

AV 11: Eric William 'Kevin' Walton oral history summary

Recorded at the home of Bernard Stonehouse, Swaffham Bulbeck, 23.7.2000. Interviewed by Bernard Stonehouse (BS).

Tape 1. [00.45.29] [00.00.38] Introduction by Bernard Stonehouse (BS) outlining Kevin Walton's (KW) career, awards and publications. [00.02.50] Description of polar connection via his father knowing Eric Marshall at school; KW's mentors were Stephenson and Lancelot Fleming; Fleming recommended him for Operation Tabarin after the war. [00.04.45] Description of joining Operation Tabarin with no briefing; journey from London – Lisbon - Montevideo – Falkland Islands – Deception Island; anecdote about finding explosives on Deception Island. [00.09.15] Mention of visiting bases at Hope Bay, Port Lockroy, establishing a new base at South Orkney and on to found their own base; mention of base at Argentine Islands. [00.10.18] Description of founding a new base on Stonington Island; comments on finding an American base already built and the strategic nature of the location; 9 men left on Stonington for the summer; comments on life on base with no privacy; praise for John Tonkin. [00.15.40] Description of learning polar skills from Ted Bingham; dogs bought from Labrador which they had to learn how to train; Comments on Ted Bingham's personality. [00.18.00] Description of work in the first summer and desire to reach the top of the polar plateau. [00.20.05] Description of life on base during the first winter including food and routines, all of which were very simple and primitive; comments on dog training and life with the dogs. [00.24.50] Description of work carried out over the two and a half years of the expedition; comments on the weather and making it up to the plateau. [00.26.25] Description of Bingham leaving at the end of the first year along with others; BS and others came to replace them; KW's sledging party left soon after their arrival; they returned to find American's had reoccupied to their abandoned 1941 base. Mention of Finn Ronne, 19 men and 2 women; comments on women. [00.29.55] Description of the American expedition including lack of good dogs; three aircraft, poor equipment and good food; cooperating for mutual success; only one woman at a time over for tea; Ronne had problems with personnel. [00.33.45] Description of the West peninsula trip and advising the Americans. Mention of East peninsulas trip being supported by air. [00.35.30] Description of travelling in crevassed areas. Mention of two separate accidents where they had to rescue men in crevasses. Description of John Tonkin's accident and rescue [00.39.02 intermittent sound] [39.30 change of tape] [00.39.40] An American was involved in the second crevasse accident. [00.39.55 – 00.41.7 no sound] [00.41.28] Mention of working with Duncan Carse on the South Georgia Survey; difficult place with poor weather; mention of Shackleton. [00.43.35 – 00.45.00 no sound] Brief mention of North Wales [00.45.29] END.

Tape 2. [00.19.22] [00.00.17] Description of KW's working life after returning from Antarctica including working as a civil engineer in Wales; comments on the difficulties of keeping a Huskie in Wales; setting up an adventure training course for Malvern College; teaching engineering at the Naval College in Dartmouth and sailing; setting up "Windows in Engineering" at Malvern school to introduce school children to the profession; the penguin sailing club. [00.07.05] Comments on his son and nephew also being polar people; anecdote about his son and nephew visiting the palace to collect polar medals; comments on writing books [00.09.59 interview ends] [00.10.00 editing shots and BS reading his questions to camera] [00.19.22] END