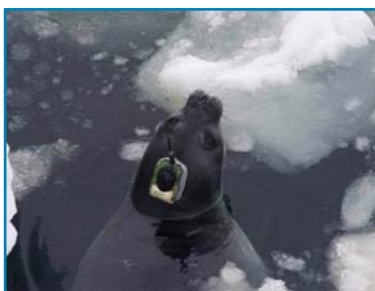




Measuring a seal (L-R) Jen, Iain, Leanne and John
Credit: R. Piacenza



Weddell seal with satellite transmitter
Credit: Iain Field

Week 3

Final good byes late in the evening of the 15th as the barge took those leaving out to the ship. They had no sooner left then Stu turned on the heater in his room (which apparently hadn't been on all summer) and the heated dust set off the fire alarms. Welcome to Davis Stu! The Vasilij sailed at 06:15 the following morning.

With the CASA aircraft gone Sharon and Blanket were busy bringing all the gear down from the skiway. Graham, Hully and Shavawn also got out to Ace Lake on the 17th with a boat to take a set of water samples for wintering biologist Daryl (due to arrive on V3) and the helicopters slung an apple hut out to Ace Lake as a winter shelter. The chippies John and Andrew (who had repaired the hut on station) spent a night in it just to "make sure it was alright". The same day Roger, Dom, Sharon and Peter took a "Red Top Taxi" to Platcha Hut walking back via Brookes and the next day Gray and Mez got away to Watts and two days later on the 19th Baz, Weapon (WMD), Shavawn, and James got dropped off at Lake Laturnula (so named because of recent fossil beds of the marine clams of the genus Laturnula), and spent two days walking back to Davis via Watts.

On Monday the 20th JR, Tika, Chief Scientist Michael Stoddart and Summer Coordinating Scientist Ray Morris were off to the Larsemann Hills to participate in the official opening of the new Romanian station Law-Racovita, named in honour of

Emil Racovita a Romanian biologist who was on the famous Belgica expedition of 1897-1899. The highlight of the day was the presentation to Teodor Negoita of a large symbolic brass key which had been made at Davis by Wayne S. and Chris H.

JR presents the symbolic key to Romanian Station Leader Teodor Negoita
Credit: C. Tickner



The 21st saw the eighth and final container lifted into place by Jibba to complete the basic shell of the new field store.

Week 4

The end of the month started with yet another trip out to the Amery with Dave and Mo spending two days in a polar pyramid downloading a years worth of ice shelf (thermistor) and ocean temperature and salinity data from the ocean 800m below the ice shelf. With the end of the summer fast approaching there was a last minute rush to get out to the field huts. John took the sealers plus Bongo off to Watts for some last minute field training, while Blanket, Greg, Ben and Joel got away to Crooked lake apple via Watts. It also started getting dark and colder at night. On the 24th we were greeted by long streaks of grease ice on the ocean, a sure sign that summer was almost over. Later the same day the Xue Long anchored off Davis and the next afternoon we had 80 Chinese visitors ashore. Many made a beeline for the post office where Post Mistress Camilla "stamped until I dropped". About 20 Davis folks also got a trip out to the Xue Long and a tour and meal (the ship is a younger sister ship to the Vasilij Golovnin).

Saturday the 25th was also the End of Summer Dinner Mk II. Another fantastic meal from Mez, then the last gig from Amery and the Loose Tooth (Tony, Elmo & Darron – guitar, Roger – bass, Trev drums, Amy and Gray – vocals plus guests (Jim – guitar, vocals and mouth harp) Joel – mouth harp, Mo (electric mandolin and a Jimi Hendrix like rendition of the Star Spangled Banner) and to top it off Theo doing the old Troggs hit Wild Thing and Bongostein (star punk rocker) doing heavy thrash grunge. The next day the final Loose Tooth GPS units came out but with crews stuck on Hop Island waiting on weather and finally back on the 27th. The next day the SAS engineers Peter, Richard and Andy C. were off to Zhongshan to repair the magnetometer, damaged when an iceberg rolled or broke up, creating a surge of ice. They got it repaired in a day, our last trip to Zhongshan for the season. All in all a very productive month. We ended up with the field store foundations completed and the containers in place while at the Summer Accommodation the strip footings were all placed, 10 stitching beams poured and the remaining reo tied and covered in plywood ready for concrete pouring next season.

Pouring concrete pillars for the Summer Accommodation
Credit: M. Gallagher



Paul repairing the wind generator on the Tarbuck Crag VHF repeater
Credit: P. Dudley

Before the helicopters left the Comms Techs Mark and Paul also got up to Tarbuck Crag to repair the Channel 7 VHF repeater and associated wind generator.

Young elephant seal on Davis beach
Credit: A. Lemon

We also started to have proper night time darkness again which allowed a lucky few night owls to see the Aurora Australis. The ellie seals also returned to Davis beach providing endless fascination for everyone as they belched, roared and sparred (and mostly slept) right on our doorstep.



Aurora Australis over the Davis workshops

Credit: A. Lemon

On March 1st the Aurora Australis was sighted at about 09:00 out amongst the ice bergs and was at anchor by mid morning. The following morning all cargo was on by smoko and all departing passengers by 13:00. The summer officially ended as the ship left at 15:00 with a blast on the horn and smoke flairs from those left behind.

Davis Station News

February 2006



Australian Government
Department of the
Environment and Heritage
Australian Antarctic Division

Cover Image:
On the way to Brookes Hut

Credit: K. McMahon

February was the last month of the summer. It ended when the Aurora Australis arrived March 1st. Here's February more or less as it happened and more or less in chronological order!

Week 1

The month started with ongoing attempts to get the Coleman party back to station from the Amery Ice Shelf. As the month started Jim, Marianne and Hully were still out there (Kath, Heidi and Benoit) having come back a few days earlier. They started calling themselves the Independent State of the Amery on the radio (just to confuse our Russian and Chinese neighbours). The next day March 2nd CASA VHA got away to Mawson with Russell, Adam and Peter, off to assist with the Mawson resupply and in particular load the 100T crane onto the Vasilii Golovnin. Back on station it wasn't all work with three boats off on a berg cruise around to Brookes Hut with FTO Mike Woolridge as coxswain. No cruises for the plumbers though, Elmo, Brett, Wayne and Mikey, who were busy dealing with yet another sewage outfall leak and replacing old ABS pipe with new HDPE.



Brett, Mikey and Ben working on sewage line
Credit: G. Wilson

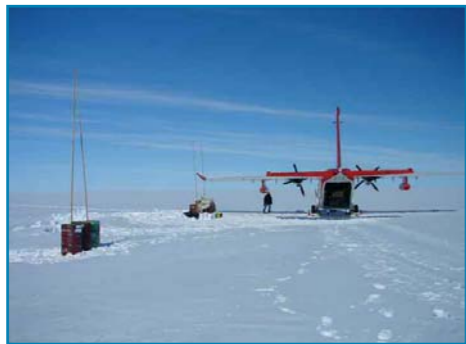
The Mack tip truck was also back on the road after Robbie managed to weld up one of the front springs. Who said it couldn't be done? The next day February 3rd another boat cruise to Crooked Fjord (JR as Coxswain) with Tika, Camilla, Peter, Andy C., Darron and Brett while Dave, Paul and Shavawn went back out to the Amery G2A camp to try and repair Dave's faulty thermistor string and dig out the cache so the CASA aircraft could haul gear back to Davis. Jim returned with them leaving Hully and Marianne on the Amery.



Adelie penguins on a berg in Crooked Fjord, Sorsdal Glacier behind
Credit: P. Nink

Cache at G2A
Credit: J. Behrens

Two hut clean up crews also got away by helicopter to Bandits (Mikey, Rosco, Mick, Bongo and Ben) and to Watts (Mike W., Wayne M-D, Kath, Heidi, Joel, Richard, Barry and Gary). These hut clean ups involved taking out new food stocks, gas, fresh water, and bedding and giving each hut a good clean out. All the necessary gear was packed in advance by Mez and Mike and slung out in a cage pallet by helicopter.



The hut crews got to participate (via radio) in a trivia quiz that evening organised by John I., Mick at Watts but failed miserably at bribing the judges with promises of red wine. At Davis the contestants munched through pizza (thanks Mez!) and even the CASA engineers Roger, Shane and Andrew who were doing the 100 hour inspection on VHB got pizza delivered by helicopter. The party of "see (almost) all the huts" walkers comprising Darron, Amy, James, Andy C., Ray and Brett set off for Watts on the 5th and ended up back at Davis on the 9th walking via Boulder Depot, Trajer Ridge, Platcha and Brookes.

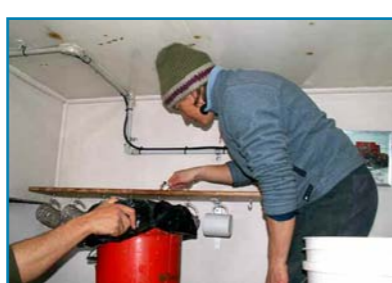


Bandits Hut (L-R) Mick Eccles, Mikey M., Andy 'Bongo' Donald and Ben Moran
Credit: R. Read



Wayne and Kath washing ceilings Watts Hut
Credit: M. Woolridge

Heidi and Kath, Watts Hut
Credit: B. Becker



with VHA bringing back its last residents Hully and Mo.

Week 2

With the Vasilii Golovnin due in a few days work got into high gear repairing the Davis wharf (which got battered in high winds and waves combined with a high tide) in late January.

Trev and Syd shovelling fill
Credit: R. Nixon

The sealers Iain, Jen and Leanne along with FTO John lost little time. Their initial reconnaissance trips showed there were many Weddell seals about who had been tagged up to 20 years ago! This week also saw two more hut clean ups get away, with Mike W., Andrew A., Barry, Jim, Marianne, Rob and John N. to Brookes and Paul, Greg, Elmo, Wayne, Heidi, Joel, Syd, Mark G., Shavawn and Benoit to Platcha. This hut is in a beautiful location right on the edge of the continental ice plateau and has been used in the past as a meteorological research site for katabatic winds and hydraulic jump phenomena. On the afternoon of the 10th, there was a great reshuffling of plans and priorities with the announcement that the Vasilii would arrive the next day. It was also Friday drinks, hosted by Science, with the theme 'wear a silly hat'.



Receiving clean up gear at Platcha (L-R) Wayne, Elmo, Syd & Mark
Credit: G. Wilson

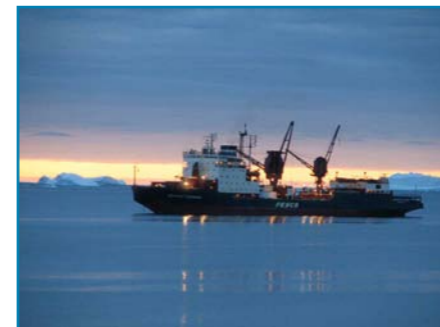


Funny hat theme at Science Friday drinks
Credit: R. Urmonas



CASA pilots Garry and Dan at Science drinks
Credit: K. McMahan

Saturday February 11th, the Vasilii called on the HF radio mid morning, was visible out amongst the ice bergs by 12:15 and was riding at anchor off Davis by 13:00. The Vasilii brought some familiar faces, Russell, Adam and Peter back from Mawson, Gray's partner Zoe (on the Vasilii as ship's doctor), plus Lisa Meyer going home from Mawson, humanities round trippers Peter (photographer & film maker), Judith (artist) and Ted (photographer) along with two new Davis people Stu (here to do some welding) and the AAD Chief Scientist Prof Michael Stoddart. Saturday was our 'End of Summer' dinner Mk I. An excellent evening with a beautiful meal prepared by Mez, a welcome to the new comers on station, farewell to those leaving on the Vasilii (Kath, Heidi, Mike, Duk and Gary) and those about to depart shortly by CASA to Casey, Mick, Brett and Syd, CASA engineers Shane and Andrew and pilots Garry, Jorn, Dan and John.



Vasilii Golovnin at sunset
Credit: K. McMahan



Jet barge with RTA container heads towards the Vasilii Golovnin
Credit: G. Wilson

A 40 ft container being unloaded
Credit: W. Scandrett

Resupply started on the 12th and was completed on the 15th. The biggest job was getting the 40 foot containers ashore to construct the new Field Store and Summer Accommodation. In the midst of it all we had an emergency visit from our Chinese 'neighbours' (Zhongshan Station is 100km to the south in the Larsemann Hills). They brought a young oceanographer who had been hit by a sea container on the Chinese supply ship Xue Long (you'll hear more about the Xue Long later). He was x-rayed by Gray and Zoe assisted by surgical assistant Mez and anaesthetics assistant Andrew A., diagnosed



with a broken collar bone and told not to move! We no sooner got Xiang Baoqiang away in the Chinese helicopter and it was summer photo time. Station photographer Richard managed the impossible (herding cats) and got a near perfect attendance in the midst of resupply!

Returning to Davis on the jet barge after a tour and meal on the Vasilii
Credit: D. Lehmann

Leaving to board the Vasilii for V4
Credit: J. Crow



The SE end of the Loose Tooth rift where a large chunk of the Amery Ice Shelf is about to break away forming a mega ice berg, one helicopter is at a GPS station (lower left)
Credit: J. Behrens

The next day February 14th was our first attempt at recovering the "Loose Tooth" project GPS units from the Amery Ice Shelf. Hully, Benoit, Marianne and Jim got 5 of the 12 units out before cloud stopped flying. It was to take two more attempts (2 recovered on the 21st and the final 5 on the 26th to complete the job). This was not just Valentines Day but also Kath's birthday. We had 8 Russian crew from the Vasilii ashore to help celebrate. The next day it was our turn with a dozen Davis people out to the Vasilii for a tour and a meal. The CASA aircraft departed for Casey the same day the sealers attached a satellite transmitter to their first seal in Long Fjord. From then on they averaged two every two days with the eighth and last completed on the 20th.



Davis Summer Crew (well most of them)
Credit: P. Nink

The data transmitters will not just tell us where the seals go over winter but also provide data on how deeply they dive, how often, how long they stay underwater and provide temperature and salinity data on the water column which will be invaluable to oceanographers and climate change researchers. When the seal moults in a years time, the transmitter will fall off.



Iain attaching a satellite transmitter, Leanne monitoring the anaesthetics
Credit: R. Piacenza