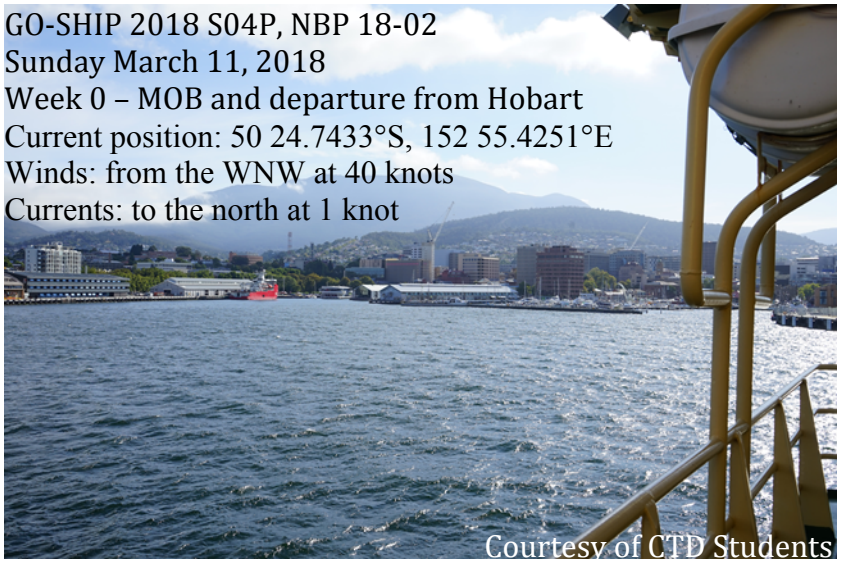

There had been the intention for the chief and co-chief to tour the NB Palmer the day before the S04P MOB began on March 6th , but the chief scientist was one amongst a few of the science party delayed by weather related flight cancellations from both the east coast U.S. and the U.K. So this walk through did not occur and March 6th was very busy and full of numerous decisions.

The previous cruise had radiation sources so we were quite concerned about contamination. However, numerous negative swipes of the decks, the hold and in particular the bio lab where our isotope samples will be prepped gave us confidence that we could continue with our initial layout plan. Swabs have also been sent off for more accurate analysis, but their results will take time to come back. We now have two vans on the helo-deck (ODF storage and the working CFC van) and one in the container hold (DIC – powered storage). The ODF team has the hydro lab, and while rest of the onboard measurements will be done in main lab, the bio lab will be used for sampling prep for our non-sailing partners and ancillary measurements. While most of our equipment showed up on the dock as scheduled and was loaded on the first day the MOB, there were a few issues. In particular we had trouble finding and tracking the SOCCOM and APL floats and the GDP drifters, but managed with the tremendous efforts of Don Hill (from DAMCO) to get them to the ship in time for pre-cruise prep (the floats) and before departure (the drifters). We are loaded, set up, stowed and now underway and this is thanks in no small part to the efforts of our MPC, Ken Vicknair who has worked tirelessly coordinating people through constant emails and phone calls and lending his good humor to distress in moments when we thought the knots too difficult to untangle.

On the night of March 7th we were invited, along the crew of the French ship Astrolabe that many of us toured the day before, to a reception held by the Tasmanian Polar Network. This is a group of local business people, academics and government officials with a strong interest in supporting the collaboration amongst all those exploring and living in Antarctica. It was a wonderful evening filled with interesting conversation and discussion and even awards for our youngest voyagers.

We are grateful for the opportunity to have met all those who attended. On the 8th and 9th we gave tours to nearly 50 of our friends and Australian colleagues of the ship and in particular, the DIC, pH and Alkalinity setup.

Shortly before we sailed, we were interviewed by a local newspaper - answering questions about the Palmer, Hobart, and GO-SHIP as well as the international collaborative effort these long-line cruises entail. We left a little earlier than originally planned and are now underway heading generally southeast, but presently on a more easterly track to try avoid the big rolls we experienced this morning. This track may mean that we have to turn off our underway systems again if we transit either the marine reserves around Macquarie Island or enter the New Zealand EEZ, but we will have time to sort this out tomorrow.

We had an abandon ship drill a few hours after departure, and general alarm drill the next day. This afternoon the general alarm went off and it was not a drill, but rather we found out later an electrical short that tripped the alarm. It is good to know that we can get our entire science party to our muster station in short order when required, but it would be nice if no alarms are sounded tomorrow.

Our next report will cover our weeklong crossing of the Southern Ocean to our first station off Cape Adare.

Alison Macdonald (Chief Scientist)
Ellen Briggs (Co-chief Scientist)