

Subject: Scholes cabin 5: A day at sea

26 January 2010 0245 UTM -53.8612, -29.0979

Dear Stirling,

We are back into the oceanography routine. Most of the team has swapped shifts - those who were on night shift now do day shift, and vice versa. The shifts are about 14 hours long, since we are all on duty for the twice-daily CTD station, and then however long it takes to process the samples we bring up. My schedule is a bit different because I am mostly responsible for the underway lab, which gets switched over at midnight. This is how I fill my day and night.

I get up about fifteen minutes before midnight, so that I can be in the lab, dressed for deck work, and sort of awake to close and restart the instruments at midnight, with new filenames for the new day. The pCO₂ instrument does that all by itself, and I just need to check that it is happy: seawater flow OK; equilibrator OK; gas flow OK; peltier temperature OK; filename OK; last calibration OK; GPS OK; Fluorometer OK; inlet temperature OK; multisensory OK. The O₂:Ar mass spec would happily continue running day and night, but the files would get so big that you would not easily be able to open them. So I close the valve controlling software, save the data from the temperature data-logger, convert the mass spec data to readable form and shut it down. Then I start it all up again, with a filename for the next day. Vacuum pressure OK; equilibrator temperature OK; jacket temperature OK; O₂:Ar numbers look reasonable. That all goes pretty quickly, and then I am ready to go outside with the UCTD.

My UCTD casts are at midnight, 0200 and 0400. I am a few minutes late for the midnight one, but have already wound the line on, so it only takes a moment to connect the tail, hit the GPS button, drop the UCTD over the stern and start the stopwatch. One minute and forty second later, apply the brake and start winding it in, which takes about 15 minutes. Then I take the probe into the lab and download the data, and rewind the tail for the next cast.

I spend the midnight to early morning hours downloading the data files onto backup disks and plotting it out to see if there is anything strange going on. I update the electronic logbook with the filenames and prepare an email summary for Warren or Pedro. I usually visit the bridge to say hello and to check sounding depths and ice conditions. I drop my emails off at the radio room and sleep from 0430 to 0730. A hot shower and breakfast leaves me just enough time to read incoming emails and send of urgent responses before the 0900 CTD, which lasts until just before 1000. I then have ninety minutes to do other CSIR work before lunch at 11:30. After lunch I may snooze until 1400, and then do some more CSIR work until 1700. We try to play volleyball until supper at 1830 if the hanger is available.

The next CTD is at 2100, so that leaves a two hours to read or go outside on the monkey bridge if the weather is not too foul, or have a beer in the lounge. After the CTD is over at 2200, I sleep until just before midnight again. In between I pop into the lab every few hours to check that everything is still fine. That is the basic routine, but problems crop up that need to be solved, whatever the time. And then sometimes we watch a movie or play games or have a party.

When Pedro called for volunteers for these voyages, he airily claimed that it would take about an hour a day. I don't hold it against him, because I didn't believe him at the time. I am a willing victim. After all, I don't have to commute to work!

Love,

Dad