

**Subject: Scholes cabin 5: Rounding iceberg B15K**

**26 December 2009 1038 UTM 70.1420 S 3.3157 W**

Dear Stirling,

We are on the move again! The helicopter reconnaissance showed us a way through, which involved back-tracking a bit, and then sneaking around the tip of the giant iceberg stranded east of Penguin Bukta.

It was awesome cruising quietly beneath the icy cliffs in the evening sunshine, knowing that the 'berg extended nine times that height under the water. This is just a sliver of the original B15, which broke off from the Ross ice shelf in 2001. It has been bumping its way around Antarctica ever since, smashing off bits as it goes. This 'fragment' is 60 km long and 15 km wide. There was a real worry that it would block Penguin Bukta, which is the closest bay to SANAE IV, and prevent us from unloading fuel there. Or even worse, it might drift free and trap us in the bukta. But it seems to be stable for now, and has helped us by creating relatively ice-free water to the west. We are sailing through that gap now, on our way to Atka Bukta, where we hope to unload stores onto the bay ice.

An inspection team was flown off this morning, in brilliant sunshine. My cabin mate, Prof Ian Meiklejohn, a geomorphologist from the University of Pretoria, and Dr Jen Lee, an ecologist from University of Stellenbosch, were on the first helicopter. They will be transferred to the Norwegian base at Troll to start their fieldwork as soon as possible.

Since we are in more-or-less clear water again I restarted all the underway sampling systems. We had to switch them off in the pack ice, because the pumps got blocked. It is rather nice to sit in a buzzing, beeping, bubbling lab again, though it does mean that I have to return to getting up at midnight! The start-up was not without hiccups. Some of the subsystems were obviously still 'on Christmas'. They refused to speak to the data-logger until I woke them up several times. We don't really need this bit of data, but I wanted to practice a start-up, so that there are fewer unpleasant surprises when I need to get the systems going in a hurry sometime.

Drive carefully to Prince Albert. Launch a rocket for me!

Dad