

JOHN DAGLESS

Edited transcript of a recording of John Dagless interviewed by Jaap Verdenius on 16th February 1993. BAS Archives AD6/24/3/36. Transcribed by Andy Smith, 26th August 2020.

Part One

[Part 1 0:00:00] Dagless: Talk about these things, you see.

[Part 1 0:00:02] Verdenius: So your memory text?

Dagless: Yes, they are just memory notes for myself, that's all they are. And I can't be sure of all the names. I could look them up. I will tell you one thing. I still haven't unpacked. I have got some garages over at another place about six miles away. I have got two crates in there that came back from the Antarctic with me. I still haven't unpacked them [Laughs] after all these years. There's lots of notes and the big thing in there and there is so much stuff in these garages that it would take me a week of solid work to find it all and make sense of it all.

[Part 1 0:00:52] Verdenius: How much stuff is there?

Dagless: About four times the amount of that black case. Not a huge amount but it's a lot ... We didn't take a lot of personal stuff down there. But there's a load of stuff that I just haven't looked at. I mean there's films and things I still haven't done, bothered to get printed. I have just got the negatives. I have never printed them or anything like that. Of course in the fifties you didn't ... These things weren't so readily done. It was something I was always going to do, because I do my own developing, my own printing and all that. I printed a few up and then I have never done it since, what with looking after the house and the girls and the cars and everything. That has all taken a very back step and I don't do it anymore. But when I am 75, I may have time when I am 75 to get it all out and write something down and look at it all and sort it all out. After all Darwin didn't produce the results of his research until he was an old man, Darwin. He went out on the *Beagle*. He went sailing down South America and to Easter Island and all these places when he was a very young man and he didn't produce anything until he was an old man.

[Part 1 0:02:20] Verdenius: That takes a special kind of patience.

Dagless: I suppose so. I don't know. Yes. I mean one might always die but then tough luck. The world will progress. Well I don't know about progress; the world will carry on anyway, at least for a limited time.

[Part 1 0:02:52] Verdenius: How long have you been there? We are talking about the whaling.

Dagless: Yes, I was whaling. I went whaling first in 1955. Yes, whaling in 1955. That was on the *Balena* Expedition. I had been to Egypt before and Malta and Gibraltar and seen a bit of North Africa. I had been in the Army and I thought 'Well ...'. I then got a job in an insurance company in London, right in the heart of the City of London:

32 Threadneedle Street. And one gets fed up with this, especially as a young man and I thought 'Well, let's branch out a bit.' How do you go to Africa or the Antarctic or anywhere else like this, you see? So I thought 'Oh yes, good idea. I know chemistry and biology.' I did that at school to quite a high standard and I studied for half a first medical degree. And I thought 'They must have a laboratory on a big whaling factory nowadays.' So I looked it up on the Stock Exchange. I looked at all the whaling companies and found one called Hector Whaling. I rang them up and, lo and behold, they wanted somebody to work in a laboratory that season. So I went along to 41 or 42 Upper Grosvenor Street and met the chief chemist, all the chemists actually, and had an interview and got the job. So I went working in the laboratory on a whaling factory ship for the season '55 to '56. It was good.

[Part 1 0:04:53] Dagless: We went across to the ... Well to get on the expedition you had to go up to Newcastle and take a ship across the North Sea on the Fred Olsen Line, the *Blenheim*, across to Oslo and then up to Tonsberg. And the ship was lying at Tonsberg. That all took two or three weeks because the ship didn't sail immediately. Then we sailed and I will tell you what: we had as rough a sea in the North Sea almost as we had the whole time in the Antarctic. It was very rough. We sailed across to ... In those days we could have bunkered full of oil at somewhere like Rotterdam but it was cheaper to go all the way across from Europe to the Dutch West Indies, to the Caribbean, Curacao, all the way across to Curacao, to fill the ship full of about 20,000 tons of fuel oil. Then cross all the way back across the South Atlantic, back to Cape Town, and then set off to the Antarctic from Cape Town. And it was cheaper to do all that. Mind you, you needed the time because the crew spent most of that time covering virtually every horizontal surface on the ship and the companionways and the stairs, everything, had to be covered in wood, all covered in timber.

[Part 1 0:06:34] Dagless: We had a huge stack of wood piled up on the deck when we left Norway and of course the flensers and the people that cut the whales up, they have like crampons. They climb up like mountain climbers on top of the whales when they were on deck, and they have these great big spikes on their boots and then they need wood. They are skidding all over the place if you left the metal on the ship. So they covered it all with wood so they can walk about everywhere with these spikes on their boots. And also if you had the flensing and the lemming going on, on the main wooden deck, you would ruin it because when you come back after the season, the whole of the deck is ripped up and thrown overboard because it is all stinky and smelly and half worn out. So you can throw it all away and then you have a clean ship, relatively clean ship. A friend of mine, we came into Cape town. Everybody was getting out their best clothes and everything again. A friend of mine went into a shop. He had got clean clothes. He thought he was clean and didn't smell and it was noticed in the shop that he had a funny smell about him and it was coming from his watch strap. The leather on his watch strap had absorbed this smell of whaling and they could just smell that one thing. Interesting.

[Part 1 0:08:12] Verdenius: What was your task? Because you said there was a laboratory and I could go along.

Dagless: Ah, the laboratory. Modern whaling, you don't just produce ..., oil the whales up and use the result. You have to produce oil to certain standards and qualities. So we produced one or two qualities of fin whale oil, or blue whale oil and

you produced sperm whale oil. You had to test them for colours, purity, clarity. All the measurements: you had to measure all the oil tanks every day or even twice a day, so that you knew exactly what the production was, how many whales you'd used and how much you had produced.

[Part 1 0:09:05] Dagless: The meat we used to grind up and dry for meat meal. We had a 10,000 ton refrigerator ship that we used to send boats across from the factory ship, with 10,000 tons of frozen whale meat. The bones were crushed up and you would produce bone meal from that for fertiliser. The meat meal would go for fertiliser and the whale meat itself would go for dog food. We had a big contract with a firm called Chappies for dog food. All these things had to be quality controlled even in those days. When you are producing your meat meal or your bone meal, you would want to know how much water, if any, was left in it. You would need to know how much oil, if any, was left in it. So you were constantly analysing these products for residues of water and oil, and various things like that. We also did a lot ... some of the early work on preserving whale meat with the use of antibiotics, streptomycin and things like that. We were doing that in 1955. Yes, doing all those things, yes.

[Part 1 0:10:32] Verdenius: Testing?

Dagless: Testing the products, yes.

[Part 1 0:10:34] Verdenius: Can you give me an idea of what the usual way of things is on a whaling ship.

Dagless: The usual way of things? Yes OK. So having traipsed across the Atlantic in two directions, you then set out for Cape Town about November time. And you go down into the Antarctic which isn't far from Cape Town. You are almost in there as soon as you start, and the factory will have ... our factory had I think it was ten whale catchers or twelve. The first season that comes on is the sperm whale season. Now for a certain time, in those days, from I think it was the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, you were allowed to catch sperm whales. Now this oil had to keep ... Nothing in a sperm whales basically is edible, so you had to keep the oil very separate. In the head of the sperm whale there is some stuff called spermaceti. We used to collect that for the perfume industry. It acts as a very good holding agent for the perfumes. When you put your perfume into the spermaceti, it holds it and stops the smell evaporating or losing its smell too quickly. This was used in the cosmetics industry. Some of the products of the sperm whale were used for lubricating high-speed jet engines in those days. The oil was very good at that.

[Part 1 0:12:41] Dagless: And after the sperm whale season, you then had: the main whaling season started when you could hunt what they called baleen whales, either fin whales or blue whales. I forget the duration of all the various seasons but we had different seasons for different whales. For instance you had a season for humpback whaling. Now the season for humpback whaling, the Norwegians call them knøl, the season for that only lasted four days because they are very valuable and very slow, easy to catch and also they were getting very scarce even in those days. So the season was only four days. You might not even find one in that time, but we got them. So your factory would be steaming slowly. When you are on full cook you are using so much steam for the factory that you had very little steam left over for the engines.

You could only do two or three knots, just enough to keep steerage way, and your catchers would be scouting for whales, anything 100, 150, 200 miles away from the factory ship and they would all be in radio contact.

[Part 1 0:14:15] Dagless: They would kill whales and leave them. If they were really hunting they would kill whales and just leave them. To mark that whale there would be a radio transmitter put on it and a radar reflector and it would be left. And either they or another ship would collect it later. Of course they were wanting to hunt more, you see. But you never hunted more than you could pick up and work up in the factory ship for about 24 hours. Because otherwise your whales would just be floating all over the place and going off. You wanted fresh whales so you always planned to work up in 24 hours whatever you caught that day. Then after you had gone over a certain figure, you stopped whaling for that day.

[Part 1 0:15:08] Verdenius: So you can't let a whale float around for more than a day?

Dagless: No. If you want a good quality no, you can't let a whale a whale float around for more than a day. And by the way whales don't float by themselves either. They sink so before you float them, you have to ... You have got them on the end of your harpoon, you tow them alongside the ship, you then blow them up with compressed air so that they float. Then either you or another ship ... We had two what we called buoy boats as well as the catchers. Some people call them tow boats. They would go around collecting the whales up and bring them back to the factory ship all the time. And when the catchers had finished what they were doing, they would also come back and pick up their whales. It would depend who would pick up each whale but you never wanted to lose one. In those days a fin whale, in the fifties, I am talking about '55, a fin whale, each whale was worth about something of the order of £2000 a whale, so it was quite valuable if you translate that into modern day money but in those days they were worth £2000 sterling a whale.

[Part 1 0:16:21] Verdenius: Were you all the time in the factory ship?

Dagless: Let's see. Well I went across to other ships occasionally. As I say we picked up 20,000 tons of fuel oil and you were using that all the time and you always go down there with two empty tanks. You arrive and you steam clean your tanks and you put the whale oil products into your clean tanks. And as you empty another fuel oil tank, so you steam clean it and fill it up with whale oil all the time. Well that 20,000 tons of oil won't last you a whole season so we had two large oil tankers, one of them coming down at various times in the season. One of them was called the *Powell* and it came down during the season and you would be winched over onto the *Powell*, sometimes for various duties and then winched back again when she was alongside. She would come alongside you see and transfer fuel oil into our tanks.

[Part 1 0:17:33] Dagless: We were going down on fuel oil. Then she would go away, clean tanks and when she had got a tank clean (her tanks were about double the size of ours) she would come back and we would pump clean whale oil into her tanks. And then we would clean that tank and she would come back and pump more fuel oil into us, until all the whale oil was transferred out of our ship and all the fuel oil was transferred onto our ship. We had done a complete exchange and then she would go away and later in the season another one would come down and do the same thing

again. So you would go on these other ships. You would be hoisted up in a basket on the end of a winch on a yard and swung out overboard and put on the other ship. That was the only time that particular year when I actually went on other ships.

[Part 1 0:18:26] Verdenius: But you never went on whale catchers?

Dagless: Not that year. The following year I did. Yes, the following year I went on a whale catcher. That was interesting. But the following year, in '56, I decided to join FIDS. I was going down with FIDS and somebody heard about me. It was Dr Dick Laws heard about me from the ... He was working with the British Museum at the time, in conjunction with the National Institute of Oceanography, and they wanted somebody to do whale marking. I was going to have some spare time before going to Antarctica so it was arranged that I would join Christian Salvesen's expedition on the *Southern Harvester* and go out and spend a month or so on one of their catchers, which turned out to be the *Southern Lotus*. It was an ex wartime Flower class corvette, oil-burning steam-engined and it had the cross of Lorraine, I remember, in the engine room. It had been operated by the Free French navy during the war and I don't know whether you ever read a book called *The Cruel Sea*. Have you?

[Part 1 0:20:05] Verdenius: No.

Dagless: Well it was the same sort of corvette that was in that and we were using it. And I went out for a month in that to do whale marking. You fire ... you have a specially reinforced shotgun and you have a miniature harpoon in it which is hollow and it is not attached at all. It is a free-flying harpoon and you grease it with penicillin ointment so that you don't get any infection into the whale, hopefully. And you go whale hunting. You stand where the gunner stands and you have the ship and you go hunting these whales. This was before the season started, you see, and you fire these miniature harpoons. They are about a foot long, made of aluminium, and they all have on them where they come from and what to do when you find them. And being hollow, when they go into the whale, they have yellow and red nylon multi-coloured streamers that come out of the back. So these are in the whale.

[Part 1 0:21:23] Dagless: Now they wish to mark whales for scientific research. So you keep a log and you log the time and the date and the longitude and the latitude of when and where you marked the whale, what sort of a whale it was, which direction it was going in and all this thing, and you marked the whale and all this information was collated later. And the idea is that the whalers will catch this whale later on and you can tell migration patterns, the size of the whale population, the average ages of whales and all kinds of scientific information, provided you mark enough whales. How far the whale has travelled in what sort of a time and all this sort of thing. These marks have been found in whales twenty years after, or things like that. You can tell quite a lot through whale marking and that's what I did. I had this ship and we went round firing these miniature harpoons into whales. But it proves that it didn't harm the whales all that much if you find them in there twenty years later in a live whale they must survive it. That's what I did for a long time.

[Part 1 0:22:47] Verdenius: For FIDS?

Dagless: For FIDS? Well I joined FIDS in the summer of 1956 and I was loaned by FIDS to do this work and I was going to join FIDS. You see I was going to Deception Island but there was no need for me to be in Deception Island so early so FIDS loaned me. It took two months, three months, something like that, because I had to catch a whole series of series of ships to get back to FIDS. When the whaling season started properly, whale marking was stopped. They were after whales to catch them then, so I went back to the factory ship which was the *Southern Harvester* and stayed on there. And a few weeks later *HMS Protector*, a Royal Navy ship, came along to refuel from the *Southern Harvester* just near Peter the First Island. That is in the Bellingshausen Sea, and so I got off the *Southern Harvester* onto *HMS Protector*. She took me back to Graham Land and eventually to Deception Island.

[Part 1 0:24:23] Verdenius: How long did you stay at Deception Island?

Dagless: Oh after that I stayed ... I got into Deception Island about ... I had been to Deception Island before. I can tell you another story about that. How long did I stay at Deception Island after that? That was, say, in January '57 and I stayed there till ... That was January/ February '57 till January/ February or even March '59.

[Part 1 0:24:59] Verdenius: Two years?

Dagless: Mmm. Two years.

[Part 1 0:25:02] Verdenius: Before that you had already been there?

Dagless: Ah yes. While we were ...

[Break in recording]

Dagless: We have a whaling reunion every year.

[Part 1 0:25:24] Verdenius: Is there a whaling society?

Dagless: Well we have a little club, yes. We don't call it anything but we have a reunion every year and we all know each other.

[Part 1 0:25:31] Verdenius: There was a certain Moby Dick but [?? Inaudible]

Dagless: I'll tell you what. I have never been able to read *Moby Dick*. No it was a novel I could never get on with.

[Part 1 0:25:49] Verdenius: I was quite interested to read somewhere about it.

Dagless: Have you had lunch by the way? Is this all right? Is this what you want?

[Part 1 0:26:10] Verdenius: Yes, this is what I want. But anyway I am coming now really to record about Antarctica.

Dagless: There's a lot more. I will tell you how I was at Deception before. We will get to it in the end. When I was out whale marking on the *Southern Lotus*, this Flower

class corvette, we were steaming about all over the Bellingshausen Sea and the Antarctic Ocean. One of our whale catchers called the *Southern Hunter* went into Deception Island. Now Deception Island is a volcano in the Antarctic that has come up through the seabed and the land masses formed virtually by the rim of the crater. And the crater rim has been broken down; is not complete. It has broken down through a narrow entrance at sea level at one side and the whole of the island, the inside of the crater, is full of water. And you can get ocean going ships in there, very large ships, any ship in the world could get in there. It's deep, wide and it's something like twelve miles long I think, well maybe eight miles long perhaps, and four miles wide, something of that order.

[Part 1 0:28:04] Dagless: And the *Southern Hunter* had been near there one day and just out of curiosity he went to go in through the entrance. Neptune's Bellows, the entrance is called. Just underneath the surface, a third of the way across in Neptune's Bellows, just outside Neptune's Bellows, there are some submerged rocks. I forget whether they are called the Shag Rocks or the Seal Rocks<sup>1</sup> or ... Anyway they are down there. Now the British Government have put, through FIDS and Operation Tabarin, have put a lighthouse inside Deception Island and if you read your charts properly and keep to the right sector of the light, so that you can see the right colour, you will avoid these rocks. But he went in or was going in and inside the crater, in the island, there is an Argentinian base and an Argentinian ocean going tug was coming out. They used several ocean going tugs down there for various work. They are handy boats. It was either called the *Chilegrano* or the *Lautaro* perhaps. I'm not sure but it was coming out and the captain of the *Southern Hunter* pulled over too far, to give the tug plenty of room to come out, and he either didn't know the rocks were there or he didn't know what to do or he hadn't looked at his charts or he hadn't got the charts.

[Part 1 0:29:52] Dagless: He hit these rocks with his propeller and there was quite a sea running and of course it stopped. It bent his propeller shaft, stopped his engine. He was helpless. He was drifting onto the coast there and had to send out SOS's and things and you can imagine that in the Antarctic.... We were the nearest ship, the *Southern Lotus*, we were the nearest ship and we went in there and by the time we got there, the *Southern Hunter* was wrecked on the shore and all the crew were in lifeboats. So we took them off. I think another catcher turned up as well. Two catchers took them off and ferried them back to the factory ship. That was a brand new whale catcher, one or two years old, purpose built, aluminium superstructure, diesel-engined. Every last latest technique was on it: Asdic apparatus, fish finders and radar and enough radio to run a submarine, and the whole thing was wrecked on the shore there. So it was very valuable. So we were sent by the expedition, the *Southern Lotus*, to break off our whale marking and to go in there and spend a day or two to board the *Southern Hunter* and salvage everything we could. So we spent a day or two doing that, salvaging as much of the Asdic apparatus, the radar apparatus, the radio room...

[Part 1 0:31:43] Dagless: Everything, all the electronic apparatus that was above the water line, we took out. You couldn't do it quickly. It's no good rinsing it all out. It all had to be taken to pieces carefully with experts there who knew what they were doing, and carefully preserved it and take it all back, and we got loads of stuff back. That catcher, in modern day terms, it was worth millions. I think, in those days, it had been

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<sup>1</sup> Ravn Rock.

built for about three quarters of a million in say 1954, something like that. Whether that included all the radio apparatus I don't know. But we took out all the ropes and nylon line and everything. We stripped it of every valuable thing. So that's why I have been to Deception before. And we went ashore of course and saw everybody. Of course it was an ecological disaster.

[Part 1 0:32:52] Dagless: There was a penguin rookery. I forget what they were, possibly gentoos, a penguin rookery just near there and there was so much oil about, diesel oil, that the birds all got coated in diesel oil and it nearly wiped out that complete penguin rookery. You could see them walking around for weeks afterwards all bedraggled and everything like that. But when I was on the base later, with FIDS, we took our little boat, our little dinghies across there, to the *Southern Hunter*, and everything that the whalers hadn't taken, we then took. I mean they wouldn't have taken the captain's panelling but we took all the panelling out of the captain's cabin and his bunk and his drawers and the beds and everything, and we rebuilt it all in the base hut. So one of us was sleeping in the captain's bunk with all the drawers and tables out of his cabin from the *Southern Hunter*. That was very good. It made the base hut look a bit different.

[Part 1 0:34:00] Verdenius: What was your task at Deception Island?

Dagless: I was a meteorological observer. Before going down there ... I said I joined FIDS in the summer of 1956. They sent us, all those who were going down as meteorological observers, were sent on a course at the Air Ministry, British Air Ministry up at Stanmore. And for two or three months this was a full-time job, full-time course on meteorological observations and the Washington Code and how to encode messages and how to send up pilot balloons. We had great big pilot balloon slide rules in those days. You have a slide rule something approaching a metre long and it has four cursors and you have to learn to operate these like greased lightning. We had theodolites down on the base and you used to follow this with a theodolite. You would follow the balloons up to twenty or thirty thousand feet and you could then, from that, and with the use of the slide rule, you could plot the wind force and direction at say 500 foot or 1000 foot intervals all the way up to 20000 or 30000 feet.

[Part 1 0:35:37] Dagless: Of course down there you would see things. You would see a balloon at 30000 feet for two reasons. We had a supply of hydrogen of course. We had a special shed full of hydrogen cylinders and you would fill the balloon with hydrogen. But of course as the balloon went up, as the atmosphere got less dense, the balloon would expand, so although it was getting farther away, it was getting bigger and bigger. So it was quite a huge balloon by the time it got to 30,000 ft. And then of course all of a sudden it would disappear which meant it had burst or it might go into cloud. If it was very cloudy you didn't do it because you wouldn't get a good enough range of height to make it worthwhile. But these balloons were extraordinary. The other reason you would see it up very high was that the atmosphere would be very clear. You wouldn't have any suspended dust or anything much in the atmosphere, so with a clear atmosphere and the balloon expanding as it went up, you could follow it quite high.

[Part 1 0:36:49] Verdenius: You were a meteorologist?



Dagless: Yes.

[Part 1 0:36:57] Verdenius: So you had to be at this base?

Dagless: Yes, well being a meteorologist – we had to take observations every three hours throughout the 24 hours, all night as well. So as well as following the balloons up, you would have a Stevenson screen with maximum and minimum thermometers, several thermometers in, and you would have an anemometer for your wind speed and you would have a wind vane for your wind direction. You would have all the instruments there and all the instruments had to be kept in working order and monitored constantly. You would have a distant reading thermograph, a distant reading anemometer and everything, so that you had all these in the met office inside, so you had only got to glance your charts in there to see what the wind was doing at any time. But the Stevenson screen, where the temperature and the maximum and minimum thermometer and you had a wet-bulb and a dry-bulb and all this sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:38:11] Dagless: You had to go out there and actually look at it because we were reading from an actual laboratory standard thermometer; it's much more accurate than a distant reading thermograph or something like that or a chart where the reading is much more approximate, although it would give you a good idea of how the temperature is increasing or decreasing with time. So you get your chart coming along and you see a huge rise. You see the needle tracing across the graph and in 15 minutes, the temperature has gone up ten or fifteen degrees, you know you had a front going through. Whereas going out to your screen, every three hours say, you might miss the exact time that the front went through, the weather front went through. But your temperatures would be more accurate but you wouldn't get the trend like that. So we had a lot of instruments to monitor and do, and every three hours, you had to encode all your weather information into groups of five-figure numbers. Now this is not to keep it secret; it's to standardise it and to enable you to send it out in a standard form, in Morse Code or even in voice but mainly in Morse Code.

[Part 1 0:40:05] Dagless: So we all had to learn Morse Code on the way down. So on the ship there were people running around on the *Shackleton* with dots and dashes and bits of paper and all learning Morse Code and all this sort of thing. This code was called the Washington Code in those days and you grouped it into certain figures and you had codebooks and you encoded it and you had groups for cloud cover and temperature and rainfall and everything. Once you had decoded it at the other end, it would tell you all about the weather. Anybody that knows about it would tell you all about it. So we used to send out all this in groups of five figure numbers and it is for ease of transmission. I mean you just can't get on the radio and say 'Well it's raining here and there is a bit of cloud over there ...'. It has all got to be fairly scientific to make any sense of it.

[Part 1 0:41:11] Verdenius: Did everybody manage to learn Morse?

Dagless: Some with a greater degree of alacrity than others. I learned Morse. I was interested so I learned it and of course you have to learn enough Morse to recognise ... There would be some professional operator in Port Stanley, the Falkland Islands, and he would be wanting to contact every base at three o'clock in the morning. So

you have to recognise him calling your call-sign of your base in Morse, and then to send him the standard reply, and so you have established contact and he will tell you when he's ready and you send your message off. By and large you could get away with a few letters provided you knew all the numbers because it was all done in numbers and in Morse Code the numbers are the easiest things to learn and to send. So some people didn't progress much beyond that but I wanted to know the letters as well so I suppose after a time I could make a bit of a hash of doing most of it.

[Part 1 0:42:36] Verdenius: Did this work attract you more than being on a whale catcher?

Dagless: But it's not comparable. Yes for various reasons. I enjoyed ... Oh the whale catcher? I don't know. I enjoyed my time on the whale catcher very much. I enjoyed it much ...

[Part 1 0:43:06] Verdenius: Did being down on Deception Island attract you more than being on the whale catcher?

Dagless: I enjoyed being on the whale catcher very much. I certainly enjoyed it more than my first season on the whale factory, yes. A whale catcher is very exciting, yes very exciting. I enjoyed them both. I think it's a bit difficult to say which I enjoyed more. Staying for two years in one place? Well I don't know. It's a fairly big island. The land mass was, as I say; twelve miles from north to south. To go round the island you had to walk right round the volcanic rim. There were plenty of areas to walk and even at the end of two years you certainly hadn't been everywhere on Deception Island. There was a mountain on there, Mount Pond, of about 2000 feet, and another one, Mount Kirkwood of about 1600 feet, something like that, and it was quite interesting. You could always go skiing. In your spare time you could always do a lot of skiing. For a time a lot of us on the base absolutely lived on skis.

[Part 1 0:44:35] Dagless: And you get the spring coming and there's still plenty of fresh snow, and the sun coming out. We used to go out and climb up, say, 1000 feet and ski down. We had a wonderful time. You would become so fit that you would run up. Even on skis you would run up a thousand feet, no problem, sideways. You would really go. But that was my main job, and of course there always had to be one Met person, one meteorological person up all night and you would stay up all night, do the three-hourly observations, open up the radio room every three hours, do your three-hourly radio schedule to send your observations off. Then you would ... You had to open up the radio room to send your observations off; you had to go down to the diesel room and start up a diesel generator. Now the diesel room had no heating at all. It was very warm when the diesels were running but once the diesels stopped, and you would all go to bed, that was it; the room used to get freezing. And we had no self-starters. You had to start these diesels by hand cranking. You had to turn them by hand, and of course you can't turn a diesel engine by hand normally because the compression ratio is so great, you would never do it.

[Part 1 0:46:16] Dagless: So you have to have a lever over on the top of the cylinder head which operates through a valve and releases the compression and the heavy flywheel. And you have to crank it like mad on the heavy flywheel (I don't know why I am doing the actions) and get the flywheel going, cranking all the time, and

suddenly reach over and turn the compression lever down. And with you cranking and the flywheel going round, hopefully you would keep it going until the diesel engine starts to fire. Mostly you would get it going but in very cold Antarctic weather you might be cranking it for fifteen minutes before you could get it going. So you had to be fit to do that. Once I can remember: we had a new radio operator come down in about 1958. Incidentally he was the one of the first (if not the first) person we had down there that hadn't been in the British Forces, because the National Service in the British Forces came to an end during that period. He was an East Ender actually, and his relations were all barrow boys and things like that – nice lad, very nice lad, fair-haired. And he was cranking up the diesel on one time and the cranking handle flew off the engine, off the front of the engine, and shot up and cut him all across the top of the eye and forehead and really made a nasty mess. All his flesh was hanging down. Luckily there was a ship in. About four miles away from our base was a Chilean base and there was a Chilean ship in, a largish transport ship, the name of which I forget.

[Part 1 0:48:26] Dagless: There was nothing for it; this eye had to be stitched, definitely. He would have had a dreadful eye and his whole upper lid would have fallen down. His upper lid did fall down; it needed to be all pulled up, and his eyebrow was mashed up, and it needed the attention of a doctor and stitching. And it was getting dark. I suppose it happened about six o'clock in the evening. But there was a glacier between our base and the Chileans' base. Yes, it was 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. So there was nothing for it. It needed doing and it needed doing quickly. I was the Base Leader at the time so I said 'Look, we have got to go.' And I took one other companion and I took the lad and we set out into the dark and went all the way across this glacier for however many hours it took, and got him over there. I have just remembered a point about it: it was New Year's Eve, because New Year's Eve in 1958. We got him across there, and we arrived at this ship with a man, with his head all swathed in bandages and the buzz went round the ship among the Chileans 'Ah the English have been fighting again. They have nearly killed one of their men now. They have had to bring him across to have him stitched up.' Stories are always improved by this sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:50:23] Dagless: Anyway by the time we waited for a doctor ... Nobody there could speak English. Hardly anybody if anybody on the ship could speak English and I suddenly discovered that I could speak Spanish. I had been listening to ... Various Argentinians and Chileans had visited the base. I had been there over a year then, or something like that, and we had a lot of visits from the Chileans and Argentinians. Just sitting round the table, listening to them, I had learned to speak Spanish. I had hardly used a word of it before, not a word, and I can remember going onto this ship with this lad and I needed it and it just came out, just like that, speaking Spanish all the time. And they were amazed because I knew some of the people on that ship and they knew I didn't speak Spanish, And it came out and I explained to the doctor what had happened and I left the lad with him and he got his eye stitched up. It was a very good job and everything like that. And they gave us cabins and we slept there and I think we stayed a couple of days, enjoying their hospitality and having a good time. And I have been speaking Spanish ever since, well when I need it that is. I did actually spend nine months in South America afterwards, so it was very handy to have the Spanish there. A couple of days later the eye was OK so we went back to our own base.

[Part 1 0:52:00] Verdenius: The Spanish just came out of the air?

Dagless: The Spanish just came out of the air, and I can remember my mother saying, when I was very young, I was quite late to learn to speak and to talk. But she said one day I couldn't speak, couldn't say anything, or wouldn't. And she said the next day I was speaking in long sentences and she said that was just how I learned to talk: one day nothing and the next day nearly everything. And it was just the same with the Spanish: one day nothing and then, when I needed it, it was there. There we are.

[Part 1 0:52:47] Verdenius: You could see these Argentinian and Chilean always?

Dagless: Oh yes, quite a lot. We were very friendly with the Chileans. The days of sending each other Diplomatic Notes had ended, more or less. The British, as you know, claimed that Antarctic Territory, and still do. And in the forties, as you possibly know from your researches into Operation Tabarin, we used to send each other Diplomatic Notes and destroy each other's property. All kinds of things went on down there, some of which has never been admitted. But in these days, we no longer sent each other Notes and we did have a certain amount of fraternisation. And when Chilean boats came in and Argentinian boats came in, if they felt like it they would visit us, and they would be made welcome and we would all sit round the kitchen table about a dozen people and have a good meal and have a very good social life together. And we would visit the Chilean base and all that sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:54:09] Dagless: So yes, Deception Island was known as the social centre of the Antarctic, because on that island there were three bases: from Argentina, Chile and Great Britain, and the distance between them on foot was ... Well we would have to walk four miles or something to the Chilean base. I say walk; it wasn't exactly walking along a pavement. And from the Chilean base to walk to the Argentinian base was a bit longer: I don't know – maybe seven or eight miles, something like that. So if we wanted to walk to the Argentinian base, we would have to walk twelve miles, passing the Chilean base on the way. But we were always more friendly with the Chileans than we were with the Argentinians. The Argentinians were quite strong in pressing their claims to the area, or so the British thought. We talk about nowadays the 1990s and 1980s; we talk about the first tourist ship going down to Antarctica and what a new thing it is.

[Part 1 0:55:35] Dagless: You can now go to Argentina or Chile and you can take a ship down to the Antarctic. It was all happening in those days in the 1950s, in '56 and '57, '58, there was an Argentine tourist ship going down to the Antarctic, *Les Éclaireurs* was going down there with a full bunch of normal tourists. No doubt they were pretty rich because that's all the people that could afford it: there were girls, men, women, the whole cross-section of humanity was on there. I remember once a tourist ship came down there; it was *Les Éclaireurs* and it came down there for a special visit. And we all got in one of our little boats. We had a 14-foot dinghy. I forget which one we used: 12-foot or 14-foot. Put our little petrol tank of a motor on the back which was a Seagull, and motored across the seven miles of the crater inside the volcano, motored across to *Les Éclaireurs* and arrived out of the mist.

[Part 1 0:57:02] Dagless: The tourists were very amazed because I don't know whether the Argentinians had even told them that there was a British base on there,

but they should have seen it when they came through island because we were right near the entrance, in a place called Whalers' Bay. Anyway all of a sudden there they were and this little rowing boat – it was no bigger than ... it was a rowing boat – came out of the Antarctic with people huddled up in great big Trople [phonetic] coats and underneath all this we put on our best clothes: brown shoes, pressed trousers, blue blazers and all this sort of thing. And we made merry with the tourists for a day on their ship. We hadn't seen anything like this for a year or so, so we joined the tourists and got invited to dinner and had a very good time. We must have arrived in the morning some time and we didn't get back until midnight or so, to our own base, and we had a very good day. There was dancing in the evening with the women. Yes, excellent day, an excellent day.

[Part 1 0:58:12] Verdenius: How did they see you?

Dagless: How did they see us? They were very friendly. Relations between the Argentinians and us were always very friendly on the surface. The passengers were undoubtedly very friendly, and I got the name and address of one or two who I later visited when I got to South America. So they were very friendly indeed.

[Part 1 0:58:42] Verdenius: Did they see you as heroes or as a sort of exotic tribe?

Dagless: I don't know. Perhaps a cross between the two. I suppose they might have thought us exotic, yes. You don't often meet people in the Antarctic, especially when you are on a tour and it is bound to be exotic, exotic meaning out of the way and unusual I suppose. Whether they thought we were heroes or not at all, I don't know. All I can say is that the girls were very pleasant. What the officers on the ship, the captain and all that sort of thing, what they really thought of the whole thing, I don't know, but on the surface they were very welcoming and pleasant. It was a good day. Everybody enjoyed themselves. There weren't many of us; there were only ... I think we left one person on the base to look after things while we were over there, and there were perhaps four of us, five of us at the most.

[Part 1 1:00:02] Verdenius: You were Base Leader?

Dagless: I was Base Leader at that time, yes.

[Part 1 1:00:06] Verdenius: How do you become Base Leader?

Dagless: Well the first year down there I was not Base Leader. We had another Base Leader, a man called Paisley, John Paisley, or was in Bazeley? Paisley, John Paisley, that's right. I think he runs a mountaineering and Outward Bound school in Scotland now, and has done ever since. But he was our Base Leader, and then when he went, he went to another base at the end of the year when the ship came down. We obviously needed another Base Leader and a telegram came. We all used to get telegrams, signals, every day from the Falkland Islands, Port Stanley, and a signal came appointing me to be the Base Leader. That's how it happened. I think they send a signal before, asking you if you would agree to be appointed Base Leader. It all has to be official. It is done by the Falkland Islands Government and the Governor of the Falkland Islands appoints you to be the leader, and you are not only the Leader down

there, you are appointed Base Leader, Lighthouse Keeper, Postmaster, Magistrate and Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary Extraordinary.

[Part 1 1:01:56] Dagless: All those things; it's all very official. We ran a Post Office there and when the ships came down, they would bring loads of mail for people wanting to have letters posted in Antarctica, at Base B, Deception Island. They would have the stamps on already, and those you would just frank with your stamp and put them in the post and send them back. Others would have money and you would have to take the money and put the stamps on the letter and then frank them and put them back and all this sort of thing. We used to get hundreds and hundreds of letters down there to ... So the Postmaster had to do a lot, had to keep a float of cash, a float of stamps and do it all and weigh them all and work out the right postage and everything. The same for any of the base people that wanted to send things. You would run the Post Office and keep accounts and everything. People from all over the world were writing. Now the magistrate bit ... There are laws. By and large many of the laws that are in the Falkland Islands were down there: things like cruelty to animals. Now one of my predecessors, he was involved in a case where had to actually hold a court down there because some sailors, at one time, came ashore and were cruelly killing penguins for no good reason and tormenting them and being cruel to penguins. There was a law against this. Even in those days there was a law against that. So they were arrested and he convened the court and they were tried.

[Part 1 1:03:53] Verdenius: They were arrested and imprisoned?

Dagless: Well I don't think they were imprisoned but they may have been. I am not sure. They were British sailors and they would have been imprisoned on the ship if necessary. I forget what the punishment was but I think they were found guilty. It was quite a ... There was no doubt. Everybody had seen them doing it, or many people had seen them doing this. That's just one case I remember where he had convened a court and the law was upheld because ... for that reason, yes. I can't remember what the punishment was. They may have been fined. I shouldn't think they would have gone to prison but I can't remember. They were probably fined or they may have been given some Naval punishment on the ship, because it was a Royal Naval ship, you see, so they would have had the facilities for punishing people. But I don't think they were flogged to death or keelhauled or anything like that.

[Part 1 1:04:57] Verdenius: Bound to an iceberg?

Dagless: Yes, bound to an iceberg, yes excellent.

[Part 1 1:05:04] Verdenius: What were your other duties, as a Base Leader?

Dagless: There was the Post Office, the Magistrate's, so you had to keep an eye on the laws. I think you had to have a gun licence if you had a private gun as well. I'm not sure about that. Lighthouse Keeper: you remember I explained that there was a small lighthouse there, to indicate the presence of these rocks under the surface. You had to keep that running. It was run by compressed gas, in cylinders, and you had to go across Whalers' Bay. We had to put these in our little boats and go across every now and then and see that the lighthouse was running all right. There was no electricity in it but the whole of the mechanism was powered by and lit by the gas, and the gas

drove the light round. You had to know how to service the lighthouse: how to light it and how to put it out, how to adjust it to the right angle, and a lot of things about it. So you were the lighthouse keeper as well; you were responsible for doing that. You could delegate these things. I mean you could say 'OK, I don't feel like doing it all. I don't want to be the Postmaster.' You could arrange for somebody else to be the Postmaster. We had people doing a lot of jobs. We had a storeman and this, that and the other. In the end I ended up doing it. But you would always have somebody to assist you.

[Part 1 1:06:47] Dagless: I remember once when we took a cylinder over to the lighthouse and we were working on the lighthouse. We were chased by a leopard seal. They can move quite fast. But there we are, that's the other duty, but the duties of the Base Leader: you are the one in charge of, or responsible for, the base really. I mean if the base burns down, and several of our bases did, ... We lost quite a lot of bases through fire. It's one of the most dangerous things in the Antarctic. It's your responsibility to make sure, for instance, that all the fire-fighting apparatus is maintained accessibly and in a good condition, so that if any fire or emergency happens, people know where it is and can get it and deal with the fire. Once actually, when we were ... We had some Chileans over and we were all having a good dinner in the kitchen and all of a sudden somebody smelled some smoke, and we rushed out into the corridor and – I forget whether I was Base Leader or not at the time – and opened the radio room door and the whole radio room was completely on fire, roaring flames. And if we had noticed it 30 seconds later, the whole base would have had it.

[Part 1 1:08:37] Dagless: The whole thing was made of wood, and we just managed to get it out in time. All of us together, the Chileans, three or four Chileans, and all of use, six of us I think, doing the right thing, all managed to get it out. I don't know; if it hadn't been for the Chileans, we might not have even got it out. Now one of the things that ... Inside the base hut you have great big 50-gallon oil drums and you fill them up with seawater, because the seawater, being salty, will not freeze until it gets very cold inside the base. It was so cold at that particular time, that we couldn't use them. The whole of these 50-gallon drums were frozen into solid blocks of ice, so they were useless. We just had to use sand and smothering the fire with cloths, and one chap actually got quite severe burns. They were all right; they recovered but quite badly burned on the hands. As I say, you think you've got fire here, we've got the water, salt water. You don't look at it. It's solid ice. We had plenty of sand buckets, so we threw it on there. Then of course, for the few weeks after that, we had to completely rebuild the radio room. But in the end it was just as good if not better than it was to start with, but it took a lot of work.

[Part 1 1:10:08] Verdenius: And just the radio equipment?

Dagless: Oh yes, the radio equipment just survived it. It was very dirty. It had to be dismantled and cleaned and put back into operation. The metal cases of the radio equipment were never quite the same colour again, just dingy dark colours, but we managed to get it going.

[Part 1 1:19:31] Verdenius: Did you have radio silence?

Dagless: We may have had radio silence for twelve hours or something like that. We did have emergency equipment, more than one set of emergency equipment, but it couldn't go very far. But sometimes you could talk to another base with it. No we managed to get all the original equipment working because we had spare parts and things. And what had happened was: in the radio office, radio room, to warm it we had a solid fuel fire that used to burn on anthracite. He'd had the fire alight and it was all ... not like a fire in a house, it was all enclosed with a door on the front and we burned anthracite on it. I think he had stood a box on it, to dry out – it was either a cardboard or a wooden box – on top of the fire to dry out. Then he had come in to have dinner and forgot about the box, and the fire had got so hot, that it had set the box on fire.

[Part 1 1:11:44] Dagless: That was what happened. Needless to say, it never happened again. We were all a lot more careful and providing you survive these things, one's discipline in such matters does improve, certainly, and we always made sure that the firefighting stuff was always kept in good order after that. But I think another 30 seconds and the whole place would have gone up. We wouldn't have been able to control it because we wouldn't have had the water. We would have had to go down ... I forget now whether the sea was frozen or not. I can't remember the time of the year, We would have had to get hot water from the hot water tanks, which eventually we would have done I suppose but with a delay, yes.

[Part 1 1:12:38] [End of Part One]

## Part Two

[Part 2 0:00:00] Verdenius: What was your position as a Base Leader towards the other people?

Dagless: It's difficult. It can be lonely. Yes sometimes a little bit of in-fighting, as it were. It's up to you as the Base Leader to try and smooth over any personality clashes. Yes, you get personality clashes sometimes. We did in the first year. I had a personality clash with somebody. I wasn't Base Leader at the time. But in the end we learned to have a *modus vivendi*, and we were reasonably friendly. We had a week or two when we were really at each other's throats but after that we realised that it couldn't go on like that so we agreed to waive our differences and live in a civilised manner for the rest of the year.

[Part 2 0:01:15] Verdenius: A whole week at each other's throats?

Dagless: Well maybe longer, but you have to sink your differences and learn to live together, because in a closed society like that, living in the same hut with only six of you there, you can't really afford to let these things fester on and on. Otherwise something serious might result. But anyway, why make your own lives a misery for a long time. So you sink your differences.

[Part 2 0:01:55] Verdenius: But how is your position? How have decisions been taken. How important is it all?



Dagless: Decisions? People more or less did their own thing. Most people down there are ... the sort of people you get down there are, most of them, are self-motivated, so they will be doing things. They don't have to be told. If you go to the Antarctic, the sort of person that goes to the Antarctic does things without being told, so they are all doing things. They are all doing their job; they are all doing this Met. You have a system. For instance the system was, well part of the system ... I told you we had three or four meteorological people. Then you have to have somebody who is the cook. You don't want to go down there and have lousy food all the time, so we used to take it: one person would be the cook for the week. Then we had a storeman. He was in charge of all the food stores. We had a huge room and that was the food stores for, say, a year and a half. Everything for a year and a half would be in there, so if the ship didn't get down in time, at the end of the year, you still carried on. So he would be the quartermaster or storeman and he would issue the cook with a week's supply. Just next to the kitchen, there was a large cupboard and he would issue the cook with a week's supplies every week.

[Part 2 0:03:49] Dagless: So that man, he was excused virtually all other duties for the week. He would be the cook, and you learned to produce good meals. But that was one of the most demanding and hardest tasks on there. People wanted breakfast and they wanted lunch and they wanted a good evening meal and sometimes tea in the afternoon as well – three or four sittings a day you had to cook for. They would expect bread, as good as you have in Europe, and buns and cakes and things like that, so most people learned to make good bread, good buns, good cakes and trifles and things like this. Although it was tinned meat and tinned this and dried that, you could learn to use it in a creative manner and we ate fairly well I would think. Most people took their cook's duties seriously and did a pretty good job but I can remember one chap, who shall be nameless, he was there the year before me. He hated cooking I think. He was a funny character anyway, really eccentric or an oddball.

[Part 2 0:05:14] Dagless: For instance, when you got issued your stores, for being cook, at the beginning of the week, you would have so many tins of different kinds of meat, so many tins of different kinds of vegetables, all that. Now to have hot water ... Of course it's a large kitchen and we had an Esse stove, an Esse Dura stove, and it is all run on anthracite, and it had three or four ovens in it, all at different temperatures. It had a thermometer on the front of each oven, so you knew what the temperature was. The one on the top right was the hot oven and the one on the bottom left was always cooler, and a great big hotplate on top of the stove covered by a big thick cover to keep the heat in when you are not using it. And piped into the back of it, by the side of it and standing higher than it, is a tank of say nearly a hundred gallons size. Do you know gallons?

[Part 2 0:06:31] Verdenius: More than a litre.

Dagless: Oh yes. Eight pints in a gallon, nearly two pints in a litre: Four litres to a gallon, yes something like four litres to a gallon, so you are talking about a tank of four hundred litres, something like that, a bit less than 400 litres, a big tank. And to get ... the only way you could get hot water, or any water some of the times when it was freezing, was to melt snow. So that was one person's duties. He would have the duty every day of cutting snow blocks and bringing them inside and putting them in this tank. You take the lid off this copper tank, you see, and put in your snow blocks

and it was full of hot water but it was piped from the stove at the back. So you would have a hundred gallons there, 400 litres of sometimes water that was nearly boiling, all the time. And then you would have another tank for cold water and of course bringing it into the kitchen, putting it in the tank, it automatically warmed up and melted into water.

[Part 2 0:07:49] Dagless: So you had your two tanks, so you had hot and cold water – quite civilised really. And this chap that I was telling you about previously, he would get the tins of meat and he would tie strings on all the tins of vegetables that needed to be heated, and all the tins of meat that needed to be heated, and these tapes were about two metres long, these strings two metres long, two and a half. And he would then get all the tins and on the end of every piece of string he would write “Monday lunch”, “Tuesday breakfast”, “Wednesday supper”. So each can would have ... so many cans for Sunday lunch, so many cans for Monday dinner, and so on all through the week. He would then get all these cans and throw them in the tank of hot water. So they would stay in there and he would put the lid on and the strings would hang in the gap over the top of the lid and hang down the side of the tank.

[Part 2 08:59] Dagless: And then when it came to Tuesday lunchtime, he would just go through all these strings and when a label said “Tuesday lunch”, he would pull it out with the tin on the end. And he would pull about four or five tins out for Tuesday lunchtime and open them and put them on plates on the table and that was it. That was his cooking. He put them in the hot water tank, and by the end of the week, say Saturday or Sunday, the stuff you were eating had been in the tank since Monday. And he just used to pull out strings all day and that was his way of serving up things. Not very imaginative. Well quite imaginative really, really eccentric but, shall we say, it wasn't appreciated by the people who had to eat it. He was one of the less good cooks. There are other stories about him but I don't think I had better tell you. [Pause] This programme, is it going to go out? English people might hear it one day, mightn't they?

[Part 2 0:10:20] Verdenius: Could be.

Dagless: In case he has got any living relations, I won't tell you. Well I haven't told you his name anyway but if I told you the story, they would recognise who he was, so I won't tell you any more stories about him. But that one is good enough.

[Part 2 0:10:39] Verdenius: What are you making ... ask you what about your decision process?

Dagless: Oh the decision process. You are a good interviewer. You don't forget the points. Well the decision process. As I said, most people down there are what they call self-starters. They do things by themselves. We had, amongst the four meteorological people there, we had what you call a senior Met man, a senior meteorological person there, and he would be in overall charge of the meteorological and the weather observation, of the whole thing. Now if something needed doing on that side, he would be in charge of it and he would organise it. That was his speciality, with the other Met people there and he would decide what to do and that sort of thing.

[Part 2 0:11:47] Verdenius: Of course. That's his speciality. But it's a closed community of course, more or less classed like a ship where the captain is the leader. Is the Base Leader like the Captain?

Dagless: Oh, the Base Leader is like the Captain on a ship, yes, definitely.

[Part 2 0:12:02] Verdenius: His will is law?

Dagless: His will is law, oh yes, but ... If he decides if something has to be done, then it has to be done but, by the same token, you don't go throwing your will about all the time. You let people, providing they are not upsetting everybody and providing they are not affecting safety and providing they are not upsetting matters, and providing it is OK, you don't stop people doing things. But sometimes you will see things that need to be doing and nobody else has noticed it, or because they are not the Base Leader, they don't notice it or think about it. It's the same all through life. If you are responsible for something, and you are the chief and you are the leader, you have got the responsibility; you see things that other people don't. So if you see something that needs doing, you are in overall responsibility, you would tell somebody to do something or you would ask them to do something. You can see me; I don't throw my weight around. You would go up to somebody and say 'Look, tomorrow, do you think we could do that?' And perhaps you would go with them and you would do it, or send them out or 'We need to ...' Most things happen. 'We need to paint this room, or do something to the base. We need to repair this.' You find that people were so self-motivated that they would think of it at the same time that you would, and they would already be thinking that they were going to repair it tomorrow or next week or whatever.

[Part 2 0:13:51] Dagless: So there wasn't a lot to do, but sometimes you would notice something and you would do it. You took the ultimate responsibility. It's difficult. You didn't lead a lot by telling people what to do; you lead by example, and let them see what you are doing. I remember once we had a dog down there that we had inherited from an Argentinian base. She had come over. We shouldn't have really had her. When the Government of the Falkland Islands found out that we'd had her, they didn't like it, because you know that they have got rabies in Argentina and there was a possibility (they thought) that this dog would have rabies. But we knew that she had been down in Antarctica for years and on various Antarctic ships. But one time she became very ill and she needed some injections. We went over to the Chilean base and got some antibiotics. I suppose because of my past experience in biology or ... I had been in the Royal Army Medical Corps actually, two years in the British Army. I was the one that had to shave the dog down and find out the right place and give it the injection. We did this for perhaps a week and she fully recovered.

[Part 2 0:15:33] Dagless: Then again she got amongst one of our other dogs and she became pregnant. She was a lovely dog. She became pregnant and one night she started to have these puppies, again in the radio room after we had rebuilt it all. She had these puppies underneath the radio operator's desk and somebody had to stay up all night with her and take the puppies and kill them all because you just can't have a lot of ... I mean we had six dogs – that was two pets and four huskies. You can't feed any more dogs in the Antarctic, on Deception Island. So there was nothing for it; they had to be destroyed. But that job came down to me. I remember staying up all night.

They were the most wonderful puppies I have ever seen ... and took these little things as they came out one at a time. Take them down to the sea and kill them. I went down ... yes I spent all night running up and down to the sea and getting rid of these poor little puppies. We had a man that was in charge of the stores, he did that a man in charge of the cooking.

[Part 2 0:17:05] Dagless: We had a man in charge of the dogs; he was also the Senior Meteorologist, senior meteorological man, he was also in charge of the dogs but that was because he wanted to be in charge of the dogs. He undertook the job and that was fine. He volunteered; that was fine, but we would always give him a hand with feeding the dogs or hunting for food. Now we had the husky dogs and we didn't have enough pemmican for them. The pemmican that you had to feed them with was just for an emergency. To feed your dogs you had to ... They all had pedigrees: all their names and their titles, their antecedents, the mother and father and all that sort of thing were all logged on sheets, just like a pedigree dog would be here. So you had to keep the dog records and of course you have to feed them, most important, and look after them. So you were expected – we had rifles and ammunition. And you were expected to hunt seal to feed your dogs. So we all used to give a hand with that. But that is the most distasteful thing I think, even worse than destroying the puppies, was hunting the seal because seals are ...

[Part 2 0:18:30] Dagless: I don't know whether you ever lived with seals but I had seen a lot of them on South Georgia earlier on, in a previous time and they are wonderful creatures and they have no fear of you and they trust ... Not always but they have wonderful eyes and it became worse. I think you become hardened to hunting seals but I think in fact – I know as far as myself it was – it became worse as time went on, to have to shoot these seals. Deception Island doesn't have many seals. There were times of the year when we were down to practically nothing and had to use our dog pemmican. And so every seal sometimes, at certain times of the year, if you see a seal a couple of miles away, you would have to go after it, and I must say I didn't enjoy it. I used to do a lot of the seal hunting because there was only one or two people liked it. I can remember when I shot the last seal I ever shot, I felt I couldn't shoot another one, but you have to because your dogs would die. So you have to keep doing it. I could shoot a seal and gut it.

[Part 2 0:19:59] Dagless: I could get the alimentary tract right out from its mouth to its anus in seconds, all in one piece. Gutting I don't mind. Once it's dead, it's dead. You can't do anything more. Yes, I used to be able to gut them very very quickly. Then you have to tow it all back to base. You might shoot it a mile away or half a mile away from where the base is and then you have to get it back. I remember once we shot a seal. We were so desperate. The dogs might have been starting to starve. We saw a seal swimming out in the sea and we went out to it in a boat, and they said 'What's the point of shooting it in the water?' I said 'Come on. We will go out.' And we went out and we shot it in the water and we put grappling hooks on it and towed it into the shore on the boat, on this little rowing boat. We had a small ... Do you know a Seagull outboard motor? We had small Seagull outboard motors on the backs of the boats. They looked just like a petrol tank on a stick.

[Part 2 0:21:13] Dagless: Yes, we shot it and we took these grappling irons and fixed them on it and towed it back to shore, and we got it. It was quite successful. They

thought we couldn't do that but we did it. We only fed the dogs every two days because dogs' digestion is very slow and you give them a huge block of seal meat. We had a large wooden area called the plan, because on the whalers and the sealers, where you cut the seals up, where you cut the whales up, is known by the Norwegians as the plan. And we had our little plan there and we used to have the seals on there. You would chop them up into cubes, all roughly the same size pieces and you would give one piece to one dog every two days. So that was all they had to eat and they lived on that. They were quite healthy on that. They would be given the meat and the blubber and everything. We once took Mr Clements (known as Clem) ... he once skinned a seal carefully and very well and took a nice large sealskin off and made a coat out of it. He did all the tanning and he made it into good leather and made a lovely sealskin coat, all down on the base.

[Part 2 0:22:50] Verdenius: Did you also shoot penguins?

Dagless: No, you wouldn't shoot them. We killed them occasionally, just to eat. Yes, we would kill penguins to eat. The only part that you can eat of a penguin is the breast. We used to eat penguin breasts, yes. Now, as far as eating wild things, when we killed the seals for the dogs, we used to take the liver and the kidneys out for ourselves, and occasionally the heart. But the liver and kidneys certainly we would take out and take them back to base. That was fresh food – it was excellent; excellent liver and kidneys. Occasionally we would kill penguins and have penguin breasts but not very often. They were quite nice; they were all right, yes. Nothing wrong with eating them, but people didn't like killing penguins very much.

[Part 2 0:23:54] Verdenius: Less than seals?

Dagless: Yes. Well you killed the seals because you had to, to keep your dogs alive. You didn't have to kill penguins because we had food already. So yes, I don't know whether it is less than seals. Killing anything like that, I don't like. I like it even less now than I did in those days. What we used to do was have penguins' eggs. About a couple of miles away, you had to climb up say a thousand feet above sea level – don't forget our base was at sea level you see – climb up a thousand feet and go over a mountain ridge and down the other side of the island, and on what I call the outside of the crater rim. And there was a penguin rookery. I think, my memory fails me here but I think they were ringed penguins.

[Part 2 0:25:07] Dagless: Anyway this penguin rookery, I would think there was something like perhaps a quarter of a million birds there, a huge penguin rookery, densely packed with all these penguins. So every spring, we used to observe this and when they started to lay their eggs, we used to go over with rucksacks and we would pitch a camp over there, a tent and you would have people rotating over there. You would go over there and you would live and you would sleep. And we would keep coming back with rucksack-fulls of penguin eggs. Then of course they would lay more eggs. If you take the eggs soon after they have laid them, provided you leave one there, they will lay more eggs. So it doesn't do any harm. Yes we used to get hundreds of penguin eggs and bring them back and we had a special wax. You could dip them in that. I forget whether we heated it. Anyway it was runny, liquid. I think you heated it and you dipped the penguin eggs in the wax which gave them an airtight coating, and with the airtight coating, you could keep them fresh for months, maybe

six months, something like that. Maybe even longer; six months anyway because the air was totally excluded and the temperature down there is very cool, very cold. Even inside the base, the sea water froze up, so it shows you how cold it was, even inside.

[Part 2 0:26:45] Dagless: In the kitchen you would have the old fire and you would be lovely and warm in the kitchen. You go out into the corridor and it was like going out into the actual outside weather because there was no heating there at all and, as I say, these great big tubs of sea water froze, and it has to be pretty cold for sea water to freeze. This was indoors and I can remember in our bunkroom, where we used to sleep, sometimes you would have half an inch of ice on the inside of the windows for weeks. For instance on a Saturday, you take a Saturday, we used to do all the chores. All the floors would be cleaned and swept and the place would be tidied up and cleaned on a Saturday. Well sometimes you couldn't clean ... you couldn't wash the floors for weeks and weeks because if you washed the floors with water, they would freeze immediately. The water would freeze on the floor before you could dry it. So you would all go sliding round the floor. Also, when you had got a blizzard, a high wind, the whole of the floor was covered in ..., most of the area was covered in lino (linoleum, a sort of plastic flooring).

[Part 2 0:28:04] Dagless: The wind would blow under the floor and the flooring would blow up. You would see bubbles rippling across the floor, where the wind was going on and blowing the flooring up, because it's an impervious coating, not like a carpet. It's an impervious smooth coating, like plastic, and it would blow up and down with the wind. [phone rings] Do you want to stop? That's the phone. My daughter is answering it. So this would blow up and down with the wind, and as I say, some days for weeks on end we couldn't clean it because if you washed the floor it would just freeze solid, soap bubbles and everything. But anyway we would get these penguin eggs and they made wonderful omelettes. They were about three times the size of a hen's egg, nearly four times and you would be eating triple penguin egg omelettes. So you would be eating the equivalent of ten hen's eggs at one time, one person at one time. Yes, wonderful omelettes, these penguin eggs, absolutely wonderful, and, as I say, we used to have our little camp over there while they were laying the eggs. The tent would stand there permanently and if somebody got spare time, they would go over there, gather up the penguins' eggs, sleep in the tent. The next morning they would come back. You had to do it all on skis. You couldn't do it on foot; it was too dangerous, so you would do it all on skis so they would bridge the crevasses. [Break] What were we talking about?

[Part 2 0:30:03] Verdenius: Penguin's omelettes.

Dagless: Ah yes, penguin egg omelettes. They were delicious, absolutely haute cuisine they were, absolutely haute cuisine.

[Part 2 0:30:15] Verdenius: I want to ask you something else. You said you were leading the base by example. Almost priestly.

Dagless: [Pause] 'Almost priestly' is a very dramatic term. Anybody that does any kind of leadership must be prepared to do the equal or more than those he is trying to lead. Don't you agree? If you take the Army or the Navy or the Forces or anything, the first ... one of the first preoccupations of anybody in charge of another group of

people is to look after the interests and the welfare of that group of people, even before your own welfare very often. I don't think priests can abrogate this idea for themselves. You see it in all walks of life. You see it in the Forces; you see it in many forms of leadership. Unfortunately you don't seem to see it very much in politics. Yes you have got to be prepared to ... I was brought up with that idea anyway but one doesn't think of oneself as a priest.

[Part 2 0:32:23] Verdenius: No maybe not, no. You know the difference between Scott and Shackleton? Scott's in the Navy and Shackleton is civilian. The difference between a priest and ?? [inaudible]

Dagless: Well now, surprisingly enough, I didn't know Scott or Shackleton and a lot of things have been written about Scott, many of which I have read, but I don't know. If you read one book, it will say one thing and if you read another book, it will say the other, and appreciations of Scott or of anybody in the past, varies with the decade in which these appreciations are written. A book about Scott in the '30s wouldn't be the same as a book about Scott in the '60s or the '70s, so I don't know about Scott. One can look at his preparations and his dispositions and his logistics and one can find a lot of faults in that. He should have succeeded but he didn't. That's all I can say really. He came from a different background than, say, Amundsen. I mean Amundsen, I suppose, had the benefit of being a Scandinavian, more acquainted with mountains and snow and icy conditions and they happened to choose the use of dogs which was excellent.

[Part 2 0:34:31] Dagless: Dogs for polar exploration are superb and you can handle dog teams and they can do fantastic things. FIDS, as you possibly know from other interviews and your researches, FIDS and BAS, up to now, have always had dogs down South on the bases and they have done a lot of excellent work. They have learned from Scott that that was not the way to do it. But of course he even took tractors as well. He was in advance of his time because nowadays, the day of the tractor in Antarctica has come back. But unfortunately, Scott's tractors were not quite good enough. Let's face it, they were pretty primitive whereas nowadays, a modern Sno-Cat and skidoos and all kinds of modern mechanical snow transport is very reliable and very useful. You may also know that owing to the terms of a recent Antarctic agreement, dogs are having to be phased out of the Antarctic area. I have already told you that we had to hunt seal to feed our dogs, so I am in two minds over this. Deception Island had a very poor seal population and the only ones that came there during summer ... Some times of year they would be quite a lot but at other times of the year there were only visiting seals. You couldn't shoot enough seal when there were a lot of seals there, in the summer for instance, because they would go bad. You only shot so many seals. You just couldn't keep them hanging about for ever.

[Part 2 0:36:35] Dagless: So the rest of the year, when the seals were really away, we only had visiting seals and of course as soon as they appeared, you shot them, which is terrible. I mean that is partly why I didn't like it, and perhaps we were affecting the seal population of Deception Island, because the seal population of Deception Island was very low. So you could say that ecologically, it's bad to keep dogs there, although on the other hand, on a base where there's of loads of seals, I don't think it does much harm because even with your dogs, if there are a lot of seals there, you are not affecting the population greatly. But I don't think that is the reason that this recent

agreement has come to pass. I think they think that the dogs might be introducing diseases into the Antarctic, and viruses and things like that. There's two things against that. Our dogs that belonged to BAS have remained in the Antarctic since the 1940s and 50s. They have been bred and bred down there all the time, so they are not going to be introducing any new diseases or viruses into the Antarctic. Of course we are not getting them from somewhere else in the world now and taking them down there. They have been bred in those conditions all the time. Now you might say that ... The other thing is of course that they might have already introduced them but if they have introduced them into the Antarctic, in the areas of BAS and FIDS, the organisms or whatever are already there. You have had forty or fifty years of dogs down there so if we kill them off now, the organisms have already been introduced.

[Part 2 0:38:48] Verdenius: Yes, it's basically too late.

Dagless: It's too late, yes. It's too late.

[Part 2 0:38:53] Verdenius: You have to be careful where they have been there.

Dagless: Yes. That's right and now we kill the dogs, off.

[Part 2 0:39:00] Verdenius: Did you go sledging when you were there?

Dagless: Yes. We didn't do a lot of sledging. We were a small island and we didn't have any ... We needed to travel about it and we needed to go to the summit of the mountains occasionally for surveying, but we did it mostly by manhauling. We only had four dogs. We used to harness them up occasionally on a sledge, just to learn about doing it, really. We had mountains of books about it all. We were always talking to our other colleagues on the radio about their journeys, but on Deception Island, you didn't need long sledge journeys and all that. But we still kept our sledge dog harness up and we learned how to make a ... There wasn't much there actually. We did make a lot of sledge dog harness and booties and ... We used to make our own harness, yes. You would have a go at it, just for our own amusement really.

[Part 2 0:40:09] Verdenius: You didn't go on long sledging journeys?

Dagless: No, you can't on Deception Island.

[Part 2 0:40:14] Verdenius: Do you regret this?

Dagless: There are other compensations. Yes in a way. Yes, in a way I regret ... but it was great.

[Part 2 0:40:28] Verdenius: There are compensations?

Dagless: Yes. There were compensations. We did a lot more boating. As I say, Deception Island was known as the social centre of the Antarctic because there were boats coming in for the Chilean base and ships coming in for the Argentinian base and ships coming in for our base. And we used to all mix up. That is not really one's image of Antarctica. But on the other hand you were totally isolated for six months of the year, when no boats came in. I can remember a time when Deception Island was



surrounded by solid ice for two hundred miles in every direction, well right across to the Antarctic mainland in one direction and two hundred miles to the north, or something like that. And it lasted for months and months and months – well nearly a year, so we were isolated; there's no doubt about that. And we did travel. We walked to another island once but we didn't take the dogs. We went across to Small Island, just in the sea there. But we had no reason ... We weren't surveyors. You only travel if you have a reason, in Antarctica, or anywhere. I never travel anywhere without a reason, even if it is only to meet you from the station.

[Part 2 0:41:55] Dagless: But those that needed to travel were the ones that were doing surveying and mapmaking. They used to take meteorologists with them. You might have one or two surveyors and two assistants who would be meteorologists or something like that, because you needed to have a party of four perhaps or three or whatever you decided on. For safety perhaps, you needed three or four people. So we had no reason to travel, even when the sea was frozen and we could have walked across to the Antarctic continent. What was the point? We had no reason to go out there and do that, and in the Antarctic you don't just go swanning around for fun because it's too dangerous. The consequences could be too great, but if there is a reason, like mapmaking or it's your job to do that, then you do it. Now we used to go round our own island. As I say, we had one or two sledges, one particular I remember, and we used to tow it around the island manhauling, three or four people, which I enjoyed. Oh yes, I enjoyed doing that. I can remember once, we were doing tellurometer surveys. Has anybody spoken about tellurometer surveys to you? A tellurometer is a radio device and ... Can you just stop it a minute? When have you got to go?

[Part 2 0:43:45] Verdenius: I have to leave this place at five o'clock.

Dagless: Leave here at five? Supposing I ran you down. Do you want to stay longer? It seems to me we have hardly started.

[Part 2 0:44:01] Verdenius: I have to get this train.

Dagless: I know but I was wondering if I ran you down to Gatwick.

[Part 2 0:44:05] Verdenius: Let me think. How long does that take you?

Dagless: Well it would take me two hours: an hour down there and an hour back. Actually if I have got to go up to Norfolk tonight. OK. You have got to leave this house at five?

[Part 2 0:44:24] Verdenius: Yes.

Dagless: OK. We will just carry on a bit then. Tellurometers: a tellurometer is a radio device for measuring distance. Now, as you possibly know, maps have always been made since time immemorial – well since surveying really became a science (and an art) – by triangulation. You have a baseline of known length and you draw triangles around it, and then triangles on those triangles from fixed points, from trigonometrical points, with theodolites and all doing it very accurately. But you have to go and set up points and then go to known points and observe those points from the known points

from two known points along a baseline. Are you familiar with all this, theodolites and triangulation? That is how you do it and you also do running traverses and things like that. Well with the tellurometer, and radio measurement of distance, you can do it by tri-lateration as well as triangulation.

[Part 2 0:45:50] Dagless: So we had tellurometers down there in the '50s. So you would go to the top of a mountain with your radio transmitter and somebody else would go to the top of another mountain or a prominent point, top of a mountain usually as they are the most prominent points, and sit there with his reflector. And you would bounce your radio waves backwards and forwards and get an instant reading of the distance without having to travel all the way in between. So your parties could be dropped by helicopter. Now the helicopters came off *HMS Protector*, the Falkland Islands guard ship, and they would drop us in various places around and you would be able to measure the distance between all these places very quickly, far quicker than travelling around. And you would get very accurate measurement of distance, so that was quite advanced in those days. It was the we were doing it. It's like radar really. We were doing that in those days. So when the surveyors were out and about on different islands, or on the mainland, they would need us to go about our island and make points for them, to focus the radio waves on, you see. Or they would need to come, so we would support these people in the field all the time while the tellurometer survey was going on.

[Part 2 0:47:22] Dagless: We would have to go up Mount Kirkwood and set up a camp there. Or somebody was going up another mountain on the mainland and we would sit there until he had bounced his radio waves off you. It might take two or three days due to the weather and various things. Of course unless you can actually see it, it is sometimes difficult to actually focus the tellurometer exactly in the right sector. So we were involved in going round all the time doing this sort of thing. I can remember once we were asked to put something that could be seen visually on top of Mount Pond on Deception Island, from the mainland. We filled a large red – I told you about these hydrogen filled balloons – we filled a huge red hydrogen balloon up and took it 2000 ft. up this mountain, several miles away. One of the things I always remember about that: we had somebody there that was perhaps a little irresponsible and when we got near to the summit of Mount Pond, we were going over a large expanse of ice and snow, and we were roped together, just in case. Because there are funny crevasses round there because there were hot underground heat areas, because, remember, it is volcanic, the island.

[Part 2 0:49:02] Dagless: I was first on the rope, he was in the middle and somebody else was bringing up the rear, or he was at the rear (I don't know). Anyway, without telling anybody else, he took himself off the rope, and I didn't know, and all of a sudden he was catching me up. I looked round and saw him catching me up. I thought 'My God!' I could have gone down, he could have gone down. It really was irresponsible. But anyway we put this huge balloon up there and they managed to see it from the Antarctic mainland. But my Goodness me, even 2000 feet. It was very cold. Well it was pretty windy too. Very cold and windy on the top of the mountain. You think there is no wind and when you come to the top, all of a sudden it is sweeping up the other side. You get tremendous fohn effects on the wind there. I can remember going up a small mountain on Deception and I could not get to the top of it. It was only about 700 feet high, 700 or 800 feet high.

[Part 2 0:50:09] Dagless: I forget what it was called. I must have climbed it 30 or 40 or 50 times. This day I went up there and there was a fair wind and when I came within a hundred, perhaps two hundred feet of the top, 50 metres or something, of the top, the wind was increasing with every half a metre. You could measure the difference in the wind, and in the end I got so far, I was being blown off the mountain. I could not go any further. I was just being blown off the mountain and had I lost my footing, I would have just gone skittering down. The wind was so ... I have never known such a wind. It was fantastic. It must have been well over 100 mph. You just couldn't face it and every foot, every half metre or something like that, it was getting faster and faster, and in the end I had to lie down. I knew I couldn't get to the top. I had to lie down and just crawl back down and you could feel it as you went down, every metre again, the wind was getting less and less. Amazing.

[Part 2 0:51:32] Verdenius: You had to run through your [?? inaudible].

Dagless: We had done a lot, yes, that's leadership. Another thing: you asked about the leadership. You have got to remember that a lot of the people down there ... I was appointed the leader but a lot of people down there could have done that, could have also been leader. I think perhaps if you are a leader, you ought to be also capable of being a follower, and I would have been just as happy to be a follower or a leader. Yes, we had several people on our base who could have equally been the leader. As I say, you get self-motivated people down there. You don't go to the Antarctic unless you have got these qualities maybe. I don't know.

[Part 2 0:52:41] Verdenius: That's exactly why I asked you, because you were didn't come as leader. You were suddenly appointed from outside which is quite interesting because that's a way of getting a leader which is quite different from the way that you run societies ...

Dagless: Yes. I don't know how else they would have done it. You have spoken to more leaders, have you? Interesting. Well that was how it happened and it's not easy. If you go to the Antarctic, a lot of them are strong characters, strong personalities. It's not easy but you don't wallow in it. You just ... Anyway I don't know what to say about it. I did think of something to say. Oh yes. You know I mentioned just now of this friend of mine, detached himself from the rope, which I didn't think much of. A few months later, or a few weeks later (I can't remember now) we were doing the same thing on the flanks of Mount Kirkwood. We had been up there to do part of this tellurometer survey and we were bringing the camp back down. With a tellurometer, it sounds all nice. You take up a little radio set, but in those days the radio sets were quite big. You had to have a largish dish aerial, like a radar aerial, a dish (flying saucer) and then your radio set. And you also have to take a motor. You have to have a generator up there, a petrol driven generator, an engine and a generator to make electricity to run it all. You just couldn't take batteries up. There was quite a lot to running it.

[Part 2 0:54:55] Dagless: You had a really big sledge full. You had got your motor and your radio, your aerial and all your own food and stores and enough to live up there for a week perhaps. If the weather clamps down you might have to stay up there a week to get the job done. And we were bringing all this down from Mount

Kirkwood at one time. A friend of mine, Bill (William he is often known as; I have forgotten his surname at the moment), we were all sort of milling around on this snow ridge, getting things organised to take it down the final 1100 feet. I am talking about feet all the time; you talk in metres, don't you? 350 metres, something like that, 300 metres. Getting things organised and all of a sudden, we all looked round. Where was Bill? And he had fallen down a crevasse. There was a tiny hole in the snow had opened up underneath him, only about half a metre wide. He had just jumped down this hole into a crevasse. We came cautiously to the edge and looked down and there was Bill standing on a little ledge, luckily a little ice edge had stuck out and he had gone straight down and landed on this small ice edge and there he was, standing. He didn't dare to move or anything like that.

[Part 2 0:56:34] Dagless: So it can happen. We were unroped at the time. None us were roped up. We had taken a risk and he had paid the price. Well we got him out. After a few photographs of Bill down there, we got him out. Luckily we all had ice axes with us and plenty of nylon ropes and we lowered a rope to him with prusik loops and managed to get his feet in one each and then we belayed them round the ice axes at the top and every time he lifted his right foot, we drew on the right rope and belayed it round the ice axe. When he lifted his left foot, we belayed it round the other ice axe and we got him out. Four ice axes I think were used. But luckily there were four or five of us there to do it. If he had been there by himself, he would have gone down but I never used to go by myself unroped over that sort of ground without being on skis. You can do a lot on skis. They transfer the weight in an even manner over a six foot length, so the bridge over a crevasse tends not to break away. But yes, he fell down there but we got him out. It took us about half an hour maybe. I have met him since, up in London at an annual reunion. So it can happen. The other thing on Deception Island was: the definitive geology of the time, was done when I was on Deception Island, while I was Base Leader.

[Part 2 0:58:29] Dagless: We had a young lad down here, very good geologist, from Birmingham University, and he came down and we supported him in the field all over Deception Island for five months, most of the summer. Which means we lent him a man from our base who stayed with him all the time. He covered the whole island inch by inch, doing the geology and loads of samples, hundreds, tons of boxes of stone and samples and things. And packed it all up and we sent it all back to Birmingham University. Now I didn't go. I am not a great one for Antarctic reunions – I have only been to about ... – for BAS and FIDS reunions. And I am also in the Antarctic Club and I have been to about three of those. One year I turned up at the Antarctic Club in London for a big dinner and everything. The Duke of Edinburgh was there and all kinds of people. They have a seating plan. You look at the seating plan and you see all these people. I was seated next to a professor. It said 'Professor Hawkes, Birmingham University'. There he was, an old man of – I suppose he was in his forties then, and this was the young Don Hawkes that we had supported in the field and I hadn't seen him from that Antarctic summer until I met him up in London there. He was a full-blown professor then, in charge of the whole Department of Geology at Birmingham University.

[Part 2 1:00:24] Verdenius: You must go next to your notes I think.

Dagless: Well I don't know. We have covered a lot of it. We could never cover all of it. I can remember one of our chaps took his bagpipes. He was a Scot and the very first time I ever went to Deception Island, he took a set of bagpipes with him. Do you know bagpipes? And the first moment I arrived on Deception Island, he was walking along a ridge some distance from the base hut, playing these bagpipes. It was all sounding round Whalers' Bay. It was quite interesting.

[Part 2 1:01:30] Verdenius: Was there any other music things?

Dagless: Music? Yes we had ... I am not good at talking from these notes. Yes, we were generally fairly musical. Most of us were pretty keen on music. We had a sort of primitive radio-gram down there that we used to play a lot of: a turntable, amplifier and speakers. Yes we used to listen to a lot of music. I listened to a lot of Beethoven down there, learned every note of several Beethoven symphonies. I can remember it now. Now what was it? Beethoven's Third, the *Eroica*. We certainly had that and it was conducted by Erich Kleiber and I think it was the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, and I think that one of the records we played on and on and on. But I never got tired of it. I loved the *Eroica*. I have got two or three versions of the *Eroica* now. We had quite a bit of Beethoven and some Mozart.

[Part 2 1:03:06] Dagless: I can remember once when a ship came down in the summer, it brought a copy of, somebody with a copy of *My Fair Lady* which was the latest musical of the time in London. And of course it gets into one's soul. We were all going around singing songs from *My Fair Lady*. But yes, we used to play quite a lot of music, I would say more classical or musicals than anything other. There were people that played cards. I didn't particularly fancy cards but sometimes you would have a card school that would start and they would start playing cards in the evening and go all the way round until 5 o'clock in the morning, 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, playing cards all night. Then they would sleep all day. They would be sleeping by day and be up all night. Because in the winter it gets very dark and you get almost constant darkness and it is easy to do that.

[Part 2 1:04:24] Verdenius: How did you spend your spare time? How did you spend your Sundays?

Dagless: Sundays. I don't think we took a lot of notice of Sundays, of what day of the week it was. But you were no more free on Sundays than you were on Mondays or any other day. We more or less abolished the weekends. Every day was the same except for Christmas Day. Free time though? We had free time. You weren't always working. When the weather was suitable you did a lot of skiing, as I've said before. Some people went fishing. That was another source of fresh food; you could fish. I didn't do that but I remember Paisley, the man I mentioned before, he did quite a lot of fishing. He used to bring fish back to the base which we used to eat. Excellent it was too. I used to eat it but I didn't use to fish for it. We did a bit of target practice occasionally but not a lot. Skiing was the main thing, boating. Oh photography, yes. We had a darkroom which we rigged up and we did quite a lot of photography. We had the facilities for doing our own developing and printing and a lot of people used to do that. I used to quite a lot of that, developing and printing and doing a lot of photography, some of which has still yet to see the light of day. The films are developed. I have got the negatives but they have never been printed.

[Part 2 1:06:04] Verdenius: Was there any kind of religious service?

Dagless: No. Let's put it this way. There wasn't a lot of outward sign of religion amongst us but religion wasn't talked about much. I was religious at the time. I believed in God at the time but we didn't do much about it. I think one of us was a Roman Catholic but no, I can't say that religion played a big outward sign in our lives although it may of course – one never knows what part it was playing inwardly to somebody. They might have been drawing strength from it; I wouldn't know. But we didn't have any official service or anything like that.

[Part 2 1:07:15] Verdenius: You wouldn't know?

Dagless: I wouldn't know what?

[Part 2 1:07:17] Verdenius: About other people.

Dagless: Well on our base, six or seven of us, I wouldn't know. No, there was no outward sign of religious observance, but, as I say, inwardly there might have been ... people might have been drawing strength from their religion. I think we were multi-religious. I don't think everybody was the same religion. As I say, I don't even know ... Discussion of religion didn't play a large part in our lives, I wouldn't have thought.

[Part 2 1:08:12] Verdenius: If you were not religious, how did you consider this landscape where no man lives?

Dagless: I considered it absolutely wonderful. I would love to go back. I sometimes think if I was a millionaire, if I had plenty of money, I would get a small ocean-going boat and go down there myself, again. I loved it: the landscape, the scenery, the atmosphere. I loved Antarctica but I can't go back anymore because I am not rich enough. I don't think I would like to go back as a tourist. No I wouldn't like to go back as a tourist.

[Part 2 1:09:01] Verdenius: Can you imagine Scott saying 'My God, this an awful place.'?

Dagless: Ah yes. Yes, he was strongly religious and I can well imagine it. It is an awful place sometimes. I've been to several deserts too and they are very similar to the Antarctic. Places are either awful or not awful, according to one's own outlook, and also according to what's happening at the time. If you are benighted or marooned on a mountain, at night, in a blizzard and you have no idea where the base is or how to get off the mountain and you know you are going to freeze to death, I can well imagine anybody saying 'My God, this is an awful place.' Absolutely, especially in Antarctica where there is absolutely nothing.

[Part 2 1:10:04] Dagless: I was on South Georgia for a time earlier on and I visited Shackleton's grave there. He is buried on South Georgia. Now he was a leader, you see. He brought all his men through and achieved a lot in the way of survival, through tremendous odds. I think that what he achieved was little short of miraculous. I have never read anything like it. When they were travelling across South Georgia, in the

last parts of their journey, they said they felt there was another Person with them, some kind of religious feeling they had. Have you read about Shackleton? Yes, they said they felt as if there was a Presence with them. I have been to the whaling station on South Georgia where they finally came out<sup>2</sup> and seen the mountains down which they came. Yes, fantastic and I was glad to have seen Shackleton's grave. Mind you, have you read about Douglas Mawson, the Australian Antarctic explorer? He also did tremendous feats of survival.

[Part 2 1:11:41] Verdenius: Mawson?

Dagless: Yes, Douglas Mawson. If you get a chance, read up about Douglas Mawson. I can remember when I first came to South Georgia, I was dropped off by the *Shackleton*, which was a FIDS ship. I was dropped off on South Georgia and left with the whalers, no left on King Edward Point. I was dropped off in the little British base there. I think a chap called Bob Spivey was the Leader and the resident magistrate. He said to me 'Well,' he said 'they have dropped you off here. You have got to wait for a ship You are going to be here for several weeks.' All this sort of thing. He said 'We have got nowhere for you to sleep' he said 'but we have got the jail.' And there was a jailhouse with two bunks, no heating, no nothing; a jailhouse with one room with two bunks, and he said 'There is another chap living in it, but you can share it with him.' It is a tiddly little place. It is not as big as this room here. I suppose it was about perhaps 10 foot by 10 foot, something like that, or even less, maybe only nine foot by nine foot, about three metres by three metres.

[Part 2 1:13:08] Dagless: And I went in there and you probably don't know this: during the '40s and '50s on British radio, what we call the wireless, there was a programme called *Dick Barton, Special Agent*. Very exciting, every night and his companions Jock and Snowy, and they were always saving the country from spies and wars and bandits. Very exciting, *Dick Barton, Special Agent* and it had wonderful rousing music to it, which I believe came from *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Anyway he was a great commanding man who played this on radio, called Duncan Carse, great big beard, tall, bronzed weather-beaten face and all that. And blow me, if I walk into this jail on South Georgia and it is Duncan Carse in there, sleeping in the jail. He was also a surveyor as well as an actor and he had been down running a survey for the British Government on South Georgia and making maps of the area, and he was living in the jail, one of my heroes of my youth. There he was, living in the jail, so I met Duncan Carse. I have seen him on television several times since. So there you are; you have to go to South Georgia to meet people. Well I don't know about you, we ought to be packing up.

[Part 2 1:14:40] Verdenius: Yes.

Dagless: There's a lot more, if you have got the time. We can arrange another meeting.

[Part 2 1:14:46] Verdenius: I have to go to England again.

Dagless: Oh, is this your last trip?

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<sup>2</sup> Stromness.

[Part 2 1:14:51] Verdenius: Yes, and I am going to get the train.

Dagless: No but I mean are you coming next month, next week, any other time?

[Part 2 1:15:01] [End of Part Two]

ENDS



Possible extracts:

- [Part 1 0:28:04] Shipwreck at Neptune's Bellows.
- [Part 1 0:44:35] Hand starting a diesel generator.
- [Part 1 0:48:26] New Year's Eve appointment with Chilean doctor.
- [Part 1 0:55:35] Argentine tourist ship in the 1950s.
- [Part 1 1:03:53] Trial for cruelty to penguins.
- [Part 1 1:08:37] Fire in the radio room.
- [Part 2 0:07:49] Hot water tank cooking.
- [Part 2 0:15:33] Culling new-born puppies.
- [Part 2 0:19:59] Shooting seal from a small boat.
- [Part 2 0:28:04] Triple penguin egg omelettes.
- [Part 2 0:47:22] A huge red balloon on Mount Kirkwood.
- [Part 2 0:56:34] Rescue from a crevasse.
- [Part 2 1:00:24] Bagpipes and Beethoven.
- [Part 2 1:13:08] Sharing a jail with Duncan Carse.