

# Alpha Ridge Test of Appurtenance (ARTA)

## Newsletter #2

24 March 2008, Easter Monday.

When I finished the first Newsletter yesterday our principal concern was whether or not we would ever see our luggage again. Would we ever again get to wear our heavy outdoor clothes? And, perhaps equally importantly, when next would we have a change of underwear? So, it is a pleasure to be able to report that by noon yesterday we were reunited with our apparel. In reality, our discomfort had been minor.

The baggage was transported from Resolute on a Twin Otter that was also bringing up a British adventurer by the name of Ben Saunders. He'll be walking to the North Pole pulling his sled and equipment behind him. Apparently, he has been to the Pole a number of times, and this time he wants to set a speed record. The present record time is just short of 37 days, and that was done with the help of dogs. He wants to go solo – man hauled – and he wants to do it in 30 days, at an average speed of about 25 km per day. Since he has to haul everything he needs, he has cut his load to a minimum – 60 kgm, he says. Right now he's cooling his heels because the Otter that brought him from Resolute is having mechanical problems - a fuel pump, I believe. He has a web site, if you are interested in more details: <http://north.bensaunders.com/> We all think that he is going to be stopped by the many open leads that criss-cross the ocean this year, but – who knows – he may be lucky.

Our main bottleneck right now is the establishment of the main camp – known as the Hydrographic Camp. We would like to be able to land a Buffalo aircraft out there in order to deliver all the heavy equipment required by a large ice camp. In particular, we need it to transport the many barrels of fuel that will be needed by the helicopters and the Twin Otters supporting the survey, and the surveys include both seismic and hydrographic. I should emphasize that the ocean proper is about 180 km from Eureka, and our survey lines extend hundreds of kilometres north of that. Therefore, we cannot use Eureka as a working headquarters for field crew and aircraft; we can't afford the extra 360 km of flying per day. For our working headquarters we need a large and reasonably permanent icecamp closer to the centre of action.

A large aircraft, such as the Buffalo, is much faster and much more efficient at hauling fuel and freight. For example, the Otter will burn about three and a half barrels of fuel in delivering six barrels to the icecamp. The Buffalo, on the other hand, will use about seven barrels of fuel while it delivers 46. And the delivery times are about the same. The efficiencies of scale are obvious.

The Buffalo is, however, on wheels – not skis – and this means that it cannot land on snow. The 'runway' must be a smooth ice strip, and this means that all the snow must be removed. I understand that the snow out there has been wind-blown very hard. This, of course, makes the shovelling extremely difficult. Yesterday there were seven people at the camp – all working at cleaning the ice strip. The plan is to make a strip about 800 ft long so that a Skyvan can land. I had never heard of this type of airplane before, but Google knew all about it – the Shorts Skyvan. I found a picture on the web of this short-take-off-and-landing aircraft (see next page). We will have it take out a Bobcat, which will continue to clean off the ice strip to a length suitable for the Buffalo. I have been told that the smooth piece of annual ice the camp is sitting on is about 6000 ft long. However, I am sure that only a fraction of this will be used – perhaps 3 to 4000 ft. I'll let you know when the dust (or should that be snow?) settles.

For those who are following this story with a map in front of them, the Hydrographic Camp is at N81 51, W91 34. Again I emphasize (with more hope that certainty) that we expect it not to move.

It is cold again this morning – about minus 43 with a 5 or 6 mph wind. The wind at the camp is slightly higher, which makes work out there rather miserable. Another worry is that a blizzard is forecast for the day after tomorrow. We can picture the nice clean runway being covered again with snow drifts.

On a more cheery note, Isa Asudeh and his crew (Thomas Funck, Mingzhou Li and Patrick Potter) have been preparing the 120 seismic recording boxes.

These insulated boxes, complete with recorder, batteries, memory, and hot-packs have been brought in out of the cold, they are being warmed up, and the seismometers, themselves, are being taken out of their protected travelling mode and put into their operational mode. Isa and company are also setting up their Local Area Network. Everything here seems to be going very well. The people at Eureka are extremely accommodating about providing room to work in, miscellaneous tools, etc., etc. We couldn't ask for better support.



The picture at right shows a typical morning meeting where we find out (as much as it possible) what is happening and where we plan the day.

Best wishes,  
Ron Verrall



We'd like to hear from you. Send your comments to:

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