

PETER CLARKSON

Edited transcript of a recording of Peter Clarkson interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee at British Antarctic Survey, Cambridge on 13th October 2010. Transcribed by Andy Smith, 26th December 2010.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:01] Chris Eldon Lee: *This is Peter Clarkson recorded at the BAS headquarters in Cambridge by Chris Eldon Lee on the 13th of October 2010. Peter Clarkson, Part One.*

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:12] Peter Clarkson: My name is Peter David Clarkson and I was born in Worcester Park in Surrey, although it is entered on my birth certificate as Wimbledon (Wimbledon, Surrey, which it isn't any more), on the 19th of June 1945.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *What sort of background do you have? What were your parents engaged in?*

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:00:34] Peter Clarkson: My father, at the time, his occupation on my birth certificate was a toolmaker, but he worked for his father along with his two brothers and eventually a brother in law in a sheet metal working company. They used to make galvanised hot water tanks. Then when his father retired or died, my father became the managing director. My mother, she was worked for the Post Office during the war. Then she married my father. Curiously, she was the younger sister of two, and her elder sister had married my father's elder brother, so some of my cousins are about as closely related as it is possible to be without actually having the same parents. They married; I do not know whether she was working then or not. They managed to buy a house in Ewell in Surrey and three years later, approximately, I was born. When they were looking for a house, it was during the war and they were offered one house, a detached house, which they thought was quite a good choice because they were not expecting to be able to afford anything better than a semi. When they went to see it, they discovered that it had been 'detached' by a bomb! So estate agents have not changed.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:02:21] Chris Eldon Lee: *Would you have gone to the ordinary state school or would you have a private education?*

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:02:27] Peter Clarkson: I had a private education: a series of preparatory type schools, ending up, when I was ten, and my brother (he would have been about 7), we were packed off to a boarding preparatory school, I think probably because my parents within three years got divorced. I think although they felt that I was not getting an education at the school I was at, I have always had a sneaking suspicion that it was probably to keep us away from the domestic crises that were cropping up. Then in 1958 I went to Epsom College, the public school on the edge of Epsom Downs. I was there for just under six years, I suppose. That was where I first became aware of the Antarctic, I thought.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:03:31] Chris Eldon Lee: *Epsom College is known for producing doctors, not geologists, isn't it?*

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:03:34] Peter Clarkson: Yes, it is. Why I came out as a geologist, which was very very rare. I can only think of one other who became a geologist. Yes, a lot of my friends have since become doctors. They came from medical families. Some of them were orphans, or at least where the father usually had died. They could be given foundation scholarships; their entire education was paid for. Yes, it was something unusual.

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:04:10] Chris Eldon Lee: *So what turned you on to geology?*

Disc 1, Track 1 [0:04:12] Peter Clarkson: I did all the usual raft of O-levels, and I thought 'I am not a cultured person. There is no way I am going to go into the Arts side; literature or things like that. It is going to have to be science' (which interested me). Then I went to the sixth form to do maths, physics and chemistry; no biology, unfortunately. While I was there, having enjoyed physical geography, but not the political and social geography side, I discovered that there was a science called geology that brought all these things together and I thought 'I will give it a go.' I was very lucky. I got into the University of Durham and never looked back, really.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:05:02] Chris Eldon Lee: *You mentioned in passing, and I stopped you from telling me, about your first brush with the Antarctic.*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:05:08] Peter Clarkson: Yes, I always remembered following Sir Vivian Fuchs' Trans Antarctic Expedition, then I read the book and I thought 'This is fantastic.' Then while I was at Epsom they had a book in the chemistry library called *The Principles of Physical Geology* by Arthur Holmes, who at one time, as it happens, was the prof of geology at Durham, but there was a particular photograph in there of part of the Sør Rondane Mountains in Dronning Maud Land, these huge vertical cliffs about 800 metres high. It is a fabulous photograph and when you read the caption, it says 'The arrow denotes the dog team.' Well you have got to look really hard to see the arrow, let alone the dog team. I saw this and I thought 'Wow. This is fantastic.' Then when I got up to Durham I discovered that there was an outfit called the British Antarctic Survey which actually paid for you to go to the Antarctic. I got my first taste of the polar regions, I suppose, almost, when I was in the sixth form. There was a master who was a member of the Alpine Club and he had got some money to take some boys to Iceland to see if a group of mountains were climbable. I do not know how it happened now but I went on the trip and I thought 'Yes, this is great.'

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:06:43] Chris Eldon Lee: *Had you been the adventurous type, tree climbing and so on? Boy Scouts?*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:06:47] Peter Clarkson: I suppose in a way, yes. Well no, I had been a Wolf Cub and then when I went to Epsom I did not join the Boy Scouts for some reason but we were all drafted into the CCF and we had to do basic training in the army section and then I opted for the RAF section. I would have gone for the naval section if they had had one but they didn't so I went to the RAF section and that was more fun because you had this string back glider that you used to assemble on a Friday afternoon and launch down the playing fields. That was good fun, better than marching round the flipping quadrangle all day.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:07:25] Chris Eldon Lee: *When did you write your letter to BAS then? That is what happened in the end.*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:07:29] Peter Clarkson: Oh I suppose it was Bill Sloman came up to Durham on the recruiting round and I went to the lecture and I thought 'This sounds good.' So I applied for a job. I was really very lucky to get it. It was really the only job I applied for. The only other letter I wrote was to the professor of geology in Iceland, to see whether they had got any vacancies. It was only two or three years ago that found out that the Icelandic geology department was two people at the time, and not likely to grow any bigger. So that was that and I went down to London for interview. I was interviewed by Bill Sloman and Ray Adie and obviously I satisfied them.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:08:28] Chris Eldon Lee: *Do you remember much about that interview?*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:08:30] Peter Clarkson: Yes, I can remember Ray Adie asking me if I knew how a proton precession magnetometer worked and I said 'Well I have not got to that stage in my revision yet.' And the other question: he said 'If you found lead minerals in a mineral vein, what else would you expect to find with them?' So I reeled off two or three other minerals and then my mind went blank and I just said 'And of course many of the other gangue minerals that we find in the Northern Pennine Orefield' and obviously he accepted that.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:12] Chris Eldon Lee: *Was it strenuous, this interview, or did you feel as though perhaps that the job was in the bag already?*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:17] Peter Clarkson: Oh I certainly never felt that, but no, I do not think it was a particularly strenuous interview.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:24] Chris Eldon Lee: *What do you make of those two men, because their names are quite famous in BAS circles, Bill Sloman and Ray Adie.*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:30] Peter Clarkson: That is right.

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:31] Chris Eldon Lee: *What are your memories of those two chaps?*

Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:33] Peter Clarkson: Ray Adie was a strange man. He became my boss of course for many years. He seemed to find it very difficult to relate to his staff. He was always very formal. It was always 'Dr Adie' and 'Clarkson'. I remember an occasion on the *Bransfield* once, when we were having a drink in the lounge after dinner and Ray came down from the wardroom. He walked across to us and somebody pulled a chair up, thrust a pint of beer in his hand. He looked round the assembled company – there were all sorts of people there: GAs cooks and so on. He said 'Hello, Fred. Hello, Jim' and he looked and me and he said 'Hello, Clarkson.' He could not get out of it and it was a great pity really because I think he would have had a great deal more respect from us if he had been a little bit easier and more open with us. Sad really.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:10:38] Peter Clarkson: He had done some very good geology in his time, but that was all he did. After that, his original time South, at Hope Bay and Stonington Island, he never really did any more geology. He used to go to conferences and he usually gave a review paper. One American was overheard coming up to him after one of his presentations and saying ‘Excellent presentation, Ray. Same old stuff though.’ Unfortunately in 1977, at a science conference in Wisconsin, and I think it was Bob Pankhurst – who by that time had got a large number of dates on the granites and so on of the Antarctic Peninsula and shown that they were nearly all mesozoic in age and that Ray’s paleozoic basement just really did not fit. At the end of the paper he got up, turned on his heel and walked out. He could have redeemed everything really if he had stood up and said ‘It is great, at last, to get some dates on these rocks. We now find really how old they are, and unfortunately my early ideas no longer hold water. But that is because we have new data; the science has advanced.’ Unfortunately he did not take that view.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:12:21] Chris Eldon Lee: *When you say he might have had more respect then, can you elaborate on that slightly from the point of view of the people working under him? Was he...That suggests a kind of proud man, doesn't it?*

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:12:29] Peter Clarkson: Yes, he was, I think. I mean, he had a lot to be proud of. In many ways, the most prescient paper he ever wrote was about the Falkland Islands. Just based on the geology that he did in the Falkland Islands and what he had done in South Africa before he came to Britain, he suggested that the Falkland Islands had originally been rotated through 180 degrees and locked into a position just east of South Africa. Then when the Gondwana super-continent broke up, they got moved across to South America. It was a paper that, I think it was in the *Geological Magazine*, but nobody paid a great deal of attention to it at the time, which was a great pity, but then plate tectonics had not really been invented then, and a lot of people still did not believe in continental drift.

Disc 1, Track 3 [0:13:35] Peter Clarkson: Then probably in the late ‘80s a group from Oxford Brookes University had gone down to the Falkland Islands to do some paleomagnetic work. And the chap – I cannot remember his name – who was leading the trip, when he had got some results, he came across here and was talking to Mike Thompson, and he said ‘We have got something really good here.’ We are able to show that the Falkland Islands have been translated and rotated, and nobody has ever said that before. Mike said ‘Well actually...’ and leant out to his bookcase and pulled out Ray’s paper. Yes, it was a pity. I think if he had not tried... I mean one of the strange things that he said to the new Fidlits, the new geology people – which did not really affect me because I did not go to the Peninsula initially – was ‘I don’t want you talking to these other people who have just come back from the Antarctic, because you will get pre-conceived ideas.’ It was almost as if every one was expected to go down there for the first time and work in a total vacuum. That was silly. Of course we did talk to the others and we found out an awful lot of useful things. But a shame in many ways.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:15:04] Chris Eldon Lee: *What about Bill Sloman? Every Fid I talk to was hand-picked by Bill Sloman, it seems.*

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:15:12] Peter Clarkson: Yes. I had tremendous respect for Bill. His personnel selection was almost faultless. He made, inevitably, one or two mistakes but they were very very rare. But then I have to say, on the other hand, that I never quite trusted Bill in certain respects. There was an unfortunate case in the 1977/78 season when I had gone back to the Shackleton Range. This time we were using Twin Otters. We were working out of the Argentine base at General Belgrano, using it as a staging post, and for a whole series of reasons, I was the only one who came home. The other three had to spend the winter at Belgrano, which upset me very very greatly. We had said we would stay together, but when the pilot was leaving with the first load, he said 'Look I can take...' (however many passengers it was) and that meant one of us was to go. We said no, we would rather stay together; we had done the season together. He said 'Well, I am not going without one of you.' We looked at one another and I said 'OK', and I got on the plane.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:16:34] Chris Eldon Lee: *An American pilot?*

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:16:35] Peter Clarkson: No, British. We flew back to Rothera. We did not actually get to Rothera initially. We ran into bad weather. We had to land on Alexander Island and we spent five nights there, because we had to get in to Fossil Bluff to refuel. We did not know quite where we were on Alexander Island, and we had to wait until we could be sure that the weather was not only good for us but good for landing at Fossil Bluff. Anyway we did it in the end, but those three lads were left behind, and when I came back here to Cambridge I bumped into Bill one day and he said 'Come and see me. I want to chat about the season.' 'Yes, fine.' So he called me into his office a few days later and as I walked into the door, he said 'What the hell are you doing here? Captain goes down with his ship!' Well anyway, once I had explained the situation he was fine about it.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:17:38] Peter Clarkson: At the end of my first winter at Halley – at the end of the first year, when the ship came in – it was unfortunate that all the base supply of booze and all the private stocks of booze were all offloaded from the *Perla Dan* at the same time, and they were all stacked up in the garage. Now if you look at that amount of booze for 30 men for a year, it is a hell of a big pile of stuff, and Bill saw this lot and nearly went apoplectic. But when you actually got down to it, it did not work out at more than a pint of beer per man per day, really. It is not a lot but it looks an awful lot in one place. I forget whether it was to me the following relief or whether at that time: there was some question about what was being done at the relief and he said 'Well you are the man in charge here. You are the Base Commander. You are in charge. We are just observers.' I thought 'Pretty powerful observers!' So I got a bit upset about that. But anyway...

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:00] Chris Eldon Lee: *It does not matter if we dart around chronologically at all because that's fine. So as you brought up the question of the three chaps being left behind at Belgrano: this is Dog Holden, Marsh and Wright.*

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:13] Peter Clarkson: That's right.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:13] Chris Eldon Lee: *You say in your base report at the time that they were therefore subject to the most adverse conditions likely to be encountered on any base anywhere in the Antarctic. So how bad was it?*

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:37] Peter Clarkson: Oh, it was absolutely appalling.

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:28] Chris Eldon Lee: *Why? What was wrong?*

Disc 1, Track 4 [0:19:29] Peter Clarkson: The whole place was falling apart. It was on the ice shelf, so – just like Halley – it was subject to all the movements in the ice shelf. I spent about ten days there, I think. I remember you would go to bed one night and you would go to open a bunkroom door and you could not open it because the building had shifted slightly. So eventually you wrenched it open and it was fine, wrenched it shut. Next morning you got up and put your shoulder to the door. The building had moved again during the night and you went straight through the door. At one stage we were standing talking in a corridor and there was this hell of a crash. Something had shifted. A large number of bottles of the base booze supply – Argentine wine – the rack had collapsed. It all fell to the floor. They showed us a film one night and we were sitting there watching this film and we suddenly thought ‘We can smell something burning.’ We looked across and there was a... The projector was plugged into a socket on the wall with a plastic plug and this plug was just melting and dripping down the wall.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:20:42] Peter Clarkson: The classic was when... We were always getting power cuts because they had only got one generator that worked, and the Brits who were there at the time, each time the power went off we would just get up and we would move across to the rack of hurricane lamps and Tilley lamps and start to light them. But on this occasion the base commander came through and he said ‘No problemo. No problemo. Ten minutos.’ So ten minutos came and went and another ten and then we started to light the lamps. It transpired that what had happened was that the fan belt on the generator had broken. Now if it had been one of our generators, they normally had three fan belts on them, but no, this only had the one. So they put a new fan belt on, pressed the button within the ten minutos but it would not start. ‘Oh, the battery is flat. Right we need another battery. We have not got one. Oh, right, we have to put one on charge.’ So they got a battery and charged it with a little Honda generator, and then Pedro comes past with his hurricane lamp, walks across the top of the battery. Bang! blows up that battery so OK they find another one, put that on charge, leave it for a few hours to charge. Then they put it back on the generator, pressed the button, and the thing would not turn over; it had got too cold. ‘Ah right. Where is the hot air blower?’ So the hot air blower was just outside the generator shed, completely entombed in ice. So they had to chip all this ice off it until they got enough ice off to get it working. They turned it on itself eventually to dry it out a bit. Then they turned it on the engine and then after it had been on the engine for a few hours to warm the oil in the sump, they put the new battery on., pressed the starter, and away we went. Eight hours, to change a fan belt, in effect!

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:22:50] Chris Eldon Lee: *But wasn't that a military base. Wasn't it where the operators knew the conditions?*

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:22:55] Peter Clarkson: Yes, but then we saw the effect of this in the Argentine military in the Falklands War in '82. Oh and there were other things. At one stage the lads contacted me. I think I was still at Rothera. Because we had arranged for the Russians to pick them up, but the Russians didn't when they left, and

it was well over a year later before we found out why. We just could not understand it.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:23:28] Chris Eldon Lee: *They sailed without them, didn't they?*

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:23:29] Peter Clarkson: Yes. Apparently it was just that it was the end of the season, right at the head of the Weddell Sea. You do not want to stay down there longer than you can help, and the weather was too bad for flying the helicopters when they passed the base. They knew the lads were safe so they carried on. No it was a bad do.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:23:54] Chris Eldon Lee: *But relationships with the Russians had been quite good apart from that event? We are talking about '77/'78 onwards.*

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:24:01] Peter Clarkson: Oh yes. No there was not a problem. The only thing was they just did not let us know. Why? I mean we could have... It was perfectly understandable why they did not pick them up.

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:24:13] Chris Eldon Lee: *There is also a note in your report about Survair refusing to go and get them. Is that right or is that part of the Russian [?? inaudible]*

Disc 1, Track 5 [0:24:23] Peter Clarkson: No, no. It was the other Twin Otter pilot, who was at Rothera. He tended to fly entirely by the book. I will tell you a bit more about that in a moment because he... We told him that, or at least our pilot, at Belgrano, said 'The weather is fine here and it is going to stay fine for a while. Just come.' Well they took off from Rothera and they flew into deteriorating weather and yet we were continuing to tell them 'It is fine our side. You have just got to cross the Peninsula.' But no, he turned back. He probably had a more dangerous flight back in deteriorating weather at Rothera. That was part of the reason.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:25:19] Peter Clarkson: Then – what happened after that? Once we had got the Russians' agreement to pick them up, it was Adie who said that the aircraft could go home. So Gary Studd, with one Twin Otter – this was before the runway at Rothera; they were using the skiway. He was very fully loaded because they had the ferry tanks in for the long flight back to Punta Arenas. He went down the skiway. He had got his flight engineer sitting right in the tail of the aircraft. At one stage he hit a bump which threw him up in the air long enough to stay airborne. Well the other pilot, he had his engineer sitting beside him in the cockpit because they were not supposed to be down in the tail of the aeroplane. He hit a big bump, possibly the same one, and instead of being thrown into the air, it pushed the nose area up into the cockpit and so that was the end of that.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:26:27] Peter Clarkson: That aircraft we then eventually packed up and brought home on the *Bransfield*, but we had a Canadian Twin Otter come through at that time. I cannot remember why or what it was doing but they had got a damaged tail fin or damaged rudder and so they swapped it with the one off our Twin Otter. Then when they knew that the Russians had not picked up these lads, they said 'We will fly back and get them.' Talking with Dave Fletcher, I said 'There is no way we can allow them to do that, because if anything happens to them, there is not an aircraft

on the continent now that can go and help them. So it was very upsetting but I had to say to the lads, who had got wind of this (if they had, I can't remember), 'No, we cannot do it.' They also said, they came back to us and said 'Look we have got our skidoos here at Belgrano. We could drive up to Halley.' I had to say no. Nobody knew the way to go. They had not got any maps. It was 300 miles, something like that. Winter was coming on. 'No. You are going to have a hell of a winter, but you are going to be safe. Anything could happen if you try and get up to Halley.'

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:00] Chris Eldon Lee: *These are tough calls for a Base Leader aren't they?*

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:02] Peter Clarkson: Yes, they are, and I still think about it. Fortunately, the three concerned, we still all exchange Christmas cards and we are friends when we meet. I do not think they held it against me but I suppose I hold it against myself more than anything.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:23] Chris Eldon Lee: *Well I am seeing them in Windermere in November. I will find out more then. That is fascinating. Thank you very much for talking about that. Let us go back then chronologically to your first steps with British Antarctic Survey. You had been appointed as a geologist.*

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:41] Peter Clarkson: That is right.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:42] Chris Eldon Lee: *And you were sent South and you ended up in Halley?*

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:44] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:46] Chris Eldon Lee: *Because of the Shackleton Mountains or...?*

Disc 1, Track 6 [0:28:47] Peter Clarkson: Yes, I was due to go to the Shackleton Range. Now when I arrived at Halley, the tractor parties had come back from the Theron Mountains, so that the tractors were back to do the relief, but the two dog teams were still out. There were probably on their way back by then but they had been trying to get to the Shackleton Range. Slessor Glacier, which lies between the Therons and the Shackletons, is impassable. It would be a major mountaineering expedition to get across it on foot. There was no way you could get a dog team across. So they needed all the way round the head of the glacier. So it was decided at relief, although I was not party to any of this, that the Shackleton Range were too far to reach overland and maintain mountain field parties every season. You would have to have a depot laying season one year and then the next you would depot lay again but there would be enough stuff to keep the field parties in the mountains happy.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:29:59] Peter Clarkson: So they said 'Well what are we going to do with Clarkson?' I just saw this in a telegram later and I have a copy of it. They said 'OK, what do we do with Clarkson?' I was probably going to come home again but they decided that 'Why don't we go back to Vestfjella?' It was where the geologists and surveyors were going in 1965 when the three lads were lost in a tractor accident at what became known as Mannefallknausane; originally it was Stella Nunataks. So, that

was it. I stayed. But of course nobody really wanted to go to the Vestfjellas; we wanted to go to the Shackleton Range. It was about May I think, when the news came into Halley that the Norwegians had already arranged with the Americans for a party to go to Vestfjella and so Fuchs said 'Well, I don't know what we'll do but maybe we can have half the range each or something like that.'

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:31:09] Peter Clarkson: But then Fuchs went off to the SCAR meeting in Tokyo and while he was there he was chatting with the Americans and the Americans were saying 'What are you doing?' So he explained and they said 'We have got air photographs of the Shackleton Range; also the Therons and Whichaway Nunataks, and we want the ground control but, strangely, we cannot get hold of surveyors very easily.' Bunny said 'Oh, we can get surveyors. That is not a problem, but we just cannot get there.' So they said 'If we flew you there, could you provide the surveyors? We will give you a set of the photographs and could you put in the ground control?' Bunny said 'Yes, OK.'

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:32:00] Chris Eldon Lee: *This was August 1968?*

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:32:03] Peter Clarkson: Yes. So suddenly it was all on and we got the news at Halley that the Americans were going to fly in a party of two surveyors and two GAs into the Shackleton Range. So Chris Sykes, the Base Commander, wrote back and he said 'Well, that's all very well but we do have two geologists here on base and they should have priority.' And Bunny came back and said 'Yes I agree, but the deal is: survey, or no flights, but of course you may be able to fit them in.' So we repacked everything, removing as much weight as possible, to get us to be able to take a six-man party. So Mike Skidmore and I, I always felt, went as excess baggage.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:32:57] Chris Eldon Lee: *Hitchhikers even? The word he uses is hitchhikers.*

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:33:00] Peter Clarkson: Hitchhikers, OK. So we actually got there. Now the interesting thing is: Why did the American have these trimetrogon air photographs? It goes back to just before I arrived at Halley. The previous doctor, John Brotherhood, had been out with Jim Shirtcliffe, doing some physio work but they were manhauling in whiteout and they walked over a cliff. Jim broke his ankle, but John Brotherhood, he probably fractured his cheek and he hurt his back. But he said he was not too bad. Ricky Chinn, the base commander, did not actually believe him. He thought he was just being brave about it, and so there were some messages went back to London and the question of air evacuation was raised. So the Americans... I believe John Brotherhood's father was an Air Marshall, something like that, which may have made negotiations somewhat easier. But anyway the Americans flew over to pick him up and then fly him back to McMurdo and Christchurch. They sent two aircraft, but one of them was acting as communications relay and Search and Rescue. To give it something to do, it took all these trimetrogon photographs. So I got to the Shackleton Range all because John Brotherhood walked over a cliff. So I have never forgotten that.

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:34:33] Chris Eldon Lee: *What is it about the Shackletons that made you...? What is so special about them? Why are they a geologist's holy grail?*

Disc 1, Track 7 [0:34:40] Peter Clarkson: I don't know that they are exactly a holy grail but they are geologically very interesting. They are right on the borderline between the ancient cratons of Greater Antarctica and the Trans Antarctic Mountains. They were actually discovered by the Argentines a few months before Fuchs' Trans Antarctic Expedition discovered them but the Argentines never followed up the discovery. I think they called them something like Cordon los Mucos, something like that, but Fuchs called it the Shackleton Range because Shackleton in 1914 would have discovered them if he had actually landed.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:35:28] Chris Eldon Lee: *That means they have been discovered three times then, does it?* [laughs]

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:35:33] Peter Clarkson: So anyway because they are linked with the name of Shackleton and it is a large area of mountains, about half the size of Wales, there was just something magical about it. This is funny. Just after we heard that we were going to be flown to the mountains, I walked into the garage at Halley, to borrow a spanner or something. I have always been very good about borrowing stuff because I made sure that somebody saw me take it and somebody saw me take it back, so they knew that I was reliable and their tools would not disappear. One of the big International Harvester bulldozers was in the garage and Dad Etchells was bending over the blade doing something or other. He looked up and he saw me and he said 'Go away' or words to that effect, and he said it with such venom that I was completely taken aback, and I said 'What is the matter?' 'Isn't our bloody transport good enough for you then?' So then it was all right; he let me borrow the spanner.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:36:47] Peter Clarkson: But no, they were going to go to the Shackleton Range anyway, and there was a big hoarding across the garage door that said 'We are off to the Shackleton Range; where are you lot off to?' Of course they did go to the Shackleton Range and they laid that super depot right in the eastern end of the range which was a lifesaver for us when we eventually got there: not just that one season but the first season. In fact we did not get there the first season, but the second, third and fourth seasons it was great. Perhaps more by luck than judgement I don't know but it was superbly sited. It was on the top of a slight snow rise, and when we got there the first time, about two years after it had been laid – no a year; well anyway – the snow was just level with the tops of the boxes, the food boxes, which were stacked just one high. Anyway we did the normal thing; we dug up all the boxes, put it back on the surface. We came through again, about a fortnight later, and the snow was level with the tops of the boxes. Wonderful siting.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:38:01] Chris Eldon Lee: *So the first time you had to turn back because you had not taken enough ration with you. Is that correct? The first year when you tried to get to the Shackletons? Or have I got the wrong end of the stick there?*

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:38:11] Peter Clarkson: No, not me personally. I never turned back, because we were flown in by the Americans. No, when Mike Skidmore and Pete Noble – they had managed to get around the end of the Slessor Glacier and they could see the mountains which they thought were 50 miles away – they certainly did not have enough food and fuel to get there and back. They could probably have done it. They would have eked things out. I don't know; I think if I had been in their position I

might have been tempted to do that but I do not know quite what the detail of their situation was. So they turned back. Well Nick Mathys and John Gallsworthy, they had been going northwest direct from the head of the Slessor Glacier towards Halley, to try to prove the route that way.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:39:13] Chris Eldon Lee: *So when was the first time you got there?*

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:39:17] Peter Clarkson: That was in November/ December '68.

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:39:20] Chris Eldon Lee: *OK. And you were flown all the way?*

Disc 1, Track 8 [0:39:23] Peter Clarkson: Yes, we were flown all the way. The Americans, they had got the Norwegians at McMurdo, so they put the Norwegians on board, they flew up to the Pole with the Norwegians. They refuelled. They then flew to Vestfjella. They dropped the Norwegians, they flew on to Halley. They refuelled at Halley, picked us up, flew down to the Shackleton Range, dropped us off, and back to Pole and McMurdo. It was the longest mission that had been flown from McMurdo at that time. I think they all got Antarctic Service Medals for it. They might have got military medals as well, I do not know, because they were all naval fliers.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:40:04] Chris Eldon Lee: *So having got to the Shackletons, what did you find, and did it surprise you at all?*

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:40:08] Peter Clarkson: It did not surprise us too much because of course Jon Stephenson of the Trans Antarctic Expedition had already done some geology of the western end. So we started off at the western end of the range which was not far from where we had been dropped, and we went to various places that he had been to, just to familiarise ourselves with the rocks that he had seen, so that we could then extend the survey that he had started, and that was what we did. Looking back, he was either extremely lucky or extremely bright, because he saw just about all the key exposures in the western end of the range. He did very well. I mean it was a great report; it was a wonderful basis for us to work on. The basic stratigraphic sequence that he set up is still there today. It has been modified and refined, but the basis is still there.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:41:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *So yours was not so much an expedition of discovery. It was a series of substantiating previous work?*

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:41:36] Peter Clarkson: Well to start with it was substantiating but then we moved away from where he had been and we saw a lot more of the range. Then eventually it was coming three seasons, I saw all the rest of it, bar one outcrop. One of the curious things is that you have these Beacon supergroup sediments with the dolerite sills intruding them in the Theron Mountains to the north, and then in the Whichaway Nunataks to the south, but nowhere do you see them in the Shackleton Range. There is a big peneplane that extends over the whole of the centre of the Shackleton Range and we have no idea of the age of the peneplane really. It might be glacial. It could be the equivalent of the Kukri Peneplane on which the Beacon sediments lie elsewhere, or it could even be something older, been exhumed; we just do not know, but we never saw any Beacon at all. It was the last time I was there, with John Wright; we were using skidoos that time. We were right in the eastern end of the

range. We had got big sastrugi, two feet or so high. It was beautiful sunny weather but it was blowing about 20 knots most of the time and it was not easy travelling and not very pleasant despite the sunshine. John said to me 'That is the easternmost outcrop on the northern side. Do you want to go there?' I got the binoculars out and I looked and I thought 'Well, it looks much the same as everything else.' But I said 'If there is any Beacon, that is where it is going to be.' Anyway we did not go.

Disc 1, Track 9 [0:43:23] Peter Clarkson: Years later I was talking to a German colleague, George Kleinschmidt, who followed into the Shackleton Range with a German expedition years later. I said 'Did you ever get to that place?' He said 'Oh, yes.' I said 'What was the rock?' He said 'I don't know. It is completely different from anything else.' I said 'It is not Beacon?' 'Well,' he said, 'it is all sort of mucked up volcanics and stuff like that.' He said 'It could be very basal Beacon, but it is not actually clear. We are really not sure.' I knew it was going to be something different. But he did another thing. On top of the peneplane, fairly near the centre of the range on the south side, I had come across a little outcrop of quartzite. I say little – it was not much bigger than this room – and it was actually deposited on the peneplane. Whether it had been thrust there or not, I do not know, but anyway it was there and George said to me 'When I went into the Shackletons, I had your maps with me, and we were flying in helicopters and I was looking for this outcrop. I flew up and down and up and down, and I started to think 'I don't know; Peter must have been mistaken.' Then,' he said 'suddenly we saw it.' He said 'Small? How did you ever find it? So, some redemption.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:44:54] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were finding, you were substantiating, in some respects, Ray Adie's theory of continental drift, weren't you? Various particles of Gondwanaland.*

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:45:06] Peter Clarkson: Yes, we were certainly thinking about that.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:45:09] Chris Eldon Lee: *Tell me a bit about that.*

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:45:11] Peter Clarkson: Well. I suppose we were helping to substantiate the fact that the Trans Antarctic Mountains, which form the margin of Greater Antarctica, way across the continent, is probably the edge of a major craton, and that everything to the west has appeared since then, particularly the Ellsworth Mountains. At the time we thought that they had come from somewhere up near Halley Bay, and they had been moved as the continent started to fragment, but that idea went out of fashion for a long time, but I believe it is now back in fashion again and people think that. But it is very difficult to find out quite what is going on because there is so little outcrop in that area and remote sensing, using radio echo sounding for ice thickness and bedrock elevation, aeromagnetism, seismic and all this sort of thing can only tell you so much; we really need to see the rocks.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:46:32] Chris Eldon Lee: *There is a certain amount of excitement in your reports from those years, in '68/'69. As a layman it almost sounds like you had found the place where Tasmania and South Africa had met.*

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:46:43] Peter Clarkson: No, I don't think I can claim anything like that.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:46:49] Chris Eldon Lee: *Two generations of magma one from [?? inaudible] outcrops?*

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:46:51] Peter Clarkson: Oh yes. Ah, this was much later work, that was done with Tim Brewer, who sadly died a couple of years ago, at a very early age. He was basically working on rocks that Dave Brook had collected from the Theron Mountains and had never written up. Then we extended that to some of the basic rocks in Marie Byrd Land, and he was responsible for all the geochemistry and so on, and it did appear to us, once we got the results, that we were looking at two basaltic provinces. This was what Dave Brook had always suspected in the Theron Mountains and I think the work we did helped to show this.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:47:48] Peter Clarkson: We did not convince everybody. Keith Cox of Oxford, who was the ferro-dolerite man, so to speak, the Karoo Intrusion man, he did not really believe us, I think. I do not know whether anybody has followed up the work in recent years, but it seemed a good idea at the time. One of the great things about geology is that if you get a bit of evidence that points towards a certain theory at this stage, you can go ahead and put it forward, and while a lot of people might not believe that you are right, if they have not got any evidence to the contrary, they cannot actually say that you are wrong. It is not just in geology but in all sorts of science, this is the way it progresses. People have got to put up these straw men from time to time.

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:48:51] Chris Eldon Lee: *How has your thinking progressed in forty years? Are you now convinced of any of these theories, continental drift and...*

Disc 1, Track 10 [0:48:58] Peter Clarkson: Oh, yes, absolutely. No doubt about it, but I think the outstanding problems for the plate tectonics of Lesser Antarctica are: what was the orientation of Peninsula? I am convinced, as I think are most people, that the tip of the Peninsula was originally tucked in close to Tierra del Fuego somewhere, but we do not know if it was in a straight line, with the rest of the Andean chain or whether it was swung round. It is possible that the area between Marie Byrd Land and the Trans Antarctic Mountains, where you have got the Ellsworths and then these various other small mountain groups, that they are all bits of micro-continental fragment, but as I say, until we can really know what is going on under the ice, we won't know this. There might be oceanic crust within what is now Lesser Antarctica, a benthic subglacial trough is one possibility.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:50:09] Chris Eldon Lee: *How were relationships on that season? There were one or two suggestions that not everybody got on with everybody else. There were a couple of accidents for a start which did not help things.*

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:50:19] Peter Clarkson: No, that's right. Oh I think we all got on well enough that season. It was the next season where there were slight strain I think amongst the surveyors. Nick Mathys broke his leg and oh we cursed him for it. We had not got good communications with Halley at the time. Mike Skidmore was sending out the message to Halley by Morse, that said 'Nick has broken leg' and the tractor parties picked this up and whoever was doing the Morse there worked out that 'Nick has broken neck'. They were about to turn back to come and pick him up. I do

not know quite how it happened but they were dissuaded from doing so, because if the injury was sufficiently serious, we would have just called up the Americans, but we didn't.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:51:21] Peter Clarkson: Ken Blaiklock of longstanding British Antarctic fame, had come down to restart the survey that he had started during the Trans Antarctic Expedition, and he said if we called the Americans they are almost certainly going to say 'One out, all out.' So we put this to Nick and he said 'Oh, OK.' Very stoical actually, Nick Mathys. Anyway we eventually got him back to the depot on the Recovery Glacier, so-called. We all met up there and then Ken and Harry Wiggins went off to carry on the survey while the other four of us – Mike Skidmore, Tony True and myself and of course the patient Nick – set about fixing his leg. By this time, fortunately, we had got quite good radio communications with Halley and the doctor was on the radio at the other end. He said 'Well, can you see the break, or can you feel the break?' 'No we can actually see it.' He had only broken his shin bone. So he said 'Turn his foot until the break disappears.' We turned his foot. 'Right, now. Does his leg look in a fairly straight line?' 'Yes it looks all right to us at this end.' 'What does it look like to you, Nick?' and he said 'Fine, go on, slap the plaster on.' So they shot the plaster on and he spent the rest of that season lying up.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:53:13] Chris Eldon Lee: *So the decision not to call the Americans was not so much to do with medical assessments but to do with the project as a whole?*

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:53:19] Peter Clarkson: Yes. We had obviously satisfied ourselves that he was in no real danger. He had probably got his leg in plaster for about six weeks, and so it was virtually healed by the time we got back to Halley. It is fine now; it has been for nearly 40 years.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:53:42] Chris Eldon Lee: *There is a comment from Blaiklock in the logs at the time, saying that Nick Mathys was uncooperative and lacking initiative.*

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:53:51] Peter Clarkson: Yes, well Nick was the nominal leader of the expedition. Yes I had sort of forgotten that I suppose. Yes, he was always a bit plodding and following things by the book. Ken had got years and years of experience; he just knew what would go and what would not. In fact at one stage, Ken and Harry had a dog team each, and the system they were using was that you sledged to Point A (this is what they would have been doing). The other party then sledged to Point B. They measured the line, did the angles, and then the party at Point A would leapfrog the others and go to Point C., They would keep doing that.

Disc 1, Track 11 [0:54:50] Peter Clarkson: But then, immediately after the accident, when they regrouped, Ken and Harry they were sledging from: they would sledge to Point A, dump a load of kit, then they would sledge to Point B where Harry would leave Ken with the pyramid tent. Harry would then sledge back to Point A on his own. They would measure the line and so on, having had a quick crash course in using a tellurometer and a theodolite. Then Harry would sledge back to Point B, pick up Ken and then they would repeat the whole thing B to C and so on. But then finally they had a dog team each and they were just leapfrogging one another, and they did not tell London quite how they were operating, but Ken said 'Well Bunny has looked at the

telegrams. He will know what we are doing, but we are not actually going to tell him what we are doing. He can work it out for himself.' Speaking to Bunny later, he said 'Yes, well I did know what they were doing but while I had not been told I did not have to stop it.' He knew Ken very well so he was quite happy with that.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:56:07] Chris Eldon Lee: *There was some argument about where to form base camp. Mathys wanted to form base camp two hours sledging from the mountains and Blaiklock wanted it to be much nearer.*

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:56:15] Peter Clarkson: Yes, that is right, because when the Hercules put us down, the first landing they did, I don't know what we landed on. It was in thick cloud, and as the skis touched down they went [claps] bang, bang, bang, bang! Whether we were hitting sastrugi or crevasses or what, we never found out but there was a sudden roar of full throttle and we went round, and eventually they landed us. God knows how he put it down. You could not see anything. I was only looking at one of the photographs today actually and there is the photograph of the aeroplane but you can see it is total mank all the way round. They just threw everything out of the back: 27 dogs, six men and all the kit, kept the engines going so there were all these unburnt avtur fumes coming back. Dreadful! But within (I don't know how long it took us to unload), perhaps it was about forty minutes, and then suddenly they said 'Right we are off. See you in three months.' Brm! And within a matter of yards they had disappeared into the mank and we did not see them again.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:57:29] Peter Clarkson: It was about two days before the weather cleared and we found out where we were. We were way out, twenty miles out onto Recovery Glacier, and the point was that not only was it ... It is called Recovery Glacier because that is where one of Bunny's tractors had a major accident though they got it out. It was ridiculous if we had laid the camp where it was because it would have been difficult to find. It was virtually a days travel for us with dogs out onto the glacier, and it would be just a spot in the middle of nowhere. There was a serious danger that we might not have found it again, so we spent ten days ferrying all our supplies to within a few miles of the mountains – about 20 miles we ferried them – and it did take a lot of time but it certainly made sense.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:29] Chris Eldon Lee: *Should it not have been, according to Blaiklock, even nearer the mountains?*

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:34] Peter Clarkson: Well he probably would have liked it nearer, yes.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:36] Chris Eldon Lee: *What was the reason for not doing that, do you remember?*

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:39] Peter Clarkson: We were losing too much time just ferrying stuff and once we had done twenty miles, that was probably near enough.

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:48] Chris Eldon Lee: *There is reference to the Mobsters being leaders and I wonder what was the story behind that?*

Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:54] Peter Clarkson: I think the dog called Shem was supposed to be the leader of the Mobsters and he was not really a particularly good leader. He also used to go peculiar every full moon. [laughs] It was quite entertaining, really. Suddenly he would stand up, look up, and he would throw his head back and he would have a howl and then he would look down and stare at the snow and dig dig dig down into the snow, stand up, howl at the moon. He would go back and dig a bit more. But he was not a particularly good leader, unlike the Beatles which had a dog called Balasuaq, normally known as Suaq. He was an import from Greenland several years earlier and driving Suaq was like driving a car. You just said 'Auk' and he would turn round. He was brilliant.

Disc 1, Track 13 [0:59:56] Chris Eldon Lee: *For somebody who obviously has a great soft spot for dogs, you seem to actually have a sneaking regard for the International Harvester bulldozers as well?*

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:00:04] Peter Clarkson: Oh yes. I mean they were wonderful workhorses. They used to pull twelve tons in the field. Dad Etchells, really, was the driving force I think for getting those into the field and doing all the work that they did. He was a great man actually. You have interviewed him I think.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:00:32] Chris Eldon Lee: *Yes but tell me about him. People never talk about themselves in the same way as other people talk about them.*

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:00:38] Peter Clarkson: He never said a lot. He just got on with the job.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:00:41] Chris Eldon Lee: *He has not changed much.*

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:00:43] Peter Clarkson: No, and he always ensured that any vehicle that he took into the field was in as near tip-top condition as he could make it, and he never had (as far as I am aware) any major mechanical breakdowns. There was a story of an epic trip with Muskeg tractors once, where somebody actually had to change a crankshaft in the hinge zone, south of Halley. They had to put the tent up over the engines and the temperature was -40 or something. It all sounds terribly heroic but you have to ask yourself 'Why did he not check that before he left?' I do not know the details of the story but certainly Dad never wanted to be put into that position, and as far as I am aware, he never was.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:01:36] Chris Eldon Lee: *One other detail, before we take a break, was: you ended up doing some surgeon's work on Mike Skidmore's lip. How was a geologist qualified to stitch somebody's lip back together?*

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:01:50] Peter Clarkson: Oh totally unqualified.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:01:51] Chris Eldon Lee: *Why was it you that did it?*

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:01:54] Peter Clarkson: Because there were just the two of us there at the time. We were in the Herbert Mountains and the highest mountain in the Herbert Mountains is called Mount Absalom, named by the TAE for one of their committee members. Anyway it was a rather fine peak, and Mike and Pete Noble had

seen this when they had been on the advance recce the year before, and so it was something to aim for. We were there just to do the geology but it happened to be New Year's Eve and we thought it would be great to see the New Year in on the summit. So we had an early supper, we made up a flask of cocoa which was laced with some rum ration and we set off. We took some geology kit because there was an outcrop high up on the ridge which justified actually going up there, you see. So we got up, we had a look at the rock and we carried on up the ridge for not a great distance. Then there was this snowface about 200 ft high, I suppose, that led onto the top, the side of a ridge that went up onto the summit.

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:03:25] Peter Clarkson: We started. We did not have ropes; we did not have crampons. We did have ice axes and we started kicking steps up this. I was leading, or at least not leading; I was in front. I came to a couple of icy bands. They were about a foot high so I could not kick into those, I had to kick over them. I turned to Mike and I said 'There are a couple of icy bands here. Are you all right? Are you happy with this? Because remember: he who is scared and runs away lives to climb another day.' He said 'No, I am fine.' So I turned back to the face, took another step, then I heard 'Aargh!' I looked round and it was horrific. You know what it looks like when you throw a rag doll downstairs: the arms and legs go everywhere. That was how Mike was cartwheeling down this snow slope for about 150 ft. Then he hit the scree and he bounced down the scree for about 50 ft. Still facing the cliff but turning round, I shouted down 'Mike, are you all right?' He replied. I thought 'Thank God for that. At least he is alive.'

Disc 1, Track 13 [1:04:41] Peter Clarkson: So I reversed down this snow slope as quickly as I could and got to him. I think he had sat up by then. I said 'Come on. What is wrong? Have you broken anything?' All his limbs were all right. He did probably have a hairline fracture of his cheekbones, something like that. I said 'Do you think you can walk?' So we got him to his feet. We had got no drink; we had lost the cocoa laced with rum that was in the thermos flask. The thermos flask had smashed. I never forgave him for that. Anyway we staggered back down to the tent and I got him into the tent. I said 'Come on, let's strip you off and find out what is wrong.' He was quite badly bruised as you can imagine. Also I could see he had got a hole in his top lip. I could see his tooth through the lip. So I said 'I think I am going to have to stitch your lip.' He said 'OK' so I got some scissors, I trimmed off the moustache round this hole and I thought it was a slightly ragged cut and I thought I really ought to trim this, according to the book, but I do not really like to do that. So anyway I chickened out on that; I did not do it unfortunately.

Disc 1, Track 14 [1:06:15] Peter Clarkson: Then I got my medical kit out, the sutures thing, and I said 'Right., Now I am going to clean you up and then I am going to stitch this for you.' So I got his face cleaned and so on, and I said 'Do you want a local anaesthetic?' He said 'Well I don't know.' So I got the needle; I poked round his lip. 'Can you feel that?' 'No.' 'Right, you don't need an anaesthetic.' I said 'OK. Are you ready?' He said 'I think, I think I am... Urrgh!' He threw up. So I had to start swabbing all clean again you see. Then I put the stitch in. That was the end. It was only one stitch and that was the end of it. He has still got the scar to this day because I did not trim the edge of the wound. I was very embarrassed because I do not think he would have done it on his own. I had done quite a bit of climbing as an

undergraduate, including some snow climbing on Ben Nevis in the winter. But we perhaps should have been better equipped; we should have had a rope, I suppose.

Disc 1, Track 14 [1:07:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *Let us take a break.*

Disc 1, Track 14 [1:07:34] [End of Part One]

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:00:01] Chris Eldon Lee: *This is Peter Clarkson recorded at the BAS headquarters in Cambridge by Chris Eldon Lee on the 13th of October 2010. Peter Clarkson, Part Two.*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:00:12] Chris Eldon Lee: *Let us move on Peter if we can now to the following season which is '69/'70, when you were the only geologist at Halley?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:00:19] Peter Clarkson: That is right, yes.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:00:21] Chris Eldon Lee: *How did that come about?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:00:22] Peter Clarkson: Well it was thought that, I suppose, I do not know really. I guess that because they thought that the Shackleton Range, the geology was virtually going to be finished by the end of my season, that they would not send another geologist in to Halley, I suppose. Also, of course, the Americans were providing us a second flight, the second season, to complete the survey, but after that presumably there would be no further flights. So it would be much more difficult for BAS to get a geologist into the field on its own, using its own resources of tractors and dogs, so yes, I was the last of the line.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:16] Chris Eldon Lee: *The "Last of the Mohicans"?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:17] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:18] Chris Eldon Lee: *You spent the winter back at Halley base, I presume?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:21] Peter Clarkson: Yes, that is right. Yes.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:22] Chris Eldon Lee: *And you were flown out again?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:23] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:24] Chris Eldon Lee: *And there is a rather nice note in the logs which suggests you got on far better on your own.*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:01:28] Peter Clarkson: Yes, I sledged with Harry Wiggans. When we met on the ship going down, on the *Perla Dan*, when we first went down, we got on very well together and we decided that we were going to sledge together. But of course it did not actually work out like that the first season, but it did for the second season. The amazing thing was: we were together for ten weeks during which time we did not see another soul. We spoke to the surveyors in the mountains, we spoke to base. We spoke to people but only over the radio; we never saw anybody, and there

was never a cross word between us, even when we ran out of cigarettes. On one occasion (he always ran out of cigarettes; he never took enough from the depot) and on this particular occasion I thought 'Oh God, he is going to run out again.' So I pinched a packet of 20 cigarettes and put them in with my kit.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:02:28] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were a non-smoker?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:02:31] Peter Clarkson: No, I was a pipe smoker. So anyway, he ran out, on a Friday I think it was. So I let him stew for a couple of days, because it would be about a week before we were going to get back, until he could get some more cigarettes. And on Sunday I said 'Come on, it is Sunday today. Peace and goodwill to all men. Here is a packet of 20 cigarettes.' 'Whey!' The air was a bit blue. Anyway he took these and I said 'Now look. We are going to be back in three days (I think it was), so that is seven a day and they will last you.' He smoked the lot that night. But he did not bother. No it was fine.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:03:12] Chris Eldon Lee: *How was the psychology, being in the wilderness for ten weeks like that. We are speaking, as it happens, on the day when the Chilean miners are being rescued from their ten weeks underground. Lots of discussion about the psychology of them. They seem fine, as they pop up through the tube. How were you two?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:03:32] Peter Clarkson: We were fine. I do not know how, really. I suppose to some extent you can say: 'All credit to Bill Sloman.' He chose both of us. This is what I say. He made very very few mistakes. He did make some, but very few, and I always respected Bill for that. A very shrewd judge of character. Yes, we just got on well together. I think we probably had mutual respect for each other's abilities, capabilities, experience and skill. It was good.

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:04:20] Chris Eldon Lee: *Were you attacking virgin rock with your hammers?*

Disc 2, Track 1 [0:04:23] Peter Clarkson: Yes, and a lot of the time a surveyor finds an assistant very valuable because while he is looking through the theodolite and recording angles, his assistant will be writing it all down, and they work very well together like that. It is not so easy for a geologist and a lot of the time I used to find that my assistant really had not a lot to do. So sometimes I would send them off to the next, to the other side of the outcrop or something. I would say 'You can bring back some bits for me. I don't want anything that looks exciting. I want everything that looks dull and normal. That is what I am interested in.' So they used to do that. But of course they would fill their pockets with quartz crystals and garnets and stuff like that. Other than that: the GAs I had, Harry and then later Mike Warden, they were both very good climbers and they quite often would go off on their own. While I was footling around at the bottom of the hill, they would go and climb to the top.

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:05:46] Chris Eldon Lee: *Give me a little thumbnail sketch of Harry Wiggans then, as a chap.*

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:05:51] Peter Clarkson: Very fit, outspoken, a good friend, an effective enemy should you actually cross him. He used to like his drink; he used to

have a bit too much on occasions and do outrageous things, but a good solid companion. Not a scientist by any manner of means. He was a cost accountant before he came South, but a highly competent climber.

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:06:39] Chris Eldon Lee: *Did you witness one of these outrageous moments?*

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:06:43] Peter Clarkson: Probably doing at least a partial striptease on a party night on base, things like that.

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:06:53] Chris Eldon Lee: *Rugby club stuff?*

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:06:54] Peter Clarkson: Yes, that is the sort of thing, yes. Except for him it was always climbing club.

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:06:58] Chris Eldon Lee: *There is a reference to you repairing a sledge with a geological hammer shaft. Apparently you were very good at this.*

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:07:09] Peter Clarkson: Well I don't say I was very good at it, but the bridges on the Nansen sledges did break sometimes. Geologists had two sizes of hammers: there was the ordinary run-of-the-mill geological hammer and then there was a two-pound hammer I think. Then we had some big four-pound hammers and they had a large head on them and the shaft was about 18 inches long. Because wood gets so dry down in the Antarctic, we used to break shafts from time to time and so we carried spares, and they were just the right sort of size to lash to a broken Nansen sledge bridge, so they were quite useful from that point of view.

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:07:59] Chris Eldon Lee: *What was radio communication like, because you were a long way from home?*

Disc 2, Track 2 [0:08:04] Peter Clarkson: From the field, do you mean? The first season was really, once we had got the system worked out, because the inherited wisdom was that you set the aerial out one way and that was completely the wrong way. We had a very good radio operator but he was also a very good technician, and he got us right. There were times, when the radio conditions were good, we could talk with base sometimes just like a telephone. On one occasion it was time for the evening schedule and very often two parties camped together, you would come into the same tent for the radio sched. It was while we were waiting for the aircraft and all we had to do was to find out whether the base had heard that it was coming. We had been called up: 'Halley Bay, this is Sledge Rocks.' 'Hello Sledge Rocks, this is Halley Bay. Nothing to report from here, Peter.' 'Well there is nothing to report from here.' 'OK then, see you tomorrow. Goodnight.' A couple of minutes later the chap came in from the other tent and he said 'I have come for the sched.' 'We have had it.' 'What?' It was fortunate that the conditions and the communication was good when Nick had broken his leg and we needed to talk to a doctor. But they were only little three-watt Squadcall sets.

Disc 2, Track 3 [0:09:51] Chris Eldon Lee: *There are references to a conversation between Donald Duck and the Flowerpot Men at times.*

Disc 2, Track 3 [0:10:01] Peter Clarkson: When the Americans were coming back to pick us up, they had got the maps; they had marked on the map where they had dropped us. It was not the first time; that was not a problem because we were on the Recovery Glacier and they were coming in from the south and they saw us but it was the next year when we had set up the depot on Gordon Glacier. They had got the coordinates and everything like that. When we knew from Halley that the aircraft was coming we listened out for the aircraft and then we tried, we called the aircraft. BAS, for some reason, used Lower Sideband and the Americans used Upper Sideband, so it was like Donald Duck trying to talk to Mickey Mouse. It was hopeless. We saw the aircraft coming out of the south. It was about midnight so it was coming out of the sun. We saw it high up in the sky coming over the south side of the range, heading northwards. When it got to the middle of the range, which was a snow plateau, they suddenly turned to the right. We tried to say to them: 'No, no, no. Turn back. Carry on.' Of course, they did not understand, and the aircraft disappeared way down the eastern end of the range. We said 'Oh, they will be back.' Ten to fifteen minutes later we saw the aeroplane coming back again. We shouted out 'Turn right now. Turn right now!' But no, they carried on and disappeared right down the western end of the range. Then they came back again, and then they turned left and came up and landed. When they got out, we said 'What the hell were you doing?' They said 'Well we did not know where you were so we were flying and we saw sledge tracks, so we have been following sledge tracks.' Because at that time, the only ones that would be illuminated would be the east-west ones.

Disc 2, Track 3 [0:12:09] Peter Clarkson: Another time, flying back to Halley (this was the end of the second season) the pilot called me up onto the flight deck and he said 'Say, whereabouts is this place?' I had come out of the dark of the inside of the aeroplane to this glare of ice at the cockpit. I said 'Hang on a minute.' I looked out and I could see all the familiar landmarks and I said 'It is right there. Done there.' He said 'You don't say!' 'I do say. Just put it down'. The thing was, unless you knew the layout of the base, and what you were expecting to see, you could have thought that because all the buildings were under the snow, this was some crevasse pattern or something. So I had some sympathy with that.

Disc 2, Track 3 [0:13:00] Chris Eldon Lee: *I am quite surprised, though, that as recently as the late '60s / early '70s that navigation was still quite 'Fred Karno's', still quite approximate.*

Disc 2, Track 3 [0:13:08] Peter Clarkson: Well they had got inertial navigation, which was not terribly good always. It used to wander. I think a lot of the time they did not really pay much attention, myself. Of course it was a different crew that came back to collect us, so whether they ever saw the maps that we had marked for the crew that had dropped us off, I do not know. McMurdo was a big place and all sorts of strange things happened. When I went back for the third season, I flew from... No I was not the last geologist. We had two more geologists, but they did not winter at Halley. I went with this chap Bob Wyeth, who was also a Durham graduate, just behind me, and we flew from Britain to Washington, San Francisco, Honolulu, Christchurch, McMurdo.

Disc 2, Track 3 [0:14:50] Peter Clarkson: Then we were waiting at McMurdo to fly across the continent. Suddenly one day 'OK, we are on.' So we get in the Hercules,

take off, land at the Pole, refuel the aircraft, and we set off. The weather report came through while we were on the ground or just after we left the Pole and it said 'Lovely.' So we carried on and the weather was getting thicker and thicker. We flew the distance and it was just solid cloud, so we turned round and came back again. Back to the Pole, refuel, back to McMurdo, and it transpired that the radio operator at the Pole had sent us not the weather report from Halley but either from Hallett which is of course right the other side of the Ross Sea or from Hawaii or somewhere. We actually had the head of the met service on board the flight, so I think a head rolled when he got back.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:15:15] Chris Eldon Lee: *You obviously spent quite a bit of time being ferried around by the Americans, so you got to witness the American operation at first hand. Were there cultural differences between the way the Americans occupied the Antarctic and the way the British occupied it?*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:15:33] Peter Clarkson: I suppose yes, in a way. Americans of course like to take all their creature comforts with them and it was quite an eye opener to get down to McMurdo and discover that there was a barber's shop there. There were no women at that time. Barber shop and also a dry-cleaning plant, launderette, duty free shop. The other thing was that you tended not to do anything by hand on an American base. You got a machine to do it, where of course you obviously heard the expression 'Fid power' which does amazing things and has done for generations of Fids. When I was at McMurdo I got a box of kit that had been delivered and I did not know where it was and I tried to find out where it might be. They said 'Oh it will be out on the dump.' So I went out to the dump and looked around and, yes, I found the box. It weighed about a hundredweight but I started to pick it up and I was going to carry it back bit by bit. 'Hey, no, no, no.' Somebody saw me, so I had to wait while they came over with a fork-lift truck and so on and so forth. I just was not used to that.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:16:57] Chris Eldon Lee: *They seemed to have access to fresh fruit and fresh food rather more readily than the British bases.*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:17:03] Peter Clarkson: Oh very much so.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:17:04] Chris Eldon Lee: *How could they get it?*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:17:05] Peter Clarkson: Ah well they were flying Hercules from New Zealand, backwards and forwards to McMurdo all the time, and so there was a lot of stuff came in like that. We used to listen to their radio schedules sometimes and I can remember listening to one party. They said 'On the next aircraft we need some more steak and some more lobster tails because we have run out.' A field party, for heaven's sake! But yes, it was a very different style.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:17:33] Chris Eldon Lee: *Any jealousy there with the British Fids who were living on pemmican?*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:17:37] Peter Clarkson: No we were not living on pemmican in my day; it was meat bar which was a lot better, but it still looked and tasted like chewed

string. No I don't think so really. In fact, when they came to Halley and they saw how we did things, they were absolutely gobsmacked I suppose.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:18:02] Chris Eldon Lee: *Was it all rather quaint?*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:18:03] Peter Clarkson: Yes. That is the word for it. Quaint.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:18:06] Chris Eldon Lee: *You got yourself a reputation for building lots of cairns – I think this might be you and Harry Wiggans – wherever you went: every nunatak, every mountain.*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:18:17] Peter Clarkson: That is right, because it was very often useful for the surveyors if we went to an area before they did. If there was a cairn already erected, that was just usually much easier to sight on that rather than know whereabouts on the top of the hill they should be sighting. It just so happened that the first cairn we ever erected, which we did just because that was the first time we had reached rock, Ken Blaiklock said 'That saved us an awful lot of time because it was in exactly the right position .' But that was pure luck. I suppose after that then we started doing it more often. You needed to be a bit careful with cairns sometimes. Certainly the number that Harry built on top of the various hills that he climbed, quite often left a little packet in the top [laughs], whereas the surveyors used to leave a cartridge case which was the actual trig point, so to speak and they used to cement them into the rock. But they did not carry water so most of the cement was yellow.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:19:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *And for "packet", we are not talking cigarettes here, are we?*

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:19:35] Peter Clarkson: No, because he had not got any; he had always run out.

Disc 2, Track 4 [0:19:38] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were obviously sledging a lot with Harry. There is a reference to having to ignore the BAS handbook on when it is a good time to sledge and when it is not a good time to sledge. The weather was so poor that you had to just bend the rules.*

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:19:51] Peter Clarkson: Yes. I mean this happened to everybody. We always said that if you followed the rulebook you would never get anything done. You had to be sensible in interpreting what you could do and what you could not do and also, with experience, to realise your own limitations. I remember once, it was the last season in the Shackleton range when we had skidoos with John Wright. We had got held up on top of the escarpment of the Read Mountains. We had got very little food left and we had theoretically run out. I think we had finished all the porridge; we had finished all the soups and so on. We were not going to starve but we were actually on the point of cutting down. I looked at the map and said to John 'If we set this compass course, in fact we can run straight back to the depot and we are not going to be crossing any crevasses or anything like that, almost certainly. I am absolutely sure that is going to be quite safe. So anyway that was what we did.

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:21:11] Peter Clarkson: We had been held up for days with this really light fluffy snow and at first it was all we could do to get the skidoo to move on

its own but then eventually we beat a track over the first half mile or so, we could pull a sledge, and eventually we got going. We had said to Dog Holden and Phil Marsh at the depot 'We are coming but we are going to have to navigate by compass because we cannot see anything. It is whiteout; it is cloud. So could you put out a line of stakes at right angles to our route.' which they did, for about a mile from the camp. We ran the distance, on snow all the time. There was just one point, after about eight miles or something like that, where we passed a very very small, it was not even an outcrop of rock, it was just surface debris of rock. We passed very close to that so I said to John 'OK. We are doing fine.' He was driving. I was sitting at the back with a compass, on the sledge. Bloody miserable too, getting colder and colder on the sledge, but we carried on.

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:22:23] Peter Clarkson: We ran the distance and we could not see anything so we stopped and we said 'We dare not go on because we do not know quite where we are now.' At that point the mist, the cloud, must have lifted slightly. I looked and I could just see an outcrop in the distance and I said 'Ah, I know what that is. That is on the corner of Fuchs Dome.' We looked around and there was one single marker post. We said 'Hah. That's it. That's what we want.' So we looked at the compass and then we could see the line of marker posts and we got in. It was the last line of the posts that they had put out and we should not have travelled in that weather, according to the book, but I knew the ground well enough. For us it was pretty safe to do so. So that is the sort of thing that happens.

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:23:24] Chris Eldon Lee: *Were there personality clashes that year? There is talk about problems with the people in the garage and the survey office. You were base leader. You must remember?*

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:23:34] Peter Clarkson: Yes, we did have some problems there.

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:23:38] Chris Eldon Lee: *Can you even talk about it?*

Disc 2, Track 5 [0:23:40] Peter Clarkson: We had two people stay for a third year, a third consecutive winter and from my point of view, as the Base Commander, I was absolutely delighted because they were two extremely good people. They were good base members; they were good at their jobs, and they were a tremendous asset to the base. But perhaps they had been there too long, I think, in retrospect. One of the new people who came in, he had been South before and his ideas of how you serviced tractors and so on did not agree with those who had stayed on, who had learned their trade from Dad. Dad said 'You do not go out until absolutely everything is right. You strip the machine down at the end of the season and then put it back together again.' The new chap was saying 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' There was friction there from that point of view. That was how he had worked when he had been on the Peninsula and we did things differently and so on.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:24:57] Peter Clarkson: In the survey department, when we were going to the Shackleton Range the first time, the Survey had taken on two new surveyors. One was a chap, he must have been in his thirties I suppose (early thirties) and the other was early twenties, a relatively young surveyor. Fuchs did not want to send both these two people into the field with no Antarctic field experience. He asked Ken if he would come back. It was thought that it would be better to send the older

chap into the field rather than the younger chap, I cannot remember why but anyway Allen Clayton had done a season in the Shackleton Range, he had got back to... No I have got it the wrong way round. It was to send a younger chap into the field, that's right, first off, because being younger, perhaps be more adaptable and so on. So Tony True came into the field and Allen Clayton arrived on base on the ship and once he was not needed for unloading he set about organising the survey office, which was a normal thing to do. When Tony came back and meeting this older man, he felt that he was being told what to do, but that really was not the case at all. Tony got this big chip on his shoulder.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:26:47] Peter Clarkson: I remember in the spring we would always send out the dog teams through the hinge zone first, before we sent the tractors. The question was who should go on this dog trip., Well I had done the previous year but as base commander I did not feel I could so it this year so I asked Tony if he could go. He said 'Yes, if that is what you want me to do.' So I said 'Yes it is what I want you to do.' 'All Right.' I heard later, from his GA, that he was desperate to do that trip and I thought 'Bloody funny way of showing it.' Anyway he did his second season and Allen Clayton who was the other surveyor who was going to do his first season in the Shackleton Range although much of his project work had been on mapping the ice shelf. At the end of the season Allen Clayton was going to be the base commander for the following year. Tony had effectively finished his work and so although he was originally down for a two-year contract, I suggested that he need not stay for a second winter. I did not actually sack him but it could have amounted to that. He was a nice lad. Why he had this tremendous chip on his shoulder, I do not really know.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:28:25] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were a trained geologist, not a trained psychologist, aren't you?*

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:28:29] Peter Clarkson: Oh yes, that is right.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:28:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *How did you take to the responsibilities of man management in confined spaces?*

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:28:37] Peter Clarkson: Yes. We were called base commanders but I never felt that we were.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:28:41] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were not in command?*

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:28:45] Peter Clarkson: No. We had the authority, but we were base leaders. I always felt you had to lead the people. OK, if necessary I could have sacked somebody but if I am going to sack them in, let's say, June or July, we have still got to live with them for another six months. I just felt one never wanted to reach that sort of situation.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:29:12] Chris Eldon Lee: *Well Fuchs specifically changed the name, didn't he, from leader to commander to give you the command?*

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:29:15] Peter Clarkson: Yes, he did.

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:29:18] Chris Eldon Lee: *Yet that did not work in practice, in your experience?*

Disc 2, Track 6 [0:29:19] Peter Clarkson: I do not think so. It was only a change in title as far as I was concerned. It did not make any difference otherwise. Derek Gipps, who was the Logistics Officer for many many years, he was a character too. He said 'I don't know what the place is coming to. The base leader is now base commander and the bases are now 'stations'. The next thing is we are going to have a stationmaster in charge. That was Derek.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:29:52] Chris Eldon Lee: *By the time you had finished in the Antarctic, let us wrap up your time down South, if we can, because you went back yet again in the late '70s to do some more work on the Shackletons.*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:29:59] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:30:00] Chris Eldon Lee: *Bits to kind of tidy-up?*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:30:01] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:30:01] Chris Eldon Lee: *Had you noticed any significant changes in the ten years between your first visit and your last one? I am thinking of the attitude towards the work and risk taking, that kind of thing, whether things were being tightened up by then.*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:30:15] Peter Clarkson: No, I do not think so. I do not think it was until into the '80s, I suppose, when Health & Safety and other regulations were really starting to be felt down there. I remember some time in the '90s, late '90s probably, and I telephoned Julian Paren who was the Director's Assistant here. Just by way of opening the conversation I said to Julian, 'How are you?' He said 'Oh, I am fed up.' 'Oh, what's the problem?' He said 'Well, I have got the Halley Diary here. It has got to go up on to the Web, onto the website. I have got a photograph of some lads with skidoos in the Hinge Zone, but' he said 'I cannot use it.' I said 'Why not?' He said 'Well, they are not wearing crash helmets. Well one of them is not wearing a crash helmet. If we put that up on the Web and anybody sees it, we could be in trouble. So,' he said 'the options are: either don't use the photograph or send it to Roger Missing and get him to paint out the chap who has not got a helmet on, or else get him to paint a helmet onto him, because', he said, 'we would be in trouble.' I said 'Well, the last thing I would want to be wearing is a crash helmet, working on a skidoo in the Hinge Zone.' It is such a cumbersome thing. It would be cold there. One time we were there the temperature suddenly dropped to -40. We were out with the dogs. That was really very cold. You are probing crevasses. But no, I think the really big change, from that point of view, came in the '80s.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:32:08] Chris Eldon Lee: *By which time you were actually with BAS on a more permanent basis?*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:32:11] Peter Clarkson: Yes, I was.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:32:12] Chris Eldon Lee: *How did that come about?*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:32:13] Peter Clarkson: Well, it is just this business of being in the right pace at the right time and your face fits. From that point of view I was very lucky. I enjoyed the job and it was just creating difficulties for family by then.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:32:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *What does a Senior Scientific Officer at BAS do all day? What was your brief when you took the post?*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:32:38] Peter Clarkson: I do not think we really had one. You were expected to do the research on the fieldwork that you had already done, plan field programmes for the future. Once you reached that level you might have a junior geologist working with you or for you and you would be expected to supervise him, and so on.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:33:10] Chris Eldon Lee: *So were you a Senior Scientific Officer / Geology or /everything?*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:33:16] Peter Clarkson: No it was never /geology but that was all you were concerned with, and of course as you moved up you got involved with various other things, like writing sections for annual reports and this sort of thing, planning field seasons. But it has all changed since then. The scientists, I think, apart from having to write grant applications and stuff like that, they are much more focussed on the science.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:33:50] Chris Eldon Lee: *You became Principal Scientific..., which I guess...Is that one step even further removed from the actual rocks themselves?*

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:33:59] Peter Clarkson: No, not really. Well it is not meant to be, but it does get increasingly... I found it very difficult to marry the science and the admin. You come into the office in the morning and you think 'Right.' You get the microscope out, start looking at some rocks. The telephone rings. 'We need a report on so and so. Now!' So you stop it and you start doing the report. You get the report finished and then you think 'Where was I? Oh yes.' But it takes you a while to think yourself back into it, and especially if, instead of just looking down the microscope, you are actually writing something. You have completely lost your train of thought and it can be very difficult.

Disc 2, Track 7 [0:34:42] Peter Clarkson: I remember Paul Whiteman once saying 'Oh it is all very well for you scientists,' he said ' but you can be working just as hard as me when you are sitting there all day with your finger up your backside.' In a way he was right. You could perhaps spend virtually a whole day trying to get just one page of A4 of a paper right, whereas Paul would be flying round like a blue-arsed fly trying to get a spare ski for the aircraft. He would be ringing Canada, [?? incomprehensible] the shippers, all that sort of thing. It was a very different lifestyle, or workstyle, working life, for people like Paul Whiteman as compared to the scientists.

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:35:30] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were at BAS when the Falklands Conflict happened in '82. Is that correct? You were still here?*

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:35:37] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:35:38] Chris Eldon Lee: *So you may have witnessed the change of culture about the financing of BAS after the Falklands?*

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:35:44] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:35:45] Chris Eldon Lee: *What are your thoughts about that sudden influx of resources?*

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:35:49] Peter Clarkson: Initially at the time we got all this extra money to do research 'in the national interest'. At the time the geologists thought 'That means minerals, doesn't it?' so we thought 'We are going to do very well here.' Dick Laws had other ideas and I remember, years later, talking to him about this and I said 'You know, because we were not party to all the discussions and so on down at that junior level but we could not agree with a lot of the decisions you made at that time.' He said 'No, you probably couldn't, Peter, but...' and he explained things to me. Yes, obviously he made the right decisions. But I will tell you something funny.

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:36:38] Peter Clarkson: One year, a few years ago, I was in Buenos Aires going to join a tourist ship, and I had a colleague in there from long time in SCAR, a chap called Tito Acero who worked in the Argentine Antarctic Institute. I had got in touch with him and I said 'I will be there. It would be nice to see you.' So anyway I called on him when I arrived and we spoke briefly and I think we had a drink and I said 'I will see you tomorrow.' When I met him the next morning, he said 'General Leal, who is in charge of the Antarctic Direccion,' which was the next, the political level above and physically above the Institute, in the same building, he said 'he has heard that the Executive Secretary of SCAR is in town and he wants to see you.' 'Oh, what does he want to see me for?'

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:37:41] Peter Clarkson: Anyway, I had seen this General Leal often enough at Treaty meetings but I had never spoken to him. It was just a nodding acquaintance, because he did not speak any English; I did not speak any Spanish. It was a time when SCAR was undergoing an internal review. We had held the first meeting of the review committee here in Cambridge and the Argentines had offered to host the second meeting. Once he explained why he wanted to see me I thought 'Ah, he does not want to host this meeting in the Argentine Antarctic Institute because,' as he described it, 'in this sad old building.' He was absolutely right. I thought 'Oh dear, he is looking for a way out here.' So I said 'OK, when we had the meeting in Cambridge, we did not actually hold it in the Scott Polar Research Institute, because they had not got the facilities; we held it in one of the colleges, but people used to visit the institute for tea and coffee and to see around and so on.' So I said 'Why do you not hold it next door in the Engineers Institute which was where we held the Treaty meeting of experts a few years earlier? Then people could just visit the institute.' His face lit up. I thought 'Great. I have cracked this.' Anyway that was fine and everything was OK.

Disc 2, Track 8 [0:39:07] Peter Clarkson: The atmosphere relaxed a bit and then he said to me 'I understand that after the Malvinas, the Falklands War, that BAS got a lot of extra money and you have a new building.' So I said 'Yes, that's right.' He said

'and I hear it is called the Galtieri Building.' I said 'Well, only unofficially.' 'Mmm, well.' he said, 'I think we should have another war with Britain over the Malvinas, the Falkland Islands, and this time Argentina should be allowed to win and then we will get a new building and we will call it the Thatcher Building.' I suddenly felt 'Here is a great man.' He had actually been imprisoned in Argentina because he was outspoken of the regime but he had managed to survive as a general and I thought: 'I have missed an awful lot here, just because we have no common language.'

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:40:07] Chris Eldon Lee: *Was that a typical working day as a senior figure in SCAR? Or was that rather unusual?*

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:40:16] Peter Clarkson: That was rather unusual.

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:40:17] Chris Eldon Lee: *So tell me about your role at SCAR, briefly. What sort of things did you find yourself being faced with?*

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:40:24] Peter Clarkson: Well I was an accountant; I was an editor; I was a communicator, pushing information around; and anything else that came along really. We just had two employees in the secretariat: myself and my secretary, and that was it, really. They have only got three now. Before I started, the previous Executive Secretary was part-time.

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:40:59] Chris Eldon Lee: *This was George Hemmen?*

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:41:00] Peter Clarkson: George Hemmen, yes. So yes, I used to do all sorts of stuff. The other interesting thing: I had to re-apply for my job at one stage and one of the interview board said 'One of the things I expect from the Executive Secretary is that he should tell us how we can improve things.' And before I had a chance to answer, another one of the board, Bob Rutford from the States who was Vice President at the time at SCAR, he said 'Peter keeps telling us how we can improve things and we don't pay any attention.' I thought 'Great. Thanks, Bob.' But it was true and when the review committee published its recommendations, there were several of those that I had already suggested, but the stock response was 'No we don't do things that way in SCAR.' 'I know you don't, but don't you think you perhaps ought to? You are trying to run this organisation, which now has about 30 members, in exactly the same way as it was when it was 12 members and it is not working.'

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:42:20] Peter Clarkson: But no, they would only take it from the man in the white coat, and in fact when the review came out and it was one of the recommendations was that the job of Executive Secretary should disappear and be replaced by an Executive Director and an Executive Officer. Bob Rutford actually said to me 'Are you going to apply for this job, Peter?' because at that time I was about 58, so I had got about two years before my NERC pension would kick in. I said 'Well, if it means I am going to be out of a job, yes.' He said 'Oh, no. We won't get rid of you, but we will keep you on until your pension starts.' and he said 'and anyway this isn't a job for you.' 'Thanks' but he was quite right; I mean I would not want to be Executive Director.

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:43:16] Chris Eldon Lee: *So had you kind of fallen out with them then in the end?*

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:43:19] Peter Clarkson: No. So the Executive Director was eventually appointed and I stayed on until I was 65, to sort of guide him through, because he came with no experience of the Antarctic at all, but he has done a very good job. He has just retired now, after 6 years in the job. I retired about 65 and then my successor, whom I trained, a delightful young Polish woman who had actually been to the Antarctic, and when she joined us she had been working up in Tromso for the Norwegians. She did about two years I think, when the opportunity came to go back to Norway where her boyfriend was living, and so she decided to take that. She left in about March time and I was asked 'Would you come back and do your old job for a few months?' which I did and then after period of about another 6 months training another Executive Officer I slipped back into retirement again.

Disc 2, Track 9 [0:44:48] Chris Eldon Lee: *Did you ever fall out with BAS over anything? Were you happy with the way BAS was developing and going towards the end?*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:44:56] Peter Clarkson: No, not really. I was just finding it increasingly difficult with pressure from home about doing fieldwork and I was actually finding it rather difficult to get stuck into any Antarctic geology because I could feel this pressure from home behind me all the time, and it was just preventing me really getting stuck into it.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:45:26] Chris Eldon Lee: *So that brought you back to Cambridge but in your time at Cambridge in the administration of BAS, did you ever have differences of opinion the way things were going?*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:45:35] Peter Clarkson: No, not seriously, not at that time, I think, but in my personal situation it led to me looking for other jobs and again, unbelievably lucky to land the job with SCAR in the same city, same line of work, unique though it may be.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:46:02] Chris Eldon Lee: *You have been back South, of course, in more recent years. At least five times, if not more, working for the tourist industry.*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:46:14] Peter Clarkson: Yes, that is right.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:46:15] Chris Eldon Lee: *How do you find that?*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:46:16] Peter Clarkson: I thoroughly enjoy it. I think it is great fun, but you have got to be prepared to put up with passengers obviously and I found in every trip there has always been somebody I would cheerfully throw overboard. You sometimes wonder why these people actually go South, particularly some of the Americans because it is just somewhere they have never been before, so 'We will go there.'

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:46:46] Chris Eldon Lee: *Ticking the Seventh Continent?*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:46:47] Peter Clarkson: Yes, that is right. I can remember being flabbergasted seeing one chap get off the ship at Hope Bay with a green golf ball and

a golf club because he wanted to strike a golf ball on the Seventh Continent. I do not know what happened when you went on the Millennium Cruise, whether you had any other, non-Fid passengers.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:47:10] Chris Eldon Lee: *We did indeed, yes: rather large ladies from Florida.*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:47:13] Peter Clarkson: The questions they ask. Bob Headland collects all these questions. 'Is this the same Moon that we see in Texas?'

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:47:24] Chris Eldon Lee: *Are you comfortable with the Antarctic tourism industry, or do you see warning signs?*

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:47:31] Peter Clarkson: No, I am comfortable with it, on the whole. In fact, while I was working for SCAR, I went to one of the IAATO meetings to represent SCAR and I was expected to give a paper of some sort, so I wrote something. Yes, this was an odd example about in SCAR, you see. I wrote the paper but obviously I cannot give that as a SCAR paper without it being seen by other people. So I passed it round the Executive and they say 'Yes, it is fine.' because I know full well that if I say to the Executive Committee 'We need a paper on such and such.' I will never get anything. So I used to draft stuff that I thought was right for SCAR and just give it to them. Sometimes they did not always like all of it but most of the time it was all right and so we went with that.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:48:28] Peter Clarkson: A lot of Antarctic scientists, I think, felt that Antarctica was a place for science. Tourism had no right to be there, and I think that is the view of some of the Treaty people as well, but Antarctica is just another part of this planet and I think not only that everybody has a right to go there. Or at least no group has a right to prevent other people from going there. But some of these people are really quite influential people. They come down to the Antarctic; they see it is a fantastic place; they have a good appreciation of what is going on, particularly in the science; and they go back home and they spread the word and it is good for science. Also there is quite a bit of interaction at different times and in different ways between the tourist companies and the scientists. Sometimes they will take scientific expeditions down to a place where they would not otherwise be able to get to. Whatever countries people are from, the national organiser is not going to take a ship there just to dump them off, so the tourists will do it, and the passengers love having these people on board because here are some real explorers. You can talk to them and tell them what they do, and so on.

Disc 2, Track 10 [0:49:49] Peter Clarkson: Then something that I tried to encourage, and I do not know to what extent it still goes on, but a lot of tourist ships go to places where the national operators never go and they can get all sorts of useful bathymetric data. So a lot of them at one stage were certainly collecting data and forwarding them to whoever, probably the Admiralty in Taunton (the Hydrographic Office). There is a lot that can go backwards and forwards, and the tourism that I have seen is very well managed, very well organised and administered, and it has to be said that in a number of cases people have seen base personnel behaving with far less concern for the environment than the tourists. I do not know if that still happens but it certainly used to.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:51:02] Chris Eldon Lee: *But we are sitting at BAS, in an office with a magnificent aerial shot of Rothera, and you were at Rothera before Rothera existed, you were saying before we started recording. Tell us that story.*

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:51:06] Peter Clarkson: Well it was in 1975 and I had just done a short season on the South Shetland Islands. The *Bransfield* had come and picked us up from Livingston Island and we were stuck on the ship for, I cannot remember now, another three or four weeks probably, going up and down the Peninsula. Ray Adie was on board and as Deputy Director if he wanted to do something then, I think Stuart Lawrence was the Captain at the time, he made sure it could happen. We had a great trip into Deception Island, we went up to where the new island was, from the 1967 eruption.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:51:51] Peter Clarkson: Where else did we go? We went to Prospect Point because Adie was determined that the foundation stone for the new building that was at that time being built, the original "Fort Lego" here on this site, he was determined that the foundation stone should come from there. So we found this huge lump of granodiorite I think and the problem was how to get it back to the ship. Prospect Point, Base J, had been closed for a number of years but there was an old sledge round the side of the building, so we managed to manhandle this onto the sledge and then, one at each corner, we got the sledge down to the launch and on to the launch. Then when they lifted the launch up, alongside the *Bransfield*, up to deck level, the bosun Pete Crockford, wanting to prove to everybody that he was as strong as four Fids who had needed a sledge to carry this stone, he picked up this rock and nearly gave himself a hernia. Anyway he got it onto the deck and you can now see that piece of rock or part of it down in the old original reception area by Madingley Road.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:53:03] Peter Clarkson: Then we went down to Marguerite Bay, we went ashore at Stonington Island – the base had just been closed then. We went to Rothera Point. Base T on Adelaide Island, it must have been built about 1961 I think. The original intention was to put it at Rothera but the sea ice was bad and they could not get round there so they left it at Adelaide. So we went to look at Rothera Point, lovely place all covered in snow. Not like that now, so 'I remember this when it was all green fields.' No, having Ray Adie on board for that trip was really good value.

Disc 2, Track 11 [0:53:55] Peter Clarkson: But that was the time when a group of us were having a drink in the Fids' lounge on the *Bransfield* and Adie came down from the wardroom where he had been having dinner with the officers and he saw a semicircle of us round the table. Somebody said 'Come over Ray. Come and have a drink.', lobbed a pint of beer in front of him and he looked round the assembled company: cooks and GAs and all sorts, and he went round and said hello to all of us in turn. 'Hello Jim. Hello Fred.' And he got to me and he looked at me and he said 'Hello Clarkson.' I worked for him. He could not bring himself to be familiar. I have to say all that changed in later years, as he was chairman of the BAS Club for many many years and I was on the committee for many many years and gradually we got down to first name terms as we did with Bunny Fuchs.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:01] Chris Eldon Lee: *You picked up a Polar Medal and more recently the MBE, in both cases because of the work you have done either in or connected with the Antarctic.*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:12] Peter Clarkson: Yes.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:13] Chris Eldon Lee: *In your little biog you say that your interests these days are all things Antarctic, so there is 'ice in your blood'?*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:20] Peter Clarkson: Do you mean I am cold and frigid?
[laughs]

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:24] Chris Eldon Lee: *No not at all. What I mean is there is no escape. Even now you are wearing a tie with penguins and the Antarctic continent map on it.*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:32] Peter Clarkson: Well that is just in case you had a camera.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:34] Chris Eldon Lee: *I have.*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:36] Peter Clarkson: This one comes from the gift shop in Stanley. It is not one of the other formal ties.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:43] Chris Eldon Lee: *I suppose my question is: can you think now, looking back over your life, what it was that... Well we know you talked about seeing the image and wanting to go there.*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:57] Peter Clarkson: Yes and in fact about 12 years ago my mother and stepfather finally moved house from South London down to Somerset, something they had been talking about doing it for nearly 40 years, But anyway I had still got stuff in that house so I had to clear out and there were a lot of childhood books there including a ten-volume set of encyclopaedias, and I thought 'Ah gosh, I remember them. I have not seen these for ages. Oh yes!' I opened up whichever volume it was and there were a lot of Ponting's pictures in there and they were done not in, well it was like sepia but instead of being brown they were blue. I thought 'Yes, I remember now.' I must have had these when I was about five or so.

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:56:51] Chris Eldon Lee: *You are talking Arthur Mee or Encyclopaedia Britannica?*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:56:54] Peter Clarkson: No, *Newnes Children's Encyclopaedia* I think, something like that: ten red volumes [Transcriber comment: It would be *Newnes Pictorial Knowledge*. Andy Smith]. Each one is about an inch thick. They were very good encyclopaedias actually, and I used to look at these an awful lot, but it was always these pictures of the Antarctic, of Scott and Shackleton, that fascinated me. I suppose that is actually where it all started but I had forgotten about it. I was thinking it all started with Bunny's crossing of the Continent but no, it was actually there before then, so I suppose...

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:57:27] Chris Eldon Lee: *You were attracted, very early on?*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:57:30] Peter Clarkson: Yes, I think I was. Then of course, going up to Iceland from school, and again. That was in '63; I went again in '64 and '66: '64 with a group from Sir John Cass College in London because one of the... I suppose he was a schoolboy the previous year but then he had gone up to Sir John Cass and was going to run an expedition to Iceland and asked me if I wanted to go along. Then again, someone from the first expedition who was not connected to our school, I think he was in some way related to Eric Ratcliffe who was the master who led it. He was now teaching at Radley College near Oxford and he wanted to take a group of boys up to Iceland and he had asked me if I would like to go along to help look after them. So I said 'Yes, I would.' So I did three Iceland trips. Apart from midges in Iceland, which were not too bad on the whole, I felt 'I like these cold places.'

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:58:41] Chris Eldon Lee: *We have got a couple of minutes left, then we must stop. Let me throw one at you and just see how you respond to it. We are about eight days away from the Comprehensive Spending Review that the Conservative government is going to announce and it is likely in that spending review that research will find itself being cut. If you came face to face with David Cameron and tried to talk him out of it, what would you say to him?*

Disc 2, Track 12 [0:59:06] Peter Clarkson: Well, I think one thing I would say – this is partly my own experience here in BAS – is: take note of what Sir Philip Green has just told you about the money that is wasted in government purchasing. I think I saw this happen a lot, or could happen a lot within BAS, when NERC said 'Oh, no, we will do this. We will do that.' They wanted to centralise purchasing for different things at different times, and it does not always work. On the face of it, yes there are savings, but when you get down to the practical detail: I do remember one occasion when NERC said 'We want to sit in on your interviews.' Eric Salmon was the Personnel Officer then. Bill had retired from it by then I think. They were interviewing mechanics. I was not on the board; I just heard about this. After they had interviewed everybody, Eric who was chairman of the board, said 'Right well who are we going to choose?' and the NERC chap apparently said 'Well it is obvious. You will have to take him. He has got all these qualifications.' And Eric said 'Not necessarily. We need somebody who we know can take an engine apart and put it back together again so that it works. It does not matter whether he has got the paper qualifications. It is the practical, hands-on experience; that is what we need.' 'Oh.'

Disc 2, Track 13 [1:00:46] Peter Clarkson: That is the way those sort of things can go wrong. That is the reverse of what Philip Green is saying. You need to look at these things properly, and certainly I think it must be possible to save money in Government. Somebody was saying to me the other day that we have never had a minister for research and development in this country, and you can look at any number of ideas that have been discovered in this country and we have never followed them up. They have been followed up in the rest of the world, and the rest of the world has made all the money. That is not to forget of course that we have invented games like soccer, cricket, which we have taken to the rest of the world. They come back and they smash the hell out of us, but we are very good at what we do in the Antarctic and let us hope that David Cameron is not going to cut that.

Disc 2, Track 13 [1:02:01] Chris Eldon Lee: *Peter, it has been a pleasure. Thank you very much.*

Disc 2, Track 13 [1:02:04] Peter Clarkson: Thank you.

Disc 2, Track 13 [1:02:05] [End of Part Two]

ENDS

Snippets:

- Ray Adie and his achievements. Disc 1, Track 2 [0:09:33]
- Bill Sloman. Disc 1, Track 4 [0:15:04]
- '8 hours to change a fanbelt'. Disc 1, Track 5 [0:20:42]
- Attempts to rescue Holden, Marsh and Wright from Belgrano. Disc 1, Track 5 [0:24:13]
- 'Depot Dad'. Disc 1, Track 8 [0:36:47]
- Gondwanaland and continental drift. Disc 1, Track 10 [0:44:54]
- Nick Mathys' broken leg. Disc 1, Track 11 [0:50:19]
- The Mobsters and the Beatles. Disc 1, Track 12 [0:58:48]
- Accident on Mount Absalom. Disc 1, Track 13 [1:01:54]
- Donald Duck and the Flowerpot Men. Disc 2, Track 3 [0:09:51]
- American versus British approaches. Disc 2, Track 4 [0:15:15]
- Snow cairns and yellow cement. Disc 2, Track 4 [0:18:06]
- Bending the rules. Disc 2, Track 4 [0:19:38]
- Personality clashes on base. Disc 2, Track 5 [0:23:24]
- Health & Safety comes to the Antarctic. Disc 2, Track 7 [0:30:15]
- The 'Galtieri Building'. Disc 2, Track 8 [0:39:07]
- Collecting the foundation stone for the new BAS building. Disc 2, Track 11 [0:51:51]
- Inspiration at age 5 by Ponting's pictures. Disc 2, Track 12 [0:55:57]