duke had gone up the hill to presumably see something like the petrels or skewers or something like that and guys came up. Somebody phoned him from Buckingham Palace so they had to get off the ship, go ashore and cart this fairly heavy gear up the hill to so he could answer the flipping phone, presumably the Queen!
Disc 2, Track 05 [0:24:25 sec]	Angus and Jim Madell had left us to do some geology and then make our way back to the Base so we made our own way back down the Murphy Glacier – we did a bit of geology on a nice fine day and then got caught in a storm, which made us lie up for something like eight or nine days. Went onto half rations, this sort of thing. Then on a pretty bad day, set off back down the glacier. Got so far, looking for a small depot. Couldn't find it. Camped and then made a bad mistake of taking a dog team out – which was already tired and had been on half rations – looking for the depot, away from the tent. Found the depot, which was just sticking up a few inches. A tent pole, the flag pole, which we'd put there, something like 5 or 6 feet of snow on top of it. Dug it out and then of course we just couldn't get back to the camp. Which was only a mile or so back I imagine – so we spent a couple of nights out. We were very lucky in that the conditions were; it was a northerly so not all that cold, probably minus ten, about 20 Fahrenheit, something like that. It was the southerlies get really cold. Managed to dig ourselves in and eat some. Couldn't open our own ration boxes, cause we didn't have the tool to do it, what do you call it? Spanner thing that you used to get the wire off? But we could open the dog boxes so we ate some NutriCan. It cleared up sufficiently after a couple of days. And we managed to find and get back to the camp – and that was snowed up by the time we got back. But I think we were lucky.

