

Subject: Scholes Cabin 5: Breakout from Atka Bukta

10 January 2010 1817 UTM 69.6995 S 3.7276W

Dear Stirling,

Free at last! We slipped off from our icy dock on the Atka Bukta bay ice yesterday at 2020, and glided across the still water of the polyna, then under the ice cliffs of 'berg A61. An evening of glorious scenery followed as we dodged between icebergs and pack-ice, threading our way between patches of open water in the lee of the big ice masses. Around midnight we reached the end of that run, and had to start pushing through pack-ice again. We passed a big ice dome, which is a part of the Antarctic continental ice mass (in other words, not an ice shelf, but a small ice cap founded on solid rock rather than floating on water).

When I awoke this morning we were still grinding through thick pack-ice. We were watching a movie in the afternoon, when suddenly I became aware that the ship was rolling with the swell - a sensation we have not felt for three weeks, because the pack-ice shields the area inside it from the waves of the southern ocean. I ran outside, to see us just leaving the last of the ice behind, for now. We were free, in the Southern Ocean again!

We quickly arranged to take some samples, and did an underway CTD. We have been using the instrument every day, but just lowering it off the stern, rather than streaming it out behind while we sail forward. I had almost forgotten how to do it. It felt wonderful to stand on the poop deck, in the sun, riding the swells, with ocean all around.

We are now sailing east. We have to go quite a long way before we can turn south again, and try to sneak in behind B15K to get at our fuel unloading spot at Penguin Bukta. Tom and Lucie have been tracking the ice conditions using satellite images from NOAA, and sending me helpful updates. Most of our ice information comes from the University of Bremen, and is very useful, but rather coarse. Every now and then we get a moderate resolution MODIS image. That is the same satellite we use at Skukuza - it views in the optical bands, so it can't see through clouds.

We may need to re-enter the pack ice to get there. But right now, the change in scenery and the feeling of being on the move again has made everyone much happier.

Love,

Dad