

Edited transcript of interview with Derek Clarke conducted by Chris Eldon-Lee at his home in Kendal, Cumbria on 28th October, 2010. Transcribed by Neil MacPherson on 07.11.2014.

This is Derek Clarke, recorded at his home in Kendal in Cumbria by Chris Eldon-Lee on 28th October, 2010. Derek Clarke, Part One.

Derek Albert Clarke, 17.12.31, New Malden, Surrey.

[Part 1 0:00:18]: Lee: So you're now 70...?

Clarke: 78.

[Part 1 0:00:21]: Lee: 78 at present, yeah. What was your childhood like, Derek?

Clarke: Very happy. I mean I was a wartime boy. I grew up in the war, the schools closed, I was evacuated to Coventry and they blitzed Coventry.

[Part 1 0:00:34]: Lee: You were evacuated to Coventry?

Clarke: Because my Dad's relations' family live at Coventry.

[Part 1 0:00:39]: Lee: So were you in the blitz there?

Clarke: In the blitz there [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:00:43]: Lee: What's your memories of that?

Clarke: Dreadful, because it was aerial landmines, these enormous great things on parachutes come and decimate the streets, as it were. But we all lived in a long underground shelter, a communal shelter. So that was quite scary there but then they moved me out to Lillington, that's just outside Leamington Spa and I stayed with a nice farming family. I can't remember their names. In fact I've been there since and I knocked on the door to see if anyone was there. They must have been about 120, I should think, they weren't there. So, I gave that up. That was a happy time. There was a lovely little school. I did reasonably well, because I was not very happy at school in London, south, you know the suburbs of London. Yeah, so that was quite difficult.

[Part 1 0:01:38]: Lee: What did your father do?

Clarke: My Dad was a carpenter by trade, a skilled craftsman. He was in the First World War, so he couldn't get in the Second, because he was gassed and his eyes were damaged and all sorts of things in the First World War. So they kept him on helping to maintain the London buses during the War, repair etc.etc. So he was the breadwinner.

[Part 1 0:02:09]: Lee: Did you go to the ordinary school or private school?

Clarke: Did I go?

[Part 1 0:02:12]: Lee: Yeah.

Clarke: Yes, ordinary school, just a Boys' Secondary School. I didn't start out very well. I used to go a school across the River Thames. The boat was tuppence, I think, two pennies. Chap used to row us across, but one day I decided I'd had enough. I stepped out the boat, my Mum stepped out and she went straight down the side. She couldn't swim. I was legging it running as fast as I could. I got a good wallop when my Dad came home that night. School days were a bit up and down that time for me. I was a late, late beginner really. I picked up when I was evacuated. A really good school.

[Part 1 0:02:55]: Lee: Did you ever have any career idea. Any plans?

Clarke: At school leaving, yes. In those days we had the Electricity Board and the Gas Board used to come round the schools looking for likely customers, as it were, people who would be perhaps interested. And my Dad always said 'Get a trade', because he'd been through the depression. So I thought, well, that sounds quite reasonable, so I ended up working for the Joint Electricity Authority. I did an apprenticeship with them. I got on quite well but as I progressed I got near to the end of my apprenticeship, I was taken into the RAF to do my National Service. I spent the whole two years in Egypt and Iraq, apart from the training in this country. So I think that was the beginning of my sort of wanderlust.

[0:03:50]: I came back home. I couldn't really settle into the same routine job and I could see that the prospects were quite difficult unless I had a degree idea in my head which I hadn't because I was never very good at maths really. So I abandoned that and started looking for other jobs and one day I saw this job in the Antarctic, in the 'Telegraph' it was. I thought that sounds an interesting place. I didn't really know a lot about it, so I had to read up quickly to see what it was all about and I got the interview quite quickly and ended up in the Crown Agents for the Colonies in Millbank, I think it was then, in this fusty little room and I sort of remember this elderly chap, like me I suppose, with all these books and stuff all sort of falling on top of him. That was the impression I had and he said: 'Yes, you're the chap, you'll be OK. That was more or less...he didn't say much more. I knew nothing about what to expect or anything.

[Part 1 0:04:57]: Lee: So how much did you know about the Antarctic? Had you read about Scott, Shackleton?

Clarke: Oh yes, I knew the great explorers but not much detail at all, what was going on at the present, at that time, you know. It was quite a blind step, really. Well, I thought it sort of sounded outdoors, which it was, I like the outdoors, most of the outdoors. I went from there really. I was actually flown down to Montevideo because the chap who...the *Biscoe* had gone on the normal run on whatever date it was from Southampton but the reason why they were desperate for somebody was because a chap had broken his arm, I think, the diesel mech I replaced. So, that was the way I got into it.

[Part 1 0:05:50]: Lee: You'd learned diesel mechanics in the RAF, had you?

Clarke: Yes, yes I used to look after these enormous great Lister engines which mainly they were used for charging up these...they were called 'trolleyacs' [phonetic] batteries to start the *Vampires*, you know to start the engines of the *Vampires*. But they used to run during the nighttime because it was too hot in the day; this was in Iraq, so I used to be on nights looking after these things and maintain them etc.etc., captured scorpions and stuff on the side, as you do. Yes that was quite a...it

was boring but, you know, I vowed I'd never go back again but of course I did go back years later to work there again. That's another, different story.

[Part 1 0:06:36]: Lee: Do you remember much about the FIDS interview? What you were asked.

Clarke: Not very much...not really. Well, I think the key question was getting on with other people and that was the number one top of my mind and I'd had that sort of experience in National Service, really, particularly in Egypt and Iraq living in close community...trying to sort your problems out, you know, the best you could. So, yeah, I was OK. I'm a fairly quiet person, quite peaceful, not aggressive, fairly sensible, I hope, or used to be.

[Part 1 0:07:19]: Lee: So, they flew you to Montevideo...

Clarke: Yes, I picked up the *John Biscoe*. We went to Port Stanley. That was a new experience for me, the peat fires and the 'glory hour' on Sunday. This was when the farmers used to come in. This was a drinking hour, the glory hour. You were only allowed to open from...this was way back, I don't know, this was '53, 1953. So the farmers used to come in, tether their horses up on the hitching rail outside the pub and go for it for an hour. Some didn't quite gather their horses coming out. Anyway, it was quite hilarious.

[Part 1 0:07:55]: Lee: Was this lunchtime or evening?

Clarke: Lunchtime, mid-day Sunday. It was a bit of a rush to get a drink there [Laughter]. I don't whether that goes on these days, you know, things have changed, I guess. So that was quite a...

[Part 1 0:08:08]: Lee: People describe it as a bit of a wild west town back in the fifties. Is that how you remember it?

Clarke: Yes, well it wasn't particularly...just for drinking. I mean the people were very, very friendly, lovely people, always take to their homes for a meal or whatever. So I quite enjoyed the Falkland Islands 'cos the crew were Falkland Islands, on the old *J.B.*

[Part 1 0:08:29]: Lee: Who did you meet? Anybody important?

Clarke: The Governor, Sir Miles Clifford. We went to the Governor's party, you know the normal... I think we went with the ship's... there was a naval ship there at that time, I can't think what it was, can't think of the name. Oh Johnnie Green came down – he was the FIDSSEC at that time. Ted Clapp was about, I can't remember. Yeah, that the sort of only person I met of real note, the Governor.

[Part 1 0:09:07]: Lee: What did you make of Johnnie Green?

Clarke: Well he was very hyperactive, I was going to say go-getter, but he had a nice character, nice but he was full of energy, full of ideas because I saw more of him down at Base F, Argentine Islands, where they were starting to build the new base. He was involved in that foundational work there.

[Part 1 0:09:38]: Lee: Did you know that you that you were going to Argentine Islands all along or was that a decision made quite late on?

Clarke: No, I knew all along because the chap says you're replacing this bloke - I can't remember his name – this chap who'd damaged or broke his arm. It didn't mean much to me, it was just another

area in the ice place.[Laughter] As I got on the boat and got talking to the other people, the other Fids, obviously you get to know what's going on a bit more, you now. I knew nothing about the week's cooking rota or any of that stuff. It's a bit a shock [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:10:21]: Lee: It was a real deep end, was it?

Clarke: Yeah, but I suppose I'd had a bit of that in the forces, you see, doing my National Service. You soon had to fend for yourself and sort things out. But I mean the people on the base they were always so helpful. You know, every base I've been to they were all trying to encourage new people and that's how it went really.

[Part 1 0:10:46]: Lee: So what were your first impressions of the Antarctic?

Clarke: Well, before I got there I was dreadfully ill. I think it was the 'roaring forties' or the...yeah, 'roaring forties', Cape of Cape Hope or Cape Horn, one of those. These 30 foot waves for three days, you know the old *J.B.* was juddering into these troughs - there was a sort of wall of water coming over you and that's just try and hold the poor old boat down because she was only a little tub, really. We used to stagger up the other side. This went on for three days and three nights. That was the sort of hard part for me...I mean you get over the seasickness, but you just can't do anything. Can't eat really.

[Part 1 0:11:30]: Lee: Did you... did you feel that your days were numbered?

Clarke: Quite often, yes. Particularly at night because you didn't know what was coming next, you know. In the daylight you would get out and have a look round. You could see what was coming...which one was coming next so you could hold on or whatever. But at night it was just of a big sort of drop as the ship fell in this big hole really and this wall of tons and tons of water crashed on the bow and you could feel it doing this to get over the next one. So that was quite an experience but the actual Antarctic was the...well I suppose the weather was mixed, you know some days it was really beautiful. You start to see a few icebergs and colours, the blues, the hues, the size of the icebergs and the land was so changeable and the... yeah, it was amazing. Well, it had always been amazing because there's so much beauty there and the wildlife, I used to love that because at Signy particularly you get involved with all the ornithology bods, the bird life, the seals, the penguins, all those...

[Part 1 0:12:42]: Lee: So when you got there you liked it.

Clarke: Oh yes.Yeah, I did, yeah. It was a bit strange, well it would be strange, wouldn't it, for your first...but being I suppose confined with five, five of us at Argentines was OK, you know. A snug little hut, quite old, Wordie House I think it was called. It needed a lot of updating but we couldn't do anything because of the new Base F they were building, the new base, so we patched it up as best we could and kept things ticking along. But everything else there was...it was a nice, lovely little spot really. It was so...well, it seemed so friendly there at that time, you know, it was nice, we could get out and about on skis. That was another hilarious time learning to ski. I mean I was more down than up and i think it was a case of if you don't get going you're going to be housebound , hut bound for the rest of your time. But we helped each other with that, encouraged or sometimes made a few insults but mostly encouraging people. Then we got quite reasonable.

[Part 1 0:14:00] I think Fred was quite good, Fred Johnson. He was...I think he'd done some climbing somewhere because he always seemed to be the leader in that sort of thing. Dave Barrett was quite good, he soon picked up his...got quite, very proficient at skis. Dave was a real gent, real outdoor guy, Dave. I kept in contact with Dave after years. He used to come to my home. My mother used to like him, she said: 'A real gent'. He had his briefcase. He was up in town, I think. Yes, so we used to ski across the Penola Strait. I think it was about six miles there and back to this Cape Tuxen, It's a beautiful ice-domed pinnacle which you could climb pretty well near to the top. That was one of our favourite trips. Then we did the big trip which I expect you've heard about with Fred and Dave down...we did go down the Lemaire Channel [Laughter]. I did anyway.

[Part 1 0:15:02]: Lee: Is Fred Johnson the guy who lives in Darwin in Lancashire? I saw him last year.

Clarke: Yeah.

[Part 1 0:15:08]: Lee: And the other two chaps, somebody called Kelley?

Clarke: Oh yes, he was the Radio Operator. I can't think the other name.

[Part 1 0:15:13]: Lee: Smith.

Clarke: Harold Smith, yes.

[Part 1 0:15:16]: Lee: Harold.

Clarke: Harold, yeah.

[Part 1 0:15:18]: Lee: And you all got on all the time or most of the time?

Clarke: Most of the time, yeah. I think the odd one out was Kelley, the wireless operator. He was a bit of a recluse, I think, in some ways looking back a bit, you know. 'Cos the thing there we're all young lads, really, and he was the eldest of all, I think. He might have been married even. David was only 19 and Fred and I were 21, -2 or -3, something like that. So I think you have perhaps a different perspective on relationships then. You think he's a grumpy old so-and-so or something like that. I didn't say that ...but he was a sort of a loner really, I thought, more than the others. Everybody else mixed in, you know, was part of the team.

[Part 1 0:16:13]: Lee: Do you think he suffered for his loneliness?

Clarke: Probably, he never looked really happy. I mean I don't know...I've never heard of him ever since I left. I don't know what's happened to him. Yes, he didn't...he was often indoor boy, he didn't go out at all. I don't think he skied very much, didn't partake in the ... well, I suppose he volunteered to stay with Harold when the three of us, Fred, David and I, went on that man-hauling trip.

[Part 1 0:16:47]: Lee: Well let's talk about that, I don't know much about it, Derek, so do fill me in.

Clarke: Well, we didn't know much about man-hauling but we read up about all these amazing polar journeys. You know Shackleton and I think we saw drawings or photographs of the gear that we have to put together with a... like a body band. Anyway we got the gear alright. Sorted that out. We had a 12 foot Nansen sledge 'cos we had a few doggies then, about six, I think. So we decided to go... well, I mean it's a different story to what I've heard from Fred [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:17:35]: Lee: Tell me *your* story.

Clarke: [Laughter] This might be my fantasy, but I thought we were going to Port Lockroy which is the other end of....I mean it's a long way down, I know. But that was my idea. I didn't express it perhaps much but it was so easy going to start with, we were all enthusiastic young lads, then we started slowing down a bit because the ... I was going to say the road, the surface was good, the frozen sea conditions were excellent until we got quite...I thought it was quite a way down the Lemaire Channel and Fred, who always seemed to be the lead guy, David and I back a little side by side behind Fred, one of his skis started to go through the sea-ice. Then we could see a bit further on there was open ice, open sea I should say so we turned back and came back. That's my story. I don't know where we went on the way back. There's various other stories about that.

[Part 1 0:18:39]: Lee: I've got a map here.

Clarke: Yeah.

[Part 1 0:18:46]:Lee: Port Lockroy isn't marked on here at all.

Clarke: No, must've been a long way away [Laughter]. But that was...it always seemed to be quite close to us. It was certainly our neighbour. But anyway...

[Part 1 0:19:01]: Lee: But you made a long journey in the end, didn't you? Did you? That was it, was it?

Clarke: Not there. I made a long journey at Hope Bay with a sledge. No we did that...that was it as far as I know.

[Part 1 0:19:15]: Lee: So, how many days were you out, would you say?

Clarke: I should say about five or six, I can't remember to be truthful. Yeah, it seemed quite a way out. Fred was getting all concerned about the details he'd received from the BAS office, the archives, whatever it is, he didn't agree and I couldn't say one thing or the other really I just said what my version was.

[Part 1 0:19:46]: Lee: So you did three or four days out then the sea-ice started giving way.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 0:19:51]: Lee: So you retreated back to the base, back to Argentina, back to Faraday.

Clarke: Farady, yeah.

[Part 1 0:19:59]: Lee: Why...did you take dogs or not?

Clarke: No

[Part 1 0:20:00]: Lee: Why not?

Clarke: Well I think we only had... I think it was five, I think. They were pretty, a rather mixed bunch. It wasn't a real sledge, it wasn't a sledging base at all. I don't know why they were there, whether

they were left over from Marguerite Bay or somewhere else. I don't know the history. But we had a proper sledge, yeah.

[Part 1 0:20:19]: Lee: But the sledging was more recreational than serious surveying.

Clarke: Oh, yes. There was no surveying at all there. It was just meteorology, the usual. Ah, I think that was it, to be truthful. So it was quite an easy time in some ways you know, once I was looking back to the other places I was at, the other bases. But it was a good insight for me because I met big Lister things I needed to take because I did plan to go down again if they'd accept me. So I thought that'll be handy if I come again, you know things that I thought would be helpful.

[Part 1 0:21:01]: Lee: So you'd only been taken on for one season?

Clarke: Yes, just the one.

[Part 1 0:21:05]: Lee: One winter.

Clarke: Yes, I think the chap must have done...the diesel mech, previous diesel mech who did the previous year, or the previous winter and I did the last year the base was open, I think. Pretty sure it was. I did see the completed new base later in my tours down there.

[Part 1 0:21:25]: Lee: And you're quite clear that you never got to Port Lockroy?

Clarke: No, never got near it, no. [Laughter]. But we did get down the Lemaire Channel, I don't know how far.

[Part 1 0:21:40]: Lee: OK. Yes, I can find that one marked on the map. Looks like you went to a cairn. Charcot?

Clarke: Oh, Charcot Bay is that?

[Part 1 0:21:57]: Lee: Yeah. I'm reading very tiny writing here and then that was the little detour before you came back through the Jalours Islands back to Argentine. Is there anything else that you remember particularly from that winter, apart from the fact that it was a good dress rehearsal?

Clarke: We did have a boat, a little dinghy which in the summer we used to collect overhanging icicles. Sounds pretty dangerous to me because they were quite like long spears, you know, go through the boat, could do. We used to do that for the water. Not really. I just found my feet really. Learned to ski which was very important for later times and got to know about the machinery I was going to look after in the future and what was expected, because I didn't really know what was expected. They said I'd have to maintain and look after the power plant and the electrical installations and the electrical bits and pieces but exactly what it was I didn't know, didn't know the size or whatever.

[Part 1 0:23:09]: Lee: It made you a very good candidate for applying again, I guess, didn't it?

Clarke: Well, they seemed to take me on. I got a good.. I mean the Chief Engineer on the *Biscoe* used to come round and inspect the machinery after the end of the year, do a little report. 'This chap's okey dokey or whatever'. His name was 'Digger'. Anyway, he was quite a character.

[Part 1 0:23:36]: Lee: Who?

Clarke: 'Digger', the first...the Chief Officer on the *Biscoe*. Chief Engineer, sorry.

[Part 1 0:23:41]: Lee: Why do you think he was a character?

Clarke: Well he was a bit of a... [Laughter]

[Part 1 0:23:45]: Lee: You're making drinking motions, Derek.

Clarke: He liked his drinking, but he was just an interesting person. I mean I didn't know him very well, just when he'd come ashore, look round the machinery an' that.

[Part 1 0:24:04]: Lee: So you came back to England.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 0:24:06]: Lee: I guess you sailed back.

Clarke: Yes, sailed back this time.

[Part 1 0:24:09]: Lee: And then you had some time back in the UK.

Clarke: Yes, wasn't very long, it was the next...have you got any dates there?

[Part 1 0:24:016]: Lee: Well, I think you were back for about a year.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 0:24:20]: Lee: And then you went back...you certainly wintered in '55 and '56 and this was now at Hope Bay.

Clarke: Hope Bay, yeah.

[Part 1 0:24:26]: Lee: So how did you fill in your year back in the UK?

Clarke: That's a tricky one, I just can't remember.

[Part 1 0:24:39]: Lee: Nothing significant?

Clarke: No, I probably...no, no, I probably bought a car or something rash like that, but I don't think I would have done, that was a bit later, I think

[Part 1 0:24:50]: Lee: Well you would have come back to a little pot of money, wouldn't you?

Clarke: Yes, it was all saved...the majority was saving. It wasn't...not big salary, not big money. It was all saved.

[Part 1 0:25:03]: Lee: Well let's move on to your two winters at Hope Bay in '56 and '57. Very different atmosphere, I think, because a lot more men on base, a lot more dogs – 70, 80, 100 dogs and a different Base Leader.

Clarke: Yes, I had two Base Leaders there, I can't...anyway I know Bill Anderson was one, Major Bill...

[Part 1 0:25:29]: Lee: Ellery Anderson.

Clarke: Ellery, yeah...

[Part 1 0:25:32]: Lee: Tell about him.

Clarke: Well, my first memories of his military style he brought that into the base and he expected everyone to...not jump to, but fall in with his...he'd only just retired, I think, Major Bill and he had his batman with him, I've forgotten name, Willis something, corporal...anyway, I've read some of his book. Not the book that you've...there's a serial in the 'John Bull' paper. Do you remember that, that's years and years ago but I haven't read the big book that people are referring to.

[Part 1 0:26:18]: Lee: 'Exploration South'.

Clarke: No, I haven't read it. He did some good journeys, good stuff and he's obviously a good leader. It was just some things. It was just I suppose most of us there, Allan Precious, myself, we'd just come out of the Forces; we'd done our National Service and whatever. We could see 'Oh dear, we're back in there again', sort of thing but there was no real conflicts. You just aired your views and that was OK, you know. [Laughter] It's a job to cast your mind back sometimes.

[Part 1 0:27:07]: Lee: It's a long time ago. Was he fair?

Clarke: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Some of the book, 'Exploration South', is written in this article which I still have upstairs, 'John Bull'. Some things are a little bit distorted looking back but nothing dreadful, just odd things.

[Part 1 0:27:34]: Lee: Such as? [Laughter]. Can think of an example?

Clarke: The photograph you've given me with my postbox here, I can't remember even building it, so I don't know where the heck it came from, but I won't say anything. It's just I don't know. Perhaps I did because I was always building like my Dad, I suppose, bit of a carpenter always doing the odd jobs round about.

[Part 1 0:28:02]: Lee: Sorry, you did some sledging from Hope Bay in '56. '55 or '56? First year, second year or both? '55 you arrived.

Clarke: Straightaway, yeah, pretty well.

[Part 1 0:28:22]: Lee: Did you have your own team?

Clarke: Yes, don't ask me their name. There were so many dog teams.

[Part 1 0:28:28]: Lee: 'Gentlemen'?

Clarke: 'Gentlemen', probably, that was a nice team and we used to get a bit, I've forgotten the word, but we used to love our teams, they were the best team and the others were not quite a bit up to standard and all this infighting, nothing serious. You know how boys are together. So that's how I got to know Julian Taylor 'cos I'd already got involved with the doggies and I used to look after the husbandry, the birth side, the young pups and stuff. In fact, that sort of changed my whole life looking back on it 'cos Julian Taylor was a physiologist from Cambridge and I ended up as Chief

Technician in Physiology in Cambridge donkeys years later, so it was a strange turnaround. I took up a new trade...not trade, that's not the right word. Anyway, I'll say a trade. I take a five-year Diploma course in Animal Husbandry which changed my direction and I ended up at the University Physiology. That was through the Antarctic really, initially, because I used to love all the birds, animals, seals. Of course, you'd get involved with all the -ologies by working with all the bods there, all the scientists etc. You get quite knowledgeable about a whole lot really.

[Part 1 0:30:00]: Lee: Were you instructed to look after the dogs ? Did it just sort of happen because you... ?

Clarke: I think it's probably because I showed interest, perhaps. I was fascinated by Julian Taylor's work. He used to have these strain gauges that he put on the dog team, between the dog team and the sledge and all these measurements and stuff. I couldn't remember all the stuff he did. Quite clever chap, I think, but I never really got...I don't know what happened to him at the end of that we all went our separate ways, so I never met him since.

[Part 1 0:30:35]: Lee: He went climbing in the Andes. I can put you in touch with him now – but that's after the interview. So, tell me a bit about your duties at Hope Bay. Technically you were a Diesel Mechanic, but you did more than that.

Clarke: Yeah, that was my main function. The secondary was the dog side. I used to help organise teams, mostly for the young ones, the young huskies bringing them up through their ages until they were about ...I think it was six months or so, maybe nine months, when they started joining the husky another team. You put them at the back of the team. Sometimes they would be OK, other times it was quite hectic. You'd end up unhooking them and carrying them on the sledge. It was such a muddle, they'd get caught up under the sledge and all sorts of language flying about the place but after a while they got sorted out. Yeah, that was my main other function really, the one I really loved, the dogs.

[Part 1 0:31:48]: Lee: It was Julian who was in charge of the breeding programme I guess, and you were kind of midwife, were you?

Clarke: Yes. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:31:58]: Lee: They didn't all make it, did they, the dogs, the puppies?

Clarke: No, oh no. We had to put them down if they were... I'm not sure we kept all the bitches and all the dogs, I can't remember which way it was.

[Part 1 0:32:14]: Lee: You tended to keep the dogs.

Clarke: Yes, too many bitches would be a bit awkward when you're out if they mate if you're sledging thousands, hundreds of miles away. You don't want puppies all over the place, so we had to destroy the puppies.

[Part 1 0:32:32]: Lee: How was that done?

Clarke: I can't really remember. I think Paul Massey, the Doctor, he had a lethal injection, 'Nempatol' [phonetic] or something like that. As far as I know there was no other way I can

remember of dealing with that. Same with the older dogs, I guess. I know at Signy Island I had to shoot an adult dog, there was no other way of putting it to sleep. It was a bit tough at the time because you do get...you're not supposed to get attached, but you do, you have favourites and all that stuff. So I used to see the puppies come right from the birth right to the eventual running in the teams which was quite satisfying. There was always this juggling about teams, swapping over dogs from A and B. It was quite interesting but you'd get quite heated arguments about them among all the other team drivers etc.. And that's where I first – I think I told the other chap – met Wally Herbert there, at Hope Bay. He was a lovely man but I used to help, encourage him with his sledge driving 'cos it was quite tricky really. You get nine dogs charging off in front of you. It takes controlling or it can do if you're not careful. So I got to know dear Wally for quite a few years. He used to write to me from his travels, I don't know why, around the World.

[Part 1 0:34:12]: Lee: Tell me about him then. He's no longer around, sadly.

Clarke: No, he passed on didn't he, Wally. All you read or hear about is true. He'd stand up to authority if he thought they were in the wrong. He was a real go-getter; he was a really kind, lovely man as well. He loved people. I used to get on well with him. He was a Surveyor, Wally, at that time. Probably always been, and he was a good artist as well. Loved his sketches and paintings.

[Part 1 0:34:49]: Lee: And you were teaching him sledging. Was he a good student?

Clarke: Yeah, oh yeah. Well he could swear like the rest of us I expect. [Laughter] He was good, Wally. Of course, he went on to great things, didn't he? Wally. Yes we used to have some good times, quite a happy man.

[Part 1 0:35:15]: Lee: Can you remember one of the trips you made from Hope Bay? Did you go on a big trip?

Clarke: Yes, well, I thought it was big at the time anyway. I went with Joe Lewis, he was another real character, real northern character with colourful language all the time, lovely, lovely, helpful, help anybody, Joe. Ended rather sadly, but, yes, they wanted us to find a route over James Ross Island for the people coming back from 'way down the Larsen Ice Shelf. I can't think of the names offhand but 'way down south, so that they wouldn't have to circumnavigate the Ross Island, they could cut over the top in theory. That was quite horrendous really. We did find a route eventually. We had to secure the dogs at the bottom and then walk by foot to have a look at the route. We found a route eventually, we thought, till we got onto the top ridge and it was all sheer ice. We had our crampons on, all the right gear, rope brakes on the sledges but it was going down this glacier the dogs would want to veer off and it was so difficult to stop them. Once you got going, the whole lot would go down the bloomin' glacier. So that was quite difficult, Joe and I, 'cos one person was roped to the front of the dogs to lead them and encourage them, the other bod on the back.

[Part 1 0:36:49]: Lee: That was an unusual tactic, wasn't it, I think?

Clarke: Yes

[Part 1 0:36:52]: Lee: Is that because they got bored otherwise?

Clarke: Yes. I think they were shattered really 'cos it was quite a pull up the top to get to that point, this col. It was sort of windswept, there was no snow, it was just black glass. It's highly hairy to take them up there really. We did find a route and I think Bill Anderson's lot used it, I think, on the way back. So that was quite a trip that was. I did lots and lots of trips, all sorts. I've got some old records somewhere upstairs. I did quite a lot of depot laying trips. We all had our share of being snowed in for two or three days or week, you know, can't get out, all this stuff.

[Part 1 0:37:40]: Lee: So the trip with Joe Lewis was where?

Clarke: To James Ross Island.

[Part 1 0:37:43]: Lee: Right, and that was surveying work mainly.

Clarke: No, that was to find this route 'cos Joe was a meteorologist, yeah, but a very gifted guy. He was good at outdoor stuff. That's how he met his problems at the end with the Scouts. You probably know all this stuff.

[Part 1 0:38:08]: Lee: No.

Clarke: He became a Scout Leader when he came home and a great canoeist and he took them across the River Thames, I think, and a tree bough fell across his canoe and held him. Well they kept his head up, he was trapped. Anyway, it damaged all his spine and legs and he was in a wheelchair for the rest of his time, I'm afraid. Many, many years. That was sad, Joe. I met him at one of the reunions years and years ago. He passed on about five years ago, I think. I'm still in contact with his wife, Jean. Yeah, so there were some other trips that were quite good. There was this trip with the... I think that's in Bill's book actually, about the open pools of whales.

[Part 1 0:38:57]: Lee: I was wondering if you were there?

Clarke: Yeah, I wasn't with Bill's lot but we were there at that time. You could go up and touch the whales with a ski stick. I've got some photographs, I could perhaps show you one or two bottle-nosed whales, killer whales, the whole lot in these pools.

[Part 1 0:39:16]: Lee: So you were patting them with a stick. Just go back then, because... tell me the scene as you saw it.

Clarke: Well, I suppose the first thing is you hear the noise, the whales blowing up and after you can see the open water in the distance. But I think the main thing is that the dogs tend to make for that sort of thing, they might think it's a penguin or a seal or something to eat. They tend to draw you to that sort...but it was on the main road, as it were, the main route and there were quite a few small holes. These [were] the ones with the bottle-nosed whales, a couple of grey whales. The bigger pool was the killer whales. They were either looking round at the top – I've got the photographs of all these things – but the others would come up on the edge of the ice and just rest on there and you could go and give them a little tap [Laughter]. It's amazing really.

[Part 1 0:40:14]: Lee: So you were patting killer whales.

Clarke: Not killer whales, no. [Laughter]. No, I draw a line...

[Part 1 0:40:19]: Lee: Bottle-nose...

Clarke: Grey whales and bottle-nosed, yeah. Draw a line at killer whales.

[Part 1 0:40:26]: Lee: And this was a vast ice sheet, so they were using the little holes.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 0:40:30]: Lee: Literally to stay alive.

Clarke: To stay alive, yeah. We don't know how they got out in the end but obviously they...I don't know where they get their food source or what. But it was amazing. I think it was reported back to FIDS at that time what was going on.

[Part 1 0:40:49]: Lee: The previous year Anderson and Julian Taylor saw little pools like that but they were shared, the killer whales were sharing them with seals and other...

Clarke: Yes, I saw that in this article I've read.

[Part 1 0:41:03]: Lee: You weren't there at the time.

Clarke: No.

[Part 1 0:41:04]: Lee: You read about it.

Clarke: Yeah...never heard that.

[Part 1 0:41:07]: Lee: Did you ever get... did you ever hear any explanations to why they were living together so peacefully?

Clarke: No. I can't believe it. It's quite difficult to believe that because killer whales, they hunt in packs. They're very ferocious beasts and the leopard seal, that's another nasty piece of work. Well they're beautiful looking animals, don't get me wrong. I've got lots of photographs on my cine about them. They skin a penguin alive, just tossing it up and down. I think we found one or two with about 10 or 12 remains in their stomachs, so they're not friendly.

[Part 1 0:41:50]: Lee: So you were killing leopard seals, were you?

Clarke: We were at the base, depending on the dogs' food stocks. It's all changed, the killing. Yeah, the *John Biscoe* used to collect them on the way down. We'd get the 'crabbies', were the ones 'cos they'd come up on the floes, about 50 or so, and they'd just sit there while they were shot and then they just hoiked them on deck and take them to the bases as they went round, shared them out for the doggies. 90 dogs take quite a bit of seal meat. To feed them it would be so expensive otherwise. And it was nice, fresh, well fresh to them.

[Part 1 0:42:43]: Lee: Are you surprised...I was a bit surprised that the seals didn't begin to learn about man.

Clarke: Yeah, I suppose in the general scheme of things we were so insignificant, the times we did this sort of thing. It wasn't a regular...sit on this corner and wait for them all to come here. It was just general pot luck wherever they were. We used to do that.

[Part 1 0:43:17]: Lee: Did you take to skiing, was it something you enjoyed ? Sorry, sledging?

Clarke: I used to like sledging because you got involved from the very beginning, stripping the sledge, The Nansen sledge. I think it was 12 feet, no screws, no nails, nothing like that. It was all thonging and lashing. It was a quite an interesting art to learn that was passed on by others who'd been there like Jock Tait, Murdo Tait. I think he would pass these skills on. It was quite interesting making the dogs' individual harnesses, individually tailored for their needs. Yeah, that was really lovely. I mean it was tough, it was quite hard but you felt when the dogs were running on a beautiful flat surface, their old tails going, it was a real feeling of ... just lovely. But it wasn't always like that. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:44:14]: Lee: Where else did you get to in your Hope Bay years with your sledge?

Clarke: Deuce[phonetic] Bay was a regular stop. That was across the other side. It was about 30 miles, I think, something like that. It was a refuge hut on the other side of Hope Bay. I used to spend quite a bit of time there helping to maintain the hut, putting roofing stuff on, looking after the wind powered generator. First wind farm over there it was. We had this little 12 volt thing which was always very temperamental. It couldn't stand these high winds, these high speed winds, it would fall apart. So that was quite good. We would go there to stay there for a while to do various surveys and things. The surveyors would go off from there, the geologists. We'd often meet the Argentine people coming and going on their way back. They'd stop in for a cup of tea or whatever, coffee and stuff. Yeah we were there quite frequently. You could usually do that in a day, but 30 miles is quite good going really. It's got to be good weather 'cos often it was down to 2 or 3 miles, quite slow. But it was very satisfying and of course the skis you had were these like slip-ons that you could slip out of them at an instant notice. At the beginning you sort of lose those quite often because there were no secure bindings. They'd go shooting off [Laughter] . It was quite hilarious, well it wasn't really but looking back it was [Laughter]

[Part 1 0:45:55]: Lee: Retrospectively funny. Where else to you get to? You went a bit further, a bit beyond the View Point, didn't you?

Clarke: Yes, James Ross down to the ...I'd have to look at my information, I can't remember. They were mostly... well, some were depot-laying trips for the very, very long journeys. I didn't go on those. And other trips were geological trips along the... gosh, I can't think of the names... 'way past James Ross Island, these lovely exposed areas with lots of fossils there at that time. I can't remember the names, I'm afraid. So that was interesting, but they were all several weeks' trips, it wasn't a ten-minute out and back. I couldn't stay away too long 'cos I had my machines to look after at the base.

[Part 1 0:30:00]: Lee: Were you doing any met work as well?

Clarke: Yes, I used to do a go at that when other people were away. I don't know whether I did the night shift or the day shift. I tried to learn Morse code but I never picked that up. I tried my best.

[Part 1 0:47:11]: Lee: [Part 1 0:47:11]: Lee: You'd take the readings and get somebody else would radio them back?

Clarke: Yes, oh yes. You'd put them on a chart and collate them and do whatever. Which helped me for another future job, years after that...in Iraq. I was a Snow Surveyor in Northern Iraq. That came about because of my Antarctic work.

[Part 1 0:47:38]: Lee: I've got a note about that. This is for a dam building project? Oh no, that was in Kurdistan.

Clarke: Kurdistan, North Iraq, yeah.

[Part 1 0:47:47]: Lee: In '58?

Clarke: Yeah, '58.

[Part 1 0:47:49]: Lee: That was after you'd left FIDS.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 0:47:51]: Lee: Tell me a bit about that whilst we're on it.

Clarke: Well, Wink Mander went out there first. We were very good pals, Wink and I. He left base before I did, he left a year before and he wrote a letter saying 'Would you like to join this survey, hydrological survey of Iraq?' I said 'Oh, sounds a bit fancy'. Any way, he said 'The basic thing is you need to be a fairly good, competent skier and climb mountains up to 10,000ft taking snow samples at the top, which were weighed and analysed as to water content to see how much would drain off when it thawed out. So I got into that. Each of us had a county each, so we were on our own again. That was quite interesting. In the summer I used to have mule trains and stuff to build the refuge huts up the mountains. And also in the summer would do stream gauges down below. Water flow stuff and also call round the local schools in Baghdad to get them to take rain gauges to get the readings. Not that they got much rain. There was a definite rainy season, as you know I expect. So that all came from the Antarctic.

[Part 1 0:49:17]: Lee: So your Antarctic skills came in handy?

Clarke: Yes, all over the place.

[Part 1 0:49:25]: Lee: Did you get to Mount Peary as well with your skiing, with your sledging? Was that you?

Clarke: I don't think so. It doesn't ring a bell. That was 'way down from Hope Bay. I don't think so. No, I can't think of any... I've got a photograph in there of this big outcrop, this big bluff. I've forgot what it's called now. This is the trouble. I've got lots of memories going from one to another. I suppose they used to keep a table of sledging mileages over the year and I think I was about mid-way - about 1200 miles or something of that nature. I was quite surprised when I saw that. We used to do lots of little trips, training trips and all sorts of stuff.

[Part 1 0:50:17]: Lee: The seal research you were supporting as a GA, was there more to it than just cutting open elephant seals, sorry leopard seals, or were you doing other things too?

Clarke: Well, going back to Argentine Islands, Harold Smith was doing some seal work there which was a bit... I wasn't very comfortable about that, he was shooting young puppy seals, young seal

pups to see if there was any commercial use for their skins but that just fortunately fell by the wayside. The other ones, we used to tag the seals. I guess that was just for general moving A to B. Seal pups, I mean. I can't think of any specific seal research that I was aware of. Obviously there was but...

[Part 1 0:51:21]: Lee: You say that you had the Argentineans there of course in Hope Bay. So I guess you were aware of the political scenario, were you?

Clarke: Oh, yes.

[Part 1 0:51:31]: Lee: How did that impinge on you?

Clarke: It didn't, no. It was a bit of a joke in a way. We'd go down there and exchange pleasantries. They'd got this enormous great wine cellar, sides of beef and all sorts of stuff down there. We still had our little tins of stuff. We used to have quite pleasant parties there, quite nice times. We got on very well. I got on very well with the diesel mech there, he was a good friend of mine. He gave me a brief case and a photographic album, leather, when I left. The other great thing was we learned languages, we learned Spanish language which is quite handy at the moment, when we go to Spain.

[Part 1 0:52:21]: Lee: So, do you think they were better resourced than you were? Did they have more finance?

Clarke: It appeared to be, yes. Particularly the hut situation, with the food and supplies. They had an icebreaker, they had good equipment, good clothing gear. Going back, in those days our clothing was more of the old army stuff. I should say hand-me-downs but that style passed on.

[Part 1 0:52:55]: Lee: Army surplus.

Clarke: Army surplus, yeah. I remember these dreadful army trousers, coarse and horrible.

[Laughter] But we made very good friends.

[Part 1 0:53:11]: Lee: Were they supporters of Peron or were they anti-Peron?

Clarke: I don't know, I can't remember. They were not into political situations really, that's all I could say. They were quite happy to receive notes from our [inaudible]

[Part 1 0:53:36]: Lee: Were you there the year that the statues were taken down or was that before your time?

Clarke: When was that? At Hope Bay?

[Part 1 0:53:43]: Lee: Yeah, the Argentineans.

Clarke: No, I can't remember that.

[Part 1 0:53:47]: Lee: That was before your time. I've got some notes from 'Expedition South' because you are mentioned a handful of times in this book and in particular there's talk of a dog called 'Suik' or 'Suuk' [phonetic] that you were very concerned about her, it says in the book. You were concerned that she was going to kill her own pups.

Clarke: Oh, right. That could be well true. I mean some were like that, you know, they were a bit not quite together. For some reason they would do that. I became aware of that.

[Part 1 0:54:23]: Lee: Was that a situation where you would step in to save the puppies?

Clarke: You'd try to, yeah, but it was quite difficult. I mean I have tried them in the Aga cooker, in the oven. Just hold them in to keep them going but it's the on-going process, you can't stay up every night to feed them with pipettes. We tried all that but it's not really practicable, to be honest. So it was quite a difficult situation but you couldn't do anything else about it really.

[Part 1 0:54:57]: Lee: You let nature take its course.

Clarke: Yeah. It was the same when they were born out on the trail. You couldn't do anything about it. You couldn't carry them or take them anywhere.

[Part 1 0:55:11]: Lee: So you just left them.

Clarke: Yeah, well you'd tap them on the head, I suppose. That was the main thing. It wasn't easy but you thought 'What else?' You'd prolong the suffering if you carried on with them.

[Part 1 0:55:27]: Lee: So that happened to you or was it one of the bitches whilst you were sledging?

Clarke: Yeah. Was it 'Susie'? .I can't think of the name, there's so many. As you can imagine if there's 90 dogs, all got their own names.

[Part 1 0:55:42]: Lee: And all the pups would die, you wouldn't try and save a couple for her?

Clarke: No, unless you were just on the doorstep of the base, obviously. It usually happened when you were well out, particularly these longer trips. You had to be quite watchful, particularly at night. They were staked out but they could escape when things get desperate.

[Part 1 0:56:07]: Lee: When they were on heat.

Clarke: Yeah, when they were on heat.

[Part 1 0:56:11]: Lee: How did the bitch react when she pupped and the pups died?

Clarke: I don't think they had much time to take it on board, really, because they were off to the next place working, pulling their little hearts out.

[Part 1 0:56:29]: Lee: So they were professionals then, were they really? Not much room for sentiment.

Clarke: I don't know how they think but it was that sort of situation where you had to get on with it really.

[Part 1 0:56:41]: Lee: She was a Greenland dog, wasn't she, 'Suuk'? Were they different?

Clarke: Yes. Quite a small stature, small build they were. Say ours were about 80, 90 pounds, a good husky, they would be about 60, 70. Quite narrow-chested and long-legged. Quite a thin muzzle, thin face.

[Part 1 0:57:07]: Lee: And there's a reference to, there's a puppy with an abscess on it here that needs to be lanced and there's a reference to you helping with the operation. Is that something you recall?

Clarke: No, I can't recall it. I was involved in all aspects, so I could have been.

[Part 1 0:57:23]: Lee: Do you remember listening to 'Fids Half-hour' on the radio?

Clarke: I can't remember that. [Laughter]

[Part 1 0:57:31]: Lee: I presume they mean 'Calling Antarctica'.

Clarke: Where was that from?

[Part 1 0:57:35]: Lee: Well, apparently you got a personal message. Is that right?

Clarke: Did I? I don't know.

[Part 1 0:57:38]: Lee: And you were a bit embarrassed about it, that may be the case.

Clarke: No, I can't remember. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:57:44]: Lee: Let me just try and ask you one or two things that Ellery Anderson talked about in 'Expedition South' to see whether you remember any of these aspects. Were you around when they found all these dead crabeater seals?

Clarke: Yes. Not when they ...we found them as well.

[Part 1 0:58:03]: Lee: You found dead ones?

Clarke: This was quite near to those open pools. I forgot to tell you that. When Joe and I did this new route on James Ross, there was some well up on the slopes, you know dead, of course. Why they went up there, how they went up I don't know. Another mystery, that was.

[Part 1 0:58:25]: Lee: Was this some of the seal research you were doing?

Clarke: No, we weren't doing any. This was surveying this route and they just happened to be... suddenly this solid seal would appear.

[Part 1 0:58:38]: Lee: You must have discussed on base how these seals came to die.

Clarke: We did, and I can't think of any outcome that we got to, really, because it's so illogical that. Why would they go uphill, for a start? Obviously the big groups of them, [there were] quite a few I think – you can see them in one of these photographs, actually – they must have had some disease of sorts 'cos there was rather odd diseases but I don't know.

[Part 1 0:59:11]: Lee: Anderson talked about the mental fatigue of sledging, particularly sledging on sea-ice. It becomes very monotonous. Did you find that?

Clarke: No, I didn't find that. I thought it was really good 'cos you seemed to be getting from A to B. The monotonous bits were when you're stuck in a tent for a week. To go outside was horrendous and you needed to get outside sometimes. That was the worst part. No, I think there was always so

much to do. You only stopped for five minutes every hour during the day and then once you stopped it was all go to get the tent up before the weather clamped in or whatever. Got things cooking etc., sorted dogs out. You collapsed by then. I didn't get much time to think about monotony except when you were stuck up in the tent.

[Part 1 1:00:13]: Lee: What was it like inside those tents for a week at a time?

Clarke: Quite stuffy. Quite uncomfortable really. You didn't really undress at all. You might have taken your mukluks off, your big overboots, overshoes, hang them up in the roof. I suppose the food was a bit grim well not grim. It was obviously a basic, balanced diet but the monotony of that might have been something he was talking about as well. It was quite monotonous, same every day in out. You couldn't carry anything else, couldn't carry Xmas puddings or stuff like that. It was just the basic fare of stewed ... I think it was pemmican, I'm not sure, like a block, compressed block of meat and fat. That was just disintegrated in a pan and that was it really. Or you put dry onions through it to give it a bit of a kick, followed by a good cup of cocoa.

[Part 1 1:01:19]: Lee: Were you there with Paul Massie?

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 1:01:22]: Lee: You were. Did you have to do one of his finger tests?

Clarke: Yes, I did.

[Part 1 1:01:26]: Lee: What was all that about?

Clarke: It was acclimatisation physiology again, human beings acclimatising to cold climates from where we came from

[Part 1 1:01:37.]: Lee: What did you have to do?

Clarke: The finger test was pretty grim; that was the worst one. I mean he'd do fat test with these callipers and weighing and all that stuff but this you were put into a wind tunnel, basically, driven by a fan drawing the cold, minus one or whatever it was, in and your fingers slowly went blue, then they went white and pink and yellow. Then it just went dead, more or less. Then he'd bring it out and there was two rulers like that with spaces and he'd time how long it would take your finger coming to a point where you could feel the two distinct ruler edges. That was part of that but that was a really painful, grim test but he was such a lovely man, you'd do anything for Paul. Real bedside manner, real first class...

[Part 1 1:02:29]: Lee: And what was the overall point?

Clarke: Of that? Well, I don't know. I think it was just to do with temperature changes, skin changes, body changes. Perhaps after a while of being on base, say six months or so, your finger would recover quickly, more quickly. Something of that, I don't know.

[Part 1 1:02:54]: Lee: Acclimatisation.

Clarke: Acclimatisation was the key, yes.

[Part 1 1:02:57]: Lee: So he was doing it when you arrived and then again later?

Clarke: Yes, it was quite a regular...once a week that finger job and this was almost every day, the weighing and fat stuff.

[Part 1 1:03:13]: Lee: Did anybody rebel?

Clarke: Probably but I can't remember. [Laughter] You hadn't much choice, once you'd signed up for it.

[Part 1 1:03:21]: Lee: It's all part of the deal.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 1:03:23]: Lee: So you were there for two seasons and came back, I guess at the end of '56, beginning of '57.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 1 1:03:32]: Lee: And you were back after the Antarctic for three years then, weren't you? So what were you doing for those three years? Do you remember that bit?

Clarke: Yes, one year was the Kurdistan in Northern Iraq and one year 'Wink' and I bought a cafe in Yorkshire up...

[Part 1 1:03:51]: Lee: That was in '57 before you went to Kurdistan.

Clarke: Was it that way round? OK.

[Part 1 1:03:55]: Lee: Yes. I think so.

Clarke: I can't remember which way round it is. Yes, we bought that. That was quite a hilarious experience in some ways. You'd get all the Fids come in on their way...on leave. They'd come and sleep on the floor and all this kind of thing.

[Part 1 1:04:12]: Lee: This was Ingleton.

Clarke: Ingleton, yeah, opposite the church. It's not there anymore. They'd come up for a free meal [Laughter] as you do. So that was quite nice, well, quite an experience. We'd got the idea of that when we were meeting at Gothland [phonetic] where I think they've done a series of BBC filming. I can't think of the name of that.

[Part 1 1:04:39]: Lee: Heartbeat?

Clarke: Heartbeat, yep. There was a hotel called the Maliant [phonetic] Spout. There was 'Lofty' Worswick, Allan Precious, myself and 'Wink'. We said we'd meet there. We were on leave from the Antarctic, whenever this time was and have a drink just to catch up with everybody. As you walked in quite a big lady's bar, the lady who owned the pub, the hotel I should say, said 'Eee, I see you've come lads'. We thought 'Pardon?'. She thought we were students from Leeds to come to do the waiting on and everything. So we did, we volunteered, like fools we were. Volunteered, we regretted that. It was hard work. They used to have these fishing parties late into the night. Drunken orgies

really, they used to go on and on. So that was real hard work, slave labour, slave pay and I thought 'How are we going to get out of this 'cos we daren't say anything to the lady; she'd more likely thump you, she was a big lady. So I wrote to my Dad – this was a bit naughty, but I did: 'Could you send us a telegram saying that we're needed back at the Antarctic'. Anyway, it worked [Laughter]. So we escaped. Phew! But because of that we were looking through the catering magazines they used to get. This cafe in Ingleton was advertised, £1400 I think it was. Because of what we saw in this hotel, how much money they were making on basic coffees and teas and stuff, we thought we could make a bit of money but we didn't. We just came out even after a year. That was it, so we stopped.

[Part 1 1:06:34]: Lee: And then you went to Kurdistan.

Clarke: I went to Kurdistan.

[Part 1 1:06:36]: Lee: And then back to the Antarctic, which we'll talk about in Part 2.

Clarke: OK.

- **[0:02:12] Going to school across the River Thames for 2p in the '30's.**
- **[0:07:19] 'Glory hour' in the pub in Port Stanley.**
- **[0:10:46] In the 'roaring forties' on the 'old J.B.'**
- **[0:17:35] Setting out to ski/manhaul to Port Lockroy from Wordie.**
- **[0:25:58] Ex-Major/ Base Leader has his batman with him at Hope Bay.**
- **[0:31:51] Bringing up husky puppies.**
- **[0:34:49] Teaching Wally Herbert sledging.**
- **[0:38:57] Tapping whales in open pools.**
- **[0:51:21] Excellent relations with the better provisioned Argentinean neighbours.**
- **[1:04:40] Fids on home leave feel threatened by large Yorkshire barmaid.**

This is Derek Clarke recorded at his home in Kendal in Cumbria by Chris Eldon-Lee, on the 28th of October, 2010.

Derek Clarke, Part 2.

[Part 2 0:00:12] Lee: Before we start talking about your time at Signy there are a couple of photographs you just showed me, Derek, from the Hope Bay era. One in particular of a group of Fids, they look like they're on the ice sheet trying to dig out a ship's anchor. What happened there?

Clarke: I think actually that was on the way to Argentine Islands, Base F, Lemaire Channel. The *John Biscoe* was just an ice strengthened ship, it wasn't an icebreaker. So it used to become fast quite easily, become stuck in the ice. Captain Bill Johnson way of getting through these tricky situations was to drop the anchor and break the ice on the side of the ship. This particular time, they couldn't get the anchor out. The power of the ship wouldn't get it through the ice, so we all clambered over the side with pick-axes, crow-bars, shovels. Eventually got it free. We thought that was quite hilarious at the time.

[Part 2 0:01:17] Lee: Wasn't it slightly dangerous as well?

Clarke: It was really. Well, the ice was so thick that it wasn't dangerous for - as you can see there - for the people around the anchor. It was so thick, but of course the weight of the anchor took it straight though, the anchor is shaped like and so that when it came up, it got stuck.

[Part 2 0:01:37] Lee: So the arms of the anchor got stuck under the ice. It wasn't because the ice was freezing over again?

Clarke: No, no it wasn't freezing, it was just the shape of the anchor.

[Part 2 0:01:44] Lee: This was Captain Bill Johnson's bravado, was it?

Clarke: That was his ice breaking technique. [Laughter]

[Part 2 0:01:53] Lee: And I've got a note to say that you suffered from snow blindness in September '56. You're the first person I've met who remembers that, so tell me how it was.

Clarke: It was a silly episode really 'cos I either lost my glasses or didn't wear my sun protective glasses. Anyway, before I got back to the base this, like, pins and needles in my eyes like flashing, flashing lights almost. When I came out into the actual daylight, it was really dreadful. I had to close my eyes, covered up. Anyway we got back to base and Paul Massey said 'Yes, you've got snow blindness and the main treatment is to be in the dark for three days'. Which I was, I kept out of the way as much as I could. I think I was in my bed because there were curtains round each bed. That was the darkest place we could find at the time and I don't think there was any particular treatment and I don't think I've had any ill effects, as far as I know. Just normal eyesight for my age, I think.

[Part 2 0:03:13] Lee: Anyway, it was caused by the sun's reflection on the snow, was it?

Clarke: Yes, the ice crystals, the ultra-violet stuff, strong, as you can imagine.

[Part 2 0:03:23] Lee: Was it painful.

Clarke: Very painful.

[Part 2 0:03:26] Lee: In the eyes?

Clarke: Yes, painful, you couldn't bear any sort of light. The thought of light might come would have you cowering under the sheets.

[Part 2 0:03:36] Lee: Was it frightening?

Clarke: I suppose it was because I didn't know what the outcome was really. I don't know if anyone actually said anything like 'That's the end of your eyes', I don't know. But it was frightening because of the pain. We're not very good at pain, are we?

[Part 2 0:03:57] Lee: What do you mean – men?

Clarke: Men. [Laughter].

[Part 2 0:04:04] Lee: I'm surprised that you were allowed to go out without the proper goggles.

.Clarke: I'm just not sure whether I'd lost them on the trail or mislaid them because that's most unusual for anybody really who's been there for a while. You wear them most of the time because it's so bright most of the time, the reflection. Unless it was one of these whiteout days where it's like a solid wall of whiteness, but it's not particularly bright, it's more a misty colour. I don't know, but it was a bit silly. So I learned my lesson, I can tell you. I never went without them anywhere after that.

[Part 2 0:04:45] Lee: You were relieved on the fourth day to be able to see again.

Clarke: Yeah, I could stand the light and see, yeah. I had another brief illness there. I don't know what it was, nobody seems to know. Paul Massey didn't seem to know. I was just drained of energy, everything went. He said: 'You'd better get back to bed again'. But the humorous part about all this – I'd been in bed a few days, Paul and his bedside manner came and said 'I think we should change the sheets'. He said: 'Hold on, lift up one side of your body' and he gave it wrench and tore the sheet in half.[Laughter] I always remember that. It was quite hilarious.

[Part 2 0:05:34] Lee: Did you have stomach ache with this?

Clarke: Yeah, the whole system had gone. It could only have been a bug... Well, we don't get bugs down there. It could have been something I ate like seal meat or something or penguin.

[Part 2 0:05:51] Lee: Let's move then to your second, well the third spell really, but second significant spell in the Antarctic. You went back in 1960. I'm just wondering what it was that drew you back?

Clarke: Thinking about that, as you said, was all the bods staying at our cafe. [Laughter] All the Fids saying 'Why don't you come back?' or whatever, 'It's great' or 'So and so is happening' or 'So and so is there', this that and the other. I think we fell for it again. And I was particularly looking forward to going to Signy because of the bird life, the seal life, the penguins, the whole animal life.

[Part 2 0:06:39] Lee: So, did you re-apply?

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 2 0:06:42] Lee: Interviewed again?

Clarke: I can't remember these interviews.

[Part 2 0:06:48] Lee: Probably not.

Clarke: I don't think I was.

[Part 2 0:06:50] Lee: But did you specifically ask to go to Signy?

Clarke: I did because... Oh, I think we both did, Wink and I both said we'd like to go there 'cos it was less... We thought, less hazardous, less hectic. Hope Bay was like a mainline station, like Clapham Junction, so much movement going on. Signy we thought was quite a quiet little base. Well, it was quieter obviously. But the attraction of all the birdlife and the people's research and working with them, finding out little bits and pieces. That's how we got back there.

[Part 2 0:07:35] Lee: So you sailed...

Clarke: Same place, Southampton again.

[Part 2 0:07:38] Lee: ...At the end of '59?

Clarke: '59, yeah. Same sort of trip. Stopped off at Tristan da Cunha, St. Helena, Montevideo, through the 'ups and downs' again. I vowed never to go through there after the first time but I did, a couple of times. You soon forget.

[Part 2 0:08:03] Lee: What struck you being different about Signy compared to where you'd been before?

Clarke: It was a smaller base for a start. I think there was only six of us that time and it was less... We had one dog team but there was less movement to and from the hut. It was all the local environment, basically. There were rips out and about, but mostly on the island. It was easier to get about without these great, long-term preparations like at Hope Bay there was a lot of preparation for the long journeys, not only the routes but all the equipment and stuff. At Signy it was all done from the office really. You'd just pop out and take your samples, weigh the birds etc. That was quite different in that way.

[Part 2 0:09:08] Lee: Did you get a sense of the purpose of this ornithological survey that was being done, all the work that was being done?

Clarke: Yeah, I could see the ideas behind it, like migration, why they...I don't think they really still... They don't know how penguins come back to the same nests every year. We had one that came back 13 years on the trot. They were all flipper tagged or a lot of them were flipper tagged. They talk about magnetic lines of force and all sorts of stuff. I don't know where they are now but I think for birds they've got a new ionosphere tracking system for birds. I believe the stuff gets caught in their feathers from different areas of the World. The stuff is more intense there, I don't know, it's a bit complicated. But it was mostly bird ringing and when you got one from New Zealand fly in it was quite interesting. 'Gosh, somebody's doing the same sort of work' and the time factor, how long it takes. Yeah, we had so many different birds, Wilson's petrels, little tiddly ones, dance on the water; Cape pigeons, dove prions, sheathbills, the deadly skua, well the adventurous skua. They were quite good.

[0:10:34] Plus I reckon we had was over 100,000 penguins when I was... Adelies, which I believe most have disappeared, I believe, I don't know. And just a few of the other species, the gentoos and ringed penguins. I think we had two fur seals, which are now over-running the place, I believe, or they were. A small colony of leopard... Not leopard, elephant seals and always plenty of Weddell seals come up to pup round about there. So it was quite a lively place in season when all the birds and animals were there. We used to go fishing in the winter, Eskimo-style through the ice with the ice chisels and catch these lovely *Notothenia*. You've probably seen those. They've got an enormous great head with just a thin body. Used to catch about 30, pop them in the deep freeze, then we'd fillet them. Lovely. So that was quite a nice change of scenery, day out. That was just in a local bay, that was. We used to use bits of bacon, I think.

[Part 2 0:11:52] Lee: All these creatures and just six human beings for the winter?

Clarke: Yes, well not for the winter 'cos they would go off, mostly leave us for the winter. Very few, maybe the odd skua, but very few visitors in the winter. They did do survey trips across to Coronation Island. That was the big sledging trip with our team of ... I think we just had one team of odd mixture of dogs. I think I said before, they might have been left from Marguerite Bay or somewhere but they planned a trip to do some survey work. That was Roger and Paddy White and...

[Part 2 0:12:34] Lee: Roger Filer?

Clarke: Rog Filer.

[Part 2 0:12:36] Lee: Did he make the little boat?

Clarke: Yes, the kayak, yeah, and it worked. You know, it was good, just in that little bay. Yeah, he was a very gifted lad. He used to do all sorts of... Put all sorts of ideas together. That was one of them. I did encourage him to ski because he used to get quite frustrated with his

skiing. He'd sort of throw things about but once he got the hang of it, he was really good, really brilliant.

[Part 2 0:13:02] Lee: He was very keen on ornithology, I gather.

Clarke: Yes, he was. He did a lot of research on the sheathbill and quite a bit of research on the... I'm not sure, I've got his papers somewhere. He used to get these little blocks of moss, little areas of moss there, put them in his container and put a small temperature underneath it to count all the bugs that would fall out as they thawed out. I forget what that was called but that was quite interesting, different parts of the island. So he did quite a bit on that, quite a bit on the sheathbills. I think Nev Jones finished one of his papers, I believe. Never said.

[Part 2 0:13:56] Lee: What was he like as a hut-mate?

Clarke: Roger, yeah, he was a quiet lad really. To be truthful, I didn't know he had a sister. Hardly... He might have mentioned her once, I didn't know. Yeah, he used to enjoy... We used to have mid-winter parties and things, birthdays. He used to like enjoying himself like that. But he was a fairly quiet lad, he used to play the... Not trombone, the clarinet. Yeah, he was a good clarinet player.

[Part 2 0:14:31] Lee: On base?

Clarke: Yeah.

[Part 2 0:14:32] Lee: He took it with him?

Clarke: He used to get on with his own research. He used to always like to be busy, getting on with it.

[Part 2 0:14:42] Lee: Sense of humour?

Clarke: Yeah, pretty good, I think. I would say he was a quiet-ish person, like myself maybe but struck up a good friendship with him through... Perhaps the skiing lessons. But we used to get on well together, go about together a bit, do stuff, chat a bit.

[Part 2 0:15:07] Lee: Let's talk about this tragedy then on the 13th of February in 1961 when he went out and didn't return. What are your memories of that day?

Clarke: He had this particular area where he was working on the sheathbills, on these ledges. I don't know how high, must have been 40, 60 feet, I can't remember, on the sea edge and he would go out every day, if the weather was reasonable. It was maybe half an hour walk, I think, or ski but it was in the summer, fairly snow free, mainly rocky. He didn't come back for tea on that particular day. Tea was fairly set, say six p.m., I don't know the time. We thought that's funny, so we waited a while longer because we thought maybe he's got involved in a bit extra, whatever. After about an hour we got quite concerned, I suppose. So we all gathered ourselves together and thought we better go and look because it would be dark soon.

[Part 2 0:16:22] Lee: Did you consider that he might have gone somewhere else?

Clarke: No, 'cos that was his specific... I mean when we left for the day or half day, I suppose half day, we'd say we were going to do A, B and C and we'd be back from there. It didn't actually cross my mind. We just went out with torches, what we had 'cos it was getting quite dark. Really for everybody's safety, just for finding a way from A to B.

[Part 2 0:16:52] Lee: What was in your mind at that time? Were you worried?

Clarke: Well, it's strange really because you don't think of those things, you don't think the worst. I don't think we ever did initially. You think, well, you know, he's a good climber, he's good with his balance and everything. Anyway, we looked and looked with the torches. Of course, it was dangerous for everybody then, it was pitch black, the rocks were quite sheer and slippery. You couldn't see anything really 'cos the sea was bashing over the rocks at the bottom. So after an hour or two, I suppose, we decided to come back and get at very first light get all the gear we want, thinking about rescuing now if he's gone somewhere or stuck. Obviously we were shouting out his name and all that stuff. Then you start to think the worst, you think 'Gosh, I wonder if he's slipped or whatever'.

[0:18:07] We found him the next day eventually , in the daylight. Ron Pinder went down with a blanket, wrapped it round him, covered him up. We tied ropes, he was right down the bottom of this cliff edge and then we pulled him up and the rest we had to go through all the procedures, informing Port Stanley. I suggested we do make a burial mound 'cos you couldn't do any digging or anything because it was quite solid. Of course, that really blew everybody apart 'cos you couldn't go anywhere. There were no ships due for ages, for months and months and you're stuck with the thought of... Of course then you think 'Should we have done this, done that, was this all the things?'. We really worked out, we thought, 'cos we found his glasses in a different place, maybe they'd blown off or he'd knocked them off or something 'cos he wasn't very good with his sight. That was one of our theories.

[Part 2 0:19:23] Lee: What were the injuries?

Clarke: I didn't see them. I think it was facial, I think. Ron was the only one who saw him, Ron Pinder. Yeah, it was a bit horrendous. But, as I say, he was really well wrapped up in this blanket.

[Part 2 0:19:44] Lee: So you never saw the body, then?

Clarke: No. Saw the outline but not the... But eventually the first ship to come was the HMS *Protector* . It had a padre on board.

[Part 2 0:20:00] Lee: Sorry, did you find a way of burying him?

Clarke: No, we didn't. It was really... When they came, when HMS *Protector* came to do the burial service, they encouraged us to build a big cairn mound, sort of surface burial. I think they brought a cross, I'm not sure. They cross was made anyway in Port Stanley. I think

somebody who's been there recently has taken photographs to send to Anne and I. I still can't remember if it's a proper burial place, to be truthful.

[Part 2 0:20:41] Lee: So you had several months of waiting for the ship and Roger's body being on the surface.

Clarke: Yeah. Well, covered obviously.

[Part 2 0:13:02] Lee: I guess there were no birds around, so...

Clarke: No. When I say covered, it was absolutely covered with slabs of rock.

[Part 2 0:21:03] Lee: But you made the cairn before the ship arrived?

Clarke: Yeah, we made the cairn but not as good as they suggested. I think that was the idea. Well, we didn't know what they were going to do, the pastor, padre, whatever they call it. Of course we went right into depression, really, 'cos the first think you think of is the family at home. All the backwards and forth questions which don't always get very far, I must admit. I think the hardest thing was to deal with ourselves because I was quite angry really. I was angry with God about it and I blamed him for that tragedy for many years. When I came home I met Anne, we got married within about a year, I think. Anne came from a Christian home and I was always arguing about blaming God. She was always saying 'No, it isn't that way'. Actually, when you're down there on the base with the tragedy sitting on top of you as it were, you try drinking - that doesn't do anything. We didn't do much of that but you think 'Oh dear' because you can't get away from it, can you, you've got to sort it out. Anyway, I have done years later, so has Anne as well.

[Part 2 0:22:45] Lee: There was no work to distract you then, really?

Clarke: Only my diesel work, well the other programmes had to keep going, I guess. What date was it?

[Part 2 0:23:01] Lee: February, early February, mid-February.

Clarke: If there were programmes, they did go on obviously. They didn't stop. They obviously stopped for a few days. We discussed things together 'cos I think Russ Thomson was Base Leader then, I think.

[Part 2 0:23:25] Lee: Was there any discussion about whether it could have been prevented or whether it could have been prevented from happening again?

Clarke: I think the only conclusion we came to there was to have two people together. I don't know whether that has been put in practice, I doubt if it has. I don't know. The actual area where they were nesting on these rock ledges on the cliff edge, there was plenty of safe walking. You didn't have to hang over the edge and stuff but I don't know whether he'd lost his glasses or something, Chris, or whether he'd slipped.

[Part 2 0:24:10] Lee: So it wasn't the sort of territory where you'd automatically rope up with somebody else then?

Clarke: No.

[Part 2 0:24:16] Lee: It wasn't that difficult.

Clarke: No, I don't think he could do his work. He used to weigh the birds there, take his own weighing bag, weigh them.

[Part 2 0:24:31] Lee: How did the base regain its equilibrium, or didn't it?

Clarke: I don't think it did really, not until the boat came in when you had new faces, new input and all the stuff from Stanley and London was sorted out, what the procedure is and all this because there was so much information going backwards and forwards, you were never sure what was going on. But I think that was the time it was sorted out. I mean it took some people longer than others. It took me quite a while because I was quite close to Roger and you think it's so unfair. You know, all these thoughts go round about and when you're in a small community, things get distorted quite a bit, don't they, things get enlarged and you almost start feeling guilty, blaming yourself, which isn't right.

[Part 2 0:25:35] Lee: Blaming yourself for the fact that you're still alive, you mean?

Clarke: Yeah.

[Part 2 0:25:38] Lee: Because there's nothing anyone could do, I guess.

Clarke: No.

[Part 2 0:25:43] Lee: Did you get the sense that he died more or less straightaway?

Clarke: Yes, I would say ... well...

[Part 2 0:25:51] Lee: He wasn't answering when you called, was he?

Clarke: No and I think where we found him at the bottom of this cliff face – I don't know, say 50 foot, I don't know the exact height – and the tide was crashing in, I don't know, perhaps he was still there.

[Part 2 0:26:17] Lee: Was there any kind of inquest that you remember?

Clarke: Not to my knowledge.

[Part 2 0:26:21] Lee: The ship's captain simply conducted a service.

Clarke: Yes, as far as I know, Chris, yeah.

[Part 2 0:26:28] Lee: Did you sing hymns?

Clarke: Probably, I can't remember that even. Anyway, he did the formal burial service. Of course then you get more of a relief, you get caught up in everything else but you still, deep down, you still... Particularly when I went to see Anne's parents, that was pretty tough.

[Part 2 0:26:55] Lee: Now that visit to Roger's family, was that your own idea or was that something that FIDS requested?

Clarke: No, no, my own...I think several Fids went there, several of the base...

[Part 2 0:27:08] Lee: Where was his family living?

Clarke: South Wales, so Russ and Nev knew him quite well 'cos they were both from South Wales or Wales.

[Part 2 0:27:18] Lee: Yes, they went to see them too.

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 2 0:27:20] Lee: But not at the same time as you.

Clarke: No. That was my... I just felt this responsibility or guilt. You think, well, I knew they would be cut to pieces. Well they were, and strangely enough they came to live with us after a few years, with Anne and I when we moved down to...

[Part 2 0:27:47] Lee: Yep. I'll come to that in a moment, let's just keep it in sequence. So, you went that day to see the Filer family, really?

Clarke: Yes.

[Part 2 0:27:57] Lee: I presume that was a difficult day.

Clarke: Yeah, it was difficult. I didn't know what to expect. You think they could be angry, they could be all sorts but they were such gentle, lovely people. Christian people they were. They were holding themselves together. Looking back now you can see that it was all in there but it really needed to be released, to help them forward but...

[Part 2 0:28:31] Lee: Do you think you were going as a kind of a counsellor? I know you did counselling work much later in life.

Clarke: No, I didn't know anything about counselling.

[Part 2 0:28:39] Lee: I meant naturally rather than...

Clarke: Naturally. Well, I thought maybe it would help a bit. I don't know how that works but [I was] somebody who he'd mentioned in his letters, apparently, to his parents and Anne about my bits and pieces. I thought, well, there is a contact there. I thought if I could just do something, just be there.

[Part 2 0:29:04] Lee: You hear some of the stories from the wartime trenches, don't you, where somebody dies in the battlefield, his mates will go and see the parents. It's the same kind of experience, I would imagine, and people want to do it and it's a good thing to do.

Clarke: Yeah. Yeah, you feel there's something there, some sort of...

[Part 2 0:29:28] Lee: Connection.

Clarke: Connection, yeah. I almost felt part of the family, strangely enough. This was 'way before I knew Anne.

[Part 2 0:29:37] Lee: So you met Anne who's been bringing us tea and coffee whose maiden name was Filer, she was Roger's ...

Clarke: Sister.

[Part 2 0:29:43] Lee: Younger sister?

Clarke: Only one sister.

[Part 2 0:29:46] Lee: Just a sister. She's younger than Roger?

Clarke: Yes, she is, yes.

[Part 2 0:29:52] Lee: So, do you want to talk about that? How did that relationship flourish?

Clarke: Well that was amazing really. This young lady came... She'd just finished her last University exam, her degree in Botany I think she was doing. All unknown to me, but she rolled up during the day, she was coming home that day. I didn't know this. Well, maybe she made an effort because I was coming. That was strange, it was some sort of sparkle, I don't know what it was – a connection, as you just said. Quite quickly we started going out together. I said I'll come back and see you again in a...I think I had to go back at that time, back to my home in Surrey. I said I'd like to come and see you next week or whatever and it just grew from there, very quickly because of Roger, I suppose a lot of it I could relate, tell them bits and pieces of the good parts. But her interest in the Antarctic and her scientific interest and all that stuff...That was it really. After about a year we got married, decided to get married and we had a family, two young lads, 45 and 43, grandchildren.

[Part 2 0:31:25] Lee: I know you have a faith and you're still connected with the church today. Did you get any sense, or even looking back at it, that someone was pulling some strings?

Clarke: Yeah, there is a verse in the Bible somewhere that God will always brings good out of difficult situations, something like that and I think this is a demonstration of Him turning the bad into a good situation. It is amazing, you know.

[Part 2 0:31:52] Lee: So, it was it the Almighty doing it, not Roger! [Laughter]

Clarke: Yeah, must have been, he looked kindly upon us and it's been a good journey ever since, 47 years now.

[Part 2 0:32:10] Lee: You then went to Cambridge to do animal research, didn't you, when you finally got back from the Antarctic?

Clarke: Yes, I did this five-year diploma before that, 'cos I wanted to get into animal husbandry work but I needed to get this qualification. I was 32 or something, you know, quite elderly to start struggling with that. Anyway, I persevered and at the end of five years I got my piece of paper. First of all I went to Huntingdon Research Centre which you've probably heard about recently. That was before the hooligans used to strike. I worked through my diploma there while I was five years in Huntingdon and, lo and behold, this job at Cambridge University popped up and I thought, gosh, that's a good move of salary and conditions and all that stuff. I thought I'd stick my neck out and apply for that. Anyway, I got that job. Some sort of fluke, well, I don't know, perhaps I was OK. And that was another experience and a half.

[0:33:24] I was there for 25 years working with these Doctors and Professors, trying to keep them at one another's throats quite a lot of the time. But really supplying their research needs, bits and pieces, animals, research projects. Working alongside some of them doing research. That was quite interesting. I learned quite a lot there. I got to know the systems. We had a little farm just outside Cambridge where we used to keep a lot of animals. I used to run that as well, so that was a new adventure for me. [Laughter] There was some quite hair-raising stories there.

[0:34:05] We had a rather big ram, Welsh ram, and all the ladies were outside in a field and he was locked in his shed. The door must have been three inches thick oak, but he kept ramming the door. Anyway, eventually he got through, smashed his way out then ran down the road to Cambridge and he saw his face in the car showroom window. He said 'There's a bit of opposition here', then ran for it and went straight through the window. [Laughter] That was my first day of my step-up in charge of this farm.

[Part 2 0:34:37] Lee: So you got a phone call from the car showroom, did you?

Clarke: Yes, £200 please. This was a long time ago, of course. What, thousands now, wouldn't it? Fortunately he didn't damage the cars.

[Part 2 0:34:47] Lee: Himself?

Clarke: No, he got into the centre of Cambridge and I thought this is dreadful because children he might knock over. Anyway, the word got out and I think it was about six rugby players jumped on him and held him down while we came in the van and collected him up.

[Part 2 0:35:03] Lee: What year was that, Derek?

Clarke: That was about 1975 or something like that. Yeah, 'way back. That was a quite challenging time. I'd just taken this upgrade. I didn't want to do it at the time. Anyway, they talked me into it. This was the first day. [Laughter]

[Part 2 0:35:29] Lee: None of this would have happened, of course, this career wouldn't have happened if you hadn't been in the Antarctic.

Clarke: No, it's amazing, isn't it, how your life is turned round by your marriage. That wasn't a very good turning round but, you know, it's amazing how things work out. Yes, it helped me in my career, so I got two careers really, the electrical career and the animal husbandry career. At the University the electrical area was quite useful 'cos they were always making these crazy gadgets, bits of electrical stuff and goodness knows what. So, that was quite helpful as well.

[Part 2 0:36:11] Lee: So, at the end of your 25 years studying animal husbandry at Cambridge University, what sort of conclusions...What sort of research results did you have?

Clarke: Well I wasn't in charge of research.

[Part 2 0:34:37] Lee: You were the assistant to the scientists, weren't you?

Clarke: Yeah. My main job was to run the staff who supplied the Doctors, the Professors with their needs. You would have animals in different stages of pregnancy or whatever. They had some really good breakthroughs with diabetes, something to do with the pancreas. What was that one, I've forgot that one. Oh, lots and lots of childbirth work. They were using little lambs for that and there was something to do with an amazing blood change just before childbirth. They were trying to work out what this was and they seem to have sorted that out. There was a lot of high-powered stuff, I couldn't understand a lot of it but I was mainly providing them with their needs and helping where I could. Do the post-mortems and stuff which I learned down South, cutting up seals.

[Part 2 0:37:29] Lee: I ask most Fids this question, and it may be different for you because of how it ended, but you did five years in the Antarctic which is twice as long as the average Fid. So how significant a period of your life was that, looking back now?

Clarke: As we've just said, very, because it changed my attitude.

[Part 2 0:37:51] Lee: How did it change your attitude?

Clarke: Well, I was perhaps a bit selfish, maybe. It changed my attitude to all sort of things, like life really, that's the biggest one with losing dear Roger. I don't suppose I was a bad chap, just an ordinary bod, doing the ordinary bad things occasionally but I think sharing with one another and able to relate to people more. I'm going back, getting into counselling now. That was all because of living on base, really, with people. It all sorts of ties in.

[Part 2 0:38:44] Lee: You said at the very beginning, you said you were a late developer. Was it a good place to do some catching up?

Clarke: Cambridge?

[Part 2 0:38:52] Lee: No, the Antarctic.

Clarke: Oh, the Antarctic. Yes, I really grew there. It really opened my eyes, all these research projects. You were thrown straight into it. Obviously, if you go out on a sledging trip with a geologist or a glaciologist, you got to learn something, haven't you? Otherwise, you can't be there, you're drawn to it all the time. I still love weather forecasting, you know, love the weather. The boys, our children, think I'm a bit crackers. I love weather and I wish I knew a little bit more about geology, that was interesting, when they find these amazing specimens. I mean [at] Hope Bay you could just pick them up off the ground, these big fern leaves in the rocks. I used to learn a bit from Russ Thomson, he was a glaciologist. Nev Jones, I think he was a botanist. Among many other things he's a Professor now, I don't think he's left yet.

[Part 2 0:39:52] Lee: Were you... I know you're deeply involved in the church these days, both yours and Anne, as counsellors. Up until about five years ago, is that right?

Clarke: Yes, we stopped that five years ago.

[Part 2 0:40:03] Lee: When you retired then. Did you have the same Christian conviction in your twenties in the Antarctic?

Clarke: Well, I wouldn't say I knew about it then. I was always aware of the beauty of things, the animals and everything, how it all sort of came together but, until I became Christian, I didn't work other areas out of my life because I had this amazing encounter with the Holy Spirit which probably sounds a bit mumbo-jumbo.

[Part 2 0:40:42] Lee: No, please, please tell me

Clarke: I joined the church in a little village outside of Cambridge, Oakington it was called. I could stand churches. It thought they were dreadful, fuddy duddy old things. Anyway, Anne went to this church, because she was desperate to find a church and she came back and she said: 'Gosh, they're all happy and they speak to you and they encourage you. Anyway, eventually I went and I was amazed. They had a band there. It was an amazing sort of thing from my viewpoint of churches and everybody was kind and friendly and everything without going over the top. Anyway, they used to go to Saturday night meetings. They said to Anne 'Would you like to come?' They had this speaker from wherever, travelling speakers, and I went two or three Saturdays and these people were doing all sorts of things, falling about. It was a bit weird and I'll never go up the front there to get any of that stuff.

[0:41:50] Anyway, Anne went up and had a prayer for a backache. I don't know how, but suddenly I found myself with her up the front and this chap was praying with me and he said, I can just vaguely remember him saying: 'Dear Holy Spirit, fill this person with your love' or 'healing'. Whatever it was, and all of a sudden there was this I can only describe it as this heat from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. And I... Well, I'm shaking a bit now, but my body was shaking and perspiring. Oh, first of all he said: 'Would you put your hands up,

just hold your hands up'. My hands went up automatically and I just felt overwhelmed, that's the only word I could use. I could hear Anne was crying beside me with happiness apparently, she said afterwards. When it had all calmed down I felt like I was really drunk, I could hardly stand. I was wobbling all over the place. I said to the dear ladies I'd brought in the car: 'I don't think I could drive. They said: 'You'll be alright'. Anyway, we got home OK.

[0:43:18] That was the beginning of it all really, beginning of the end or the end of the beginning. [Laughter] Slowly but surely we got into counselling and we came up to Lancaster to a place called Ellel Grange. They do in-depth counselling, specific problems, the whole lot, all the abusive stuff, everything, the nasty stuff. So we worked there for 14 years, I think seeing all this horrendous stuff but how the Lord can change things around. That's basically that bit.

[Part 2 0:43:51] Lee: Thank you for telling me that. One of the Fids said to me, who also had a Christian conviction all the time, including when he was in the Antarctic, he said to me: 'If God wanted to live on earth, he'd live here in the Antarctic'. Can you see his point?

Clarke: Yes. I could see that, yeah, it's an amazing place. It's sort of near perfection, isn't it really, when you think about the tainting of the environment, all this stuff we do but there it's... I know there are areas which are getting a bit tainted but it's as near perfect as you could imagine heaven being, heaven.

[Part 2 0:44:28] Lee: It's pristine

Clarke: Pristine, yeah. Yeah I think everything's so... Yeah, maybe that's it

[Part 2 0:44:39] Lee: You never wanted to go back?

Clarke: No, I think it was after Roger's death really, Chris, I thought I can't face any more of that if that ever happens. It really turned me around. By then we were soon married and that changes everything, doesn't it, you can't sort of just charge off. So we just had a busy time.

[Part 2 0:45:06] Lee: And have you ever been tempted to go to a reunion?

Clarke: I went to one when Joe Lewis was there. This was about 20 years ago, I think. This chap who's organising the tapes, I've forgotten his name.

[Part 2 0:45:20] Lee: Allan Wearden.

Clarke: Allan Wearden, he was there but I wouldn't know him if I saw him now. No, I don't really particularly when we were at Ellel Grange, ministering, counselling. It's too hectic, you didn't have a moment spare. When I was at the University, when I was at Cambridge, not far from BAS, I went to Scott Polar to see Wally Herbert, once. He was doing a lecture tour. That was quite intensive there.

[Part 2 0:45:54] Lee: That was difficult for you?

Clarke: Yeah.

[Part 2 0:45:57] Lee: You're shaking your head, so...

Clarke: I couldn't...Well, I just needed somewhere quiet, I couldn't face people after a while. No, so I've never really been, Chris.

[Part 2 0:46:09] Lee: So in some respects the passing of Roger in such a tragic way closed the door on the Antarctic.

Clarke: It did, really. I keep in contact with Ron Pinder. We used to live fairly nearby in Cambridge, he's still there. I write to Wink every year. I send Allan Precious a card occasionally. Yeah, so I've not really been to these. I'm not really very good at these big groups. [Laughter] Well it's a funny thing to say, isn't it? I'm just fairly quiet. We like our own company, I suppose, a bit selfish. If you're working with counselling people, you need a bit space, that's the other thing. But that's stopped now, we're just helping the church really, which is great.

[Part 2 0:47:03] Lee: Well, I've enjoyed your company for the last couple of hours. So, Derek, thank you very much indeed.

Clarke: OK. Thank you, Chris, pleasure.

- **[0:00:30] Using the *Biscoe's* anchor to break through the sea-ice.**
- **[0:02:20] Experience of snow blindness.**
- **[0:15:07] Loss of colleague and friend, Roger Filer.**
- **[0:29:52] Derek and Roger's sister meet and eventually marry.**
- **[0:34:05] Derek's Welsh ram smashes into car showroom in centre of Cambridge.**
- **[0:40:40] Encounter with the Holy Spirit.**