

1 Polar Mariner – Captain Tom Woodfield OBE ([WoodfieldT50](#))

Captain Thomas Woodford was a Warsash cadet in 1949-50. He served his time with Port Line before taking up an appointment on the RRS Shackleton which supported Antarctic expeditions. Having been promoted and after several years serving as Master on other survey ships, he came ashore in 1974. Captain Woodford then joined Trinity House until his final retirement, upon which he became an Elder Brother. The following extract is from his book 'Polar Mariner' published in 2016 by [Whittles Publishing](#) who kindly gave permission for us to use extracts.



Captain Tom Woodfield OBE & RRS Shackleton

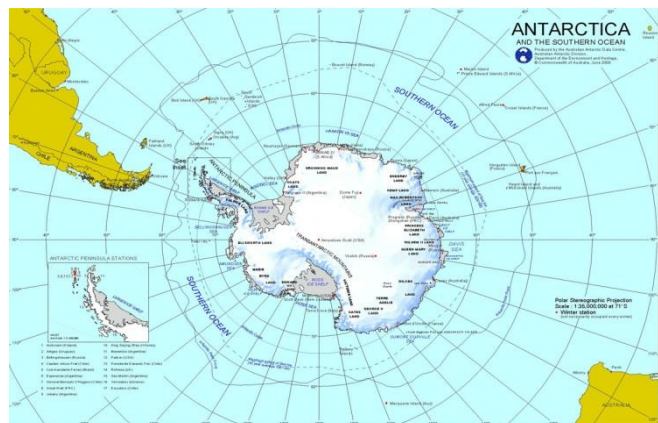
Polar Mariner which is illustrated with many photographs, is a very interesting and well written book (ISBN 978-1-84995-166-1). Further extracts will follow in later editions of All Hands.

An Opportunity Grasped: One Sunday shortly after gaining my initial Certificate the good fortune from which my life has benefited began to kick in. My older brother, who by this time was in the Army and returning to his Unit, my younger sister, off to school in Switzerland and I to join a ship in the London docks, all on the following day spent what was likely to be a last Sunday lunch together at home for some considerable time. During that afternoon my father read out an advertisement from the paper adding “This will interest you, son”. It read “Full crew required for an Antarctic Expedition Ship - no polar experience necessary. Apply Crown Agents” etc. The opportunity to combine those inherited interests of the sea, mountains, ice and polar exploration was a chance not to be missed. I telephoned my employer on the Monday morning and explained that I wished to attend an interview for a Junior Officer’s position aboard the Royal Research Ship (R.R.S.) Shackleton rather than join my next Port Line vessel.

We were to be employed by the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey (F.I.D.S.) and one of the interview panel was Captain Bill Johnston who was to transfer from R.R.S. John Biscoe, the sole vessel then run by F.I.D.S. (the Survey) to command their newly acquired second vessel to be named the R.R.S. Shackleton.

Becoming Involved - That Which Lay Ahead: All voyages were expeditions to relieve the bases bringing them new personnel and supplies. The bases were stations for scientific research but their establishment had also in my first years an underlying political purpose.

We supported not only their existence but their scientific research, survey and exploration and indeed carried out such ventures ourselves offshore whilst all the time displaying Britain’s claim to sovereignty by our presence. They were always a contrasting mixture of great endeavour and blissful scenic passage making. Ever present though was the enthusiasm and camaraderie of a volunteer crew and expeditioners. The combination of sea ice and ferocious weather which protects Antarctica’s shores and made it at times such a fearsome place to approach, provided continual challenges which I came to relish.



There were many times of anxiety; being driven onto the rocks or becoming beset and crushed for long periods, but also many of pure joy; gazing at the beauty of the land or seascapes, marveling at the wildlife so tangible without fear of humans, or just from the satisfaction of achievement against the odds, whether on a day to day basis or the completion of an entire voyage. I delighted in the company of my fellow travellers, be they humble mess boys, ship’s officers, young scientists or eminent and knowledgeable professors when we shared the wonders and excitement of the polar world that were continually on offer. I completed 19 years of

voyaging to Antarctica on three ships sailing from Southampton via South America and the Falkland Islands and in my early years soon became passionate about my trade, polar seafaring. I became fascinated by the Southern Continent, its magnificence, natural inhabitants and weather, and developed a keen interest in the formation, geology and glaciology of that ice and land mass. I became enthralled by the history of those who had first ventured to this often desolate and demanding part of the planet and incredulous at their achievements in appalling conditions both at sea under sail and ashore with such poor equipment, clothing and food. Laterally in my career at sea and even more so afterwards I became actively involved in the politics, protection and economics of the region.

Royal Research Ship Shackleton - First Voyage – Lasting Impressions

The loading of the cargo and stores was completed quickly once the inclining test proved our stability satisfactory, although we still had a condition placed upon us to ballast any double bottom fuel tanks when they became empty. Expeditioners were embarked and at last we sailed South. For our second departure it was again into poor weather. Down the Channel towards Ushant a full southwester came in and Captain Johnston decided a quiet anchorage made more sense than little uncomfortable progress in mid-channel.

We anchored less than a cable under the lee of Berry Head, weaving our way through and passed many other ships taking shelter. To we big ship mariners aboard, which is what the majority of us were, the philosophy of nursing the ship and crew and working with the weather, and not fighting it was a revelation and my first lesson in seamanship from observing Bill Johnston. He was however to prove a hard taskmaster. He was a tall, gaunt Ulsterman brought up in the coastal trade before a tough war in rescue tugs based on Gibraltar assisting Malta convoys, then joining the Falkland Islands Company's ships as Master. He was recruited to FIDS by Sir Miles Clifford, a Governor of the Islands who had admired his expertise. The Colonial Office, represented by the Governor, was the body responsible for us. Johnston was a cold, rather aloof figure, who chain smoked Players Perfectos Finos and drank lots of pink gin.

Not once, though, in my nine years associated with him did I see him the worse for wear, not even in Stanley where the inhabitants hospitality made it difficult to stay sober. He occasionally showed a dry sense of humour though usually at the expense of others. He did not suffer fools or incompetence and was severe if you were not carrying out his instructions to the letter. He always wore uniform, usually with cap, even in the severest weather.



RSS Shackleton

He frowned upon any dressing down and even showed a dislike, but tolerated, my wearing a black silk scarf instead of a tie when passage making at night.

Where the saying originated I know not but he favoured the phrase “You don't have to be scruffy to be tough”. His authority was absolute, so it should be as Master, may say my professional readers, but his style of command which extended beyond the ship to the bases and areas in which we were working or lay was extreme. He never discussed his plans or tactics. He never aired his concerns nor shared confidences. He was phlegmatic with apparently no nerves. We used to joke that if you stuck a pin in him he might later consider saying “ouch”. His well-kept secret, however, was that he was seasick, although some sharp eyed lads noticed that he was not around much during the first day of a passage if it was rough and we had not been to sea for a while, unless it was absolutely necessary as for instance when we sheltered under Berry Head. Above all

though, and most important, was that he was a fine, safe, but adventurous seaman with an uncanny eye for a safe passage in unchartered waters from whom I was to learn a great deal.

An uneventful passage was made to Montevideo with a short visit to the Cape Verde Islands to top up with both fuel and water entirely for the purpose of maintaining good stability. During the passage we familiarised ourselves with the ship and settled into routines. We had none of a new vessel's teething problems for she had already been in service for a year in the Baltic. However we did swing ship to calibrate the Magnetic compass on the Magnetic Equator at about Latitude five degrees South. Taking compass bearings of the sun whilst on different headings and comparing them with the true bearings extracted from the Nautical Almanac establishes the deviation of the compass on various headings. This can then also be refined by adjusting the soft iron correctors adjacent to the compass, the Flinders Bar and Kelvin Balls, which we did. The change to these errors would have resulted from a change to the ship's magnetism consequent upon the large amount of structural work that had taken place in the shipyard. This was a first for me as the task was usually carried out by a professional compass adjuster prior to sailing, but it was not to be my last "swing" by a long way. We discovered later that when working heavy ice the effect on the ship was the same as that of taking a hammer to a piece of steel. It changed its magnetism and consequently its effect on the compass deviation. Later we had to devise methods of evaluating the deviation in high latitudes when the other compass error, variation, from the earth's magnetic field, was high, not nil as at the Magnetic Equator. We created many transits at places frequently visited of which we had established the true bearing on a sunny day to enable us to make compass checks when required. Picking them up in poor weather, then confidently applying a correction whilst entering a hazardous area, where only our own limited sketch survey had established a limited route, and haste was essential, proved testing. We had, of course, a gyro compass but during this initial season, and on many other subsequent ones, it repeatedly failed, once for an entire nine month voyage. I therefore developed an obsession with the errors and corrections of the magnetic compass.

Montevideo, at 36 degrees South, in the mouth of the River Plate was an exciting and friendly place to visit. It was hot in mid-summer, the air filled with the aromas of frangipane, bougainvillea, barbecued meat and red wine. Scruffy in a Latin unkempt way with buildings in disrepair and broken pavements it had lovely beaches and an outdoor way of life. Our day and a half there was spent taking water, fuel and it was our last chance to store up on fresh fruit, vegetables and meat. None of these were available in the Falklands except mutton of which there was an abundance.

The thousand mile voyage from there to the Falklands saw a distinct drop in air temperature. There are two parallel but opposing currents off the east coast of the Argentine, the south going warm, the north going Falkland current cold. The latter had carried an iceberg north onto the English Bank in the mouth of the River Plate in 1936. A careful lookout for ice was always kept on this passage, but in truth I never met ice until some few hundred miles south of the Falklands. The two currents with their individual air masses above them often differing by up to ten degrees produced fog. Associated with the possibility of meeting ice one could never not be alert.

Stanley and Introduction to the Southern Ocean: We were well behind the schedule of a southern season when we arrived at Stanley late in January. FIDS, the acronym by which the organization was known had its rear base here. At the back of Government House were a handful of offices where a small team led by the Secretary (SECFIDS), co-ordinated activities south, liaised with the Governor and London H.Q., through a wireless office nearby which provided a communications centre for the ships, bases and shore staff. Near the jetty we also had a stores depot. The Fids by which the expeditioners were known were kitted out with their 'Southern' clothing and gear, whilst stores, cargo and mail were transferred between ship and shore so as to stow our load in accordance with the order of bases we were to visit on this single voyage south of our shortened season. The role of the vessels was normally primarily to re-supply the several bases with their annual stores and change over the personnel, after which we were to assist, support and facilitate their operations. We were to build refuge huts as outposts for extended survey runs from the bases, and land men, dogs and stores at remote locations to establish camps from which further survey work could be undertaken.

On this voyage however, in conjunction with our sister ship we carried two complete new stations, the building materials for the erection of the huts, generators, food, fuel and equipment sufficient for a year's occupation. Another first for me as we sailed out of Stanley harbour was not just to have the decks piled high with drums of petrol, diesel oil, gas cylinders and sledges but also to have fresh carcasses of mutton strapped to the rigging. After a couple of days at sea they were both 'salt cured and frozen', perfect for delivery.

Right: The John Biscoe (later voyage)



The Drake Passage, that part of the Southern Ocean lying to the southward of the Falklands and South America is a turbulent place. The passage of depressions being almost relentless and the swell they create rarely subsiding. It's average height being between four and five metres. Twenty years later this stretch of water was to throw at me the most tremendous family of ocean storms of my career, but on this occasion sailing between depressions it was relatively quiet. At 58 degrees South a faint speck of white appeared on the horizon. 'Iceberg, iceberg', the cry rang around the ship. One's first is always an amazing sight and wonderful experience, whether a giant flat top tabular broken away from an ice shelf or a sculptured deep blue fragment from a glacier. As that first drew nearer one became aware not just of its enormity but also of the chaos of surging, breaking, swirling sea that it's static bulk created. This maelstrom in turn trapping fish, squid and krill providing a feeding ground for a multitude of birds. About this latitude the Antarctic Polar Front or Convergence would have been crossed. This is where the cold north going surface waters of the Antarctic meet and sink beneath the southward flowing temperate waters of the Atlantic. Also in this area is an upwelling of water from the circumpolar current itself created by the almost constant westerly winds. The sea thermograph falls abruptly by about five degrees showing that there is very little mixing at this level between the two adjacent water masses. The relevance of these oceanographic phenomena, the instant change to cold water and the upwelling, is to the mariner twofold. Firstly, the colder water allows ice to survive longer than in the warm, thus increasing greatly the possibility of ice being met in the open ocean; secondly, the bird life increases dramatically. The cold water, about 2 degrees centigrade supports krill which the warm water does not to the same degree. These in turn are fed by the nutrients and diatom carried to the surface by the upwelling in the circumpolar current. Around the ship immediately in entering the colder, richer water giant wandering albatross which had occasionally been sighted singly since about the latitude of Rio de Janeiro at 23 degrees South now arrived abundantly and frequently. Rarely was the ship now without these graceful creatures. They are joined at the other end of the spectrum by the tiny Wilson's storm petrels both riding the air up draughts from the plunging bow, or feeding on whatever is churned up in the wake astern.

Admiralty Bay: As we approached the sub-Antarctic islands of the South Shetlands a wonderful variety of further land nesting seabirds joined the ship, Terns, Skuas, Shearwaters, Shags and Gulls. Turning into our first southern harbour, Admiralty Bay on King George Island we also entered our first pack ice, blown into the twelve mile deep enclosure from the Bransfield Strait. What a glorious sight, a natural wonderland.

To be dwarfed later by panoramic extravaganza but then for my first time Antarctica in all its glory. Working multi-year pack ice some three feet out of the water with at most times considerably more beneath; seals upon it basking in the sun and penguins now joining the array of wildlife hopping onto and off the floes. The ice pristine white with snow cover or bare and deep blue, and light blue to green with algae, and dirty brown with decay or the detriment of seals and penguins. The rugged island 1800 feet high close to hand, almost encircled us, heavily glaciated, crevasses galore in the tumbling ice fields ending at the water's edge in fractured ice cliffs, interspersed by craggy rock buttresses.



Deck Officer taking bearings from the John Biscoe in Neumeyer Channel

Mountain peaks and nunataks (Ed. - hills or mountains completely surrounded by glacial ice) rising inland from snow fields. Every ray of light whether of direct sun or a shaft filtered through cloud, bursting into a spectrum of colours as the ice crystals of snow, pack ice or glaciers acted as prisms. The low sun casting long dark shadows that contrasted with the pinks, blues and greens created by the algae within the floes or ice cliffs, and the rose tints of the glacier and shelf faces when struck directly by the sun as it skimmed along the horizon at the beginning and end of our twenty-four hour day, it being mid-summer. And a realization that Antarctica was not all black and white.

On arrival we anchored within the pack ice but it was too dense for us to lower the boats and work cargo, yet too hummocked to carry it by sledge, and there was always the possibility that the wind would change and it would loosen or move out, stranding us with our loads or worse. Satisfactory though for us to take our first polar walk to get some photographs. Twenty-four hours later the pack did loosen and we put our boats down and got ashore. The shingle beach adjacent to the base hut upon which we landed the stores was littered with a variety of whale bones but mostly enormous vertebrae and long ribs. These and the occasional iron trypot in which whale or seal blubber had been rendered down bore testament to the whaling and ruthless slaughter of seals in the early nineteenth century. Firstly, fur seals were taken for their coats and then any seal for their blubber.

Our method of cargo delivery at such bases that afforded an anchorage was to fill the scow, a thirty-two foot open wooden barge which we carried on deck, having put it over the side into the water. This was then strapped alongside the sturdy motorboat which we kept stowed within the scow on deck. Fairly straightforward in good weather with no swell and no ice but that was not usually the case. The anchorage had good holding with blue mud, one of the best, but we were harassed by pack ice moving in and out on the wind from the Bransfield Strait. Its weight would drag us around and made working the boat and the scow alongside a nightmare, or impossible if too dense. When the pack was out of the anchorage a swell would come in which made getting the craft over the side safely difficult. All hands tending retaining painters to stop them swinging. Frequently the landings were clogged with floating brash ice or bergy bits, or the same were stranded on the beach in our way left by a falling tide. The weather was changeable, gusting winds producing breaking waves which along with swell made work difficult amongst the ice on the shore line. All these circumstances we began to master and they became for us the norm. Large items such as tractors and generators were usually taken ashore by forming a platform across both motorboat and scow upon which they were placed. They were then driven off or hauled down a ramp of wooden deals which we carried at all times. Fid power was the ultimate resource, indeed the main resource for working cargo. We had never heard of health and safety.

Before leaving Admiralty Bay we shifted anchorage and tied up stern to a glacier snout where the base Fids had created a dam on the rocks immediately at its foot. We ran out a hose and pumped aboard good fresh water. The glacial scouring provided a danger free approach and the moraine good holding for the anchor but the latter in line with the sides of the glacier continued out into the sea as shoal water and had to be avoided.

With our complement we were always short of water and tapping these glacial runoffs was a favoured and frequent method of filling up our tanks at a variety of sites.

The Banana Belt; We progressed south to the U.K. stations of Deception Island, Port Lockroy, Arthur Harbour and Argentine Islands, searched for a new site on the Antarctic Peninsula, and called at several unexplored locations both on the mainland peninsula and the offshore islands to land surveyors and scientists to form independent field parties. The scenery became grander and more beautiful. After all Admiralty Bay was only officially sub-Antarctic. The mainland mountains now rose to 12,000 feet. The glaciers descending from them forming at greater altitude and further inland were very much longer, wider and with higher fissured and fractured cliff faces where they terminated and entered the sea, frequently calving (Ed. - ice chunks breaking from the edge of a glacier). The coastline was mainly of ice cliffs interspersed by higher solid rock buttresses. Yet later after voyaging further south this region of the northern Peninsula with its more moderate temperatures became known to us as the Banana Belt!

The sea ice we continually met varied from one year old to multi-year ice. The younger, more recently formed, would have broken out from an adjacent bay or fjord, of which there were many on this coast, where it had established and remained over the previous winter. Not very thick, perhaps a foot, very even and often in very large pieces, anything up to half a mile across. The older ice had formed in more open water, become fragmented by swell and subject to collision in heavy weather and sometimes rafting under pressure till it became static once again in a further winter's freeze, then broken apart once more in the following spring. This cycle may happen many times producing multi-year ice with floes up to forty feet thick, having varying degrees of hardness within. A further feature of this ice being that it may have embedded in it glacial fragments, vicious rock like cores. The ice of this latter type in our vicinity would undoubtedly have been formed in and then borne out of the Weddell Sea by the circulatory current there to flow past the tip of the Peninsula, then driven by the wind into the Bransfield Strait and beyond. Entering this ice for the first time the rules of engagement were drilled into us, and as years later I likewise drilled them into my young officers. Reduce speed. Do not get amongst ice until there is no alternative. Go round every small piece, large piece, vast floe or ice field until you can no longer steer a sensible course to your destination. This was not only good safe practice but training and confidence building for we rookies in the handling of the ship. Do not collide with it unless there is no option then adjust your speed and hit it with the stem. Avoid a glancing blow on the shoulder or entrance where the arrow form of the bow ends and the full body of the hull begins it being the most vulnerable of areas. If in doubt about one's ability to avoid a piece alter course to hit it head on, doing whatever one can with the engines to reduce impact, but remembering that water over the rudder from the propeller is what steers the ship best and having possibly thundered astern to reduce speed and impact it often pays to go ahead again momentarily to get that flow of water across the rudder before colliding for the final fine control. We soon realized that the Master kept himself in reserve for the most difficult conditions and we young deck officers were expected to handle the ship in a manner few deep sea shipmasters had the chance to, ever.

Deception Island: Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands, which we now headed towards contains the best known and most used harbour in the northern Peninsula and off-lying islands. With British, Argentinian and Chilean stations on its shores it is the ugly duckling amongst the scenic beauty of the other base sites, yet perhaps one of the most interesting places to be visited in the region. Volcanic, it is the second largest crater island in the world. It was discovered by Captain William Smith in January 1820 in the 250 ton brig Williams during his fourth voyage to the South Shetlands.

These voyages were of a commercial nature round Cape Horn between Buenos Aires and Valparaiso. He chose, however, each time to strike well south of the Horn in the ambitious hope of finding a southern continent. His courage, repeated determination and outstanding seamanship amongst ice and in virgin waters cannot be lauded sufficiently. On his first voyage there in February 1819 he made a landfall on what he named Williams Point, after his vessel, on the north coast of Livingstone Island. He then bore away to the northward. On another voyage during the southern winter of that year he saw no land being held off by pack ice, but on his third voyage in the following spring he ran from west to east and back again along the northern shores of the group, discovering all the major islands.



The John Biscoe approaching Argentine Islands Base through Meek Channel. Note two American icebreakers lying in Penola Strait.

As he departed north and west on this voyage he sighted the magnificent island that now bears his name. Only fifteen miles in length by four and lying some twenty miles to the westward from the other islands of the group it rises to a tricorn of peaks the highest of which is 6900 feet. It has precipitous bare rock faces which contrast dramatically with its steep snow slopes and is difficult to land on. It was, however, the twenty two year old American sealer, Captain Nathaniel Palmer, who in November 1820 in the sloop Hero who is thought to have first entered and seen the potential of the harbour at Deception Island. The horseshoe shaped narrow crater rim averaging 1500 feet in height encloses the circular bay four miles in diameter having a central depth of eighty-eight fathoms. The only entrance to the bay named Port Foster after the Commander of H.M.S. Chanticleer who explored it in 1829, and the adjoining very much smaller and shallower Whalers Bay, a secondary crater on which our base was located is through Neptunes Bellows.

A cable wide entrance named by the early sealers because of the gusting winds so often experienced there. It is as dramatic as its name. Three-hundred foot high sheer cliffs to starboard as one enters with strata of varying volcanic hues of sulphureous yellows, oranges and brick reds. Separated from these cliffs by only a few feet is the remarkable dark basalt Pete's Pillar, an Old Man of Hoy type rock stack of 150 feet. The apparently usable water of this entrance is halved, for to port lies a hidden central danger with only six feet over it, Raven Rock, and beyond it more foul ground.

Later in my career, my own rather unorthodox route of entry was to steer for Pete's Pillar until 400 feet from it. Then alter on to a course which bore towards a distinguishable rock point inside the harbour which kept me a constant 500 feet off the cliffs in the best water, and in turn safely past Raven Rock. Initially steering directly for the towering shore, before altering course, was itself slightly dramatic and unconventional but I felt this way I had more control in gusting winds and in better water, than on a long single course approach in un-nervingly shallow water, attempting ultimately to achieve, and maintain, that small distance off the cliffs correctly, especially as the leading mark was often obscured by mist or a lump of ice. It also gave me a better view, as I approached, of the inner entrance and harbour. The reason for wanting this was that by the time I had command, beyond Raven Rock and the foul ground on the more gently rising shoreline opposite the high cliffs was the wreck of a Salveson whaler, the Southern Hunter. She, having entered the harbour in poor weather to see if any compatriots were holed up there, found none, took a round turn in Whalers Bay and proceeded out to sea again. Vessels entering and leaving are obscured from each other on the dog leg course needed to enter and exit Whalers Bay until the last moment by the cliffs. She had met an inward Argentinian supply ship in centre channel, altered course to starboard to avoid her and hit Raven Rock. Since that

occurrence most ships blow their sirens when entering or leaving. I also took the precaution of making my rather unconventional and exciting approach for a better and earlier view of the inner harbour.

On the edge of Whalers Bay the base hut stood amongst the derelict whaling station, from which it had been built from some of the remains. The shoreline was fascinating in that there were many hot springs and at low water much steam would rise from it. Inland upon the ash and snow slopes there were fissures in the outcrops of rock gushing more steam, and smoking fumaroles. The snow slopes, to a great degree, sullied by blown ash, were occasionally relieved by red volcanic outcrops, but the general appearance of the island, being mostly ash in summer, or snow slopes bespoiled by ash, was of a dull depressing nature.



Tien Peaks (2,300 ft.) of Cape Renard at entrance of Lemaire Channel
(copyright George Larmour 1958)

The prolific and varied birdlife nesting among the rocks and cliff faces were a welcome counterbalance to the austere landscape. They appeared to relish a bathe in the warm springs and the Pintado Petrel in particular loved to gorge themselves on the parboiled krill along the tideline. In 1921 there were reports from catchers in Whalers Bay of the seabed subsiding and paint being seared off their hulls during volcanic activity. Years later we were to have our own volcanic dramas but on this first visit nothing worse than the ship frequently dragging in high winds and Adam and me falling down a crevasse occurred.

When the main discharge of cargo was completed the ship would invariably remain at a base for a while to provide support for the shore activities, and did so on this occasion. The ship's engineers would assist with the base generators, the wireless officer with the radios, the Fids aboard and crew would help generally in sorting and stowing stores and all of us when required, which was often, with building works. The presence of the ship providing food, hot showers, although the lack of water was always of concern, and the occasional evening film show and the conviviality of some fresh faces with whom to share a beer was an important part of our base visits. We three deck officers only stood anchor watches in the severest of weather. The quartermasters and able seamen manned the bridge whilst at anchor both keeping an eye on the ship's position by bearings and from distance rings set against the shoreline on the radar. Watching out for the welfare of the boats and keeping in radio contact with them as they plied between ship and shore was a further duty for them. Tom Flack, the Chief Officer preferred to 'keep' ship which meant that Adam and myself, when off duty, had time to follow our own pursuits. Adam's developing passion was surveying whilst mine was to climb every piece of rising ground and see wildlife. We combined each other's efforts, surveying from the launch when appropriate and enjoying a hike or climb at other times.

Our main problem whilst there was dragging the anchor, the result of a combination of poor holding on a steeply shelving seabed of ash and the frequent and sudden onset of offshore gales, one lasting for three days. During such a period of much yawing prior to dragging despite having two anchors down we nearly lost both the motorboat and a scow full of cargo. Having to clear the ship's side in a hurry with the scow lashed alongside the motorboat, the scow began to be swamped. It was often the practice when extra labour was needed ashore to unload, to transport Fids from the ship sitting atop the cargo in the scow. They were squatted there on this occasion and scrambled across into the already packed motorboat as we cut the lashings of the sinking scow which was beginning to drag the motorboat gunwale under water. The scow as it freed and no longer weighed down by some thirty souls lurched, shed some of its cargo, became swamped and although then waterlogged we were then able to tow it to the beach, whilst the Fids were put ashore dry.

Another day ashore we experienced a self-inflicted problem, on this occasion only Adam and myself being involved. Having climbed the highest point on the island, the 1900 feet Mount Pond, on a quiet day, we had

great difficulty in descending through the numerous crevasses. In our inexperience we had failed to take into account the warming effect of the sun, by afternoon on a fine day, on the snow bridges over them, which we had crossed safely during our morning ascent, and fell into one. Nevertheless despite our scare we managed with difficulty to get out and completed a rewarding climb. However, it was a timely early warning of a general principal not to venture out of ones sphere of competence without support and assistance from those who had the requisite specialized knowledge and experience in this dangerous environment. On the water we had our knives and known what to do in the case of the sinking scow, in the crevasse we were ill equipped and struggled. I never climbed again unless in the company of an experienced Fid and likewise made sure that Fids were always nursed in bad conditions when afloat.