



# From Deptford to Antarctica: The Long Way Home

*Pete Wilkinson*

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## **From Deptford to Antarctica: The Long Way Home** Pete Wilkinson

Pete Wilkinson grew up in Deptford, south London, in the 50s. Somehow he got to grammar school and was spat out of the education system in 1962 with a few GCE 'O' levels and no idea of what to do with his life. The 60s rock 'n' roll scene, motor scooters and free love offered a mild distraction but, as a general malcontent, he drifted from job to job, uncertain of where life would take him. He was feisty, easy to provoke and had a fierce sense of what decency and justice should look like, qualities which found their natural home when he finally found - unlike U2, a band which would ultimately provide the justification for his jaundiced view of environmentalists - what he was looking for. Pete helped establish Friends of the Earth, leaving after suffering three years of the classism which prevented his natural campaigning flair to flourish, and then joined Greenpeace UK. He was a co-founding member and became a central figure in the UK's embryonic green movement. His friendship with the charismatic father of the modern Greenpeace phenomenon, the late David Fraser McTaggart, and his naturally strategic mind helped Wilkinson to the highest positions in the organisation from where he ran what one journalist called 'some of the most important and successful environmental campaigns of the 80s'. And they were campaigns that he and his colleagues won: radioactive waste dumping at sea, whaling, Canadian sealing, the Orkey seal cull, captive cetaceans, the fur industry, Sellafield: no company or industry was too big for Greenpeace to take on. Even Antarctica. After finally falling foul of the growing Greenpeace hierarchy, Wilkinson was despatched by Greenpeace to Antarctica where, over six consecutive seasons, their campaign succeeded in protecting the entire continent from exploitation for 50 years. This is Wilkinson's story told in his own gritty style and containing his unabridged Antarctic diaries which build into a fascinating insight into the Greenpeace world as it was, but as it is no more. Includes many campaign photographs.

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