

Subject: Scholes cabin 5: Thank you

22 February 2010 0036 UTM -35.3799, 13.6817

Dear Stirling,

I am only a day away from Cape Town, and you may not even get this email before setting off to meet me at the docks. This is the last one I will send from the research vessel Agulhas.

I need to thank some people. First, to you, for agreeing to allow my emails to you to be shared with anyone who was interested. I have enjoyed writing them. You always have interesting questions, and they make me think how I can explain what I am doing in terms that do not assume that you already have a PhD. I know that a lot of people are embarrassed to admit that they don't understand science, so forcing me to be plain was very helpful to everyone.

Then to Mom, who had to run the home and look after you and Grandad for three months without my help. I know that was not easy, and I am sure you helped her a lot.

Helen de Beer kept me in contact with my research group at the CSIR and took over a lot of responsibility for things that I should have been doing in the office. Thanks to my colleagues for managing without me.

It was Christine Read's idea to share these emails in the form of a blog. I am a bit slow about that kind of internet generation thing, but I knew a good idea when she suggested it. Wiida Basson posted them on the CSIR website after you and Mom forwarded them.

Many people have given feedback on the emails, or helped out with information. Thanks especially for Tom Roach and Lucie Edwards for the ice cover data when we were looking for leads.

This has been a strange and wonderful experience. I have been privileged to work with a wonderful team of young researchers and scientists-in-training. They have been competent, hard-working and unfailingly cheerful even under difficult conditions; and a bundle of fun when they decide to cut loose. The officers and crew of the Agulhas have been thoroughly professional, from top to bottom. There have been many interesting people among the passengers - the overwintering teams for SANAE IV, the summer scientists, the OutSite and PWD construction teams, the helicopter crew and the DEAT support staff.

Like many people, I suspect, I had long wanted to visit Antarctica. It did not disappoint me, and surprised me in many ways. It is an austere beautiful landscape, and full of life. I don't anticipate ever coming back, but feel privileged to have experienced it once.

Most people will never see it, and I am happy if they have had a glimpse through my eyes. Thank you for letting me have the chance.

Love,

Dad.