

Subject: Subject: Scholes cabin 5 (p): Iceberg skittles

6 January 2010 2251 UTM Atka Bukta

Dear Stirling,

Yes, we are still at Atka Bukta. We are running seriously behind time now, and the consequence will be cutting into the oceanography trip up to South Georgia. We are all a bit glum about it. We have now sent almost everyone to SANAE IV who needs to go there, and they have enough equipment to get on with their jobs. We still have some cargo in our hold to unload (including the heavy bulldozers), but the main problem is the 400 000 litres of diesel. It can only really be pumped ashore at Penguin Bukta, where the tanks are and where we can steady the ship right next to the ice shelf, but we can't get there.

The immediate problem is thick pack-ice, which is crowding the area between Atka Bukta and Penguin Bukta, a distance of a few hundred kilometres, and stopping us from escaping out to the open ocean. The satellite images show that the whole of Antarctica is freeing up from ice very nicely - except the bit we need to travel through! A German resupply ship has been trying to get through for a week now, and is stuck within sight of us.

The satellite radar images also show that the big iceberg B15K is on the move. A smaller fragment of the same original iceberg smashed into it a few days ago and seems to have dislodged B15K from where it was stuck. But it is not clear where it will go next. It has swung away from the coast, which means we could sneak into Penguin Bukta through the back door (if only we could get to the back door!), but that would be a very dangerous thing to do if B15K continues to swing or drifts against the ice shelf. The best scenario would be that it just drifts on westward, hopefully opening a polynya that we can sneak through.

Love,

Dad