

Date: Sat, Jan 16, 2010 at 7:21 PM

Subject: Scholes Cabin 5: Sailing for South Georgia

Dear Stirling,

By the time you read this we should have sailed from Penguin Bukta, heading for South Georgia. South Georgia is probably the nearest permanently inhabited place to us here, but it is about 1700 nautical miles away – in other words a round trip of 6400 km. It lies northwest of us, across the Weddell Sea and the Southern Ocean. On the way we will pass the South Sandwich Islands, which are uninhabited except by seals and birds.

The purpose of the trip is twofold. First, the oceanographers will sample the sea all the way there and back. This time we are able to stop the ship, so twice a day we will be letting down our rosette CTD to 500 m depth and filling bottles with seawater on the way up. Then the work really begins!

Filtering, analysing and downloading the data from all the attached instruments will keep us busy flat out until the next sample, 12 hours later. We are divided into two shifts, each working for 14 hours with an overlap for each CTD station. I will be doing the underway CTD every two hours between midnight and breakfast as, well as running my underway pCO₂, O₂:Ar and FRe systems, and helping to manhandle Rose through the door she is too fat for.

The second purpose is to allow the meteorologists to drop off weather buoys every day or so. The buoys will drift around the Southern Ocean for a year or so, sending back data every day. I think we may leave one on South Thule island as well, just above the high water mark.

But perhaps the real reason for the trip is to give the 'summer' teams in Antarctica a chance to finish their work before we come and pick them up again. We would otherwise have had to sail all the way back to Cape Town and back, or hang around for three weeks doing nothing. So it is smart to use the ship's time for some good science.

Because of the ice and weather conditions we encountered at Atka Bukta we have been delayed by about a week. As a result, the research cruise has been extended by five days, and we are scheduled to return to Cape Town on 23 February instead of 18 February. I know you and Mom will be disappointed. But the needs of the voyage come first, and we must make the best of it.

Love,

Dad