

Alpha Ridge Test of Appurtenance (ARTA)

Newsletter #11

5 April.

Today was another very successful day. We installed all the explosives for the outer line. Again, there were eleven sites and a total of 158 boxes of explosive (17.5 kg each). One helicopter (with Alain and me) found suitable sites and hauled all the explosives. Two other helicopters followed behind drilling the 10-inch holes, rigging ropes and primacord through the explosives and lowering everything to a depth of 100 m. One helicopter, CFPHO, carried Tim Cartwright and Bob Olsen, and the other, CFCNG, carried Lloyd Litwin and Kirby Kleiter. They

leap-frogged over each other, one doing the even-numbered holes and the other doing the odd-numbered holes. We (Alain and I) managed to keep ahead of them – but only just. The picture to the right shows the type of ice we wanted – reasonably thin ice that held no more than a skiff of snow.



The line started at 82 32N, 94 05W, and ran more-or-less north to 84 30N, 98 04W, a length of about 120 nautical miles (220 km). We picked up explosives at three different caches, all placed there a few days ago by the Twin Otter.

The people out at the North Camp (Jorgen Skafte et al) told us that they had started to move; the ice had moved about 800 metres in the last couple of days. Although this is rather minor compared the movement in 2006, it is a change. In corroboration of this, we saw lots of new leads – like the one at right – on our way out to the North Cache.



The weather continues cold, clear and calm. It is beautiful weather for flying,

which is the reason the project is moving along so quickly. This is the weather we had come to expect for late March and early April. We all hope that the previous two years, which were horribly warm and foggy, were aberrations. The picture to the right shows the good visibility that we are experiencing. The Icecamp is in the middle of the picture, and the



cold, austere mountains of the northern Ellesmere coast are in the background – about 15 km away.

Jon Biggar has made a start on his Bathymetry program. He had two helicopters out this afternoon taking soundings and doing 'gravity'. Knut Lyngberg was with Mike Black, and John Mercuri was with Rob Morisson. The soundings are done with an acoustic technique: a short pulse is put into the ice, the acoustic pulse reflects off the bottom of the ocean, and the sounding unit receives the pulse and measures the total time interval. This time is then converted to a depth. The crews were having a little trouble getting the pulse to couple into the ice. A frozen slush layer, which contains a lot of air was not passing the acoustic energy. They had to chip their way through this 'insulating' layer to get their unit to couple to the ice below.

In a couple of the early Newsletters I mentioned a Brit, Ben Saunders, who was trying to set a record for walking to the pole single-handed and unassisted. Yesterday he had to be rescued. I understand that he had broken a ski, and he had also hurt his leg. Our helicopter CFARE went and got him, and he was taken from the Icecamp to Eureka. Everyone is speculating about who will pay for all this.

Best Wishes, Ron Verrall

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

Name: ronverrall

Address: gmaildotcom

If you have been writing and I haven't been replying – that's because I'm out at the Icecamp, and I don't have access to my email. I'll try to catch up when I next get back to Eureka.