

DAVID HILL

Edited transcript of a recording of David Hill interviewed by Jaap Verdenius on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1993. BAS Archives AD6/24/3/21. Transcribed by Andy Smith, 30th December 2014.

[0:00:00] Hill: Do you want to see what slides I've got, or what do you want to do? Or do you want to just ... What did I ...? I had a bit of paper just now, with some notes on.

[0:00:12] Verdenius: Um, we are planning to write out some anecdotes but I didn't ask if you had a diary at the time. Did you take some note?

Hill: No. All I've done is ... I did have a diary at one stage but I don't know where that's gone. I've written down here some little stories I can remember that might be of some use to you, so I don't know whether you want me to elaborate on some of the stories.

[0:00:46] Verdenius: It's got to ... because you wrote a lot. If you go through the stories, then I have got my questions and things open, which I want to touch. I have got it in my mind. If you go through the stories that you have, ??? [inaudible].

Hill: OK, well shall I just tell you they are not in any sequence at all, so they are all out of sequence. I will tell you a nice story about ... We had a geologist from America, that came down collecting rock samples and different bits and pieces for his students back in America, and on the BAS ships we have what we call a 'King Fid'. Now the word Fid comes from the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, which it used to be called before it was the British Antarctic Survey. So the new members coming down were called Fids, and on the main mess deck that the Fids are on, you have a King Fid; he is the man that is in charge. So we had this geologist on board for quite a long time and he got on very well with the lads, and he was doing the final trip on the *Biscoe* back up to Punta Arenas and we thought it would be a nice idea if we could make him King Fid just for the short duration because he really thought he was in with the lads and they all liked him.

[0:02:24] Hill: So I approached the captain and said could we make LeRoy Sharon (which was the man's name) King Fid. The captain thought for a moment and said 'Well we can't make him King Fid because they haven't got kings in America, but we could make him President King Fid, would that suit the bill?' So we duly made LeRoy President King Fid. Of course he was living in the wardroom and we were living on our own mess deck. He came down one evening, saw the oranges we had that weren't in very good condition and he said 'Is this the level of the food you have down here?' We said 'Oh yes, this is normal.' 'Oh, we are not having that.' So because he had this authority, he went and complained to the Chief Steward, and from that time on our food improved. So we thought that was a good move. But that's just one of the stories.

[0:03:21] Verdenius: Which base was this?

Hill: He travelled round. Well he was at ... He went right down to Signy, South Georgia, and he came down to Adelaide just collecting samples of rock for his students to work up. So that's where he fits in. It's a long time ago now.

[0:03:50] Verdenius: Was it usual for the Americans to go along on a British ...?

Hill: What you had, you used to have exchange scientists and we have had a Russian on board. I think we had an Argentinian once, and you do get exchanges. And if a particular scientist has some work to do, and if there is room on the ship on so on, or if it's possibly interlinking with some of the work that we're doing, there's overlaps and so on, it's quite usual for scientists to do an exchange, and one of our people may go on an American ship or something. So it's not unusual to have somebody from another country with a speciality: geologist or biologist or whatever it might be.

[0:04:39] Verdenius: Can you confirm Argentinian or Chilean?

Hill: We did have an Argentinian down yes, at one stage. This was probably before the Conflict.

[0:04:50] Verdenius: How were the contacts between English and Argentinians on the base?

Hill: Oh no problem. I mean at Deception Island we had our own base, we had a Chilean base and an Argentinian base before Deception erupted. It erupted twice in two years. We pulled out and so did the Argentinians and the Chileans. But the relationship was not a problem. I think in the Antarctic that people are people; they haven't any politicking to do; they get on with their science, and I think this is where the Antarctic is a place where people are people and get on as people rather than as countries or a particular persuasion of politics or whatever it might be. So that's the nice thing about the Antarctic: a friendly place. Do you want me to go through any others?

[0:05:54] Verdenius: Yes.

Hill: There's another little story. When I was at Adelaide, which in fact we now have sold the base to ... The Chileans have old Adelaide and there is a little island just across from the station at Adelaide called Avian Island. We were doing a programme with a doctor on the common cold. The dogs were given a virus and we were trying to catch a cold from the huskies. Because we needed somebody as a control, so they weren't affected by any bugs that might be around, we asked four people if they would go to this little island and stay there for a fortnight or so, and camp and so on. The sea ice was frozen at the time and they went across to this island and camped. Unfortunately we had a very bad storm and the sea ice had got broken up and chossed up so you could neither get across on a sledge because it was too broken and you couldn't get across in a boat because there wasn't enough open water. So we were in radio contact and these people were getting pretty desperate.

[0:07:13] Hill: We had a motor mechanic that looked after the generators; he had gone over there for a bit of a break but he was a very strong smoker. We got on the radio one night and we said 'How is Barry?' and they said 'He is very desperate.' We said

‘Why is he desperate?’ ‘Well he has run out of fags.’ We said ‘Well what’s he doing?’ and he said ‘At this moment he had got some tobacco and he has got some toilet paper and he is rolling it together and he is grasping it with both hands and he is trying to smoke it.’ So we were getting a bit worried and the weather didn’t improve but at that particular moment the penguins were migrating across the base, across all this chossed up ice, across to the island.

[0:08:07] Hill: So we duly caught an Adelie penguin (that it didn’t like very much) and we got a 50-cigarette tin, cigarettes inside a sealed tin, and we made a harness up and tied this cigarette tin to the back of the penguin. We told them to watch when the penguins came onto the island, because there were just two entrances onto the island where they came out of the water onto the island. They watched and watched and watched and never did find the penguin. So eventually we got them back and some months later, when the sea ice had gone out, we went across to count the nests over there, and the penguins, and we actually found a penguin sitting on the nest with the time still tied to its back. So the cigarettes did get there but the man didn’t get the cigarettes. So that’s another little story. Do you want me to carry on?

[0:09:05] Verdenius: What a penguin!

Hill: Yes, what a penguin! So in fact the tin came back and we had it duly on the shelf behind the bar, with a little story attached to it.

[0:09:14] Verdenius: Did any people ever stop smoking?

Hill: Yes, I did. I used to smoke. I wasn’t a heavy smoker. I suppose I was really a social smoker but I worked with a man that stopped every five minutes (it seemed) to have a cigarette. I said one day ‘Well this is ridiculous; this is just a habit.’ One of the radio operators at that time and myself, said we would support one another and give up. So we gave up and I haven’t smoked since 1967, and yet we had free cigarettes in those days, and free tobacco, which they don’t have now, so you could have as many cigarettes as you wanted and as much tobacco as you wanted. But they no longer supply them with that now.

[0:10:00] Verdenius: All this fresh air.

Hill: That’s right. Do you want me to give you another story? OK. Well there was a time at Halley Bay in 1967, ‘66/’67 season, whereby we were building a new station. They called it ‘Grillage Village’ because it was laid on a grillage mat and built. And we still had the old base and probably you have heard about the base that was 70 or 80 foot down in the ice, which was the old IGY building, which was the original building that was put down there when Halley Bay started. So we had the old base and we had the new base we were building. Of course the old base had all the cookers down there. It had all the film down there, it had all the booze down there, and we were living very sparsely because we were building the new station. So each week we used to go down for the weekly film and the fresh food, as fresh as one could have it in that situation.

[0:11:15] Hill: So one week we went down and the first time I had gone down there they laid the tables and there was no tablecloth (it was just a top) and the first thing

you were given was a hot mug of tea and the cutlery was metal handled cutlery. What they used to do was: before you could eat your food, you would drop the handles of your cutlery in the tea to warm up the handles so they didn't freeze to your fingers, and then you had your food. And this particular evening, we were in the lounge and one has got to remember that this building was collapsing and there was a hole right up to the surface, so it was open with just bits of wood across and sacks and polythene and so on. The first time I was in there, a chap gave me a beer can and a beer. I said 'Thank you very much.' Then he said to me 'You must hang on to your beer mug.' and I thought 'Oh I am going to get another beer.'

[0:12:19] Hill: But that wasn't for the beer because when the people came in, more people came into the lounge, because it was ice above us and not a ceiling, it started to melt, and of course it would drip everywhere. So you had to catch the drips in your mug and deposit in a hole in the ground. We also had string and tin cans that were put on end to make a guttering system, and the strings that came down to go through the floor, because the water would come along the guttering, the string would act as a down pipe and it would run on the outside of the string and go through the floor. We were getting a bit fed up with this and this one particular day it was -25 degrees in the lounge and the film they tried to have was actually going over sprockets almost one frame at a time.

[0:13:05] Hill: Somebody mixed up some ... We used to get a rum issue then, an old Naval tradition, because the Survey started as a Naval thing initially. So they mixed up some orange to go with the rum and with hot water, but no sooner had they put three or four tots out, turned round and the orange was just like an ice lolly. It was solid. So -25, sitting in the lounge, was not our idea of a luxurious evening. So after that, we didn't go down; we stayed up at the new base and then eventually, as the accommodation was built, the old base moved up to us. The films came up to us and so on, and then we did the swap-over. But for a whole year we had two bases really running: the new one and the old one. So that was another little story. -25 in the lounge is not to be recommended.

[0:14:04] Verdenius: May I put on the lights. because ...?

Hill: Yes.

[0:14:08] Verdenius: [Pause while he switches lights on] It was a Saturday night?

Hill: That was a Saturday night. Most Saturday nights used to be the night you maybe had a bit of a wash and tidied up, but it was the night you had (in those days) fresh meat. We only had fresh meat once a week, and the cooks put on a little bit extra, made a nice meal for the evening, you know, and we made an evening of it with a film or whatever. So that was the sort of the highlight of the week.

[0:14:40] Verdenius: What kind of films did you get?

Hill: We used to have the big, 16mm, large canisters and what we used to do: we were allowed to take so many down and it was really Halley Bay at that stage was the only base that had films, and of course because they were out of the country for a year or more, you didn't get a very good selection. But we used to have all sorts of films. We

used to have a lot of documentary films that were actually donated by people like BP or whatever. Those were kept; we were allowed to have those and keep them. Then the other films would come back on the ship at the end of the year. But we had a lot of the old films, I can't really remember half the names. *Top Copy* was one. What was that one called? No I don't think I have got the right name. Anyway we had lots of the old films. *How to Murder your Wife* stands out in my memory. That was a Jack Lemon film which was quite fun, and of course from the film, people got catch-phrases, and of course you used these phrases around the base for the rest of the year. So people got fun from that, and of course we used to have great fun by mixing reels of different films up and sometimes running films backwards was quite fun. So that was just having a bit of fun on a Saturday night.

[0:16:05] Verdenius: What other kinds of information things did get through?

Hill: What, documentary type films?

[0:16:14] Verdenius: No, I mean did you get any news?

Hill: No, because the ... It was just full length films because obviously news wouldn't have been a lot of good. It would have all been out of date. But most of them were just full length films: two or three reels or whatever it might be.

[0:16:33] Verdenius: Did any newspapers reach the bases?

Hill: No. Halley Bay, once the ship leaves, then there is no normal contact until the following year. So once the ship went, that was it. You were on your own. I can't speak for the modern days, whether they get an odd aircraft in there during the winter now. I don't know; I suspect not. But Halley Bay was the most isolated of all the stations, because the ship came in when it could get in through the Weddell Sea, and then it discharged its cargo, changed over the crew and the base members, and came out. The other bases: you might see one of the ships two or three times in a season until it finally goes North to come back to England. But Halley Bay is not like that. They have had ships in for longer periods, when they have had big building programmes. The ship might have to stay there for two or three weeks, acting as a hotel and so on, for the number of people that you would require for a big building operation. But normally the ship came in, discharged the cargo and then went.

[0:17:39] Verdenius: Does this mean that for this period between the two ships you didn't hear anything from the outside world?

Hill: Yes, I mean you had radio contact of course, and in those days initially you used to have to send everything out Morse key, and then in '66/'67 we had teleprinters which was a real invention, and now of course they have got faxes and they can beam stuff up to satellites now. So the communications now is far far in excess of what we ever knew. We were allowed, when I was there, 100 words out a month and you received 200 words in from your family. That's all you were allowed because the time with the transmitters and the equipment they had in those days was very limited and you needed the equipment to use for all the scientific traffic that they needed, as opposed to personal traffic. So we were reasonably isolated in that we never got letters or whatever, but having just 200 words in from relations and friends was all

right but it was very brief. It was like writing a telegram. It was just one-liners, but I understand now that they can pick up a telephone now and get a link back up via a satellite back home. I've never done that because it wasn't there, but there was always a facility ...

[0:19:13] Hill: On the ships you could book a call back to Portishead in England and that would link up with the telephone network in England and you could do that once you were on the ships, either going down or coming back. But I have never used that facility, and I always found that in an emergency my wife and I said we would use it, but I have seen a lot of people go on the ship-to-shore telephone, talk to their relations and find there is a problem at home, can't do anything about it because they are 7000, 10000 miles away, and be very upset by it. So I don't know, it's very difficult to say whether it would suit you or not. I don't think it would suit me. I would rather say I am there doing a job and not have the worries at home, unless you really needed to talk to somebody. Do you want another story?

[0:20:11] Verdenius: Yes.

Hill: Oh dear, right. What shall I give you now? I will give you a story from Halley Bay again. When we were building the station there, we had to build a toilet facility, obviously, and we dug a hole 26 feet deep and about 10 ft square. We were a bit naive to think that one could melt the ice and make it deeper. So we had put all this timber down and old fuel oil and so on, and tried to set light to it. Of course the ignition of the stuff when it got flammable actually sent a wall of fire, a ball of fire straight out of the hole and almost singed people who were looking over the edge. But eventually we built a building over it and we had two compartments: one with a wooden seat and one with a plastic seat, and by far the most popular seat was the wooden seat.

[0:21:21] Hill: Now the reason I say that is because one night somebody was a little bit ill and was sick and lost their false teeth down the toilet. So one of our climbers volunteered to go down to rescue these teeth and when he got down there of course, all the waste products from us humans was frozen and was in a large mound pointing up, like a pinnacle, and he deemed and called it a 'turdicle'. So when he got down there he had the honour of smashing this turdicle, and it all froze and it just fell to bits. So we reckoned that if you are going to have a seat at all, a toilet seat, a wooden seat is probably the answer down in the Antarctic, rather than a plastic seat. So that's another one. It's a bit rude that one, isn't it?

[0:22:13] Verdenius: ??? [inaudible]

Hill: A turdicle. I think it is quite ... It was just absolutely frozen like a pyramid, because of course you are sitting there. It just froze. That was it. What can I give you? Shall I give you a cat story? Do you want a cat story?

[0:22:37] Verdenius: Cat story?

Hill: Cat story. We used to, at one stage ... I know it is totally banned now with animals and in fact dogs have been taken out of the Antarctic now, but at one stage Halley Bay, certainly, has had several cats over the years, but it had a cat there that used to, because the base was under the ice at that time, and thirty or forty foot deep,

this cat used to climb up the ladder but they were so frightened that it would get snow blindness that they made it some little goggles so that it could peer out at the top of the shaft. But it was quite strange to actually be sitting in the lounge; the first time I sat in the lounge there, something jumped up on me which frightened me to death, almost. And it was a cat and I never thought I would ever see a cat again until I got back home, but there have been several cats over the years.

[0:23:29] Hill: They used to be looked after quite well, but one cat – I think she was called Kista, after the *Kista Dan*, a Danish ship that we used to lease each year, and Cosmo who was named after Cosmo Haskard that was an ex-Governor of the Falkland Islands. Kista, the female cat, was deaf and Cosmo was not inclined to sex at all. So we trained Cosmo by pulling bits of fluffy sheep's-wool along the floor to get him in the idea of how he could perhaps have some sex with the female. We had been training him for weeks on this and he was getting the idea, and when he was eventually behind the female cat, Kista, he made a charge for her and because she was deaf, she was so surprised, she turned round and slashed his face with her claws. So I think that put him off sex for life. Well that's just a little cat story that I remember.

[0:24:42] Verdenius: ??? [inaudible]

Hill: That's right.

[0:24:47] Verdenius: Did you, at the time that you were there, whether ... Did you experience the introduction of women on the base in the Antarctic?

Hill: No. During my period there were no women. The only women we had seen were probably women that were on the Russian ships that used to come in to South Georgia. There were several research ships came in there, or in point of fact any of the tankers, and of course there was (and probably is) a big fishing fleet that used to fish in the waters off South Georgia. Many of those ships would come in; they had females, either as a doctor or a dentist or even a crew member. But I have never experienced any females on a base. I have been to Palmer station which is on Adelaide Island again, and the Americans there had women on the station, but at that stage I had never experienced women on a station or the ship actually.

[0:25:54] Verdenius: Because the British have been remarkably, for a remarkably long time, sustained a solely male presence on the Antarctic.

Hill: That's right, yes. Well I suppose like everything else, it's breaking new ground, isn't it, and having to put extra facilities and different facilities. There was always the fear of whether the human relationship between the male and the female ... Somebody might take a fancy to somebody you had already taken a fancy to and could cause friction but I think in point of fact, if you are doing a job and you keep it in perspective, I don't think there is the problem that perhaps one felt there might be. It's a very personal thing, isn't it? I don't know whether I would like it or not, because I have never experienced it, but one has to say if somebody equally can do the job, then why shouldn't they be there?

[0:26:50] Verdenius: When you said you hadn't imagined a cat to be present all, how did you imagine this situation in which you stayed, before you went there?

Hill: I think the first time I went down I believed if one read Scott or Shackleton or somebody that I would be in an almost, slightly larger shed than you would have in your garden, but very basic and very small, and I think I was surprised at the size of the stations and the facilities, though certainly Halley, in those days, it was very basic because the station was just about to be rebuilt, and of course some of the conditions were pretty harsh. But I never imagined that the buildings would be so large and the facilities quite reasonable.

[0:27:45] Verdenius: How did you imagine that you would ... ? How did you imagine your time schedule? How did you imagine how you would spend your time?

Hill: Well I think certainly on my side of it, on the construction side and the engineering side, that we know if we have got to go in to rebuild a base or to refurbish a base, that time is not always on your side because of the weather conditions. So one is working, certainly at Halley, when you are replacing a station you are working in 12-hour shifts. And for certainly the initial period you have got a lot of people around with the ship (or ships, as happened). You capitalise on the number of man-hours you can get out of all the people.

[0:28:30] Hill: We used to work 12-hour shifts, 24 hours a day. So you worked your shift, and you then had to come back to the ship. You washed and you had some food and went to sleep. Then you were woken up, you were back up to the base to start building again and that was the cycle that went on for the period the ships were there: two or three weeks, and then after that of course, the ships went and you were down to the number of people that would be there for the rest of the winter, and any building programme means a lot of long hours. So I don't think I ever imagined that we would be getting some social times, but in point of fact in those days you made your own fun on Saturday nights as we have already said. You made that the night to have a drink and socialise as perhaps in the week you didn't have time to do so.

[0:29:24] Verdenius: Apart from work, there was also the aspect of the cold nights and cold days.

Hill: That's right. I think that, for me, the 24-hour daylight was ... I couldn't get really used to getting up, day or night, and the sun was always up, was difficult. The night time you can always go out with your flashlights; you can go out with lights on vehicles and so on, and if you are living in a building, then your lights are on, very much like we have got in this room now. The lights are on and it is a room; whether it's got a window; you can see out of it. Or if you are under the ice, it is just a box and the lights are on. So you would put them on naturally and you wouldn't know whether it was day outside or night, but going outside and seeing sun all the time for a period, I found: it's quite nice but it's quite difficult because you felt you should be always up all the time. When it's dark you feel you should be asleep. So that was quite strange, but you got used to it of course.

[0:30:40] Verdenius: But it was easier for you to get used to night than to day?

Hill: Darkness, yes, than sunlight, I found, particularly if you were on the ship and you couldn't shut the sun out. It was quite bright; the curtains wouldn't perhaps shut

out ... So it was always bright about and you couldn't have it as when it was completely dark. I found that a bit strange, just personally.

[0:31:04] Verdenius: Did you go on tour, on sledging tours in the continent?

Hill: Yes. At Halley Bay in those days, we had upwards of 60 or 70 dogs, and several dog teams, and there was a lot of sledging done at one stage at Halley a little bit before my time, when they went out to the mountains and took geologists out or whatever. And the Theron Mountains, dogs were taken out in '67 season, and a chap called Jim Shirtcliffe and I made up a team. We called it the Hobbits. We used to do about a 9-mile trek every day, training, along the shelf ice at Halley Bay, down a safe crevasse called er ... down into Mobster Creek, and then along the sea ice and then back up one of the Chipantodd<sup>1</sup> ramps and then back to the base. That was training us and training the dogs at the same time.

[0:32:17] Hill: One was encouraged to try and get a little time away from base, either for recreation, because you were living on top of one another quite closely, and yes, we did get a chance to go out sledging a little bit. And I did some sledging when I was down at Adelaide, again. And I think the dogs are marvellous. A lot of people don't like them and unfortunately now, with the new treaty that's just been drawn up, dogs have to be removed from the Antarctic. Psychologically I think they are a good thing to have, but obviously 'the system' doesn't think they should be there, and I think that is unfortunate.

[0:33:00] Verdenius: Can you explain why it is psychologically ...?

Hill: Well I think if you ... People go through difficult times in the Antarctic. You think of home on occasions of course, and the winter period when it is all dark and so on, psychologically it is difficult. Some people you get on with and some people you don't get on with. A dog, if you've made a friend with a dog or a team if you have got a dog team, you have got an interest there, and those dogs are always welcome to see you, whether you are feeding them or if you are petting them or whatever. And I think to go out with dogs ... I think a memorable thing for me is out sledging with no motorised noise at all and just the crisp noise of a sledge going over nice hard ice and the panting of nine dogs in front of you going along at a reasonable pace. Total silence apart from that, and that to me is beautiful and of course people now – now the dogs are going to be removed – will not ever get that experience. So that's why I think that psychologically they are good for people.

[0:34:13] Verdenius: [Pause] Can you go through ...?

Hill: Do you want another one? You see I did this one night, can't you? What can I give you now? Oh a little story really. The *John Biscoe*, that has been recently paid off now and been replaced by the *James Clark Ross*, at one stage we used to obviously have our morning cereals, and at that stage the cornflakes had all the *Magic Roundabout* characters in there: Dougal and Zebedee and so on, and each of these characters you had in a little plastic sachet inside the cornflake packages and everyone

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<sup>1</sup> Creeks just east of the original Halley Bay, named after Johnny Raymond (Chips) and Charlie Le Feuvre (Todd) of the IGYE who discovered them.

collected them. So it was decided that the ship in those days had to be manned at the wheel all the time.

[0:35:11] Hill: It didn't have an automatic pilot on it. So they put the characters from the *Magic Roundabout* on each spoke of the ship's wheel and for a whole season down there the *John Biscoe* was steered by 'Two degrees to Zebedee.', 'One degree to Dougal.' or whatever it might be. So the crew got used to having commands of directing the ship by the characters of the *Magic Roundabout*, and of course when we came back up to waters where we had to take an official pilot on, and the pilot got on board and asked for the ship to be taken two degrees to starboard, nobody knew what he meant. They were trying to say 'Well is it Dougal or is it Zebedee?' So the ship was driven, for fun again, for boredom, on all the characters of the *Magic Roundabout*. Do you know the *Magic Roundabout*?

[0:36:03] Verdenius: No.

Hill: You don't know it?

[0:36:04] Verdenius: No.

Hill: Ah well there was this series over here and I thought I thought it was world-wide. There's a big coil spring; that's Zebedee. Dougal was a dog I believe. Ermintrude was a cow and I can't remember the other characters, but there was a series of these characters that were a little comic thing for kiddies. Kiddy stories, you know. They had made little stories out of them and these characters were quite well known at one stage over here, and that's where the characters come from. Want another one?

[0:36:41] Verdenius: I think I am too young for this?

Hill: Eh?

[0:36:42] Verdenius: I think I am too young.

Hill: You think you are too young? I don't know, it may have been just a British thing but the *Magic Roundabout* was quite well known and kids loved it.

[0:37:00] Verdenius: Do you remember, on the ship, your first experience, your first impression of the country?

Hill: Of the Continent?

[0:37:12] Verdenius: The Continent, arriving there?

Hill: Yes. I think that certainly, when we sailed from Southampton, two or three weeks before you got to South America, and obviously you had gone through the Tropics and it was very warm. So you had gone through a complete change from the conditions at home and then gradually dropping down towards the Falklands and the weather changing: getting a bit more ... the sea getting rougher and the weather changing: more winds and so on. Then having the winds and snow and squally

weather that the Falklands had was obviously something that we hadn't experienced before, other than perhaps if you were in the top of Scotland in England. And then going further down, getting towards South Georgia, probably just after that, seeing you first iceberg, and of course everybody rushes out and takes loads of photographs of this white iceberg.

[0:38:09] Hill: But then gradually the whole thing changes; the temperature changes and then when you come upon, certainly, going into the Weddell Sea, your first encounter is not the continent at all but is sea ice and quite thick sea ice. And the ships in those days obviously, the captains were quite good ice captains and could sort of sense perhaps where to take the ship. But nowadays they have got satellites that can tell where there might be leads, but some of the captains would take the ships right out round to find what they call a shore lead, where the ice was just broken back from the Continent, where they could get the ship in. Then of course once you get through there, you see this enormity of white shelf ice, 120 foot or more out of the water, and that is the edge of the Continent and it is quite awe inspiring to think that that's it.

[0:39:04] Hill: You are going to be living on that for the next year or more, and that is one area but going down the Peninsula, the Grahamland Peninsula, or as the Americans call it: Palmer Land, it had a different feel because you do see mountains and the ice and the different aspects of it, where at Halley Bay you don't because it is just a flat shelf ice. So there's two aspect of it: the very barren shelf ice and then the beauty further down in the Continent on the Peninsula, of seeing the mountains and the mixture. It's just two slightly different aspects to the Continent.

[0:39:52] Verdenius: Did you enjoy them both?

Hill: Oh yes. I think each one has something to offer in a different way. You come down through the Lemaire Channel which is quite narrow in shipping terms, with rocks either side of you, and the picturesque scene you get: of the mountains and the ice, it's quite spectacular. That you wouldn't get at Halley. At Halley Bay, the barrenness of it for thousands and thousands of miles, it has some beauty which is very difficult to describe. It's just beautiful because it is so harsh and so barren. So there's two different aspects of the Continent: very barren and not so barren with mountains giving you a break and perspective probably.

[0:40:40] Verdenius: Could you describe the scene around Halley Bay which is so difficult to describe?

Hill: I think Halley Bay, if you take that you've got shelf ice which is, let's say 120 ft out of the water, and it is a solid shelf there until you find a ramp. And that's the difficult part. If there isn't a ramp, ... and luckily for Halley Bay, the original Halley Bay (that's where it was named from, was the bay) that ships first unloaded. Then over the years they have had I think what was called the Chipantodds and in later years Mobster Creek which has been a natural ramp from sea level up through this shelf ice to get yourself up on the shelf ice, because if that wasn't there, you would have to go further down the coast, several miles down the coast, before you could unload at what they called the Low Shelf Ice, where it naturally comes off and goes down to a lower level. So that's what you see: just this vast white shelf ice and then

luckily you have a ramp that gives you your access to get up onto the top of that shelf ice and get your supplies up there and so on.

[0:42:01] Verdenius: And the shelf is flat?

Hill: In real terms it looks flat, like an iced cake, but clearly it isn't. It obviously has a contour to it, but of course you have got that amount of shelf ice coming off, which is the bits that form the big icebergs, before the actual solid *terra firma* further back. This is all flowing off and I think the biggest iceberg that I have ever encountered was: they give them numbers these days and there has been a big one recently<sup>2</sup>. They have all got A preferences<sup>3</sup> but I can't remember what the one was that I had seen. We were on a Danish ship then and the captain, Jakobsen, who was the captain, thought he was going along the shelf ice, and the radar blipped and he thought there must be an edge. He took the ship around and then it blipped again. He said 'That's not the shelf ice because I wouldn't get round three sides.

[0:43:01] Hill: So we measured it and it was 100 miles long and about 60 miles across and again about 120 ft out of the water. That gradually moved out of the Halley Bay area, up the Weddell and finally going up the Peninsula, grounded itself, and then gradually broke up. But it just gives you the idea of the scale of things, if an iceberg can be that large and it is moving. It quite awesome and quite difficult I think for anybody to really understand. I think the Russians have actually had bases put on some of these in recent years, to see what the movement is of currents and so on. That's really Halley Bay for me and my memories of it anyway. Yes, one story that comes to mind. You have been talking to Dave Limbert, who was at Halley when the original IGY hut as it was called (International Geophysical Year hut) was built, which was a tremendously strong building, and we had gone down there after it had been evacuated to rescue any building material we could.

[0:44:20] Hill: In fact there was a great stench of pickles and vinegar and we couldn't work this out and when we eventually got right down in the base of the building, there was a shelf there which had all the pickled onions on there in jars, and because the weight of the building was on there, you couldn't take the jars off the shelf. But gradually the weight of the ice on top of the building was forcing it and smashing all these jars, and you had this tremendous stench of vinegar around, but it was incredible that all the weight, or part of the weight of the building was on the shelf. But nobody could get the pickled onions off because they were jammed in. That's another sort of odd story that you remember.

[0:45:08] Verdenius: Which doesn't freeze?

Hill: It didn't freeze, no. It was just the compression of the weight that gradually smashed the bottles up. But a tremendous building. We got all sorts of bits and pieces out of there but we used to have a problem because it was over 80ft or more down then, and you had a shaft that went up to the surface, that obviously didn't go up straight. It was bent and twisted and when you had somebody at the top driving a

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<sup>2</sup> He may be referring to the B10 iceberg which was more than 100 square miles in area and broke off the Thwaites Glacier in 1992 (Source Wikipedia).

<sup>3</sup> He means prefixes, which actually can be A,B, C or D depending on the longitude of the point of origin.

vehicle and only two of you and somebody down the bottom, and you put, over the top of a wheel you put a rope with a hook on and load some stuff up in an old 45-gallon oil drum. Then you tell the guy 'Away you pull it.' He jumps in; he can't see it coming up the shaft because he is driving a vehicle, and many a time the drums got stuck, or caught on the side of the shaft and deposited its load and shot it straight back down the shaft and you had to get out of the way pretty smartish. Those were some of the dangerous things that perhaps we shouldn't have been doing.

[0:46:17] Verdenius: You have been on most of the bases, have you?

Hill: Yes, I have wintered at Halley. I have wintered at Adelaide, and I have wintered at South Georgia. And I have summered at Signy, South Georgia. I have been down to Stonington (as it was then) and now Rothera. I have spent summers down at Rothera. And Horseshoe and several of the bases that we haven't got any longer. And I have been round places like Bird Island which is just off South Georgia. Yes I suppose, yes, I have been to them all. I have been very lucky I suppose over the years

[0:47:06] Verdenius: For how long a period of time were these bases built. Were they built with the eye that they should be still there in 2015?

Hill: No, I think they were built at the time to do the science that they thought was required in the area, whether it was geology or whatever it might have been. Obviously the buildings down there don't deteriorate that much, I mean timber lives very happily down there in the very dry conditions. We have tried different building materials. We have tried glass reinforced plastic which isn't terribly good because you can't get the insulation. Then you get moisture and that drips inside. But a lot of the other structures of modern day now seem to be plywood with a very thick sandwich of insulation between them and made in a panel form, proved quite economic and they last very well.

[0:48:14] Hill: But I suppose that they were built for a period and they just go on and on and on, particularly if they are reasonably maintained, apart from Halley Bay where if it is built on the ice, as it has been up until recent years, it gradually gets accumulation of snow and ice on it and gets crushed. But the latest base at Halley now is on stilts to try and stay above the accumulation so it won't get crushed. So that will be the first time that the British have done a base on stilts. But the other bases are primarily built on rock anyway, though they might be covered in snow and ice eventually, the base of them, but the actual foundations are actually on rock and Halley is the only one that is built on snow.

[0:49:03] Verdenius: How come that the British have never established a base inland like the Russians have at Vostok and ...?

Hill: Well I suppose in some ways that one starts where the science was and I suppose IGY was set up as a number of other bases were set up in the International Geophysical Year, to do the geophysics, and they were set at strategic places. Halley Bay, because of the amount of data that has been collected there for weather and everything else, and they are doing the ozone measurement and so on from Halley now. They have just stayed there and there is no real need for them to go inland, and even though they did work geology from Halley, it meant that they had to travel in

real terms a great distance to get to the mountains to do their geology. So that's when they used to do a lot of sledging down there and in latter years tracked vehicles that had some great distances actually, for some of the vehicles in that sort of terrain.

[0:50:14] Hill: And the other bases have set up, either on old whaling stations – Signy was an old whaling station. In fact one of the huts that is still at Signy is an original whaling hut. And of course South Georgia grew up from the whaling when it had an administration there (the government administration) and we took over as a scientific station some years after the whaling had finished. The government administration moved out and we took over as a scientific station. So I don't know the answer to your question, really. I think we have set up where we needed to set up, and certainly on the Continent, to go inland, what is there to do that perhaps other nations are doing now.

[0:51:05] Hill: You would be repeating the science and it's the way, I suppose, that you need to maintain those stations. The Americans have perhaps got more resources than we have got in terms of money, and you would have to fly everything in there. All our stations now are supplied by our own ships and at Rothera there is an airstrip there, a metalled airstrip, as opposed to an ice airstrip, and now we are getting slightly larger aircraft that can go to the base and radiate out from there and take people out to do their work by aircraft. So I think that is probably where we start from: all economics to a certain degree. Right.

[0:51:55] Verdenius: Right. Do you think there is any scientific work to be done on these bases, like Vostok or Amundsen, or at least in these locations?

Hill: I suppose some of those stations there, if you have not got any geology to do, then the only thing you can do is static science, of doing measurements, either ice measurement, ice flow measurement or whatever it might be, or upper atmosphere work, where you are measuring the upper atmosphere: ozone or whatever you might be doing. But I can't see what other advantages they have, other than 'It's the South Pole.', or 'It's McMurdo<sup>4</sup>.' or something like that. But I am sure if you spoke to a Russian or an American, they would give you very good reasons why they are there.

[0:52:49] Hill: But I suppose these stations have grown up over the years, and because there is a good collaboration between nations, you are getting a whole spectrum of information about the continent which is building up over the years, which is good, rather than one nation trying to do the work and it would take them a hundred years. If you are pooling your knowledge and your information, you are getting that knowledge a lot quicker than you would if you were working on your own, and this certainly goes for work that people do with the oceans now. There are several nations that are working together, ourselves included, that are getting data back about the sea, because that seems to be the thing that is affecting our weather as much as anything else. And it's collaboration I think.

[0:53:36] Verdenius: Have you been there?

Hill: To?

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<sup>4</sup> McMurdo is not an inland station.

[0:53:39] Verdenius: The South Pole?

Hill: No, I have only been down as far as Halley. Well we got down to actually Shackleton base one year, which was where Sir Vivian Fuchs started from when he did the Trans-Antarctic trip. We took the *RRS Bransfield* down there and that was the furthest a ship had got that season, which was: we must have been down 78 degrees, nearly 80 degrees<sup>5</sup>. So that is as far as I have got.

[0:54:08] Verdenius: Does it appeal to you?

Hill: The Pole? No because there is nothing there. Well there is: there is a station there, but I mean it's just in the middle of virtually nowhere. It just is the centre; that is the Pole. But no, I have never had a great yearning to say I wanted to go there. I think being at Halley and so on is as interesting, if not more interesting. It's only just to say 'I have been there.' isn't it? It's like many places 'I have been to London' or 'I have been to Paris, or Amsterdam' or wherever. No, I wouldn't say it's really ... I have ever thought 'I must go to the Pole itself.'

[0:54:53] Verdenius: A century ago they made a big deal out of it.

Hill: That's right. Well they have now, I mean Sir Ranulph Fiennes has just walked, he's got about another 60 miles to go and he's walk from one side of the Continent to the other, and that's a first there. And we have had a ladies' expedition recently that have got to the Pole, but I think the people at the Pole, the Americans there, get absolutely fed up with people. They are trying to do some science there, and all they are getting is all these people that want to do it, for one good reason or another. You must judge what these people are doing on their merits, but this is why they don't really welcome people because they wouldn't ever get anything done. They would just be looking after people that are doing things and I am afraid some people that really aren't equipped to do what they are doing, either support or with their expertise. And I think this is probably not the place to be, for me anyway.

[0:55:54] Verdenius: Not the place to be?

Hill: To be. Not the place for me to be.

[0:55:57] Verdenius: For you. That was for men.

Hill: Oh no no. I mean I don't think ... We found this on our own stations, that whilst you welcome an odd ship in, particularly at South Georgia when I was there, you were getting ship on ship on ship and it was a very disruptive set up because they had been on the ship for I don't know how long. They just wanted to come ashore and relax and enjoy themselves, and you didn't want to be unfriendly, but you had a job to do and disruption with people can be a bit of a nuisance. So I can imagine the people at the Pole, if they get loads and loads of people, these different expeditions and so on, that they get a little fed up with it. It can be very disruptive. You want another story do you? Um, let's see. [Pause]

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<sup>5</sup> Vahsel Bay, at the southern end of the Weddell Sea, is at 77° 49' S.

[0:56:58] Hill: Yes, a story that stands out in my mind, and unfortunately at Halley Bay in '67, we had a doctor called John Brotherhood, and he was down doing physiology work on the human body: the human body working in those sort of conditions and those temperatures. He was out with a colleague doing a manhauling exercise, carrying food and pulling a sledge with the food and their equipment on, very much like Sir Ranulph Fiennes is doing probably at the moment. They hadn't radioed in and we hadn't heard from them and we had quite a blizzard blowing and we had no contact from them for two or three days. Eventually, though the conditions were still bad, we had to send search parties out to try and find them. We had several search parties that went out and came back and unfortunately they weren't found.

[0:58:06] Hill: The base then went very very quiet. People were just doing their jobs but not saying too much, obviously very concerned that two colleagues might be lost. So the atmosphere on the station was, as I say, very subdued, very quiet. The base commander asked if I would go out on one of the rescue missions and of course I said yes. He said could I go on the trip that I talked to you earlier on, that Jim Shirtcliffe, who was the chap that was accompanying Dr Brotherhood; could I go on our trip that we used to take and see if they had gone down into what was deemed as a ... it was a crevasse but it was a very wide crevasse and quite safe. In real terms there was a route through. This was where we used to take the dogs training.

[0:58:59] Hill: So I went out with two other colleagues and we had almost white-out conditions which is quite frightening because you have no perspective of where you are. We were going towards the cliff and I was looking for this safe route down in this crevasse, because the weather wasn't very good. I felt that we were going down the slope correctly but had a fear that it wasn't, so we were making snowballs and rolling them to see if we could see if there was an edge, and luckily we had the presence of mind to stop and then move to our left. And in fact we found the ramp eventually to go down into this crevasse, but had we gone on the route we were going, we would have done the same thing as John Brotherhood and Jim Shirtcliffe had done.

[0:59:51] Hill: They thought they were going down the safe route but in fact went over an 80 foot cliff and they landed at the bottom. Jim Shirtcliffe damaged his ankle and unfortunately John Brotherhood, his knee went right through his face and broke all his facial bones. We went down into the crevasse and skied along and luckily we found a tent and they were both still alive. But opening that tent up, as I did, and seeing this person inside, it was as though the person was (how can I describe it?) as though they had had a lady's stocking pulled over their face, as you see with the old bank robbers and so on, and the face very distorted. Because all his facial bones were broken, and his eyes were all black and blue, and he wasn't in a very good condition but still alive. And then we got back out of the crevasse, got up so we could get radio contact, and eventually got more people out, and because his back was damaged as well, and we didn't know whether ... what injuries he had, all the training we had had for first aid and so on, came into play.

[1:01:05] Hill: We cut a trench in the ground and put a sledge in that so that it was level with the ice and then slid John Brotherhood onto a sledge where we had some Lilos blown up just to cushion him. And then we brought him back to the base. This was in the middle of winter and in fact, because he was in such a bad way with his

facial problems, and we didn't know really what other damage he had, the Americans were asked would they get a flight out of Christchurch, New Zealand, and would they fly in and rescue and take him out for medical attention at a hospital. So eventually the Americans actually flew two Hercules (the 130 series) in and landed one at Halley Bay, and the other one circled a range of mountains called the Shackleton Range, some miles away. Just in case the other one had a problem, it could drop supplies or experts down. And the Americans took John Brotherhood out, flew him across the Pole, and back to Christchurch, New Zealand. In fact I haven't seen him since and I think he still owes me a beer. That was a very worrying time I think, for all of us, but the outcome was: he is OK. He is now in Australia, I think, teaching athletes there, the best way to use their body for the sport they are doing.

[1:02:43] Verdenius: What kind of ... ? Did you have first aid training?

Hill: Well each base of a certain size certainly had a doctor and Halley Bay, because it was so isolated, had a doctor. The doctor, in those days, doubled up as a ... looking after dogs as a vet, and he doubled up as a dentist, and unfortunately Dr Brotherhood, who we were just talking about, he tried to take a tooth out of my head and he had never taken a tooth out before. He was reading the book on how to do it as he was doing it and it took three days to get a tooth out of my head and I have still got the gap there to prove it. But we had a basic training in first aid and some people were more expert than others, but no more than that.

[1:03:32] Hill: Training on the ship going down, a bit of training back in Cambridge, or in those day in London, but I think certainly the Survey does a lot more in that than they did in those days. The numbers are more now; there's a lot more people down on the stations I suppose, certainly in the summer, and I think there is a lot more training done for first aid. We just had a very basic knowledge of it, but training pays off. You see in this instance, with this accident, though you didn't consciously think you had it all stacked in your mind, you did and you actually went about it the right way because the doctor that flew in with the aircraft said we did everything absolutely right, and he couldn't have wished for the man to have been dealt with in any better way.

[1:04:26] Verdenius: What had you done?

Hill: Well because we didn't know about the back injury, we made sure that we lifted him in one go. You didn't move people about in case there was something wrong with the spinal cord or something, and we supported him and had him strapped to the sledge in a way that he wasn't going to move about too much. In fact we had an X-ray machine on the station that nobody had ever used, and of course we didn't really know much about it other than reading up about it, and of course we had to try and form some large negatives and take an X-ray of his head, which obviously with the brain there, one was worried that you gave it the wrong exposure or whatever. So we tried out: one of the guys offered his arm to be X-rayed first to see how we could set the machine up. In point of fact the plates that were produced, the negatives that were produced, the American doctor that flew in said they were of excellent quality, so one learned.

[1:05:36] Verdenius: Did ever any fatal accidents occur?

Hill: Not during my time, but there has been. There have been people that have gone down a crevasse. There was one accident where an aircraft was flying over low ready to come and land, and somebody was standing on top of a caboose we use for the contact, for bringing the aircraft in on a strip. He got struck by one of the skis: just clipped him and unfortunately killed him. And there has been a number of deaths over the years but if you compare crossing a road in England or whatever, it is comparatively safe down there, even though the conditions are very harsh and very dangerous. So I think over the years we have been very lucky by not losing that many people.

[1:06:39] Verdenius: What happens if somebody dies at the Antarctic?

Hill: Well I suppose it depends on the relations and I suppose today with the ships you have and the facilities on there, that you could bring somebody out, but most of the people, if they have gone down a crevasse, you are not going to get them out anyway, so that is their grave. And if they have been killed where they could be got out, I don't think any body has been brought back<sup>6</sup>, to my knowledge, of the British side anyway. They are either buried or whatever there where the accident occurred but most of the time, if it has happened, as I say, if they have gone down a crevasse you are not going to get them out anyway. That is their natural grave. If somebody has been killed, as this accident with the aircraft, obviously that body was buried on the ice and all the correct procedures followed. But it is obviously a very sad time, isn't it?

[1:07:51] Verdenius: How does one deal with it, back at the base, because when you said 'if somebody is lost the atmosphere is quite subdued'?

Hill: Yes, that's right. Well I don't know. I have not been on a station when somebody had been killed, but just experiencing when we thought somebody was lost, that was bad enough. I would think morale must be very difficult if a colleague has been killed but I think you have got to deal with it because you know that you are all in an isolated situation and there is no way that you are going to have professional counselling or be able to say 'I can't stand it anymore. I am going.' You can't go; you are isolated there and I think you just have to come to terms with it.

[1:08:42] Hill: It may be very difficult to come to terms but I think you have got to come to terms with it quite quickly – more than you perhaps would in a situation you might be at home – because it can drag the rest of your colleagues down if two or three of you really are upset. The morale could go down and down and that's not good, because no matter what it is, if you are isolated in the Antarctic, you do have periods when you yourself I think, if most people are honest, you do have your ups and downs. You do get a bit homesick or a bit cheesed off or so on and what you have got to try and do is not let that affect your colleagues around you because you have really got to keep things on an even keel.

[1:09:32] Verdenius: I am asking you because I have asked some people what they did on a Sunday, if there was anything like a religious service going on.

Hill: No.

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<sup>6</sup> The body of Kirsty Brown (killed by a leopard seal at Rothera on 22 July 2003) was repatriated.

[1:09:47] Verdenius: Which surprised me because it is a way of keeping up the morale.

Hill: No, I think that is one thing that certainly is lacking down there. We had at one stage the padre in the Falkland Islands had suggested perhaps he could come down for a trip and so on, not to stay but to visit when the ships came in, but nobody really has taken a religious service. The only time I think that I have been at a service is when the Naval ship, the British Naval ship *HMS Endurance* came in to South Georgia and South Georgia has a small church there, that the whalers had and that is still maintained. We had a Christmas service in there once which was pretty good; even the organ was playing, so it was good. But no, Sundays, I don't know now but my time we were allowed, if you had time off, you had Sunday off. Most people would do a bit of letter writing, or writing a diary or doing some recording or developing a film or whatever. That was your own time but we never had any religious services or anything.

[1:11:17] Verdenius: What did you do on Sundays?

Hill: What did I do on Sunday? Well I think I read a bit more. If I could get out with the dogs and do a bit of sledging, that was good because you knew it was your free time and that you weren't using other people's time when you should be doing your own job. And sledging and feeding the dogs and repairing sledges or harnesses for the dogs and that sort of thing, and generally your own little bit of house-keeping, darning socks or whatever; all sorts of domestic chores you did. But the days and the weeks go very very quickly because there was always something to do; there was always a problem and although you think that you have got free time, somebody might have a problem and of course you go and help. I don't know how the free time is now. I do hear that they seem to sit down just watching videos, which absolutely appals me because I think it is such a beautiful continent there and if you are going to sit down watching videos, you might as well stay at home and watch the television in your own lounge. But perhaps I am getting too old. [Laughs]

[1:12:32] Verdenius: Can you tell me ... ? You were telling me about the sledging, that you could imagine nothing like as beautiful as six dogs ...

Hill: Nine.

[1:12:46] Verdenius: Nine? Running in front of you. Can you elaborate a little on the situation, of the sledging tours?

Hill: Well I think what it is: you are out with nine dogs and that is your only means of transport. You know each individual dog as an individual. They all have their own characters. You have a lead dog at the front, that may not be a dog that is really pulling the sledge but can take a command. We had a lead dog called Suaq and if you shouted the dog left or right, there is an old Eskimo ...

Female voice: Dinner is ready.

Hill: OK, we will do this bit and then come down.

Female voice: OK, when you are ready.

Hill: The lead dog then: you had commands for left and right, and stop and start. I can't remember, I think it was 'Rrra' was left and 'Auk' was right and 'Ah now' was the command to stop. Your lead dog: you pick a dog that has a bit of brain, so that when you give it a command to go left or right, it will go one degree or two degrees or whatever it might be, or have a certain amount of movement they will make when you give them one direction. You let them move left before you ask them to move a bit more, so if you wanted to come round let's say four degrees, you might have a dog, when you gave it one command, it would move two degrees. Then you know you want to go another two so you obviously wait for it to do that; then you give it another command and it will do the other two degrees. So you have that affinity with your dogs, that they are working with you and it is a lovely bond I think, just dealing with it, with no mechanical means at all, there is something very wonderful, very beautiful about it. And of course you haven't got the noise around you of machinery and so on. Our whole lives seem to be geared with machines and noise and engines and cars and vehicles and so on, and just being out there naturally with just dog power and you, is something that I have thoroughly enjoyed.

[1:15:09] Verdenius: How do you notice when a dog gets tired?

Hill: Well you have to watch the dogs very carefully because, depending on the terrain you are on ... OK it's ice but you can get soft snow on top and if they are running quite hard or pulling quite hard, they have got a lot of fur between their toes, their claws and you can see a dog starting to run awkwardly and if you stop you will find that what's happened: because it has got warm there, the ice or the snow has melted and then it has frozen again in between them and formed a little ball there and the dog isn't running properly. So you have to keep an eye on the dogs. But you will get tired before they do because we don't ride on the sledges.

[1:15:59] Hill: I mean you have the man that is driving the sledge for the day skiing between the brake at the back, and the other man has got a line on to the sledge perhaps, but is skiing. So you are not being pulled by them because they are pulling 1200 lb or whatever it is in their own right, with your food, your supplies, your tent and all the rest of it. You will get tired before they do I guess and then of course you just stop for the night and put them on a night span which is normally a wire span because a lot of them chew and if you have got the rope that they are connected to during the day on a harness, they will just chew through it and you might lose them. So yes, they are great. I reckon they are great fun and I think it is a great shame that they are being pulled out of the Antarctic now, a great shame.

[1:16:53] Verdenius: Will they be back again? It's a pity by the way that you did not put these anecdotes on your list, or did you?

Hill: When?

[1:17:03] Verdenius: That you told ... downstairs.

Hill: Oh no I didn't put those. I just remembered those. I just remembered the ones about the planes, and bits and pieces.

[1:17:15] Verdenius: Have you ever been in a plane above the Plateau?

Hill: Well we have got the ... BAS have, when I was down there had a new Twin Otter and a Pilatus Porter aircraft (single aircraft) and we used to fly down regularly from Adelaide down to Fossil Bluff, which is down King George VI Sound, just across from Alexander Island<sup>7</sup>. That used to be quite regular: runs up and down there to take supplies down or scientists, and then the aircraft used to go across to Stonington, Adelaide and all round there, dropping the various field parties off to work; then picking them up and moving them on somewhere else where they worked for a while and so on. We had flown up and down that section.

[1:18:11] Hill: At Halley the plane has gone across there occasionally but I have never flown across there. Aircraft movements and certainly the activity of aircraft down for the British has increased a lot. The Rothera airstrip being built, so they can get bigger aircraft down there which means they can move larger supplies or a lot larger numbers of people about. Because the criteria I think at one stage with the Twin Otter was you had to be able to get a full sledge in there and at least a dog team, but they are marvellous aircraft, the Twin Otters. But we occasionally were asked ... The pilots used to get a little bit bored going down to Fossil Bluff. They used to call it the 'Milk Run' and what you had was: King George VI Sound was probably in the region of, let's say, 26 miles wide, with a mountain range either side.

[1:19:10] Hill: So it was like driving down a street really with houses either side. As long as you could get the aircraft going down there, you knew you were going in the right direction. I remember one day that one of the pilots, Dave Rowley, said 'Just take the stick a minute. I am going back to have a pee at the back.' (because you have a little pee chute at the back that you go and have a pee in). Of course I grabbed the wheel. I had never touched an aircraft before and I am climbing at 200 ft a minute, and then he shouts back 'Put the stick down.' Then you are diving at 200 ft a minute. So that was quite hairy for a minute or two and there was the pilot at the back, trying to have a pee in the middle of all this going on. But they were quite good because once they got the aircraft up, it wasn't too bad.

[1:19:54] Hill: One other pilot asked me to take the stick one day and I was hanging on this stick trying to keep this aircraft level and my arms were almost dropping off. After about half an hour, well not half an hour probably about ten minutes or so, though it seemed like half an hour, he said 'Oh I will just show you now how we trim the plane.' And he fiddled with some bits and pieces and all the weight came off the stick and you only just had to touch it then. But he was just trying to get me to feel what the aircraft was doing. So one did those sort of things; I don't suppose you are allowed to do it anymore. [Pause] Pilots are a different breed altogether. I will give you one story that I probably can tell you about aircraft. At Adelaide there was a piedmont there, an ice piedmont, and we again were loading materials to go down to Fossil Bluff, and we had a pair of scales up at the airstrip and you had the loadmaster

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<sup>7</sup> Fossil Bluff is actually on Alexander Island.

who was somebody that had to take that responsibility and that particular day was the doctor. So we had all the scientific instruments on there.

[1:21:06] Hill: We were doing echo-sounding across the Sound there, and the scientist was on board with this very expensive piece of echo-sounding equipment. We were loading timber and sand and more sand and cement and more sand, concrete mixer, more sand, and it was going on the aircraft. He was counting up the weights, how many kilos and so on. Anyway he said 'That's it. Right, that's the maximum the plane can have.' So we all got in. There was three of us and the pilot. So the aircraft went up, taxied up, was shooting down this piedmont which was a slight slope and of course he was getting to a point where the aircraft wasn't lifting off and then the bells go, otherwise the plane is going to stall.

[1:21:56] Hill: So we turned round and we tried again and the same thing happened, and we did this about eight times and he said 'I am going to have one more go and if I can't get off, we will have to take some of the weight off the aircraft.' So we were shooting down the piedmont and in fact the bells were still ringing and he went off the end of this ice cliff and I thought the plane was just going to go and bottom out. It just felt as though we were falling like a stone and then eventually some air got under the wings and we were airborne of course and the pilot looked back and said are we OK and we said yes and he said 'Fine. I have just got to land it now.' So when we got down to Fossil Bluff, that was a very chossed up airstrip down there, a very bad airstrip, we landed very heavily and at that time we thought it was because of the bad ice.

[1:22:51] Hill: Eventually we got up to the base, unloaded and so on and then we got radio contact back to the base and they said 'Was everything all right?' We said 'Yes, we were OK. Why?' They said 'Well in fact you have got almost double the weight in that aircraft you should have because the scales had come off their pivot and instead of weighing the correct weights, they were not the correct weights, they were incorrect.' In fact we had twice the weight the aircraft should have taken so no wonder the thing didn't get off the ground. We were very lucky again. I mean these things happen. So aircraft are a marvellous thing if you respect them and treat them the right way I suppose. That's an aircraft story. I am trying to think of any more aircraft stories. I suppose the illegal ones but I daren't tell you those dare I? Because I'll get ... if somebody finds out who told you.

[1:23:47] Verdenius: I am not putting this directly into the film you know.

Hill: Right. You are just getting the stories out of it?

[1:23:54] Verdenius: Getting the stories out and all the stories that get into the film are asked permission for it.

Hill: OK. Well I mean the iceberg I told you about earlier, that we had found in 1966, a couple of years later (it must have been 1969 when I was at Adelaide). I was up in one of the aircraft and we saw this iceberg. It was known because it had been tracked round and by this time it had broken in half and was grounded. We actually landed on that berg. I don't say it has ever been recorded that we did, but we did. Of course the top of it had had a fall of snow and it was very soft. When our aircraft go off, if you

are going any distance, you have got a lot of fuel on board and we landed and we had spare fuel drums inside the aircraft as well, and we actually couldn't get off.

[1:24:56] Hill: If you get very powdered snow on top of the ice and you get the friction of the ski, it tends to melt and you get it hanging on like a bit of glue there. So we had a bit of difficulty getting this aircraft off, but we eventually did. That was a bit worrying for a moment of two, thinking 'Are we going to get off?' The answer to that would have just been to jettison all the spare fuel drums we had, and try and get back to the base, but we eventually got off. But that was an illegal landing, I guess. Not on the flight path, because obviously when you take an aircraft you file a flight path, of where you are going and what direction you are going, in case anything happens to you, so people would know that you would be somewhere on that route. So there are good reasons why flight paths should be presented I guess. [Sound of having a drink].

[1:25:58] Hill: Well what else have I written down here that might be of use to you? I think there was one ... I have done the Russian ship. There was one memorable occasion when the *RRS Bransfield* ran aground just off Rothera. We had gone down there; we were just about ... We could see the base in the distance probably, two or three miles off. There is a small island called Jenny Island just off Rothera and normally the ship went to the right of this island to come into Rothera. On this occasion we came in on the left hand side. Somebody said to me (I can remember vividly), it was about 20 past ten and somebody said to me 'Have you been down here a few times, Dave? You have come down a few times. Where is normally Jenny Island?' 'It will be on our left.' He said 'It's not. We have just come past it. It is on our right.' I said 'Well I have never come inside before.'

[1:27:12] Hill: We had had all the hatches unbolted ready to discharge cargo as quickly as possible and get some stores ashore, and we actually hit rock at about five and twenty past ten in the morning, and in a big way. I have hit ... You hit ice, and certain ice has a certain noise to it, and blue ice is the most dense ice. You really get a lot of noise from it if you hit that, but this was like no other noise, and I said straight away, I said 'That's not ice, That's rock.' And the ship was ripped for about three quarters of a length and luckily she was double hulled so that saved her but we were parked, literally parked up on this rock for quite some time until we could try and understand where we were going to go once we had tried to get the ship off. So eventually we pumped all the head tanks out to make the ship light on the bow, and slipped her back in the water, and then went up and just pushed the bow with the propeller, just going slowly into fast ice.

[1:28:28] Hill: The crew were just checking all the tanks to see if the tanks were holed anywhere, in case there was water getting in that we didn't know about. They were watching, or testing, the tanks and not watching the radar, and a berg came down and smashed into the side of the ship, which frightened everybody to death because we had just come off the rocks. So we thought that was I don't know what was going on there. So eventually we just took the ship to open water. We do what we call squares. You just go up on a course, then turn right and go on a course and turn right again and keep doing the squares all the night in open water. And eventually we went in to Rothera and then a small ship called the *Hero*, a wooden ship that the Americans had up at Palmer station (which is just up the Peninsula), they were just about to go North.

[1:29:29] Hill: They had some ex-Naval divers on board doing some film work for the National Geographic, and we asked if they could ... if it was possible for them to come down. They came down and put the divers over the side and had a look at the damage. Then we marked the ship's side with all compartments off the drawing and then every time they came up, they told us how much damage was done on that section. And in fact they came up with some rocks that actually got broken off and were between the two hulls. Then eventually the *HMS Endurance* came down and so-called escorted us back to the Falklands. We were about a few miles out of Rothera and the *Endurance* stopped, and we thought 'Well this will be marvellous. Perhaps we could tow her and take her into the Falklands.'

[1:30:26] Hill: So in fact it was just an engine breakdown and eventually we got into the Falklands after the Navy said that they needed to have lunch before they would go into the Falklands, so we steamed up outside the Sound going into the Falklands for an hour or so while they had lunch and then eventually, we weren't allowed to go in first. The *Endurance* had to go in and escort us into the Falklands. Then after that the ship was taken up to South America and Lloyds were sent down to have a look at her to see if she could take the journey home or had to be repaired in South America. They said 'If she has got this far ...' and they had a look at her. 'She will be quite sound enough to bring her back to England.' which they did. They put her into dry dock. Then she was repaired and she is still plying up and down now.

[1:31:20] Verdenius: Alive and kicking?

Hill: That's right.

[1:31:24] Verdenius: What types of ice did you distinguish?

Hill: Well you get sea ice and obviously if it's old, and it gets more and more dense, it's almost ... it is blue, it's got a very blue haze to it, and it's very dense. It's more of a clear ice than if you like just white. But it's very dense ice and that is really old ice, and it gives a different ring to the ship's hull when you hit against it. But sea ice is quite interesting when you are driving the ship all day, just coming back and driving at it and trying to cut pieces off to cut yourself through. I have been on the *Bransfield* when we ... I first spent 12 hours or more solid, just trying to cut a path through, to get through to some more open water. That's really jarring because the ship just shakes and shudders. You come back and you charge at it again, because our ships aren't icebreakers, they are only ice strengthened. That's quite tiring, particularly on the captain if he is just stuck there looking at white ice all day, trying to push the ship through. But that's quite interesting.

[1:32:38] Verdenius: Do you distinguish any other types of ice?

Hill: Well I am not an ice expert. Just as a layman I would call ordinary sea ice or I would call it dense blue ice where it is quite hard, as I said just now, but you would have to ask these experts on ice, I guess. Glaciologists, that's who you want.

[1:33:12] Verdenius: Please continue.

Hill: I don't think I have got any more actually, not that I can think of. I just jotted these down. We did the Russian ship didn't we? I have talked about John Brotherhood and I talked about the IGY. Oh yes, I will give you I suppose another aircraft one. [Wii](#) didn't not that. When I was at Rothera one year, we were due to do a building programme and unfortunately we had very very low temperatures which was unusual for that period – i.e. the summer down in the Antarctic – and we had several goes to start doing this building programme and we were trying to cast concrete for the foundations of this building. We were having a stop-start situation and eventually (in fact we were talking about Ray Adie earlier) Ray was down as the senior officer down at the time. I had spoken to Ray and said 'You know, this stop-start situation is really getting to people's morale and they were getting fed up with it.' I said 'If the weather continues like this, I think we are going to have to make a decision to curtail the building operations this year, winterise everything, and then start the work next season.' And he quite agreed.

[1:34:28] Hill: So the temperature still plummeted, and we were getting very low temperatures at night, far in excess of anything we could deal with with the equipment we had. So eventually I decided that we had to cancel the building programme, which we did, and a couple of days afterwards, the two aircraft that BAS had then were due to fly north. When they leave the base, they have special ferry tanks put on, so the whole plane is almost a floating fuel tank, because they had to fly all the way from Rothera right the way up to Punta, in Chile (Punta Arenas in Chile). The two aircraft were taking off simultaneously: one was going to take off and it hit a bump in the ice strip and unfortunately, instead of bouncing up, it forced itself down. The nose wheel and all the suspension on that end came right through the cockpit and rippled the front of the plane so it couldn't fly. The next aircraft that took off actually hit the same bump but luckily got thrown up and got airborne and made the journey.

[1:35:42] Hill: So we had one aircraft that was written off really and because I had some men there, we decided that we would try and rescue this plane and it was four or five miles up on the piedmont, well the ice slope coming off this airstrip down to Rothera. So I got the builders to go up with the aircraft engineers and the pilot and so on and took everything they could take off: all the engines were taken off and all the building materials that we had: all the roofing timbers and everything else, they were all used to make special crates and to salvage all the bits and pieces – all the instruments were taken out and so on. Eventually we took the wings off and made special crates for those. So we stripped the plane right down; then we were left basically with the fuselage.

[1:36:31] Hill: So we devised and I designed with the lads, putting two very large BAS cargo sledges together and we went up and took a former of positions, strategic positions along the aircraft's fuselage and cut the shapes out. And then came down and made a complete cradle of the shape of the fuselage on these two sledges that were bolted end on end and took that up and then gradually lowered the aircraft down, got its skis off and everything else, lowered it down on to the cradle, strapped it on the cradle. Then we had the tortuous journey of bringing this down a sloping ice slope that sloped two ways. So we had one vehicle pulling and then one vehicle behind, on wires, just holding it as an anchor, as a brake so that the thing wouldn't slip and slide.

[1:37:33] Hill: Then they gradually came down keeping it taut, the two lines between each vehicle and slipping ourselves all the way down until we got it down to the base. Then of course we had to transfer the aircraft on its cradle onto a big floating ... what we call a scow and because it was going to be a high level on the scow, we had to fill the base of it, to give it some stability, with 45-gallon oil drums filled with sea water to give it some ballast. Then we had to wait for the water to be very calm. Then we gradually winched the cradle onto this scow and fixed it on that and came with a small launch very gingerly across to the ship. Then unfortunately the fuselage was longer than the hatch opening on the ship, but the hatch below the opening was as long if not longer than the fuselage. So what we had to do was to put slings on it, put a long sling on the nose and a shorter sling on the tail so that the thing was at an angle, so we could feed it in the hatch opening and into the larger section underneath the hatch and had it in between decks. Then lowered it down and then it was secured.

[1:38:55] Hill: The only damage we got: when it was being lifted, a bit of wind caught it and it spun round and caught the side of the ship. But that was the first time we had actually brought an aircraft back from the Antarctic that had crashed. Then subsequently – I am not sure if it was the year after or a couple of year afterwards – they had similar accidents or whatever and they have done that on a couple of occasions now. That was the first time we did it but on subsequent occasions, rather than write an aircraft off, they have said ‘Well we know we can bring them back and probably get them repaired back in either Canada or UK. So that has been done on a couple of occasions now, apparently.

[1:39:33] Verdenius: One of the pilots described his work down there as risky by all means.

Hill: Who was the pilot you were talking to?

[1:39:43] Verdenius: McDermot.

Hill: McDermot, yes. When was he down? Because I know the name but I think he is recent isn't he?

[1:39:49] Verdenius: '67.

Hill: Oh, he is going back. He's not recent, is he?

[1:39:53] Verdenius: '67 – '71, round about that time.

Hill: '71? There was a Mick Green that used to be down. Bert Conchey was down when I was down. He was seconded from the RAF, and Dave Rowley who was a pilot that we engaged and Dave came in. I was at Adelaide '69 and they came in I can't remember whether it was just before Christmas or just after Christmas in '69, so McDermot must have been a bit before that, eh? He must have been '67 – '67/'68 I guess. Was he at Adelaide? Must have been at Adelaide. Yes, and flew down to Stonington I expect. Mm right. What other stories have I got for you? I don't know. Need lubricating I think.

[1:40:53] Verdenius: Can you just tell me how would you describe the work that you have been doing there? How would you define it? Did you call it discovery, like Amundsen or would you call it remote sensing like the Moon travellers?

Hill: Well I think it depends on from which angle you are looking at it. If you are looking at it for the whole organisation, that I was down working for, then I think it was discovery. I don't think it was on the same way as Amundsen because it wasn't just setting a goal to get from A to B. You are down there with a scientific motive, to research into certain things, whether it would be going off to look at some rocks and do some geology, or whether it was measuring ice and doing glaciology, or whether it was doing meteorology or physics, upper atmosphere work and all the rest of it. Halley Bay was certainly, at one stage, a mixture of a static base/ a travelling base but in latter years it is now really a static base, measuring and recording there as opposed to people going out on long trips to do some geology because the mountain ranges are several hundred miles away.

[1:42:21] Hill: So I think overall it is certainly ... it's trying to find out about the environment. It's trying to find out, because it's such a key area to the rest of the weather pattern . Perhaps the effect of that continent could be a tremendous effect on the rest of the world. To find out what we are doing wrong elsewhere that could be affecting the weather patterns down there, and other activities. So I think it is really, from my angle, I would think, is a discovery and a research to widen our understanding of our continent and certainly the world as a whole. So I think that's where I would look at it from, that point of view. As a personal thing, my particular thing is construction. I just found the whole business of trying to build in those conditions quite like nothing else.

[1:43:19] Hill: There was no books you could read that would really tell you about it because there is no rules you can build to because the elements are changing all the time and human beings, being what we are, we never play by rules and you get different people do different things and can cause problems with any design you might put down there because of the way they treat it or use that particular building or whatever it might be. So I think from my angle it is very interesting, and when I see consultants being given information to try and do a design down there, and they come up with all sorts of magic ideas. You say 'That won't work.' They say 'Of course it will.' because their mind is geared to harsh conditions here or whatever, in Scotland or wherever it might be. But you have got to say 'People don't do it like that. They don't react that way,' It's no good giving a super design that won't work because people won't work the way the design has been drawn up.

[1:44:20] Hill: So we have had many an interesting discussion to say 'Well I am sorry. You might have done all the calculations. You might have all the theories in the world but I am saying from experience that that probably won't work.' So it's very interesting to try and ... You will never win against the elements, and I think you have just got to try and get designs that work as much in harmony with the elements as possible, and with people. And I think designs that are kept simple or are designs that you can do something about if you have a problem .... If it's too sophisticated, then it's not so easy to deal with.

[1:45:04] Hill: Particularly we found in recent years, that on the mechanical and electrical side now, things are not driven any more by chains and wires and so on. It's all electronic pulses or printed cards. Well if a printed card goes down and you haven't got a spare printed card, the whole sequence of events to drive something or signal something just won't work. Now years ago you could jury-rig a bit of wire wrap or a bit of chain or whatever it was and things were much simpler because they were more mechanical to deal with and repair than it is today and that's given us certain problems.

[1:45:43] Hill: When we were trying to buy, or we used to try and buy what one would deem old technology, and people say 'We haven't made that for years.' That's given them problems, so a lot of spares and when you have a design and somebody says 'Oh yes, we can service that design. That's not a problem. We have got engineers world-wide.' Then you say 'Hang on. This is Halley Bay. It's right in the Antarctic and it's not accessible for half the year or more.' Then they don't understand that. So I think from my angle you have got to try and design within the limitations of what you might have to do with the people at any one time on the base. So there we are. Does that answer your question?

[1:46:30] Verdenius: Yes. You seem to be sort of ambivalent about let's say progress of things down there, like bringing in the new technology which doesn't work.

Hill: Well I am not saying it doesn't. They have had a lot of problems, and I have been away from that side of it for quite some time now so I am speaking a little bit probably not so informed about it as I ought to be when I was there with it. But they have had in recent years certainly one design that was supposedly going to last 16 years or more and didn't last more than 6 years before it showed signs of giving problems and some deterioration. The new design now, with trying to be at Halley above the ice, on jack legs not dissimilar to an oil rig I suppose if you want to have some similarity. Then they want to keep so many metres above the ice, and then they will maintain that by jacking up on the legs that are there and then adding more legs and keep jacking this platform (or platforms) up.

[1:47:48] Hill: I think that is quite a novel idea and I hope it works. But I still maintain that a simple cost-effective design that we had some years ago, if that was kept going and on a regular, I think it's normally I would deem it to be about 7 year cycle before you would need to replace, I think that is a design that could have been refined a bit, was not super-duper futuristic design, but a design that would probably work and in terms of cost-effective, be very cost-effective. But I am no longer there so I have got to bow to the people that have been charged with doing what they have got to do. But yes, I think the comfort on the stations have improved immensely. I don't know whether that's totally a good thing. I think if we have too many comforts, and if too many things are done for us, we expect more things to be done for us and I think a little bit of ... It's a very fine line but I think a bit of balance of not having desperate accommodation but having it a bit sparse, makes you work a bit harder for it.

[1:49:06] Hill: I think if everything is done, and it's so easy, you want more and more. But it depends on your anticipation of what you are going to get when you are there. You said to me earlier on about what did I expect. I thought I was just going to have a

small ... basically a small hut and that would be it and I was surprised at what I had when I got there. I was quite pleased. And I suppose people now go from very nice accommodation in their homes and the workplace here, and probably have a greater expectation of what they should get when they are down there. But I think that to me would say 'Though I am looking at the snow out there, I could be in a laboratory in Amsterdam or London or Cambridge or wherever.' I think getting out there and experiencing a bit of the harshness of the Continent you will get a feel for it a lot better than sitting in a nice cosy laboratory, looking out on the nice scenery and hoping that somebody will keep the generator going to keep you warm. But there we are, looking back I think, isn't it. Perhaps I should be looking forward.

[1:50:25] Verdenius: I don't know. [Pause] I haven't been there and I can't compare it.

Hill: No, well I think it is like the ships now. The new ship, the *RRS James Clark Ross*, I haven't actually been on her. Unfortunately ... I had a chance to go and see her launched but I couldn't make it. I am told she is very luxurious. Each cabin now has got its own toilet and facilities in, and then you start to become little boxes and isolated and you won't go and see somebody that's using the toilets and you are sharing the toilets or showers or wash handbasins, whatever. I think this can start isolating people too much and I don't think in the Antarctic the right frame of mind is single-minded. I think you have got to be together.

[1:51:18] Hill: You have got to be ... you have got to get to know people and I see this isolation happening more and more with the luxuriousness of ships and videos on stations and all these sorts of things. But maybe it is still successful but I hear of more personal problems, I think, than I ever experienced when I was down. I don't know what that's due to; whether it's the situation that is there now or whether it's the world situation or whatever. We see the world in a different way now, don't we? There seem to be more problems about the world than there has been in recent years. I don't know. [Pause]

[1:52:10] Verdenius: Do you think I have forgotten to bring up something which you think should be brought in?

Hill: You have?

[1:52:16] Verdenius: Do you think that I have forgotten something, to bring in something, some topic that you think should be brought in?

Hill: I don't know. I don't know what you have got from other people really. It's difficult to know what angle you haven't had, we haven't talked about relationships. I suppose in some ways one could liken ... What I was saying just now. We have often found that a couple of people don't get on. In fact if you send them out in the field, as it's still called, (it sounds so silly). It's not a field, other than a white field, but it's still called 'people go out in the field'. If you send a couple of people that didn't get on, they are so reliant on one another. If one falls down a crevasse or another one falls down a crevasse, obviously you want pulling out, but that guy might have to pull you out and vice versa. Sometimes people that don't get on, on a station or base, may well find some common ground when they go out in the field because they have got to get

some common ground between them to work on that period of time they are out doing whatever they are doing. So it can get the best out of people sometimes.

[1:53:38] Verdenius: Did you encounter this situation?

Hill: Well I think you do get this. You get this in any walk of life I think, but certain people you wouldn't ... I mean I have people I have to work with, and work reasonably successfully with I hope, but I wouldn't go out with them socially. Now on a station you are stuck with people in a work situation and you are certainly stuck with them in a social situation because you are there on a station; you can't get away from them. OK, there are perhaps certain areas you perhaps can go in: the library where one tries to keep that as a quiet area but you still ... Those people are still around you and you can't get away from them. So you have got to find some common ground and I think there's only station I was on where one person there fell out with everybody over a period of a year.

[1:54:32] Hill: I think I was the last person that fell out with him purely because I said 'He's not going to upset me.' I was prepared to listen to all his drivel and certainly when he had a few drinks, it was the same stories over and over and over again. People would just walk away from the bar and gradually there would be nobody left, perhaps, him and I. Then I eventually just had enough and would go out and people would say 'You stuck it out well tonight.' But that was a person, really, that was at the wrong ... should never have been there, wasn't sifted out at the right time. It's very difficult. You only interview people and you have got to weigh up (a) have they the ability to do the job and (b) are they going to fit in on base in a tight community. So I think that was the only time that I have found somebody at the end that I just couldn't find any common ground with, but most of the time I think, people got on.

[1:55:36] Verdenius: Did you get to go sledging with him?

Hill: No I didn't no. He was a radio operator and really liked a bit of home comfort I think. As I say, I think he was in the wrong place. He had the ability of a radio operator but really should not have been in that location I don't think, because he used his job to gain control over people. Because, as I told you before, we only were allowed a hundred words out a month, and you would go to him and you had written out your hundred words and say 'Could you get this out?' and he would always say 'Can you do this for me?' or 'Can you do that for me? I am terribly busy and I don't know if I can get out this month.'

[1:56:20] Hill: And very often, if you weren't in his good books, he would not perhaps get your airletter out one month because he would have the official side of saying 'I had too much official traffic and I just couldn't do it.' And that's hurtful I think to people because you see people using the position they have got when there was really no need to deal with it that way, and perhaps that is why people eventually got fed up with him. I don't know. But I think that is the only time I can really think that I never got on with one individual.

[1:57:05] Verdenius: I think we are at the end.

Hill: Good.

[1:57:08] Verdenius: Only maybe the illegal drinking stories.

Hill: I don't know about the illegal drinking stories. Do you want to see some of those odd slides I've got, if they are of any ...?

[1:57:20] [End]

ENDS

Possible extracts:

- 'President' King Fid. [0:02:24]
- A penguin courier. [0:07:13]
- An improvised guttering system. [0:12:19]
- 100 words a month. [0:17:39]
- The 'turdicle'. [0:21:21]
- A cat with snow goggles. [0:22:37]
- 12-hour shifts on the building site. [0:28:30]
- Dealing with 24-hour daylight. [0:29:24]
- Steering the ship with Zebedee and Dougal. [0:35:11]
- A huge iceberg. [0:43:01]
- A pickle odour at the IGY hut. [0:44:20]
- Rescuing John Brotherhood. [0:59:51]
- Dog driving. [1:12:46]
- An inexperienced co-pilot. [1:19:10]
- An overloaded plane struggles to take off. [1:21:06]
- Landing on an iceberg. [1:23:54]
- *RRS Bransfield* aground. [1:27:12]
- Salvaging a crashed aeroplane. [1:36:31]