

Subject: Scholes cabin 5 (P): Back to the Bukta

2 February 2010 1400 UTM -70.4646, -7.6323

Dear Stirling,

We arrived back at Atka Bukta yesterday afternoon, after a few hours picking our way through fairly open pack-ice. This marks the end of the 'buoy run' phase of our voyage. The two ocean sections that we measured on the way from Penguin Bukta to South Georgia, and then from South Georgia to Atka Bukta were really successful. We collected about 140 UCTD measurements, 28 CTD measurements and about 50 surface water samples. All my instruments worked continuously and the data look great. We are all a bit worn out, so today we are mostly just sleeping, reading and watching movies.

We are trying to get to a low piece of ice shelf on the western side of the Bukta. The ice there is solid enough to bear the weight of the heavy caterpillar tractors we need to unload, but low enough that we can use our crane. The problem is that the way is blocked by a few kilometres of pack-ice. We hope for a wind from the south, which will cause it to drift away. In the meantime we are cruising backward and forward along the ice edge, like a hungry leopard seal waiting for a penguin supper. The 'groot trek' of caterpillar tractors and sleds only left SANAE IV this morning, and will take two days to get here, so going in too early will not really help.

The Mary Arctica, a container vessel which has been attempting to resupply the Neumayer base for the past month, is also here. It has been to the ice shelf, but was chased out by the arrival of the pack-ice. After so many weeks of being alone on the ocean it feels quite strange to have another vessel nearby. Soon we will have to get used to sharing our own ship too, when the helicopters return, bringing the summer scientists and last year's overwintering team from SANAE IV.

Love

Dad