

Moore\_David

**Edited transcription of David Moore recorded at his home in Radlett, Hertfordshire, by Felicity Aston on the 26 October 2010. BAS Archives AD6/24/1/91.  
Transcribed by David Price 12 December 2013.**

[Part 1 0:00:00] Felicity Aston. This is David Moore recorded by Felicity Aston at his home in Radlett, Hertfordshire on the 26 October 2010.

**David Moore Part One.**

Moore: My name is David Moore, David Peter Moore, and I was born on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1934, that makes me 76 years old now and I was born at Leigh-on-Sea in Essex.

[Part1 0:00:28] Aston: So David, what was your first job out of school?

Moore: I was an office boy, working for Shell Tankers and we used to collect all the log books from the Shell tankers and work out how much fuel they had used and what sort of mileage they'd done all around the world and various things like that.

[Part1 0:00:50] Aston: Then you did your National Service with the Royal Air Force, is that where you got your experience as a wireless operator?

Moore: Yes, National Service started on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1952 and I did all the usual square bashing and then went to a trade school down at Compton Bassett, RAF Compton Bassett where I learnt Morse because they battered us with Morse, day after day until we spoke in Morse virtually. We did it every evening and, you know, people were tapping up Morse all day until it nearly sent you mad. But we all got used to using Morse regularly and it became a second language to us and I was picked then to go with six others to Germany and I finished up in a small unit at RAF Hambühren near Cella in Germany, in Western Germany then and we were monitoring Russian and East German units, both the Air force and the Army just for any details they might let slip, and we passed them all back to Cheltenham<sup>1</sup>. I won't say any more, I'm probably breaking the Official Secrets Act now but it's a long time ago.

[Part1 0:02:21] Aston: Were you becoming a wireless operator following your own interests or was it something you were just allocated to do?

Moore: I was told to put my hand up when I heard a trade that interested me. I did that because I'd worked in an office I stuck up my hand when they said 'office jobs' and they said 'there are no office jobs left, you can... you must become...you will have to take a test for doing wireless operating' so I said 'Alright, fair enough' so that was that, I became a wireless operator. Usual service thing but if you wanted to be a cook they sent you out fighting somebody and vice versa, so I did what I was told.

[Part1 0:02:58] Aston: So how did you first hear about FIDS, was this something you were aware of or ...[unintelligible]

Moore: I knew nothing about it at all and when I had finished the Royal Air Force I went back to work for Shell Tankers I was then moved to Eagle Oil and Shipping which is one of their smaller units for taking oil around the world. By then I had met my future wife called Charlotte and we used to travel backwards and forwards on the train from Leigh-on Sea to London to go to the office in the morning and home at night. We had the Evening Standard

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<sup>1</sup> GCHQ Cheltenham, UK high security communications centre.

and used to look at that every night in the train going home she said, because I had been talking about going whaling or something ridiculous like that, she said ‘Oh, here’s a good job for you’ I think she was probably trying to get rid of me but anyway she said ‘Why don’t you have a go at that if you are interested?’ Because I was fed up with working in an office it was just ridiculous after working in the Air Force which at least I had a bit of fun with it, you know. They were all very sombre and sober in the offices at Shell and I thought I wanted to get away from that and so I sent off a letter to this Box Number I think it was, it may have been Crown Agents and lo and behold I had an answer from them to say come and see and so I went to the Crown Agents office in London. Went to the Crown Agents and they told me a little bit about it and they said ‘Are you interested?’ I said ‘it sounds very interesting, yes.’ They said ‘What about your Morse?’ So I produced my papers, which were discharge papers which said that I could use Morse at 25 words a minute, which was regarded as fairly good, you know, because I had got up to Senior Aircraftsman by then. you had to pass a test, so 25 words a minute they said ‘Well, that’s grand, you had better start, I had a medical and they found that I had some bronchial asthma and they said well, never mind because you’ll be going to a static base, going to a base and you won’t be moving very far, and if you do you’ll just have to make it for not very long because you are their wireless operator. So I said ‘Fine, Ok that’s all right by me’ and that was it. So about a week later I had a letter to say you’re going to be going to the Antarctic, so I thought ‘Oh, I had better start reading about it, so I read one or two books at that point, it was fairly hard work but who cares about hard work you know, but...

[Part 1 0:05:49] Aston: What was the response of your friends and family to it when you announced that you were going to the Antarctic? Was it seen as quite a crazy thing to do or dangerous, you know, adventuresome?

Moore: They thought it was all exciting to them and they were all asking questions about it which I couldn’t really answer. But the local press got hold of it; the Southend Standard came and interviewed me, they didn’t listen to a word I said as is typical of the press and so they put, did pieces in the local paper about me. After that, strangely enough another young man called at the door one day, Frank Ryan, who eventually went to Base Y at the same time as I did, went down on the *Shackleton* at the same time as me. We had a talk and so on and so forth and we said we would meet up on the *Shackleton* which we did eventually. A nice young man, I think he actually died since then, I’m not really sure about that, I can’t remember. But anyway, so eventually on, just before Christmas we joined the Royal Research Ship *Shackleton* and set off. My mum came to see me off and that was great.

[Part 1 0:07:13] Aston: Tell me a little bit about when you were getting ready, there was a bit of a delay wasn’t there?

Moore: There was, I was just coming to that, yes. Well we all got on the ship and off we sailed, you know – here we come to the Antarctic but it was fairly rough out in the Channel and we got to Torbay and there we stopped, put down the anchors, that was that. They said ‘We’ve got a problem, the cargo’s shifting, we can’t sail any further with it like this and we’ve got to go back to Southampton, so get ready boys for the journey back.’ We all went back to Southampton, Christmas was fast approaching so they said you had better go home and have another Christmas dinner, which we had all had beforehand so there was a second one and so we reported back to the ship in Southampton on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December and we set off again and sure enough, there was no problems then and they’d got it all sorted out. So we sailed down to the Cape Verde Islands and that was interesting because the, you know, all of what they called the bum boats came out from the Cape Verde Islands all trying to sell us

fruit and all sorts of things, cigarettes and whatever. So we got rid of all them and sailed on to Montevideo and we passed the German battleship which was alongside the River Plate, I can't remember the name of that<sup>2</sup> but everybody knows it. We spent about two days I think in Montevideo, maybe three which was quite an enjoyable and exciting time as any old Fids will certainly remember, I'm not going to say anymore [Laughs.]

[Part 1 0:09:2] Aston: What was the atmosphere while you were on... this was the first time that you've met your fellow Fids?

Moore: It was all very quiet to start with but we gradually got used to each other, and when we crossed the Line, I forget who was running that but one of the blokes ran it who had crossed the Line before and the seamen as well and the officers were all engaged with it. We had a jolly good time and all got, not beaten up, but you know, shoved around in the usual way and by then we were all quite a cheerful crowd together but never boisterous, you know, we weren't getting drunk every night or anything like that, it was a fairly quiet trip down but full of good talk and full of comradeship which was building up, you know. None of us knew very much about it, I think we were all new Fids so I don't think there was anybody there who knew what we were going into, there may have been one or two, I may have listened but I can't remember. We went into Montevideo and out we came and headed for Port Stanley, I remember passing the *Fitzroy* the old *Fitzroy* on its way back from Port Stanley to Montevideo which was its regular run, we passed that one day with big lots of waves as we passed by. We arrived in Port Stanley, I think very early in, no hang on, I think it was the third week in January, but I'm not really sure about that. I could find it somewhere, I think it was then, so we docked in Port Stanley and then a further round of collecting clothing and finding out a bit more what we were doing, what we were going to do. I was told that I would be going to start a new base with seven others and that I would have to start a radio station, which filled me with horror because I had never done anything like that in my life before, I'd been listening and sending Morse but I'd never had to run a radio station or never dealt with the aerials or never dealt with anything really technical. They had ticked boxes when I went I passed the, when I did the technical bits in the Airforce saying 'He knows about that' you know and I really didn't know much about it to be honest and I said to them 'Well, you know, you may be sending the wrong man down to start a new radio station. They said 'No, you'll be alright' I remember going back to the *Shackleton* and saying to Jack Hill and Ken Hill who both travelled down, all three of us wireless operators we got on quite well together Ken had been in the Navy, Jack had been in the Airforce like me. I said 'Look lads I've got a good job for you down at Base W you'll enjoy it, they said 'Get on with it, you do it' so that was the end of that nobody was going to volunteer to take my place so I thought 'OK I'm stuck with it I'm going to have to do it.' I talked to Lofty Tyson who had been down there as a radio operator, as a wireless operator and he was running the repair shed in Stanley, so he was in charge of radios and so one day I think while we'd been in Stanley for a few days I went back to the ship and they said 'Have you heard what's happened to your radio, your transmitter?' They said 'It's been dropped, and it had been dropped about 30 feet down into the hold of the old *John Biscoe* or somewhere anyway. So they had taken it up to Lofty Tyson and said 'It's all broken, mend it' and he, poor chap, was very good at his job and he mended it as far as he could. But it was chaos from there on quite honestly because it gave me trouble for the whole year and I'm not telling a sob story but that's what it was like, I had to make the best of it and never mind we went south and I knew my other base members by that time and felt very happy with them.

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<sup>2</sup> The ship was the battleship *Graf Spee*, severely damaged during the battle of the River Plate, Dec 13 1939. The ship was scuttled on order of its commander, Hans Langsdorff, on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1939.

[Part 1 0:13:32] Aston: Is that down in the Falkland Islands with your base members or did they sail down with you?

Moore: I can't quite remember that to be honest, I know one of them had and that was Mike Alford he's on the ship, I've got a photograph of him on the *Shackleton* but I haven't got a photograph of anybody else and I don't remember anybody else but there was Tom Murphy he was the base leader, there was Eric Salmon who was our 'wise old judge' because he'd been on several trips down there. He'd been on Deception and had been here, there and everywhere and knew everybody and knew how to work dogs, and knew how to cook. That was the first time I had met Eric and I think he had been in Port Stanley for some time having come back the previous year from down south. So that was useful and it was said, I was friends with his wife actually after he'd, well we'd stayed friends when we came back and poor chap had a serious heart attack or something, what do call it when your left side gets paralysed? But anyway he was aged just over 60 and he'd just retired from FIDS, he was working for FIDS in Cambridge. Anyway he had this severe attack and I went up to see him a couple of times where he lived in Cambridge and poor chap was struggling, you know he'd had a stroke, that's what it was. He was his old cheerful self but he could be a bit twitchy as it were, you know difficult to get on with but he was always friendly and happy but sometimes he used to say terrible things about my wireless operating at that time, you know this is well after. But his wife, I was friends with her as well because they'd married down in Port Stanley that was to Freda, Freda Salmon, do you remember the name? No, she died a couple of years ago actually, yeah, no, no this last year and so when I went to Eric's funeral and did a speech or something, anyway, so I knew him and Freda always maintained that he should have been the base leader but he was, as she said something of a maverick, which he was. That was his speciality. That was what made him so good, he was. But he and Tom got along extremely well so that was no problem they worked together. And there was Ron Miller, who was a brilliant builder and a mountaineer, and there was Hedley Wright who played the bagpipes and regarded himself as above most people and Mike Alford who died last year in South Africa, he was a surveyor. Who else, oh goodness, I won't try to remember them; they'll come back to me in a minute.

[Part1 0:16:32] Aston: Well what about Tom Murphy, what did you make of him when you first met him, was he reassuring as a base leader?

Moore: He was like a father figure and quite confident about what he was doing he was a Scotsman and a good man to have around. I was only 21 at the time you see, I was the youngster, as Ron Miller, when Miller wrote to me in reply to one of my letters not so long ago he said 'Nobody told me you were no'but a lad' [Laughs.] he comes from Barrow in Furness which is, that was a perfect accent for Barrow in Furness but so I was 21 but I would pretend I was 31, most of the men were obviously much older than me, in my terms then, you know. Anything from 24, to 25 up to 30, 31, 32 something like that anyway so I felt really at home with some blokes who knew what they were doing even if they hadn't been down on base before. Eric had, Ray Cooper another brilliant man he was the diesel mechanic, he was ex-Navy and he'd been on Deception Island so he was, that was Eric and Ray, Ray Cooper was one you could depend upon in any circumstances. In fact the whole lot of them were really and truly and they helped me immensely all the way through whenever I needed anything or a bit of nudging on, they were there to do it without any fussing. We were like a big family. We quickly became I think, I'm not sure if we became a family on the old *John Biscoe* because we went down south on the old *Biscoe* the old whaling ship, no, an old mine

sweeper<sup>3</sup> or something. It looked like a dinghy, it was moored even behind the *Shackleton* which wasn't big, so we all got on to the *John Biscoe* and I've got a photograph, where is it now, here.

[Part 1 0:18:42] Aston: You've just mentioned to me that Wally Herbert was on the boat with you.

Moore: Yes, that's right

[Part1 0:18:48] Aston: Do you know much about Wally Herbert?

Moore: No, ah yes and no, we had a quiet trip down, I remember him coming out with us he was one of our group that got into some of the worst pubs in Montevideo and we met all sorts of strange people in there and we had a good laugh about that afterwards. On this journey when we were into Port Stanley, no, I wasn't, we sort of talked if we bumped into each other and had discussions about things, we weren't close friends but we knew each other as pals, you know for the short term period. Anybody who had been in the services was easy to deal with that way because you knew that you met somebody and then you moved on quickly and you didn't make long term friends. You know you just made friends quickly and suddenly you were moved on you didn't have to worry about that so that was the situation there. I know that we then set off to the south and we were very daunted, this going, this, it was exciting when we got closer to the ice. We started to see bits of ice, bits of whales all sort of Antarctic things like that and it was quite exciting. We started to call at different bases then, unloading into what we called a scow which was a dirty big boat, and we unloaded all sorts of stuff into them, took it ashore, unloaded it, it was sheer hard work, nothing else than that. It was just hard labour but we did it because we were all young and we could always have a nice meal back on the ship, and have a few beers and so we survived it all. I don't know how many bases we visited but all the time we were sort of moving further and further south because the captain, I forget who that was quite honestly. It may have been Captain Brown but I'm not very sure but anyway his, he had daily talks with Tom Murphy because Tom Murphy wanted to get somewhere to stick Base W on, and so did Captain Brown, if it was Captain Brown. So the closer we got to the Southern end of our trip there for doing the bases, I forget which ones we got near to but we went to Anvers Island, I think they were starting Base N there and we unloaded a load of stuff there, went on and always looking for the right place for W which had to be north of Base Y because that was the slot to fill in as it were. The whole reason it seemed to me for our existence was to fit more bases in because it was the International Geophysical Year and somebody somewhere was afraid of the Argentinians and the Chileans moving in more than they were. They were at various places and so they said to themselves, right we want the new base there, full stop, you know just find a place, that was the intention, I think that was what happened. Eventually after we sort of been down and come back and looked around I think Tom and the captain decided that this island Detaille Island in the Lallemand Fjord was about the only place that was suitable, and if it had problems so what. We can't stand and talk about that because the winter's coming on and we've got to get out of it said the boat, said the ship.

[Part 1 0:22:53] Aston: What did you do about Detaille Island as well, what were they [unintelligible.]

Moore: It was one, well who knows? It was a space on which we were going to have a base. That was about the length of it, what I could see anyway was that it was more or less the right

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<sup>3</sup> The old John Biscoe had been a boom defence vessel during its wartime service.

place, and it was, there was no, on the banks of the Fjord and like this, and mountainous areas going up the sides and this was a low, rocky island, quite small and it would be filled in by sea-ice in the wintertime and therefore it could be used to set off on survey trips in different directions, and go back up the fjord and up on to a plateau which was hoped to be found, which they did find a plateau on the top, and that was it. And so Detaille Island, we'll get near it and we'll unload everything on to the scows and backwards and forwards with the scows unloading stores, unloading building materials, timber, concrete, fuel, food, everything.

[Part1 0:24:02] Aston: All by hand?

Moore: All by hand, nothing mechanical at all. On to your shoulder and lift, you couldn't even use sledges because we landed them on to a rocky area above the ice; there was no sea-ice there so it was all hand manoeuvring. At the same time we were doing that the builders were mixing concrete and starting to make, well we all did I think at that stage, we were all sort of involved in... we didn't know how to do it but we were told what to do, you know, 'mix the concrete this way.' It was very fast setting Concrete Fondu<sup>4</sup>, it was called Fondu. it was a French concrete, had to be French didn't it, and so we built the concrete foundations, you know, square lumps<sup>5</sup> as it were all the way along. So building the foundations and the builders carried on then, they had to set for several days, I don't know how long and all the time we were sort of landing stores and carrying stores up to near the site of the hut so that was another use for us. Bring it to the shore, landing it there and then picking it up again and moving it up to the site of the hut. But that went on as a sort of chain gang situation, meanwhile the *Biscoe* had set us all ashore but several others as well who were on movements around, you know, to different bases and they were sort of put ashore to help us, which was fine, about four or five different blokes. Good healthy, strong young men all willing hands to move, we were very willing to do everything, we didn't stop to ask questions we just got on and did it. The old *Biscoe* came back after about a week or two weeks, I'm not really too sure. Even more anxious to get away now, we loaded the other, our friends that had helped us and off they went. We all stood there on the shore, on the cliff, thinking 'What the hell's going to happen now. It's gone?' We felt rather forsaken to be perfectly honest, and to be rather sad that we were dumped on the island, told to get on with it as it were.

[Part 1 0:26:32] Aston: What state was the hut in by that point when you were trying to [crosstalk.]

Moore: It was not in a very good state, we'd put up 3,4,5 tents, I don't know how many say 3 or 4 or 5 I don't know, some sledging tents, typical tents, you've probably used them and so we lived in those and we carried on doing the building. We also had built, with stores like what we called the caboose with store boxes and canvas over the top which we used for cooking and for general sort of meetings and cups of tea and whatever. If we wanted a rest we went in the caboose and that was that. One day Eric said, because he was in charge of the cooking, he was a good cook he could take a tin of stewed steak and make it into a real meal, he and Ray as well both had experience and they used to produce super meals for all of us gang, the fourteen or fifteen of us originally, to some porridge for breakfast and some bacon, bacon sandwiches or something like that and then at night tinned, a stew with stewed steak and all sorts of, clearly basic foods but good hot warming stuff. Eric said to me one day 'I think you ought to have a go at cooking tomorrow' oh yes OK, you know always ready to say

<sup>4</sup> Incorrect, the correct name was Ciment Fondu, a French product which was a High-Alumina cement which was quick setting and could be made with sea water. Both desirable attributes in an Antarctic environment.

<sup>5</sup> In building parlance, known as piers, all in line and finishing at a uniform height.

yes, never ready to say no and he said ‘You know what to do, you want anything? I said yes, I’ve watched you and you know it was a disaster, an absolute disaster, I had never done any cooking before and it was just the one thing to do the right thing that I said I could do that. I tried to make eggs and bacon for everybody on four Primus’s, total disaster. Six o’clock or whenever the lads finished work on the building they all came pushing through the door and said ‘Right, where’s my dinner, where’s my dinner?’ I said it ‘I’ll be another hour yet.’ What! and without using all the foul language that was thrown at me, Eric said ‘Go and sit down over there and rest and I’ll do the dinner and he had made something within about twenty minute so there was a decent hot meal for everybody. I took a long time to live that down of course but then the extras went and it was just the eight of us.

[Part 1 0:29:15] Aston: So the *John Biscoe* left and there were eight of you left behind at Base W and you were living in tents but you were still continuing the building work?

Moore: Yes it was very important to get that, get the building finished before the winter really started in earnest. The weather was absolutely awful from there on and we were living in the tents so the idea was to work as fast as we could finishing the outside of the building and as much of the inside we could so that we could move in as soon as we could because it was getting a bit desperate outside. I remember in my tent there was I think there was three of us but I’m not very sure but because we were continually using the bed area the bed sank by about six inches every night, you know, so you had this fall into your sleeping bag and then we would say OK we had been there a week, we’ve got to move the tent because we can’t climb in and out of bed anymore.

[Part 1 0:30:21] Aston: During this time where was all your radio equipment, were you still in radio contact?

Moore: Nothing at all, nothing at all, it was all in crates, everything was in crates, we put no aerials up at all, it was important to get the house, hut built so that we could get into it then we could start living a normal or comparatively normal life then. Until then it was just a work site and us in the tents going to it every day and working and coming back to the tents at night after having a hot meal in the caboose, not cooked by me. So the time came when the weather was so foul that Tom said ‘Look we’ve got to move into that house now and we’ll work from the outside,’ we’d finished the roof and we’d finished all the cladding and everything like that. We were directed by Tom and Ron and Eric as well who took his part in, you know, he was all there with what to do and how to do it and eventually came the day when Tom said ‘Everybody in, let’s stop living outside like natives’ or something like that and we moved into the hut. Now, the first ever time that we were in contact, I mean we were still busy working inside there was a lot to do, lot of building work and painting and all sorts of things inside. We had to get the kitchen all prepared which was, and all the water system so that because all the water had to be just fetched in, snow fetched in and dropped into the tanks so when it was habitable then we moved in. From there on it was a case of what’s the next important job? I must say that I had, I didn’t deliberately delay my radio station but it got sort of pushed aside somewhat because there was always other urgent things to do, there were dogs to look after, there was cooking to do, inside the house there was all sorts of things to be done but we did have a little domestic Bush radio<sup>6</sup> which you won’t remember at all but a little domestic radio on which we could get a lot of American stations and they played music. Then one day I was playing with it one evening, I didn’t have time during the day to play with anything but in the evening I was moving it around and suddenly loud noises were

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<sup>6</sup> Bush radio, a leading British manufacturer of domestic radios. Became part of the Rank empire in 1945.

coming out of it, Morse. I sat and wrote it down and it was VPC which was Port Stanley and they were talking to the control base, talking to, using Morse they said 'OK here's some messages for you' and one was for Mike Alford who was sitting opposite me. I had no radio equipment, just this funny little old set. I wrote it down and walked over to Mike and said 'Just got a message in for you' I won't tell you what he said but it was foul language, he can be quite terrible like that, and I said 'no, it really is a message for you' and he took a lot of convincing that it really was for him and eventually it dawned on him that this was from his mum hoping everything was well, nothing terribly important. He thought I was a magician of some kind I think that I'd produced this out of thin air. I think the next night Tom said 'Well, listen in every night and you might pick up something important and we'll get on to sorting out your radio room, putting up the masts and everything I think next week.' Then came a message that said 'work from VPC' which was Port Stanley again and saying 'We've heard from Base N but we've heard nothing from Base W yet, what's happening to them?' and some rude reply went back from the control station I said to Tom 'We've got to get going, could we get the transmitting station going and get the aerials up?' so we concentrated on it. We got the radio transmitter in, it all had to be wired in and I had lots of books which had come with the transmitters and the radio. We had two receivers, the big transmitter, an American Army one and an old RAF one, all obviously bought surplus, surplus stock after the war. Everything was done, we put up the aerials and I thought 'God these aerials aren't going to last very long' absolutely fragile silly little things they were.

[Part 1 0:35:17] Aston: They were just buried into the ground were they or how did you...?

Moore: Well we had to fix the masts into cement, in the ground, in the rocks outside because there was still rock available to use and they had four guy ropes, guy wires actually. So we had to get a secure fitting for those and so I worked out and I'd got this not from any knowledge but from a book, but I had to get the aerial pointing in a certain direction. So we did that and got everything strung up and so I sat there one night, I'd done a little test on it and worked up the, you had, it was a transmitter which you had to work on hard to get it going. Twiddle that and twiddle that and twiddle that and press that button and then it should be going well and after a little while I got the hang of it and I sat there one afternoon and listened to the sked that was going on the receivers. I thought, oh, I'll wait until the end of the sked then I'll tune in with Z32 which is my call sign ZHF32 you know you just cut things down to Z32. So I did a general call which was CQ from Z32, come in if anybody can hear me. No answer, I don't think anybody heard it at all I thought 'this is going to be all downhill from here'

[Part 1 0:36:51] Aston: What did you think, did you think that you set up the aerials wrong, the transmitter [Unintelligible]

Moore: I did not know, I did not know, I could see that the transmitter was working whenever I hit the key it was going like this [demonstrates movement] something was working right. I thought I would have another go, later on in the day, it was in the evening then, after the evening sked and I think it was a bit later than that and I think I heard them say 'We are all listening for Base W, perhaps I was in the wrong frequency. Anyway I got, they told me the frequencies and that was the only bit of information that I ever got from Lofty at Port Stanley and that gave me the frequencies for the base and the control.

[Part1 0:37:41] Aston: This is a sheet of paper that lists all the different radio codes for the call signs for the different bases?

Moore: That's right, that's right.



[Part 1 0:37:50] Aston: Port Lockroy, Anvers, Argentine and then down here the base in charge, control was Port Stanley.

Moore: Control actually was the controlling base which was Port Lockroy, and so that was the one I had to work with. I listened to Port Stanley because they came through loud and strong. They had much stronger transmitters than we did. But anyway that evening I think it was I sent out another general call and I think it was somebody way in the distance said 'I can hear you loud and strong, in Morse, can you hear me, it wasn't loud and strong but anyway I could read him and so we made contact, after all that we were up and running.

[Part 1 0:38:44] Aston: How long was that? That you had been out of contact with the world?

Moore: This was during May, I've got the date somewhere but it was during May possibly about halfway through May so it was long enough. Everybody probably thought, well they're all dead, you know, well you figure out [unintelligible.]

[Part 1 0:39:01] Aston: Was there a bit of triumph in that, how did that feel to be back in contact, was it relief?

Moore: It was triumph and relief because I had been concerned the whole time, and from the time they first said 'You are going to start a new radio station at the new Base W I thought to myself 'is this ever really going to happen, I can't see it I haven't really got the experience.' Having accepted the job to do that and there was no way out in other words, I had to go and do it and make a success of it. This was my first success, so that was grand. So we were getting used to life as a base, we worked together doing all the usual things, all the basic chores and so on. I joined the three skeds that were essential every day to send weather information and all the traffic that I had to send that was official and receive the vast amount of stuff that had been piling up with the control station. He sent, we spent several hours that first three or four days with him passing me loads and loads of messages. My arm got tired writing and it was Peter Bunch at Lockroy and he was a bit of a, I've never seen him since but he was ex-Navy and he was a bit rough and tough, he asked me one day was I taking the mickey out of him because I'd missed something and in the Navy you didn't miss things obviously I did because I'd been in the Airforce was his attitude. So I asked him to go back and that was when he got a bit fruity with me but we made friends, in Morse, afterwards and that was the way it carried on so having said that I could not reach Port Stanley with my equipment no matter how I tried because the transmitter was not capable of being wound up to its true potential.

[Part 1 0:41:08] Aston: Then Port Lockroy collected all the messages and then forwarded them on to Port Stanley?

Moore: That's right, from me; I think that was only from me because I was having that difficulty getting through to Port Stanley. Whether that was the situation we were in the fjord, whether it was my aerals pointing slightly in the wrong direction, whether it was my transmitter I never found out to be perfectly honest. At a certain stage I had to make a report to Tom to say 'We've got to have new aerals next, for next year, it's just got to be done.' Because once the weather got really bad the aerial masts and the aerial wire iced up so heavily it just broke the masts, just like that and there was no way I think some of the masts on some of the bases were strong enough to have a bosun's chair going up them so somebody could go up, be pulled up to clear the aerals. There was no way that you could do that with these fragile little masts that were useless. After about the third collapse which became a running joke in the base, 'David, your masts are down again' and everybody ran then to do

something about it and Ron Miller built wooden ones for me using what he could of the metal but he built wooden, I've not been able to find any, that's Ray [unintelligible] you stayed on the right side of Ray. I'll tell you something about him in a minute but it's really very funny made us laugh anyway. Yes, I think that was summertime.

[Part 1 0:43:03] Aston: When these masts collapsed did that mean there was no contact with... [Unintelligible]

Moore: No contact, no contact, you just stayed silent. You couldn't do anything send anything, they had to be up and the aerial up and in good form before you could send any messages.

[Part 1 0:43:21] Aston: So how were you repairing them, just putting them back in the ground and in a stronger position?

Moore: Exactly, yes, exactly that. They had to be repaired and put up again and hope for the best and then in the end Ron Miller constructed two wooden masts which were much, much more substantial. The aerial of course had to come down and that again was knocking my signal down all the time because it just wasn't strong enough. Port Lockroy could read me easily but there's no way I could get through to Port Stanley, so anyway that's the way we arranged to have it. I could read everybody quite happily on the two, on the receivers, I could read everybody without any problem at all, except the ones that couldn't send Morse. No names, no pack drill<sup>7</sup>.

[Part 1 0:44:14] Aston: So what sort of messages were, were these messages from home as well as operational messages?

Moore: Incoming messages from home, monthly letters from your truly beloveds and mums and all that sort of stuff. And going out it was just weather, weather reports which the meteorologists were taking, weather recordings, weather readings every day and they would convert that into a number code and I had to send that off to, yes I used to send them to Port Lockroy as well so that was the traffic. Anything that Tom had to say to headquarters had to be written out, probably in code. I think it used to be in code, I'm not very sure about that, all into five number codes, some were anyway, anything that was regarded as very important was coded otherwise it was in plain language, so that was that.

[Part1 0:45:08] Aston: What sort of limitations were there on domestic letters you'd get from home, was it just that allowed, your one monthly letter or did you have someone who would write four page letters that blundered on and someone else that would write just a sentence or could it be whatever you wanted?

Moore: I just remembered it was very limited actually, I can't, I've got some of them here which I've collected up from the past but any monthly letter seems to be about that long at the most.

[Part 1 0:45:31]Aston: About a paragraph?

Moore: About a paragraph and then I had cables coming in which were not limited because they would go down to the Post Office and send off a cable to me and my mum used to say, to go into the Post office and say this is to Base W so and so and so and so, they also sent like

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<sup>7</sup> Common service colloquialism

that, you know saying ‘Oh gosh this is a special baby come in’ but we used to enjoy that, so that’s what it was. Lots of and course we could read everybody else’s, I could any way, read everybody’s special messages coming in and some quite hilarious from girlfriends, wives to be and so on and so forth. I never passed them round I used to have a quiet chuckle for myself. I shouldn’t really be saying this should I.

[Part 1 0:46:19]Aston: It must have been a position of trust within that party way because you were privy to all the messages that were coming in and out.

Moore: Absolutely yes, oh yes I didn’t blow about the bit, really and truly, It came to me, I sent it and that was the end of it. I would tear up the bit of paper that I had. No, hang on, I used to keep them in a file, yes I used to keep them, Lofty told me that I had to keep every message that I sent. But since I was a little bit put out because one of the things they failed to do was enclose any message pads at all and so I had to steal paper from the meteorological department to write my messages which was typical. I thought this all tied in with my views that it was all put together in a bit of a hurry, A, they didn’t know where to put us, B, a lot of it or some of the equipment didn’t ever get through or came in the wrong size parcels or whatever and...

[Part 1 0:47:20] Aston: Did Base W get put together in a hurry?

Moore: I believe, I believe, this is my personal opinion, yes. It would have been a nasty job for somebody to do in logistics somewhere somebody had to put it all together and I’m not blaming them because they did a pretty good job but there were weak areas, let’s put it like that. Talking about Ray, we’d been in the hut for some time and Ray said ‘We’ve got a gramophone,’ this is an old fashioned gramophone of course ‘but we’ve got no needles’ now that tells you the age, so we were all sitting there one night Ray said ‘I love *South Pacific* and I want to hear it, now.’ So we all thought ‘you old softy’ but we didn’t say it, not to Ray. So Ray and I said ‘We’ll go out and of course it was snowing like a storm and we found out which box the needles were supposed to be in, because there was still stores to unload and to break out and to bring into the hut. We searched for about two hours in this snow storm and eventually found the right box. We had to chip ice off the boxes, get the right numbers and several numbers that it should have been in the needles weren’t there, eventually we got the needles brought them in in triumph and started and we found the records and played *South Pacific*. Ray sat there with great enjoyment and we all enjoyed it. After the fourth or fifth time of hearing *South Pacific* we all got a bit fed up with it, but there we are, we suffered.

[Part 1 0:49:03]Aston: Did you ever hear any radio transmits from any other nationalities down there, you mentioned there was sort of Argentinian, Chilean bases along the Peninsula did you ever...

Moore: I never bothered to go looking for work I think that’s the long and the short of it. I used to listen sometimes to ships working and that was always interesting if they were sending peculiar messages about the whaling ships and so on were still operating then, not many of them but that was always interesting to listen to because Grytviken had a radio station there. It wasn’t FIDS or anything to do with BAS or anything like that, it was the whalers. I think it was part of the Falkland Islands Dependency but it was somebody I didn’t know. When I was on the way back I heard that they wanted another operator because the one was going home or was going to go home shortly and I thought ‘Oh, what a great idea, we’ll get married’ because I was always, I’d left almost under a cloud because I said I didn’t even want to get engaged before I went South. We’ll get married when I got back, you know, I thought ‘What a great idea, I’ll come back, get married and then we will both go to South

Georgia. Charlotte sent back a very rude letter to say 'I'm not thinking in terms of going to South Georgia, if you go there you are on your own.' [Laughs]

[Part 1 0:50:31] Aston: The interviews were very much, it seems like, on your own at Base W and you had a lot of work to be doing during the winter, but how were you feeling, did you feel a little bit like you had been abandoned on this tiny island?

Moore: No, that feeling wore off, you had a busy life to lead even though you can't think what you would have done all day but there was a lot to do, feeding the dogs, going out catching, shooting seals when they were around and going out catching penguins unfortunately I'm not an animal lover but we used to go out on penguin hunts. I used to hate it, I said to Tom 'I don't want to do this' and he said you've bloody well got to, it's our food and the dogs' food as well. He said 'get yourself a big stick and come along, don't be such a pansy.'

[Part 1 0:51:32] Aston: Did you have a favourite penguin meal? The preparation of penguin...[crosstalk].

Moore: Absolutely and that was to fry it in butter. We had loads and loads of butter and we used it for all the cooking, so we used to cut the penguin up into small pieces and fry it and that was beautiful, like steak, just like steak. You probably heard that many a time, many a Fid. It really was it was really lovely food especially if it's the only fresh food you had that week, you know. We used to do it on a Saturday night always, that was the last meal of the cook's week on Saturday night and we used to do a big fry up of penguin. I didn't like doing the butchering I sometimes used to con Ron Miller into doing that because he knew how to do it. He used to skin the penguins and I used to do the butchering after that, cut it, cut up the breasts because that was all you could use. You couldn't use the legs [laughs] but it made a good meal, sometimes we had seal, what's it called? The livers and that sort of thing, the offal, I didn't really care for that very much I know Hedley once produced seal, slabs of seal which he roasted for Sunday lunch and I thought that was awful but anyway he didn't grumble too much about these things, he did sometimes. We used to make bread every day and I used to love making bread and I really enjoyed it, I used to put everything into it, making apple pies as well that was another speciality of mine. We had tinned apples obviously but we had lots of flour to use and so, but some people were not all that good at making bread and we used to sit and chew on it in silence and without being too cross about it. We did expect to have biscuits at coffee time and cakes at tea time and if we didn't get those we were a bit morose, you know, with the cook, because it was expected it was expected of you to do that, produce it on time. I had a difficult job in that I had to keep breaking off doing skeds three times a day but the others had other jobs to do as well but it was a busy time but we worked well as a team. The only bit of annoyance we had was on mid-winters night which was June the 21<sup>st</sup> and there was a bit more beer going and whisky going and I must say when I went to bed everything was quiet but the next morning somebody who shall be un-named, shall not be named had a black eye and nobody said anything about it, it was just 'oh well, he's got a black eye.'

[Part 1 0:54:23] Aston: Perhaps they couldn't remember.

Moore: I think they did, we just kept it quiet between us, it was like a family we didn't want to talk, not like the Eastenders, we'd all be talking about it, so that was that. Eric, sorry, Ray had another thing to cheer us all up because he had done his time in the Navy and if we were a bit down he used to get out his Pay Book, I called it a Pay Book or something of that nature, it showed his record in the Navy and he started off as an Ordinary Seaman worked his way up

to Able Seaman then became a Petty Officer, which he should do he was one of the leaders of men, then came the wording 'Struck Officer' demoted to Ordinary Seaman so that was Ray. He worked his way up to Petty Officer three times in his service three times, every time he struck an Officer. So when things got bad he was demoted down the hill again. That used to make us roar with laughter the way he told us all about that and what these Officers had said to him and what this that and the other, he said 'I had to hit him in the end I just had to hit him,' and that was that.

[Part 1 0:55:44] Aston: You had a dogs at Base W was it one dog team or...

Moore: Yes, I can't remember how many dogs we had to be truthful but it was about, I think about twenty and that made two teams to the best of my knowledge. I was not a sledging man at all, I didn't go out sledging at all I asked Tom to let me go sledging and he said 'no, I've been told, David, that you are not to go sledging.'

[Part1 0:56:17] Aston: That was for medical reasons?

Moore: Yes. Why? I said, he said 'well they told me, I shouldn't tell you this' he said 'you've got medical, a minor medical problem maybe only minor but I don't want to run the risk of you, running about 100 miles away with dogs and for you to break down.' As it happened the only time that it did get me, I was really perfectly healthy all the way through except when Hedley and, by this time we had gone through the winter and sledging parties were going out. Tom went, Tom and Eric and Mike and Hedley and John, John Thorne, were all going sledging regularly, I think that covers all of us I've a job to remember who they all were now, anyway, never mind. Hedley and John had gone out surveying down towards the south on the sea-ice, perfect, we'd got loads of sea-ice all around us by then and that was great. The weather was still pretty bad but it wasn't too bad after the winter period had finished in sort of October, September – October, but off they went and I had terrible difficulty with getting the sledging sets, the sledging radio sets to work properly and I couldn't do it. So they went off without really having confirmed confirmation that they wouldn't be able to call me on my main set. It was a weakness which I regretted but they, that was the situation but I couldn't wave a magic wand over them, I couldn't get them going properly. It might have been batteries it might have been anything. Anyway they, all the sea-ice went out one morning when they were supposed to be on the way back. The whole fjord cleared and it was water and we knew they would be coming back there and we suddenly saw one day their tent on Roux Island which is about ten miles across the fjord from where we were. I don't know how many miles but about ten I think.

[Part 1 0:58:44] Aston: So you think they might have been really worried about them that they were, they couldn't contact you to say they were alright?

Moore: We were worried, yes, the last days when the sea-ice went out we were worried because we thought 'How in the hell, you know' we knew there was no other way back round if they went along the coast into the fjord because they couldn't travel it. However we didn't really know what to do so we just waited to see if we could see them which we did eventually. After about two days we'd made some sort of contact with lights, this Aldis lamp and so on and so forth but not very good progress and Tom said 'Well we've got to make some effort to go and get them' so he said to Ron and myself 'we've got the small dinghy, we've got an outboard motor' it was a very small boat with an out board motor and he packed up a parcel of goodies for them to have cigarettes, more cigarettes and biscuits and sweets and so on and he said 'bring back two dogs and we'll do it in relays, two dogs or however many you can get on board and eventually we'll bring back Hedley and John.' Ron and I set

off and it was calm as a millpond going over, no trouble at all. We landed, had a quick chat, put two dogs on board one was Steve and one was Porgy I think it was and we set off back across the bay to Base W. Well after a period of time we knew that the wind was getting up from the north, we knew it was getting up and the wind as you will know, can get up very, very quickly down there and no messing about and suddenly we were in heavy weather and we had two dogs Ron was on the tiller, I was looking after the dogs and keeping them calm. They weren't terribly pleased with themselves especially as we were lumping about all over the place and then the outboard cut out.

The dogs seemed to panic even more at that stage and Ron was busy fiddling about with the engine at the back, he was only bleeding it I didn't hear much, it made the engine worse but he was capable of getting it going if it was capable of being got ready again. Anyway we were starting to ship water quite heavily then, the dogs were going berserk and I feared that they would jump over and take us down with it or make life really impossible a) for themselves and b) for us because they'd probably tip the boat over. So I got back and Ron said 'We've got to bail out, we've got to get rid of some of this water' and I managed to get past the dogs, away from them and we bailed out, bailed out and he said 'I'm going to try that motor again.' I don't know that we even spoke very much at that time because we were both scared as hell because we thought we were going down. Anyway we bailed out sufficiently to make it liveable again and he had another go at the engine and, sure enough it fired, he said 'there's no point in this weather in trying to get back to base.' It was a long way away as far as we were concerned, so we said 'OK, back to where Hedley and John are' and this we did and it was reasonably acceptable journey back to them, whereas we would have been dead if we had tried to carry on back to base, definitely, because we knew perfectly well that the ice would be coming roaring back in pretty damn quick because that's the way it had gone and with this wind it was bringing it back in. Sure enough the next day it was all there and we would have been chopped up by that if nothing else. We got back to Roux Island and there was John and Hedley, and Hedley 'What are you doing, coming back here? Haven't got enough rations for you.' We paid no attention to it, we just said 'we're here, we stay and we will stay overnight' we put the dogs ashore and tied them up and so on and John who was a much more sensible character said 'Right, we'll get this tent for you and this that and the other so we put up the other tent and we'll make the rations work don't you worry about Hedley' and that was it. The ice had come in, it was all in great big chunks all over the place and there was no way anyone was going to get back with the dogs or with the boat. After about a week of living like this and in rather bad conditions at that stage, whether it was the worry of it all or what but I don't know, or it whether it might have been Ron with his smoking cigarettes in the tent. I suspect it was him but I would never say anything to him about that because they were very cheap cigarettes he used to smoke and I was coughing and puffing in a bit of a bad state and not very much good to anybody at that point. I thought 'well, I think he got very fed up with me coughing and Hedley was fed up with everybody and everything, I think they talked together and thought 'right we're going to go back, we'll ski over this rough ice or walk back over this rough ice.' I didn't know anything about it until they had gone. John came from his tent and said to me 'they've gone' I thought 'that's the end of them, they're never going to get there' but they did and we had a message flashed back, Eric used the lamp to tell us that they were back safe. I think we told him there was no way we were going to do it, no way are we going to do it, it would have been silly, we had all the dogs were there anyway, they had to be looked after.

[Part1 1:04:45] Aston: What about the food, rations were tight already and you'd been there a week the four of you?

Moore: We, I think John and Ron killed a seal in that first week, there weren't, I don't think there were any penguins around there but there was enough to scrape and cut down the rations a bit. I don't really remember how we got through and I don't, I didn't do any cooking over there it was all down to John when we were two by ourselves. I think he felt better with that, although he wasn't such a brilliant cook. It was all pemmican and we just cut down on the pemmican, we weren't doing much heavy work, no heavy work at all so we just had fairly limited rations and enjoyed what we had and that was that.

Eventually we had a message from base which was difficult to pick up but it was a light, a light done by Eric and we also heard, by that time we, I managed to be hearing Base Y and we heard Gene Donnelly saying that there was going to be a helicopter brought in. he wasn't speaking directly to us, he was talking to one of the other bases, so that's what happened. We were told, we were informed by lamp from Base W that a helicopter would be above us at some time the next day so have the dogs ready or whatever, so we prepared everything and sure enough a helicopter came out of a complete magic as far as we were concerned.

What had happened was that the *Protector*, HMS *Protector* with their two helicopters had come down much further south than they had ever come before because they didn't like ice at all, quite naturally, I'll tell you something else funny about *Protector* as well but anyway. There was this helicopter and we'd got one dog and pushed him up, you know, and harnessed him up, John and I lifted him and up he went. John said 'I'm going to go back to base' I don't know why he said that but anyway he did. He said 'You look after the dogs,' and I said 'OK, fair enough, send him back and I'll load up the dogs' off he went. I think he'd had enough, he had been there a bit longer and he was fed up with the whole damn thing. So he went back to base and the helicopter came back and there was no body in it to help me so I to go and get two dogs, or one dog and untie him and bring him up. Of course the whirring helicopter above, the dog was going like this, you know, and didn't want to get into the harness at all but after a struggle I managed to lift him off his feet to get him on the harness which was sort of hanging, about there. How I did it I don't know, I couldn't do it now, and that dog went up and of course we had a two way radio between the helicopter, they'd thrown down a two way radio which was handy and they said 'We don't want any more' said the man at the back, not the pilot he had enough job keeping it steady and I said 'but surely we'll take one more.' I seem to remember this conversation, 'all right' he said 'OK, what if they fight then.' I said 'they won't fight, they won't fight' of course dogs are fearful for fighting, I thought 'never mind he'll find out when we get there.' So I brought another dog up, we got him in he said 'right, that's it, how many more dogs? You'd better come up, I'll take you back and I'll bring somebody else out' so, I got up there, the dogs were sitting there, like this, they weren't going to fight they knew they were up against it they just kept quiet, shut up and get on with it. So we went back and I don't remember anything of the journey at all, I've got pictures of it hovering around us somewhere and this one I'll show you before you go. I jumped out and I think they were worried about landing I said 'bring it down so I can jump I remember and they, in their report said 'the scientist jumped out from five feet up, we told him not to but he did. [Laughs]

[Part 1 1:09:14] Aston: What about the dogs?

Moore: The dogs were more or less sort of, they didn't want to handle them too much so they were sort of thrown out and caught the dogs put them down and they were sort of led off and put on their line, you know on the usual line and Tom said 'go inside there's a whiskey waiting for you,' I said 'Just what I need, just what I need' I was exhausted by that time, you know there was not much food for the last month and carrying dogs around, so that was the end of it really. They did two more, two or three more journeys with two or three blokes and

they brought all the dogs back and some of the equipment and Hedley and, so that was the end of the adventure.

[Part 1 1:09:53] Aston: I take it the helicopter pilot didn't think much of having dogs in the back? Can you tell me a story about that he was not impressed with the smell?

Moore: In the end, I don't think I can find that report quickly [shuffles papers] '*It was agreed to lift by winch one survivor as a handler and one dog in the first instance.*' That was John and his dog going back. This is the pilot talking, '*he did not want to have a dog riot in the rear cabin, Mike that was 'sit or stay', 'a dog owner from youth, wasn't sure the huskies would understand or respond to sit or stay*'. Ridiculous, but anyway [more paper shuffling] yes, but the two pilots – '*Mike Harvey and Mike Rollinson, both recall that the rescue was a fascinating, challenging and memorable experience. It was for me too, 'both rescue teams very thankful although it was difficult to share feelings either way at the time.*' It was, '*but they were well remembered if only for the strong distinctive smell from the dogs and maybe the surveyors too, who had survived remarkably well without the 'home comforts' of a FIDS base, from a FIDS base for a very long time.*' So that was that then.

[Part 1 1:10:50] Aston: What was that report you were reading from there, was it a base report?

Moore: That was from essentially, that's from John's diary of that trip but the report I was reading from, there was, that particular report was from the *HMS Protector-The Roux Island Rescue* they called it. So it's an account of a rescue carried out south of the Antarctic Circle by Royal Navy helicopters of the Fleet Air Arm.

[Part 1 1:12:13]Aston: So you are going to tell me the story about the *Protector* you mentioned.

Moore: Oh yes, yes. After we'd been relieved and we were on the new *John Biscoe* I think by then and we went down towards Alexandra Land<sup>8</sup> which was even further south, the weather was pretty awful and I think *HMS Protector* came down for some reason, knowing that they were safe because, it was either *Bransfield*<sup>9</sup> or the new *John Biscoe*. They'd sold the old *John Biscoe* by then, anyway it was felt that we, I don't know by whom, I think we felt all a bit nervous with *HMS Protector* prowling about for some reason. One of the seamen who was rather a funny lad went to the refrigerator and got loads of cubes of ice and threw them in the water and said '*There, Protector, there's ice, just be careful, off you go.*' Shortly after that they left the scene. We all had a huge laugh about it and there was no reason for it at all, just for a laugh.

[Part 1 1:13:22] Aston: That was a rather dramatic end to your winter at Base W, were there any other scary, scary periods that you remember?

Moore: Nothing really, I mean it was scary enough doing the ordinary Antarctic things, in other words disposing of the waste every day, kitchen waste and whatever. We had to go, either one of us or two of us to carry it to the ice-cliff and tip it over, nothing like today when I think everything is cleaned up isn't it? But this was 'well somebody else will have to come and clean this up'. But, on a heavy day when the wind was really taking you down to knee level as it were that was frightening enough, going doing just an ordinary little job like that. But nothing really, you just got used to it and knew about it. You had to crawl

<sup>8</sup> Correction. This should read Alexander Island.

<sup>9</sup> Correction. RRS *Bransfield* was not launched until 4 September 1970.



along and do the business.

I suppose the only other thing that was out of the ordinary was we had the Royal, Prince Philip was doing his tour of the world on *Britannia* and he got near to the... there he is there. He got to Port Stanley and he said 'I rather fancy seeing one or two of the bases' so we got to hear about that and we said 'thank God we are too far south from that' and he started off at Signy I think and went to Hope Bay or Deception and then he said 'I want to go further south' and everybody had to do what Prince Philip said. I had a message I think late one night saying 'Expect arrival of HRH Duke of Edinburgh tomorrow at about midday.' You can imagine what we said, so we were up all night scrubbing, cleaning, doing everything, you know, making it look like Buckingham Palace as near as we possibly could and sure enough the ships, and he transferred to either the new *Biscoe* or something, one of the ships I can't remember. Sure enough then they came ashore a great big body of men the Duke amongst them and several other naval officers, several bodies from Port Stanley and from FIDS. They all came ashore and I've got some photographs of them somewhere, not very good ones and anyway he proceeded to inspect the base. He was a jolly man, very nice and pleasant and he walked all around, he came to see me, I was in the radio room I think it was about 2 o'clock, I was just about to start a sked and anyway I can't remember what I actually did or not, it may have been just before that or just after it. He asked me, he was there about half an hour or so asking me all sorts of questions which I wouldn't have thought he would have asked, but anyway he did, he was very knowledgeable. So, we chatted backwards and forwards for a good long time, it may have been twenty minutes, it may have, you know, you're not counting time on those things. he said well, 'thanks very much indeed, I'll go and look at the met room now' and that was that so I'd had a good long chat with him and he'd learned a bit about it. Then they went off up to the, a body of them went up to the penguin rookery to see the penguins, then they came back and I heard all this laughter outside my window, right immediately outside I thought 'OK I'll go and look and see what's going on there' they were holding the tennis match, the famous tennis match and they, so I said 'what's going on?' to Tom 'what's going on?' 'This is the first Antarctic tennis tournament,' and they were all half-drunk to be perfectly honest and they were whacking the ball about, falling over and laughing. It was just a great joke to them and we stood and watched them, we all laughed and clapped and that was the tennis and it was done fairly quickly I can tell you that. They were a bit cold and they wanted another drink [both laugh.]

[Part 1 1:17:41] Aston: Was that the Duke's idea?

Moore: I believe it was the Duke that said 'We've got, now that we're here, you've brought the tennis racquets – Lets have a game.' I didn't hear that but that's what Tom said because he was with them all the time, and so that was it. It's been talked of ever since, I think other bases had said that they had the first tennis match but they never did, we had it at Base W. So anyway they all cleared off in the end and went back to the ship before going back to *Protector* then back to the *Britannia* which was much further north, we didn't want that touched by ice obviously, so that was that.

[Part 1 1:18:25] Aston: You mentioned earlier that you had a bit of fun about the Protector, and how was she regarded by the rest of you, did they not come far south enough?

Moore: No, they, we regarded them as a sort of 'observing from a distance' as it were, you know, we knew that at some, in the northern bases there wasn't a lot of sea-ice around or any bergy-bits or anything like that to bump into them. I've got a good picture of where they bumped into the John Biscoe and bent all its back-end in but we really had no opinion of them as such except that they were sort of, for us they were really necessary because they did

a good job which we would have been in serious trouble if they hadn't been able to send their helicopters in but there must, knowing some naval men and having known a little bit about the Navy there must have been some very worried frowns back on the *Protector* while their nice two helicopters were sorting us lot out 'Why didn't we look after themselves a bit better' must have been the sort of attitude. But nothing other than that.

### End of Part 1

#### David Moore Part 2

[Part 2 0:00:00] Aston: This is David Moore recorded at his home in Radlett, Hertfordshire by Felicity Aston on 26 October 2010.

Edited transcription by David Price 12 December 2013.

[Part 2 0:00:10] Aston: You came to the end of your season in Antarctica and it's time to go home but what happened, was there a hand-over with a new team of men to come in and causing the base problems?

Moore: In essence that was what was happening, we'd had several men go, Ray Cooper had gone back, gone south I think when the new *John Biscoe* was coming round on its first visit round the bases. Ray was going back to some other base and I can't remember which one and we had a second man, whatever his name was, I forget his name now the one with the baseball hat. I don't remember his name but he was very cheerful character, he kept us up all night arguing. He was a Lancashire lad and he wouldn't give in to any argument – he had to win everything and he was right in the end because we were all arguing about what the OBE stood for and I can't remember the details but he was right and we were all wrong and we were cross with that because we were up awfully late. But one or two others came in, Eric came in and one or two others there was John McDowell<sup>10</sup> I think it was, another met man came in and he was a good lad, they were all good chaps. Eric had been a paratrooper but I think he had, somebody had died back home after he had been landed with us and in the end, as we were going back to Port Stanley we were told to go back to Base W and pick him up and take him and he flew back home to whatever had happened. But he was good for a couple of months so that period of January then, after the December, January was a period of people moving around and in the February my time was up, I was only there for a year, John was staying on for a year at Base W. I'm not sure about the others but Tom had gone by then, I can't remember where he'd gone to.

Tom had sent me a telegram at base to say 'When the Duke was here he gave me a photograph of himself, signed to Tom Murphy, and David, I haven't taken it with me. I want you to go back into the Base W although it had been handed over to the new base leader who was another naval officer actually, Erskine his name was.' And he said 'I want you to go and get that picture for me and somehow get it away from the base, bring it back, I'll meet up with you in England and you'll hand it over to me.' 'Fair enough' I said 'If that's your orders, that's your orders.' I went ashore on a very rough night, the last night, we were moving out. I'd been on the ship for some time then, again we were going around the bases loading and unloading, back to the old routine again and I said to Mr Erskine<sup>11</sup>, I forget what his naval title was, I said 'There's a picture here of the Duke which was given to Tom Murphy and I am instructed by Tom Murphy to take it away and to give it to him because it's his property.' 'Oh no' he said 'That belongs to the base' 'No it does not' and we had this little discussion and in the end, because he couldn't care less really and he said "Oh all right then, take it' and

<sup>10</sup> Correction: The person referred to was W McDowell not John.

<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Angus Erskine RN.

so he and two or three of his mates found it and said ‘All right if you must take it...’ It was all a bit naughty because it wasn’t Tom’s at all, it was given to the base but I thought Tom is my leader I will get it for him. I’d made a big, with the carpenter on the ship we’d made this sort of like a map container, I shoved it into that. I was frightened to death going back on to the ship because it was really bad weather then, the sea was all over the place and it was a matter of leaping for your life when you got back to the ship. Anyway we were all on board, I brought it all the way home, all the way through customs and handed it to, Eric and Tom came down to see me in Leigh and Tom said ‘before we go’ we’d had a nice cup of tea and whatever ‘but before we go I want that photograph. ‘Here it is, there you go.’ he said ‘Do you know what I’m going to do with it? I’ve been ordered to send it back to Base W.’ I said ‘Tom you idiot, why did you get me to take it’ he said ‘Well, it was worth a try.’ So that was the end of that.

[Part2 0:05:08] Aston: This house that you built, this base that you built with your own hands and those people around you. How did it feel to them about passing it on to the ....?

Moore: It was not nice, it was our house and these strange men had come and were taking it over, we didn’t feel right about it but it was done in a sort of real broken up by the one or two changes that we’d had. But whilst it was nice to see new people we were a little bit off hand with them undoubtedly for the first few days until we had got the measure of them and they’d got the measure of us and we were all pals together after that. So that was no problem but when it finally came to my relief and I had to go on that ship and go and leave the base, no, I felt quite sad I really did. Just in the same way that I felt sad when I’d seen the old *John Biscoe* go round the corner and leave us, you know, but I was looking forward to getting home so it was the first step on the way home so I had that to look forward to you know. As it was I didn’t get married when I got home it was 1959 before I got married, and then of course as you know ’58 went quite well for that mark, 57 and 58 went quite well but by the time the relief for 1959 came the ship couldn’t get in. It was 30 miles of sea-ice all the way round and they all had to go out, sledge out to the ship, which story I’m sure you’ve heard from other places. Funnily enough the dog that escaped from that eventually found his way down to Base Y was one of the dogs Steve that we brought back on the boat or tried to bring back on the boat, which nearly got drowned with Ron and me.

[Part 2 0:06:58] Aston: A dog with nine lives rather than a cat.

Moore: Oh yes, that was exactly it.

[Part 2 0:07:02] Aston: So what were your thoughts as you were leaving, what did you feel most proud of leaving that base? Was it setting up the radio station or the building of the base, or was there one thing in particular that you were particularly proud of?

Moore: I think, I don’t think I sat down and thought I was proud of this or I was proud of that, I really didn’t but I knew that a very happy chapter in my life was finishing or about to finish and I couldn’t ....I’m looking back on it now as a man 55 years ago. I was a young man and I’d enjoyed the experience even though it had been frightening on occasions but I had enjoyed the experience of being with a bunch of lads and we worked as a team. That was important, I had never experienced that before and only rarely experienced it since, I have once or twice but that was one major thing to me. I was losing that even though we had a voyage in front of us it was a lot of new blokes and new stories to tell each other. I was also extremely proud of the fact that I thought that I wouldn’t be able to set up a radio station, but I had, with its shortcomings maybe yes, some of them weren’t mine but with my shortcomings and the shortcomings of the equipment I was distinctly proud of the fact that I

had been able to do that. Because if anybody had told me before I had gone down that you had to set up a radio station I would have said 'No way, I'm not going' and that's the truth because it would have been beyond me to think of being able to do it. But when you're faced with things you just get on and struggle on. I was helped a hell of a lot by Ray and Eric in doing the wiring and doing, fitting all the valves in the right places. These are all valve sets the old transmitter stood about six foot high so you imagine what damage was done to it all when it fell 30 feet down into the hold. It may have been 25 feet, I didn't see it but it was bad enough because a lot of it got smashed. So that was the thing I was particularly proud of and I was also looking forward to going home of course. Yes, in fact, thank goodness I haven't got to stay another year, that was the other little bit of it because I personally get a little bit fed up with the routine I suppose because it was very much routine. I hate, even though I loved cooking I hated the stress of cooking knowing that there was seven lads out there who wanted a good dinner and you had to do it. Like the stress on any chef in other words which must be at least, I wouldn't work in any restaurant at all, ever, because the stress of producing good meals at the right time. I do a lot of cooking here but it's all right within the family, I can do it and I do very good food even though I say it myself. We really shouldn't be saying these things but I can cook pretty well now and I serve up a good Sunday dinner, I don't do any tiddly bits like Eric used to make cheese twiglets for tea, they were marvellous, better than anything you can buy in a shop. Donuts as well he used to make and I've tried my donuts and nearly set fire to the hut but anyway that was one thing we always had to be worried about. Fire has caused serious horrible damage in the past in FIDS' huts. I don't know if they are all timber now, mostly metal are they?

[Part 2 0:10:43] Aston: How do you feel that your experiences in Antarctica, you were only there for a year but what kind of impact did that have on the rest of your life and the person that you became?

Moore: It had a huge effect, let me think, well I, when I came back I knew that I, we wanted to get married and that was that. I wanted an outside job of some kind and not go back into a wretched office. I went to a grammar school and for all of those that are a certain level they said '40 miles up to London, go and work in an office' that's all the careers advice that I ever had. I thought 'this is stupid, I'm not going back to work in an office' so I thought 'right, forestry, agriculture, farming whatever' and in the end I thought 'I'm going to go farming, go into the agricultural trade.' What I really wanted to do and I didn't have the money for, and this shows the ridiculous amounts I'm talking about but I just didn't have any money. I think I had about 100 pounds when I came back and that was all. But what I really wanted to do was to go to a wireless training school, I knew of two in England which I could have gone to and learned how to do the job properly. All I've done is, as it were was sending Morse and receiving Morse but doing the whole job knowing a lot about the technical side. I thought, I made enquiries and it was going to cost 400 pounds, cash down more or less, there were no ways of doing it by saving and so I couldn't do it, I didn't have 400 pounds and I didn't know any way to borrow from. My mum and dad didn't have any money and the banks weren't going to lend 400 pounds to a wanderer with a big beard so I put that aside and I worked then as a farm labourer or a cowman on a farm near Southend where I lived. I used to cycle 5 miles to it at 5 o'clock in the morning to do the first milking and 5 miles back at night, I was exhausted most of the time. Then that enabled me to go into and take a year's study at Writtle Agricultural College and I came out of there with a Certificate in Agriculture, from there on I started to get better and better jobs in farming, mostly in pigs but it helped me to, the experiences helped me to have the confidence and the courage to do that and learn new things all the time. I had never been, I always think back and think well I learned a hell of a lot while I was down south, a hell of a lot about myself, about other people. About how to do

things and don't stand looking at it, do it, and this is what helped me through a year of damned hard work farming and study afterwards, a year of study which I hadn't done before really, I didn't do any study at school I'd just mess about too much. So then in Harborough I wanted to be a manager of a farm, I eventually got to be a manager of a big pig unit and that was great, I was in charge. I could tell people what to do but I still found that I had loads of heavy work to do but I was in the fresh air most of the time, a lot of the time anyway. That's what I wanted to do, to be doing the physical or practical job not sat in an office.

By that time I was married of course, we got married in 1959 and that was great we moved first of all I think up to the Midlands and then moved to various, we bought a house up in the Midlands, an old Georgian house and we had, Charlotte and I put it all together. It was dropping to bits and we put it all together and eventually sold it for about three times what we paid for it. Which again we bought it for about seventeen hundred, ridiculous isn't it and sold it for four thousand or just over 4 thousand, something like that. We thought we were the cat's whiskers because by that time we had farm houses to live in and so I didn't need the house. I worked for the *Farmers Weekly* which again I thought might lead to a sort of journalistic career, but no way, they weren't having farm workers or pig managers coming to work in their nice office in London. It was the wrong decision, I shouldn't have gone there and after about six months to a year I said 'Right, I've had enough of this, I'm going.' They said 'go then' because I hadn't got on too well with them and then I did another thing in which I was helped tremendously by my service in the Antarctic. I looked in the *Farmers Weekly* magazine which had various jobs and become a Loss Adjustor. I don't know what a Loss Adjustor is but I'm going to have a go, but you know what a loss adjuster is, he adjusts insurance claims. The firm that I went to in the end had all the NFU<sup>12</sup> work, Farmers Union insurance work, that's why they wanted farmers or people with agricultural experience. So I went to the interview and there was a great bunch of people there wanting to be loss adjusters and I was able to tell them all sorts of rubbish about the Antarctic and stand up and look them straight in the eye and sock 'em where it was needed.

[Part 2 0:16:14] Aston: Did it help to get the job?

Moore: It helped me get the job and I regretted that after about six years, I said I've had enough of that. I got fed up with dealing with old ladies about their decorating, so then I went, I saw again at a box number I replied to it and Lloyds, Lloyds of London wrote back and said 'come and see us' and that was as a risk surveyor, which I did until I retired. It wasn't until I retired that but I had it for about thirty years and then I had my own small company just for the last two or three years. but there again I sat there and told, it was a lady who was interviewing me for the job at Lloyds, I talked all about the Antarctic and she said, the Chairman of Lloyds came in and sat down and said 'I've just come to listen in,' you know, and she said 'Oh, this is Mr Moore and he is going to join us.' I thought 'well, nobody's asked me yet but if she said that, that's OK'[Laughs.] I'm not.

[Part 2 0:17:12] Aston: I just quickly want to ask you, looking back in time a little bit about the actual hut Base W. Once you'd built it, was it successful, the place there? What was it like to live there?

Moore: It was quite a good home, yes, it very quickly got covered in snow or virtually covered in snow as the winter came on. By then of course we were in full occupation. As you went in the front door, if you turned left there was a sort of long corridor along the front of it, if you turned left you went past the dormitory, in a civilised world you'd say dormitory, the

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<sup>12</sup> National Farmers Union is an industry association for farmers in England and Wales.

bunk room or whatever with all the bunks, apart from Hedley's which was up in the loft. Beyond that was the water, the big water tank and the big room which I believe we called the Stateroom, but that's where we had the bath and whenever, if a year had passed you had to have a bath. That's not what the pilots thought, but seriously it was down to you to go and get the snow if you wanted a bath on a Saturday night or Sunday night you had to trudge backwards and forwards filling up the tank with snow and get that all melted until you had enough water to heat up, and then you would have your bath. Beyond that was the diesel generator which was Ray's kingdom and sometime he installed the generator. You know he was just brilliant at things like that. He could start it with one swing, he had that sort of muscle and we also for the first few months we had a sort of explosive thing which we put into the little slot, you wound up the thing as fast as you could and then you went bang, like that and it exploded into life ..Brrr! Brrr! and then the diesel was going and that was producing all the electricity, great, and stuff you know. We ran out of the explosives before long and then it was just a matter of hoping for the best, keep winding up. Ray could do it because he had the muscles of a cave man. But sometimes he said 'David, I don't want to do it on a Sunday morning' and he said he'd had a few beers, he said 'You do it on Sunday morning.' I used to get really wound up into it, and I had to get it going for my early morning sked and get everything going. So I used to wind up and wind it up and in the end it would go. But one day it just wouldn't go and I got into such a temper with it I kicked it and nearly broke my ankle. Kicked the diesel, the diesel engine, I just nearly broke my ankle and I hobbled all the way back to the radio room because I think just shortly after I think Ray, if I remember rightly I think Ray heard all the cuffuffle and came and started it for me. But anyway we got the radio going and that was that. So after that he decided he'd get up on Sunday mornings because he couldn't have me hobbling about the rest of the year. That was that, that was the diesels' room.

Coming back then, passing the bunk room again there was a big general living room which was where we all met during the evenings, if you like. There were books and there was gramophone record of ancient make and that's where we wrote letters or played card games or something like that, it was the general amusements room. Next to that I think we had offices with Tom's office as the base leader, and the surveying office, beyond that was the kitchen so therefore we've come in the front door, all that down there is the bunk room, we've got the living room and offices and turning right along there we got to the kitchen which was quite a big room but not as big as the bunk room obviously or the general amusements room. Over there was an Aga cooker which was the first time I had ever seen such a thing in my life but it was a brilliant cooker, it really was, and I can quite see why they are so popular now, and the big water tank in there and the table for our meals. And the store cupboards for all the food, which was mostly tinned and quite varied, lots of tinned foods and tinned meat and loads of flour and lots of butter because we liked, it was the proper thing to do to put about half an inch of butter on your bread because it helped you, this is what we were told anyway. You know 'this is the right thing to do because it builds up your reserves of fat and then you can deal with the cold weather better' which we always found a very good excuse. Beyond that on the front, if you like on the front of the hut was the radio shack, radio room rather, beyond that was the met room and then in that corner I think it was the toilets, toilet area which was a bit of a den of you know, horrible area because that all had to be carried out the next day or the next day afterwards, so that was that.

So to bring any water in if you were the cook you had, I think you'd got a gash hand to help you with getting water in, for if you were on cook that week, so we were all gash hands so anybody around did it. That's one thing, nobody ever argued about what they had to do. We saw things knew they had to be done and so we just did it. Not like my son, not like my

grandson whose favourite question is 'Why?' That's sad, he used to be a lovely little boy when he was about that size [demonstrates size] now he's fifteen 'Why?'

[Part 2 0:23:22] Aston: You mentioned that fire was a big hazard because the building was made of wood. Was that something you were constantly aware of, the risk of fire?

Moore: Well I was because I know that when I was repairing the transmitter at different times, various things, I can't remember what I used to do but I used to create a bit of heat in there at times and I was always a bit unhappy about that. We had fire extinguishers around, I think at some stage Tom had said to me 'alright, you're in charge of the fire extinguishers' I said 'Alright Tom' I don't think I thought another thing about it, I thought 'well, we'll put one here and one there and put one there. I never thought much about it, and do you know what, when I was working for Lloyds as a risk assessor I used to go around very importantly saying 'You have not got enough fire extinguishers, you need one there, one there, one there. You need everything done properly or you'll get no insurance.' And I'm the man that didn't know a damn thing about it and didn't care too much when I was in the hut. It wasn't something that we gave a lot of worry to but we knew that the kitchen was safe, we knew that the heater was all safe, it was stacked in by asbestos if I remember rightly, which again is another hazard that's only just come up in recent years. I sometimes worry about my breathing with it the more I think about it, but anyway that's beside the point. It worried me more when we were laying insulation in the loft because you'd wonder if it was still the same stuff you've have in your house now, but I mean we had the guys in to do free insulation in our house and I couldn't even go into the loft because of all these dusty hairs hanging around. But then we had masks if I remember, you couldn't work when you are crouched down trying to walk along these little beams in the roof and rolling out sheets of this fuzzy stuff, you know, insulation stuff. It was terrible, I must have let that, I'm remembering that now but it did affect my breathing then but at least I didn't have Ron Miller smoking fags all day.

[Part 2 0:25:34] Aston: Did you have many accidents during your tour there when the men had sort of general accidents?

Moore: No.

[Part 2 0:25:40:] Aston: No?

Moore: No, I don't know why not, we weren't particularly careful about things. We were just lucky I suppose. My accident with my foot was self-inflicted and I wasn't going to report that to anybody apart from Ray who thought it was a good laugh. But that's how we saw things, you know if things went wrong we had a good laugh and put them right, and that was the story of Base W and its first year really. But no other accidents at all, nobody fell in the, I don't think anybody fell in the water and nobody fell through the ice or anything like that. Nobody fell off the roof or anything.

Well now, after the Prince Philip had left us and got back to the luxuries of the Royal Yacht *Britannia* he, after a few more drinks I should think, said to his wireless operator 'Kindly send the following message.' And I'll read it out to you 'Please pass to Bases Whiskey, which was Base W of course, Foxtrot, November, Alpha, Oscar, Bravo, Golf from Royal Party *Britannia*. I have received the following from His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, begins 'I have thoroughly enjoyed each of my rather short visits to Bases W, F and A, O, B and G and I'm most grateful for your hospitality on each occasion. It was most interesting and instructive to hear about your work, your bases and all the various activities. I was most impressed by the obvious good spirit at all the bases and also by the very high standard of housekeeping. Many congratulations to you all, I send you all my best wishes for

the New Year.’ We think that he was taking a rise out of us because he knew that we’d been up all night scrubbing everything in sight. And that was the ‘high standard of house-keeping.’ Now the other thing I’m going to...Am I still going? Yeah, well now this is something I’ve only recently come across and only recently read. I read a book by, oh dear oh dear, I’ve forgotten her name, anyhow she’s recently written the book called *The Longest Winter*, I can’t remember her name<sup>13</sup> sadly. I might be able to tell you by the time I’ve finished. Anyway six men were sent off from Scott’s camp, Scott’s base, to go and explore north and east from there whilst he was concerned with going south to the Pole. There were six men, two were Royal Naval officers, one geologist whose name I, his name will be known to everybody except me as I’m standing here, sitting here, and three seamen who were all good quality seamen, but off the lower deck as they used to call it, I suppose they still do. But anyway to cut a long story short they did their first winter and then for one reason or another, and I am not going into that now, they had to provide for themselves because nobody came to pick them up at the right time. So they decided that they’d better look after themselves, so they had to, if you read the book you’ll know all about it, it’s well worth reading. They had to hack out a cave in the ice to live in and then scrounge whatever food they could get after that. It was a pretty awful ordeal for them until that winter passed and they were able to travel back to Scott’s camp again. One of them was Doctor George Murray<sup>14</sup> he was a Royal Naval doctor and quite a quirky sort of character and in his diary in the ice cave dated 1912 during his second unintended winter he wrote the following little poem which is good fun I think they had a far harder time than we ever experienced in the Antarctic. These were real men who lived through it all but he wrote:

*A for Antarctica, all frost ice and snow  
the place where all half-witted explorers all go  
B for the word they most frequently use  
when not where met without most frequent excuse.*

I thought that sums everything up [laughs.]

**ENDS.**

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<sup>13</sup> *The Longest Winter* by Meredith Hooper (2011).

<sup>14</sup> The book refers to the Northern Journey of Scott’s Terra Nova expedition. Led by Lt. Victor Campbell. The RN Surgeon mentioned was G. Murray Levick and the geologist was Raymond Priestley (later Sir Raymond Priestley.)



### Possible Extracts

- National Service – becoming a radio operator. [Part1 0:00:50]
- Attending the interview, learning about FIDS. [Part1 0:02:58]
- Departure for South, a false start. [Part1 0:07:13]
- Arrival Port Stanley, problems with base radio. [Part1 0:09:02]
- Base personnel, an appraisal. [Part1 0:16:32]
- Finding a suitable site for Base W. [Part1 0:18:48]
- Building the base hut. [Part1 0:24:02]
- Problems with radio equipment, getting set up. [Part1 0:35:17]
- Being a cook. [Part1 0:51:32]
- The Roux Island affair and rescue. [Part1 0:56:17]
- A Royal visitor. [Part1 1:13:22]
- Base changeover, the Royal Photograph affair. [Part2 0:00:10]
- Home, a new career, changing jobs. [Part2 0:10:43]
- A tour of Base W hut. [Part2 0:17:12]
- A Royal thank you. [Part2 0:25:40]
- Scott's northern party 1912, a final word. [Part2 0:27:42]

**ENDS.**

