

CHRIS ANDREWS

Edited transcript of a recording of Chris Andrews interviewed by Jaap Verdenius on 10th February 1993. BAS Archives reference AD6/24/3/28. Transcribed by Dawn Sutcliffe on 31st December 2021.

[0:00:00] Verdenius: One of the things you said during the film was that there were a lot of people that you met on the ship who were actually doing anything just to get there.

Andrews: Yes. As I recall most of the people who had gone down had gone as a fulfilment of some ambition. The job that they had been offered had been coincidental really to their getting there. Not everybody, they're a few of us; I was lucky because I had a trade as a doctor, and the people who had a trade as a diesel mechanic or as a radio operator I suspect we had gone for the same reasons, but it was easier for us. The people who wanted to be meteorologists or general assistants or those sorts of roles, there were all sorts of people I recall. I suppose you're looking for specific examples really are you? Well, who can I think of? On my particular base the three meteorologists, one wanted to be a doctor and had been a scientist doing something completely different and then had got attracted to the idea of going to the Antarctic and had gone on this short meteorology course. The cook had been in hotel management, and I suppose at some time maybe he was trained as a chef. The thing I remember about him was the base he was put on; all the fresh eggs had gone in about two weeks, and he hadn't realised that these things were supposed to be stored away. So that wasn't very popular, so I don't think he was a particularly good chef. Sorry, I'm drying up a bit here.

[0:02:33] Verdenius: How did you get involved with the expedition?

Andrews: I had trained to be a doctor in London, and I found being a student quite difficult in a way. I enjoyed the student parts, the fun parts, going to parties and that sort of thing, but I'd found the medicine quite difficult. I enjoyed very much being a newly trained doctor. I found the additional responsibilities made up for a lot. But I think after 6 years at medical school and then a year being a doctor, I just felt I wanted to do something different. I was looking for a direction in my life, so I happened to see the advertisement, and then I applied, so then I joined. That would have been about May or June and doctors are quite hard to find, or they were then. I got my best friend involved, so he said he'd come too although to another base. And then slightly difficult personal circumstances in that I met a girl, a new girl; this was about 6 weeks before I was due to go. We ended up getting married 10 days before I

left but I felt I couldn't drop out because I'd committed my friend to go, and if I didn't go and he had to go it was really not fair. Anyway, I'm still married so that worked out alright. So that's how I got involved. I suppose like many other people I'd always thought about the Antarctic; I'd read various books. While Captain Scott was perhaps a hero to my parents' generation rather than my own, he was certainly someone who stayed in folklore and one couldn't help but be interested in the Antarctic, anybody whose read anything about it.

[0:04:54] Verdenius: Was it hip to go to the Antarctic?

Andrews: Certainly, as a doctor it was considered very odd. All the advice I got was not to go. Despite what one now recalls about the freedoms of the 60's and the early 70's it certainly wasn't like that in medicine. You were supposed to toe the line and do the right jobs and progress through in the right way. Any stepping out of line like going to the Antarctic, was seen as being something that would affect your future career and you really shouldn't do that sort of thing. So that was the official advice. My friends were obviously likeminded and thought I was doing a very sensible thing. And I certainly enjoyed it very much.

[0:06:00] Verdenius: What kind of picture did you have of the situation that you would find when you left?

Andrews: I think I was reasonably well informed. It's difficult in retrospect to remember how much one knew beforehand and how much I've learnt since. Our induction process for the British Antarctic Survey was very good. The time we had, 3 days in Cambridge before we went as a single major entity, plus lots of other information that was given to us. I had a good idea of what to expect. Until you get there you can't imagine how big it is. That was really the major surprise to me. And getting there, I think that was an amazing surprise as well. It's difficult to imagine because we're used to flying everywhere, you get on an airplane, and you get off. When you actually do travel by sea and things take weeks and weeks and weeks, you get a much better idea of how far away everywhere is. The same when we got down there; you could look on the map and you'd see. They'd say 'well you're in South Georgia and we're going to Signy Island' or something and it wasn't just like an overnight ferry to France. It would take you days to achieve these things. Which is why I think it's so splendid that Ranulph Fiennes and Michael Stroud have actually managed to walk across it, I think that's just amazing to read that this week.

[0:07:50] Verdenius: He plays a role in England. It's a news event?

Andrews: I think it is, it has been this week. It's interesting to speculate why. I think Ranulph Fiennes has, in a way he's had bad publicity over the last few years because he's been trying to walk to the north pole as you know with varying degrees of success. I suspect people thought he wasn't quite such an amazing character which he clearly is because the achievements he had, although to anybody who knew what he'd achieved, were quite amazing. Because it wasn't quite the goal that the press wanted it was all rather belittled. I think the fact he has actually achieved this is fantastic. I've never met him, I would like to meet him. I remember back in 1972 when his Transglobe Expedition was being planned and he sent various literature round, I was tempted at the time, I can't quite remember whether it was just after I got back or when I was down there, there was this literature saying what about coming and joining the Transglobe Expedition and going round the world both ways which sounded just amazing. Of course he achieved that a few years later.

[0:09:22] Verdenius: Did you consider that?

Andrews: Oh I did. My problem really was that I had got married. I say problem, I've been very happy to be married of course. But I think like most people you have to decide how much of a traditional existence you're going to live and how much you're going to risk, if you like, and live a more penurious existence and enjoy yourself more. 20 years on into one's life it's difficult to know how the other way would have been. I've been very happy with my life and family; done alright in my career but one can't help thinking that some of these other people who have persisted with exploration, how much fun that would have been.

[0:10:18] Verdenius: You have a book on your shelf there or maybe 2 or 3 books?

Andrews: Yes, one day I shall have to write something myself but not yet. Job for the future. I did write a very detailed, intimate diary to my new wife and one day I will sit down and write something from that. But I haven't really looked at those ever since I came back. I used to write a lot, every day. I think that would be quite fun to do sometime.

[0:10:58] Verdenius: What will be your point of view?

Andrews: I don't know. I suspect perhaps a little bit the sort of thing you've said you're after in your film. Some sort of personal view of growing up perhaps, how one's vision of life is developing. I think there's nothing like just being in love, as I obviously was, and having got married and

feeling a bit distraught at having left my new bride and yet committed to go. And yet enjoying myself because it was something I'd wanted to do. So there was a lot of mix up of emotions I suppose, I suspect as I haven't reread these long letters I know will all be in there and somehow I'll have to try and make some sense of it. But that's why I've put it off, because I don't know whether it's worth doing really.

[0:12:02] Verdenius: There's a sort of growing up in the Antarctic Experience?

Andrews: There were both good and bad things I got out of it. Undoubtedly the good parts of the companionship were excellent, and I made some good friends who I still keep up with. But yet the disappointments as well; the people I actually spent the winter with, there were 8 of us, and the other 7, we lived too close together for too long. I'm sure they would all say the same if I met up with them now, I'd be very happy to meet up and have a drink. But I would not feel any particular bond which is disappointing. I didn't feel I made any real soulmates with the people I was living with. The people who were my soulmates I met on the ships and that sort of thing, who went to other bases. And maybe some of the summer visitors as well who (...) I think it's just too long in a way. It's a long difficult relationship living on an Antarctic base with somebody.

[0:13:29] Verdenius: When you got there, there were a lot of people leaving. You were taking over the medical duties; the other doctor was leaving.

Andrews: Correct

[0:13:42] Verdenius: How did this introduction go for you?

Andrews: It went very well. I still correspond with the doctor who I took over from.

[0:13:55] Verdenius: How did they welcome you?

Andrews: It was a strange time. You knew this was going to be where you stayed, and we'd had a wonderful trip down. We'd visited all these other bases and we'd been to South America, and it had been hard work unloading the ship. But we'd had a really wonderful time and suddenly this was it. This was the end of the experience for the moment because you had to stay there. Of course, you look at things in a slightly different light then. The huts all look a bit small and dirty and there's not too much to do, certainly where I was. It was quite a major expedition to leave the place most of the year and you were just stuck there. So, there was some trepidation, but they were very friendly when we went ashore. As

I recall we were taking their mail, so they were all particularly interested in just getting down and reading their letters rather than talking to us at first. I never felt particularly worried about my medical duties. I would in retrospect with experience now and expertise in a particular field. I'm an anaesthetist and I certainly would have had enormous trouble giving anyone an anaesthetic there. I wouldn't have been able to do it but that didn't worry me at the time.

[0:15:33] Verdenius: You would be worried to give an anaesthetic?

Andrews: Well people did have to. One or two people have had operations and you usually have to perhaps talk somebody else into giving the anaesthetic while you do the surgery as the doctor, you have to do it all. As a young newly qualified doctor one's got much more confidence perhaps.

[0:16:00] Verdenius: What kind of equipment did you use?

Andrews: We were pretty well equipped. Although I say that, we were simply but adequately equipped. One of the problems was that it's difficult equipping the bases for everything. We did have a simple anaesthetic machine and we had simple, basic operating instruments. And as I recall there were one or two specialised things, for example, drilling burr holes in the skull if someone fell and got a haemorrhage into the skull, so that you could have released the pressure. The problem would be as one understands in retrospect that to actually know what to do is the problem, rather more than doing it. And what to do and how to do it safely. We're very lucky in the western world with the preliminaries we have in medicine, the investigations we can do which tell us what is necessary. We had a primitive X-Ray set so you could establish someone had broken their arm but that was all.

[0:17:19] Verdenius: Did you ever have to do any operations or any non-trivial medical handlings?

Andrews: I was involved with one or two. I have to be a little careful what I say because people might be able to identify who they are and that sort of thing. We had one major problem where someone had fallen down a crevasse or over an edge and fallen about 20 feet and broke their leg: on another base, not on my base. That was a major problem for them. They handled it very well; he'd not only broken his leg, but he fractured his pelvis and damaged his urethra, which is of course the tube from your bladder to pass urine out through your penis, which was damaged. The scientists on his base coped very well on the radio with

me, I was on the radio all the time and we got expert advice from London as to what else we might do. They nursed him for a period of about 3 or 4 months and he did very well. His leg was a bit shorter. I never found out whether he had another operation. That was the most major problem. But my compatriot on the other base did have one or two things on the ship of fairly major significance which had to be dealt with. We had one problem of somebody who slightly lost their nerve and that was quite difficult. He was sent down to be a general assistant. He was sent down to be the man who was the expert at climbing and doing everything, to look after scientists, and he clearly lost his nerve and didn't want to go out anymore. And that was difficult for everybody to handle. I think he did eventually get through it which was good. That again was not on my base, it was on another base. But I was the doctor looking after the 3 bases in Marguerite Bay, that was my patch even though I couldn't actually get there most of the year. So that was the medicine side really.

[0:20:08] Verdenius: How do people get along under these circumstances with first a lot of light and then a lot of dark?

Andrews: You just live it. I think this is the problem. It's very difficult to step aside yourself as an individual and look at the base and see how everybody's getting on, how they're reacting to each other, because one is so intimately and emotionally involved with it. I found particular problems as the doctor. I say particular problems; I rather felt that everybody seemed to get on well with me. I never have particular problems with personal relationships but there clearly were problems within the group, not major problems, but there were some problems, interpersonal relationships which weren't working out. Yet everybody seemed to get on with me and so I decided at one point, I wasn't sure whether they really did or were they just being nice to me because I was a doctor, because they didn't want to fall out with me, if you see what I mean. It's interesting. The light and the dark; I think certainly mid-winter and the months around mid-winter were quite quiet. As I recall we used to do a lot of reading, a lot of sitting at the bar. I personally used to alternate. I'd have a night sitting at the bar talking and then I'd go and sit and read for the next night and so on. After mid-winter we did seem to (...) slowly the light came back, and we were able to get out. There were the things to start looking forward to, the aeroplanes coming and a bit more travelling, that sort of thing. Time did move very slowly though. I did a lot of reading, more reading than I've done since. That I do miss. It's one of the great advantages of being there, you do get away from this terrible rat race and always having too little time and too much to do we have now in Britain.

[0:22:43] Verdenius: How much contact did you have with the outside world during winter?

Andrews: As an individual very little. We got our messages; we had a message from home as I recall it was once a month. 100 words, maybe 120 words which had to be split in my case between my parents and my new wife. But it was a very public message. You couldn't really write very many intimacies in it. So, there was that to look forward to. The radio operator kept in touch, but we never listened to the radio. We never listened to the World News or anything, or desperately rarely. So, I find now that whole year, the whole of 1973 is lost to me in some ways. And all the major news events that happened that year come as a surprise to me when I read about them now. There seemed we had no desire to find out what was going on, it didn't seem relevant.

[0:24:00] Verdenius: ???[inaudible]

Andrews: Not so ever, no, not relevant at all. Maybe I'd be different now. I listen a lot to the news now, but I didn't then particularly. Somehow you just didn't need to. You'd rather set up your own little world and settle down in that.

[0:24:24] Verdenius: But what did you talk about during those long winter nights?

Andrews: What did we talk about? It's hard to be certain now. We talked quite a lot about women. My earlier remarks in a way pertain in that this sense of; we were too intimate; it was very difficult to maintain the right level of personal contact and intimacy. Either you were fed up with them so you didn't particularly want to talk to them. Certainly not about maybe your intimate thoughts. But yet you knew you had to; you have to have some sort of social relationships with people. So, in the end perhaps it got a bit superficial I seem to recall that we would talk a lot about things that didn't really matter very much. Not our reasons for being there, which one somehow imagines you should have been talking about.

[0:25:35] Verdenius: You went on several sledging tours?

Andrews: Yes, I was lucky. I think that was because I was the medic, it gave me a lot more freedom which I took advantage of. I hope people weren't jealous of that, the others. It was much harder for the meteorologists and people because if one went away the others had to do their work whereas for me, I could take the radio messages and answer the questions. I had 3 trips out: 3 sledging trips. I went out man hauling

with one of the chaps. We lasted about 8 or 9 days and I have no idea how anyone can man haul 400 pounds across the Antarctic. We had enormous problems man hauling. We were probably trying to pull a bit more than 400 pounds. It is very, very difficult. We had to go uphill as well so to achieve 20 miles a day which these guys are is just mind blowing. Very difficult.

[0:26:49] Verdenius: How do you go up hill man hauling?

Andrews: Well, we had to because we were at sea level and to go anywhere, we had to climb, not very high, five or six hundred feet to get in towards the mountains and that's hard work. Then I went on a climbing trip for a couple of weeks. We didn't achieve a lot, but I'm not actually a real climber myself. But I do a lot of walking and I got out and about. We did climb one peak and then we went on quite a long 3 weeks sledging trip with the dogs through to Rothera, through the mountains and round to Rothera where the new base is. I suppose in total I had about 6 weeks travelling and then in the summer I got out in the aeroplanes quite a lot, which was brilliant fun. Couldn't get enough of that, going flying. That's, I think, when you really appreciate how big the place is, when you get up in an aeroplane. Your horizon is extended, and it looks the same wherever you look.

[0:28:01] Verdenius: Looks the same wherever you look?

Andrews: What I mean is you just see mountains and snow wherever you look. If you're on the ground, and of course you can see a long way on the ground in the Antarctic. From our base we can look across to the mountains of Alexander Island which were probably 60 miles away, and you can see that quite clearly. But if you get up in an aeroplane you can maybe see 100 miles or more away. Just more and more white and mountains and nothing else, no vegetation just nothing there.

[0:28:48] Verdenius: What did you take along on these sledging trips?

Andrews: The sledging trips I was involved with were very much (...) they weren't working trips. I did a little bit joined in with one or two working trips where there was more routine. Geology or whatever where they were collecting rocks and they had a routine of what they were actually doing every day and it was working. Whereas the trips I was on were fun trips, so we worked ourselves hard, but we didn't have to do anything except travel. So we took the basic equipment that one was provided; the pyramid tent and very nice down sleeping bags,

skis and all the gear, plenty of food and a few books. That was about it really and cameras.

[0:29:53] Verdenius: How did you keep your camera running?

Andrews: That was quite difficult. I adapted it. I had a little Rollei super8 camera which I adapted by making a battery pack and wearing it in my pocket and just running the wires and plugging it in the bottom. Because it did stop running, it wouldn't work otherwise. And that was quite successful.

[0:30:22] Verdenius: Didn't the film get frozen?

Andrews: It didn't seem to no. It was all just standard Super8 cassettes, and it seemed to work perfectly well. Where I was on the Antarctic peninsula the climate is not as extreme as it is in the centre. We did see low temperatures I can't remember exactly, but I think we may have gone down about minus 45, minus 50 even, the coldest. But the average temperature was much higher than that and was often only minus 10 going up to zero on a good day in the summer. These are temperatures you see when you go skiing now, they're not too extreme. You wouldn't think about anything taking film when you're out skiing. Skiing in the Alps I mean, not down there.

[0:31:24] Verdenius: Which books did you take?

Andrews: Can I remember which books? I went through various stages. I read quite a lot of books that I'd always wanted to read and never had time to read. I read a lot when I was a young man, 12, 13, 14 when I did read a lot of books. I didn't read much when I was at university and there are a lot of authors, I'll just give you a few examples, people like Hardy or Trollop, people that you'd heard of and somehow never had the time. They're books that take a lot of reading and there never seemed to be time. These are very good books to read. On one trip I remember taking Asimov's book *The Foundation Trilogy* and reading all those. So, anything but preferably long so it went on, because we always seemed to have hours when we weren't doing very much.

[0:32:35] Verdenius: I was wondering how you got time to read on sledging trips?

Andrews: You spend quite a lot of time when you're not sledging, that's the answer to that. We weren't experts, we were being careful, and you have to be careful because if you do get into trouble there's nobody to rescue you. We had the only dog team on my base, and we were a long

way from home. They had skidoos; they could have come looking for us but that was all. It would have been unusual, it would have been a totally unplanned way of doing it, going out on skidoos. So, you had to be careful, and you didn't travel in bad weather if you couldn't see because there's a lot of crevasses around. So, you just have to be a bit careful on glaciers. There's a lot of glaciated ice around. We only travelled if we could see where we were going. If you can't well you have to lie up for the day and read.

[0:33:43] Verdenius: Could you get yourself out of a crevasse if you fell in?

Andrews: Yes I think I could have done that. We were instructed on the base. I'm not a mountaineer as I said but we practiced. We didn't actually go down crevasses, but we practiced on rock cliffs nearby, climbing up ropes. We always took a safety rucksack on the sledges with all the necessary gear in to get somebody out. There's no doubt if one person goes down and there are only two of you, it's quite difficult to get the other chap out particularly if he's hurt at all, if not impossible to get him out. But you don't think you just try it. I did actually fall in a few crevasses. Never right down and I found that very frightening and almost lost my nerve. We flew into Stonington; I was flown in as the doctor to check out their medical boxes. This was towards the end of their summer when the ice on the air strip was badly melted and there were crevasses open everywhere. It was probably about 3 or 4 miles down from the air strip down to Stonington base. We were loading the sledge up and I fell through about 3 different holes and ended up hanging onto the sledge. All these, what seemed to me at the time really hard guys, were just totally oblivious of these dangers. When we finally loaded everything up and just got on these sledges and drove like hell jumping across crevasses on the way down, I was not looking forward to my trip back up two weeks later. We achieved it. I found that quite difficult the crevasses. It's a funny sensation walking on things that give way underneath you. There were a few other crevasse incidents when I was out (...) when we were out climbing, I fell in one of the bergschrunds. But it was all very straight forward. It takes a bit of getting used to. I think I decided at that time I was very much an amateur rather than a professional if you know what I mean. I was very happy to be there doing it, but I would never be one of the really professional hard men who make a living at it.

[0:36:49] Verdenius: Sort of relying on the other people who were there?

Andrews: I've never doubted my mental capacities. I never give up, I'm quite good that way but I would rely on their physical or their judgement of

the degree of difficulty about things and what to do about them. Professional mountaineer if you see what I mean. I felt I couldn't quite make the jump from being an amateur having a good time, to that.

[0:37:38] Verdenius: Is it the same as what you said with the aeroplane?

Andrews: In what way?

[0:37:48] Verdenius: You said about the aeroplane that they were taking risks, but they were not taking risks with the weather. They were doing things?

Andrews: Yes, I think there was something similar in that. The point I was really making there was that having talked to them and talked to pilots since we all have some idea of how wonderful it would be to be free and just to get up in an aeroplane and fly, but actually it's so carefully controlled, you have to report where you're going, what you're doing. You can't fly where you want and yet down there, they have total freedom. So, they would tend to use their aeroplanes as they would wish to but would recognise the dangers. While they might throw it round the sky they wouldn't try and fly it when they couldn't see because they recognise if they crashed it which they'd be quite likely to do there's no one who can help them. There have been various aeroplane problems I know over the years. When I was there, we were going through a very good patch where for 5 years there were no accidents, but I know they've had some since.

[0:39:14] Verdenius: Is it the same with the mountaineers who do all kind of things that seemingly are risky but keep track upon ???[inaudible]

Andrews: I haven't met that many real mountaineers apart from in the Antarctic. Because my circle of friends has been more hill walkers, not exactly rambling but not the Himalayan experience. I've got one or two colleagues who actually do, but they're amateurs as well, they just have more money and go to the Himalayas. I'm getting a bit bogged down here. I'm not expressing myself very well. I think we've sort of reached a bit of a dead end in this conversation.

[0:40:25] Verdenius: What do you mean?

Andrews: I say I'm not sure I can elaborate further exactly the point I'm trying to make. That is the lure, there's no doubt the lure of the Antarctic for many people is the freedom that they somehow perceive it will give them to do what they want to do. And I imagine it applies to mountaineers who can climb mountains no one has climbed before and

that sort of thing. And still recognise the limitations that they do have to be a bit more careful. Of course, the problems that have come tended to be where people did break simple rules; camped on sea ice or travelled in bad weather or whatever. That's the times when people do get into trouble

[0:41:24] Verdenius: We got stuck somewhere. At the point of the reason why (...) One of the things that occurs to me now when meeting all these people, is that all of their bases are situated on the edge of the continent. Which is quite different from the inside of the continent; the places that Scott and Amundsen and the first explorers went to. It's a rocky terrain, it's like the Alps, its mountains, it's not a desert, which makes up for some kind of difference, because the place where Scott went to was a desert, was so cold.

Andrews: It's quite true. He started off like that on the Ross Ice shelf and it seemed a bit like that. Then they hit the mountains and headed up through the mountains for a while, and then it was a desert again on the plateaux. It must have seemed much more inhospitable to them. It is difficult to imagine doing it not knowing what was going on.

[0:43:20] Verdenius: When you were there everything about those Russians, they were sitting there on the cold pole[phonetic] virtually in the middle of nowhere

Andrews: We did think a bit. I said earlier we never listened to the radio and that's true on base, we never did. But I remember when I was out on one of my journeys, we listened a bit to the radio. We listened to a play, Frankenstein. Frankenstein is Transylvania, isn't it? Where he goes to Transylvania. You know Dr Frankenstein?

[0:44:06] Verdenius: Frankenstein goes to Scotland. It's Dracula that comes from Transylvania

Andrews: I mean Dracula then, Dracula. They'd had the play on and at the end of the play, which lasted about an hour on the world service, he gallops off into the night and disappears into the night. So, as a joke we were sitting in our tent, a long way, there was nobody anywhere near us. We were probably 100 miles from our base and there were no other bases or anything nearby and feeling a bit lonely. So, we sent a telegram to the BBC and said that we thought we'd heard this sledge galloping past. They read this out the next week on the world service and that was quite nice. It was really one of the few times I remember now feeling in contact with the outside world at all. I don't know why we

actually put the radio on at that point, why we decided we would listen. It must have just been something that happened. That was very unusual. Normally you didn't think at all about any of the others. I suppose it's a bit like British history. Despite being at the centre of Europe we are a very insular nation. When you learn history at school all you learn about is the Stuarts and the Tudors and the British kings and queens and of course we made all our colonies learn about the same things. When you're in the Antarctic you just learn about the British bases. One knows that Chile and Argentina claim the same bit of territory, but I don't ever recall seeing a map with their bases on. I know where it is now because I've learnt since. But at the time we must presumably have sailed quite close by, and we never called in or talked about them. There were seven British bases around the peninsula and you're going to that one.

[0:46:26] Verdenius: Did you have any contact with them?

Andrews: None at all. The only contact we had at all, we had one visit from a tourist ship. It came down to Adelaide once when I was there. That was very strange, all these old Americans; we found that quite difficult to cope with really. They were pretty unwelcome I think it's fair to say. We did our best to be hospitable, difficult not to be because they were enthusing. We were the real explorers, and they were just visiting. It was quite nice; they took us out to the ship. We had a drink on the ship some of us and then came ashore again. But it was very unreal, it wasn't part of it. It was rather intrusive. We were really very happy I think with our own little isolated world, and we got used to it and we didn't want anybody else to come in. It was an intrusion. That was the only visit that I recall. Having said that there was one other now I think about it but very different visit, and that was two French men. This was the most extraordinary thing. I don't know how I could forget that. We heard a knock on the door one night unexpectedly. Of course, people don't knock on the door in the middle of the night and there was a French guy there who had come on a yacht, he and his friend on a yacht called *Dameon*[phonetic] and I think they've written a book about it since, but I haven't read the book. But they'd actually sailed from Tahiti and made landfall at Adelaide Island. They were parked by our jetty, and we went down and saw their yacht and of course we saw these as very different beings who we wanted to entertain and hear all about them and do whatever because this was real adventure to sail from Tahiti in a yacht. But they couldn't stay, they were worried because of the ice. There were lots of big bergy bits around threatening their yacht, so they stayed overnight moored to our jetty fending off bits and sailed away the next day. That was a shame, we would have

like them to stay. That was another intrusion but a welcome one. I forget how many days it took them from Tahiti, but it wasn't very long. It was something like 40 days they'd sail straight down

[0:49:38] Verdenius: An intrusion. Those tourists must have been one of the first tourist ships to go there?

Andrews: Yes I think it was. It was the *Lindblad Explorer* it was called then. I suspect they keep changing the names on these ships and using the same ships don't they from what I read? We were about as far south as they'd gone, and I don't know how often they do go down there. Argentine Islands they went the year I was there 2 or 3 times. I think they experimented and went further south to us, but I suppose the ice is that much less predictable, a little bit more difficult for them so they probably didn't persevere. Funny idea having tourist ships

[0:50:34] Verdenius: How would you describe your presence there at the Continent?

Andrews: I never questioned why I was there. I very much saw it superficially as an unexplored continent because that's what I'd been told and that's what I believed. We were there both for the personal adventure and exploration of our own characters I suppose. But we were there with a purpose. I've been brought up in a scientific family. I like to think I am a scientist and that alone was justification to be there to find out about it. I did a number of projects, but my major research was physiology of the Adelie penguin, various aspects of their liver physiology. I undertook that with the fervour, I suppose, of feeling that it was knowledge waiting to be found out. Now I would question much more whether it was justified. I like this idea of developing Antarctica as a park and being very careful with what we do and how we touch any aspect of it really. I think that the penguins who suffered in my high hands, I don't mean literally, they didn't feel any pain or anything, but the few penguins that were used for my research programme, and from which I would say we did gain a lot of information and a lot of papers were published. One has to think a little bit deeper about whether what is one searching for. I think so much more is now known in terms of satellite technology and so on that a lot of what we were scratching around on the ground for can be found out much more indirectly now. So, I would see that time being different from now anyway, different from now. I don't know how much things really have changed. I rather belittle the simplistic research then of counting numbers of birds and ringing them and that sort of thing and seeing what happened to them. I think again I was probably not educated well enough to appreciate the importance of that sort of research and rather more concentrated on

(...) With a medical upbringing, now particularly as an anaesthetist if you got a drug it does something. I give you a muscle relaxant it paralyses you and so on. I have this problem deciding what is real science which is how I was brought up to look at life, the real science.

[0:54:32] Verdenius: Looking at life is a real science?

Andrews: We all have benefitted from the application of pure science I suppose is what I am trying to say. This is the great debate that's gone on through the 70's and 80's, certainly in British Universities; What is the value of pure science? By pure science I mean finding out things just because they're there. Whatever you happen to look at, and that's how I saw my exploration of the penguin if you like, it was pure science. Whereas now and Mrs Thatcher and her revolution in the Universities is very much geared at only applied science is of value. What's the point of researching about anything unless somethings going to come out of it, whereas the pure scientist always says well you never know what's going to come out of it. You've got to keep looking. While I still hold to that view, I have changed a little bit and recognised that applied science has got a greater part to play.

[0:56:05] Verdenius: Was it pure science that you were doing?

Andrews: Yes I was, it was very much pure science because we were looking at liver function in penguins. The penguin is an unusual creature of course. It's quite an odd evolutionary quirk in a way. I was particularly interested at that time in the liver and things like the production of bile and the constituents of bile. One of the things you can do, looking at different species, is the different types of bile acids that are produced in different species. You can come to conclusions about how they've evolved and that sort of thing. So, that was just one aspect of it and the anatomy, the hepatic anatomy. It's a bit like climbing an unclimbed mountain really, nobody's done it before so it's terribly easy. What is the value of it? That's what I would now questioning I suppose I'm saying.

[0:57:30] Verdenius: Suppose I tell you that the research being done now on Adelie penguins, research on the waste of Adelie penguins which contains less amount of nitrogen will in the end take part of the research programme on genetic engineering which will bring contribution to the acid rain programme. Any reason more or less to call that new science? Comes pretty close

Andrews: Yes it does. I haven't really changed my views. I think pure science is the real science. The question is how much we can afford. My current career in the health service, we are continually being told that you've got to make the most of your resources, money is all. I think like many people I find it all rather depressing. Why does it seem more like that now than it used to? I don't know. When I went to the Antarctic, we were very fortunate of course. A lot of resources were being put into us although we didn't realise it. I had no idea how much it was costing to keep me down there and to set me up and let me do what I wanted. We were allowed to do what we liked; it was wonderful. I suppose that was on the backs of not exactly of the masses, but the taxes of many others who weren't being given the opportunity and now there are so many more people getting opportunities to do things we have to look a little bit more carefully about how we spend the money. That's all I'm saying.

[0:59:43] Verdenius: I think it's difficult to make the division. The ozone layer, you know the hole above the south pole. It was discovered by accident, but it was a pretty important discovery. It sort of changed the world probably, and was made from pure science, value free science

Andrews: Yes, yes, absolutely

[1:00:13] Verdenius: Would you describe your presence there, with the other people who were there, as pure scientists?

Andrews: On my particular base there wasn't a lot of pure science going on because we were very much a support base. We were the air support base. Meteorology is, I don't know; I mustn't discuss sciences I don't know a lot about. There's a lot of pure science in meteorology, of course there is, but actually measuring the weather on a day-to-day basis isn't particularly pure science I wouldn't say. My science in a way was the only pure science going on there. The other bases, South Georgia and Signy, that's where the real biological pure science was going on. The field parties out who we were supporting were doing a certain amount with collecting rocks and measuring ice thicknesses and measuring this, that and the other. It's not exactly pure science, and yet it is. It's difficult geographical science I think, finding out more about something is pure science although there's a sort of logical progression isn't there from knowing nothing at all about a continent, which they didn't about Antarctica, to making a 1 in 1000 map of the place. You have to progress through a series of stages. I don't know whether you'd say it's pure science or applied science or what or geographical science. It's a bit different.

[1:02:10] Verdenius: Do you consider yourself purely as a scientist?

Andrews: I didn't no. I considered myself as a doctor. I think I was there as a bit of a psychological prop to other people. Doctors increasingly are only as much use as the people who surround them and the equipment that surrounds them. It's very difficult as an individual to do very much. I didn't recognise that particularly at the time. And I'm sure that the other people on the base didn't recognise that. I was the repository of the medical knowledge and if they hurt themselves, I would hopefully sort them out. But in fact, modern medicine takes an awful lot more than a doctor and his black bag. In reality you rely very much on people being young and fit and healthy. You could cope with certain things, minor accidents, and minor problems but very difficult to investigate and sort out a major problem or major accident, very difficult. So that was my primary role but having recognised that I was only going to be there as an insurance policy for everybody else and do my best, I then set about seeing what else I could achieve. I did get a PhD from my time down there which has served me in good stead. I feel I worked very hard for it. That was the pure science. It also meant that when I did come back and get back on the treadmill of career medicine it meant that my time had been well spent and I didn't miss out.

[1:04:23] Verdenius: It sort of integrates with your development?

Andrews: Yes, I think it helped me a lot with my future career. The whole experience has helped me a lot. I felt more able to relate to people in a way. One of the things having been down there with so few people, and as I said somewhat disappointingly in terms of personal relationships, it does undoubtedly strengthen you and let you know your own limitations and help in your relationships with other people.

[1:05:15] Verdenius: Would you go there on a tourist ship ever?

Andrews: I think I would only want to go on a tourist ship probably with a group of ex Fids. I wouldn't want to go with a lot of people who I felt were sharing it with me for the first time. I would love to go back, and I would love to go back with, even if I didn't know people, people who had been down there in the past on some whatever, nostalgic expedition ship or whatever. But I wouldn't like to go with a lot of Americans who are just going to gawp. I feel that would spoil the experience for me. I would rather just have my original experience in

my mind rather than go and see it again with a lot of different people who (..) Maybe that's illogical but that's how I feel I think.

[1:06:19] Verdenius: I think that makes sense. I don't think you are there with a lot of tourists with small pocket cameras staying in their ships probably. It seems in some way out of touch with the country. You also have said that they are coming to watch you on the base

Andrews: I would hate to be seen by people down there as one of those.

[1:06:59] Verdenius: What was it like? I mean if you tell it, it sounds like they are watching monkeys

Andrews: That's how they saw us, real explorers 'Gee there's a real explorer. Look at his beard!' and all this sort of thing.

[1:07:15] Verdenius: How did you know that?

Andrews: Really, that's how they were. There'd be groups of them wandering round looking and you felt as though you were an animal that was being gawped at. It's as though they'd gone to some safari park and were seeing you in the wild, only not quite. Funny, but they were quite open about it. And I think this was probably for them the high spot of their trip. Undoubtedly, they're further south. A real base and real explorers in their view. We shouldn't have felt the way we did but you couldn't help it.

[1:08:00] Verdenius: They also said this 'my gosh you are looking like Scott'

Andrews: Oh yes, they did! Because of course we did. If you get a group of men together you don't, well we hadn't shaved but that just gives you a beard. You do look pretty dirty and scruffy. Our normal base routine meant that most people were only taking one shower a week just because of the problems of getting water and you couldn't be bothered to get any more water in. Clothes, well you washed them occasionally [laughs] so they always looked awful and dirty and smelt. It just was normal, natural. That's how one seemed to be, and you didn't notice these things. So, when this lot arrived in their pristine, no doubt anoraks and things given out on the expedition ship, all looking beautifully new and clean, we stood out, we looked like real explorers.

[1:09:08] Verdenius: But of course you look different, and you look like explorers but I think something really changes in your mind when suddenly there is

someone standing before you with a camera and is photographing you because you look so exotic.

Andrews: Just changing the subject slightly but in a way on the same tack. One thing I haven't mentioned which again I would observe, and I think is an interesting thing about it all. There are undoubtedly people who do become obsessed or whatever word you want to use; perhaps that's too strong, with the Antarctic or with any other wild place, who have trouble relating when they do get back to civilisation and keep going back and back. That's interesting, I met one or two people when I was down there who were in that phase, who'd been there before and had gone back since. Their motivation is interesting, why they find that their remote side wanting to live in the Antarctic, in this remote place, overtakes their desire to live anywhere where the majority of people want to live in civilisation. I personally, while I would love to go back and I wouldn't mind going and spending another winter, I couldn't conceive of giving up the other side of my life now to keep doing that.

[1:11:03] Verdenius: You never could consider it?

Andrews: I mentioned earlier the fact that maybe one looks back and you think you had the chance you could have stayed on. I think the people who do go back, and back and back, are giving up a lot and not gaining as much as they might by having another life. Again, I'm not expressing myself clearly and I'm rather losing my way here.

[1:11:44] Verdenius: Are you thinking of somebody particularly? Some life story particularly of someone?

Andrews: Oh no I'm not really, I'm just thinking of a few ordinary Fids. No one in particular. There are a lot of people who have gone back and back and back. I can understand their desire to be, as my own desire is, to be associated with the Antarctic because it's such a wonderful place. But to actually live there is a pretty remote thing to do. The guys who went down in the early days and spent 3 years there because that's how it was. You can imagine doing that. Of course, one or two of them went back but they had a goal. They had the goal of getting to the pole. They were driven on. But the actual living there while they were doing it was pretty uncomfortable, pretty difficult for them. In a way modern day people who are going back and back and back are actually going just for the living there, which I would have thought not such a psychological lift, not such a help. What is the goal if you keep going back there? I'm not sure.

[1:13:23] Verdenius: You've probably read Brave New World with Mr Savage?

Andrews: I have read Brave New World but I'm afraid I don't recall that. It's a long time ago; one of my books I read when I was 13 or 14 year old.

[1:13:44] Verdenius: He's brought out of the jungle or the savagery to be shown the brave new world and he goes back again, whilst not only going back to savagery or to hardship, but also losing his face in the technological world. It's over losing a lot and gaining not very much.

Andrews: Well, that sounds really what I'm saying doesn't it? You need a goal I think and first time down there to see it is a fantastic goal and one I would now repeat if I could but as a visitor not as a sort of resident.

[1:14:50] Verdenius: Did you ever have this idea that you (...) There were some of the people that I spoke to with had this idea. I've been taking with the other guys on the base and we had these ideas about will we fit into society anymore? At this stage we had the idea if the bomb should fall, what do we do? Thinking starting to get sort of isolated, and they started imagining the world in which they had to take care of themselves. Ordinary atmosphere not being present anymore. This was actually playing a great role with a lot of people.

Andrews: Certainly, I developed this sense of isolation. I think my own time was so geared up by the fact I'd left my new wife which was difficult. I thought a lot about her. As a group we certainly found, well Stanley seemed quite a long way away, but you could just about accept them and all their messages. Things coming from London, the most innocuous message would arrive and there'd be a bit of an uproar about it because it all seemed completely unreasonable. I think one lost one's sense of proportion quite a lot. I don't think I ever reached the stage of feeling out of touch with my past and prospective future. I recognise perhaps a change in views and realities of the outside world but equally recognise that was because of where I was and what was happening. I didn't ever feel it was particularly a real change. One other thing which we touched on and you were talking about having jobs. One of the slight problems on our base that winter was that we had a man as base commander who didn't have a job. I think this was a new role, slightly experimental. He was sent as our manager effectively but didn't have a role; he wasn't the radio operator or the diesel mechanic or the doctor or anything. That was very difficult for him. He handled it very well actually. I think he took a lot of stick from the rest of the people on the base. He had come in, he had never been there before, so he was the leader having not had a winter there whereas some of the other guys

were staying on for their second winter and knew much more about it than he did. I think that was a mistake. I don't quite know why it was organised. How much he affected our vision of the outside world, because he was the filter between the telegrams arriving from London and the Falklands to the rest of us. So perhaps some of our sense of change or vision of the outside world was geared to the fact that we found it a bit difficult having him as our manager. It's much easier to be underneath somebody you recognise as a superior being if you like, somebody who's done it all and you admire.

[1:19:10] Verdenius: Instead of a newcomer?

Andrews: Yes. But he handled it well really.

[1:19:21] Verdenius: Do you think there's an aspect which I didn't cover?

Andrews: I think not. At the time the most important thing to me was my relationship with my wife. It's funny in retrospect thinking about it and as I say I would get the letters, perhaps I should have got them out and let you read some of them. My whole time there was linked up in a way with this relationship with her, which couldn't be because she was over there. While everybody has girlfriends and people get their 'dear John' letters when the people have given them up, it was a bit different for me in that I had actually just got married. I think they were probably a bit worried about that. The authorities, the BAS people were probably a bit worried and wondered what might happen. That probably slightly affected my ability to enjoy myself down there. If I hadn't met her, I would have looked at things slightly differently. I'm not saying I didn't enjoy it; that was always there. I was sort of wishing the time away rather than enjoying it.

[1:21:15] Verdenius: You couldn't afford to get lost.

Andrews: No, I didn't want to get lost or get killed or anything [laughs]

[1:21:27] Verdenius: Different from the people who go over and over and over there. You have some feeling that they want to get lost there.

Andrews: Yes. I think your right. That's a very good way of looking at it. Perhaps they do.

[1:21:50] Verdenius: Put on your microphone.

Andrews: 'February 1973. Today has been incredibly gruesome. The *John Biscoe* arrived with 50 seals for dog food during the winter. All sorts of specimens had been removed. They arrived ashore hideously mutilated. Transport from the ship was somewhat novel, a wire strap round each one and towed in the water, 10 at a time to be winched ashore by us. The seals were mainly Crabeaters but smaller numbers of Weddell's all weighing around 400 pounds. I've taken a lot of movie film of the operation and more tomorrow when we have a seal chop. An operation which is undertaken once every few months and by all accounts it's pretty horrific. At present the seals lie in neat rows like corpses in a morgue trussed up with last year's victims, who have yet to be eaten. Ecologically and economically it's pretty sound policy but emotionally it's a little trying. I suppose after my own efforts to decrease the world's wildlife stocks, I should be immune to it all but I'm not. The more sadistic members have seemed to get quite a kick out of it. Last night was the second of what will no doubt be routine. '

[1:24:13] Andrews: This was before they'd all gone and left (...) 'who cannot stand any form of vivisection and confessed to spending an hour and a half chasing a penguin away for fear I might spot it. I tried to inspire him with science but when finally, he told me his conscience might force him to let up, any penguins I attempt to cage I knew I had lost. I can respect his emotional standpoint but feel very sad that he should feel so strongly and obviously be so upset by what I personally could not do without believing in it'

[1:24:55] Andrews: 'Just north of Stonington in beautiful fjord territory huge masses of mountains with clear blue sea and crevasse glaciers between the hills. From there we flew down the peninsula and dropped in at Two Sledges to give them a few goodies. I photographed the dogs but stupidly I only took off with 12 photos and soon used them all. The perspective of the place from the air is very different, the size is still there but on a more manageable scale from the air. The whole width of the peninsula is visible. I can't begin to describe the sensation. I don't know if you've ever been in small aeroplanes but it's much more like being in a car than a big jet. Very noisy one flies much lower threading between the mountains and over them sometimes often with a great lurch as the air temperature changes and the plane drops a few feet. When we stopped at the Sledges, they were both at 8000 feet and the temperature was -14 degrees and my first taste of the real cold. When it comes to landing the pilot just nips down, has a quick look and then zoom down we go. If anything, landing on skis is less bumpy than our trip to Portugal. In the afternoon I went right down over King George VI sound to a depot

almost as for Fossil Bluff and on the way back I flew the plane for a while. Unfortunately, we were back after the other plane had flown by”

[1:26:49]

<ENDS>

Possible Extracts:

- Expectations when travelling to and arriving in Antarctica [0:06:00]
- Good and bad things of the Antarctic Experience [0:12:02]
- Equipment for doctors on the bases and medical incidences [0:16:00]
- Living with constant light and constant dark [0:20:08]
- Description of sledging tours [0:25:35]
- Visitors to the base [0:46:26]
- Thoughts on pure science versus applied science [0:50:34]
- Description of some being ‘obsessed’ with Antarctica [1:11:03]
- Extracts read from Chris Andrews diary [1:21:50]