

around the continent

PALMER

Making room for foreigners

By Tom Cohenour

Palmer Station correspondent

The call came in unexpectedly. "Palmer Station, Palmer Station, this is the *James Clark Ross*. Do you copy?"

It was Chris Elliot, the captain of the 325 foot (100 m) British research vessel RRS *James Clark Ross* (JCR) requesting permission to make an early port call at Palmer Station. The JCR wasn't expected for another 10 days. Because of heavy sea ice in the southern part of the Lemaire Channel a change in schedule was needed.

"We can make that work," responded Station Manager, Bob Farrell. "We'll be happy to see you again."

An influx of visitors to a small station requires careful planning and a well-coordinated effort for it to go smoothly. After years of such activity, Palmer has it down to a science. The entire station pulls together to make it happen. Each summer they host approximately 1,400 visitors over a 10-week period; on average, 140 visitors per week. Keep in mind that Palmer reaches maximum population at only 46. Now imagine adding 140 new faces.

The arrival of the JCR marked the beginning of the visitor season.

"They'll be here in five hours," announced Farrell over the intercom.

Immediately the call went out for volunteers to act as tour guides, set up the galley, bake brownies, make coffee and work



Photo by Tom Cohenour/Special to The Antarctic Sun

The British ship James Clark Ross approaches Palmer Station on Nov. 30.

the station store.

The visit was reciprocal. During the four and a half hour visit, crew members as well as British Antarctic Survey (BAS) scientists from the ship enjoyed tours of the Palmer facilities. And station personnel and scientists had the opportunity to visit and tour the JCR. Pizza and drinks were enjoyed in the station lounge, shoppers enjoyed PalMart (station store) and a British film crew had a chance to conduct interviews with some Palmer scientists.

The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) crew traveling on the JCR is doing a program about science in Antarctica. They were pleased to be able to interview Dan Martin with the prey component of the Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) (BP-028-O), and Dr Charles Amsler and Dr Bill Baker. Both Amsler and Baker are part of a team of seven conducting research on the Chemical Ecology of Shallow-Water Marine Macroalgae and Invertebrates (BO-022-O).

Even on such a short notice, the visit by the JCR was a huge success and marked another milestone in the long standing cooperative relationship the USAP enjoys with the British Antarctic Survey.

SOUTH POLE

Space ships, an exorcism and Polar tourists

By Judy Spanberger

South Pole correspondent

The weather this past week at Pole has been clear, sunny and warm. Temps in the minus 20s, which feels like a heat wave to us. Perhaps it's due to the measly 4 percent humidity here, but if you stand in the sun and out of the wind, the effect of the radiant heat is intense. Many people are walking around with slight sunburns on their faces.

Thanks to the clear weather we've been getting up to five flights a day and the cargo people have been quite busy. Material is coming in and construction continues to make visible progress on the elevated station.

The tunnel crew continues with their



Photo by Kevin Culin/Special to The Antarctic Sun

Bill McCormick and John Penney exorcise a broken tunneling machine.

progress, sometimes with the tunneler machine, sometimes by hand. They say they can do at least as much by hand as with the machine, but the machine is easier on the body. So when the machine breaks down, we do what we can to get it back online. We'll even go to extremes. Like hold an exorcism for the poor thing. People brought amulets, drums and cowbells. There was dancing, chanting, preaching, bagpipes, violins and Korean exorcism music. Offerings were made to appease the tunneler machine gods (don't ask). Our prayers and wishes for future tunneler machine good health went up and we're hopeful for success.

The Operations department is pushing the last of the snow mountains away from the station and out past the cargo berms, which are on the very edge of our little village. It takes a while to move these long piles of snow. A dozer pushes the snow into a pile and then starts at the end of the pile and pushes the snow over the top of the pile in the direction that the snow will eventually end up. It's like watching a very slow caterpillar make it's way out to the edge of the berms.

We've had a couple visits from the Twin Otter crew this week. The ATRS (Advanced Technology for Radar Sounding of Polar Ice-formerly known as SOAR) project came through and spent the night. ATRS is the under-the-ice radar

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the week in weather

McMurdo Station

High: 37F/2.5C Low:13F/-10C
Wind: 58 mph/93 kph
Windchill: -29F/-24C

Palmer Station

High: 42F/5.5C Low:25F/-4C
Wind: 62 mph/100 kph
Precipitation: 1.67 inches/40mm

South Pole Station

High: -21F/-29C Low:-32F/-35.4C
Wind: 26mph/42kph
Windchill: N/A

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mapping project that looks for lakes and other anomalies under the polar ice cap. Last year they mapped Lake Vostok. I had a chance to talk with one of the scientists on that project while they were here and asked about the rumor of a space ship being the cause of the heat that keeps Lake Vostok liquid. Not true, according to their data. There's a small magnetic influence, but that could easily be caused by many of the rocks found on the continent. They believe that there's a small somewhat active volcano at one end of the lake that might be providing the warmth. Oh well, there goes a great story. The other Twin Otter took out the AGO group for a two week camping trip.

We had our first tourist plane of the season this past Sunday morning. A DC3 operated by Adventure Network flew over from Patriot Hills. Six tourists from Taiwan, two field guides and three crew members spent three hours at Pole. They gathered for pictures at the Pole and were given a small tour of the station. That's right, it was a three-hour tour.

Henry Kaiser, a participant of the NSF-sponsored Antarctic Artists and Writers Program, was here for the weekend. Henry travels all over the world and creates guitar music to remind people of a particular place. On Saturday night he played with our own band, ThunderJug, in the summer camp lounge Jamesway. We have a remarkably good band here at Pole, but when Henry played with them, the music rose to a level that you might see in a cool seedy jazz bar in Chicago (if you were lucky, and had gotten there on a good night). It was great, and by their grins it seemed the band was having as much fun as we were. It was hard not to stand there, maybe swaying with the beat, grinning and reminding yourself that you were standing in a large insulated tent at the South Pole. It was delicious fun, and one of those things that makes being down here a special experience.

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"reliving" McMurdo-style diving until a strong storm broke up the fast ice. Now on some days we have open water suitable for boat diving in the diverse and beautiful communities that surround the Palmer-area islands. Other days the winds and/or currents bring pack and smaller brash ice into the harbor that is too dense for zodiacs to pass through. So those are days for the lab or for diving through the packed ice bits right off the station boat dock.

Fortunately, even the marine communities right beside the station are rich and diverse so we have been able to

make a great start at collecting for laboratory assays. The lab work is now well underway and we are looking forward to another great season in Antarctica!

Dr. Chuck Amsler is Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Read more about the day to day diving and other research activities on an interactive Web site designed and operated by the UAB media relations department for K-12 school and general community outreach. The URL is www.wow.uab.edu.

Needed: A dose of original thinking



Get your best work published in the
Prose, Poetry and Photography Contest
sponsored by The Antarctic Sun

Photos: Categories for wildlife, scenic, people and other. One entry per category.

Prose: A complete fiction or nonfiction story in 300 words or less.

Poetry: Whatever inspires you.

E-mail entries by Dec. 31 to sabbatkr@mcmurdo.gov, or bring them by The Sun office in building 155. Call x2407 for more information.

Continental Drift

What would you put in a time capsule at the South Pole?



"A CD of photos of Palmer Station or a bag of Cheetos."

Jennifer Tabor
Food Service
Supervisor Assistant
at Palmer Station,
from Sterling, Alaska



"How about a picture of our LC-130s?"

Rich Fabio,
109th Crew Chief at
McMurdo Station, from
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.



"I'd put a piece of the World Trade Center in there and I'd put a note in there saying 'This is the day the world changed.'"

David Ricks
Avionics Systems Specialist
at McMurdo Station from
Albany, N.Y.