

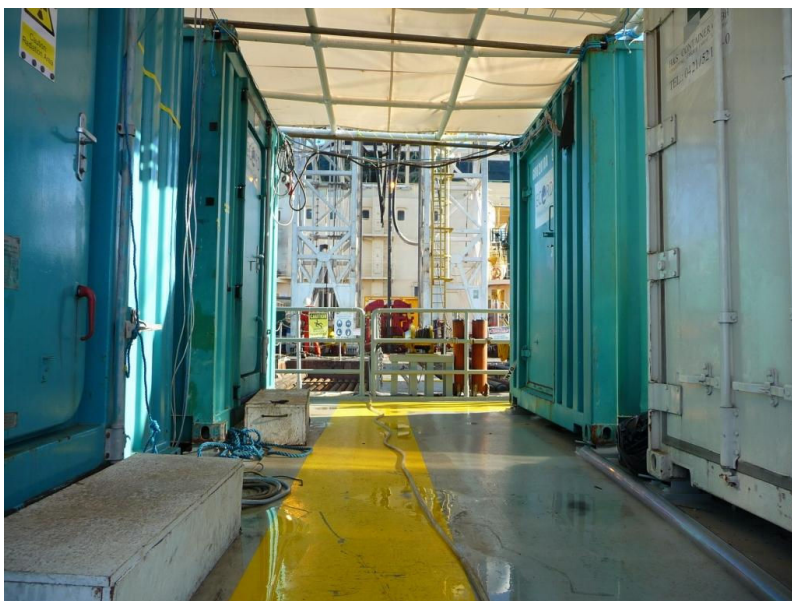
Expedition Log for IODP Expedition 325
Week 2
Great Barrier Reef Environmental Changes

22nd February 2010

Two Different Worlds - Sedimentologist Graham Lott shares his views on the contrasts between Expedition 325 and his previous offshore experiences

I went on my first marine geological survey in 1971 when I joined the BGS team mapping the UK Continental Shelf. Twelve years later the job was almost complete and I moved on in BGS, to other career opportunities, and I have not been on a survey ship since. So why am I here, more years than I care to remember later, aboard the Greatship Maya, on the Great Barrier Reef?

Well for me there were two motivations the most obvious one was the chance to take part in such an expedition exploring one of the geological wonders of the world - what geologist could turn down such an opportunity?! I have always been fascinated and excited by the idea of collecting and analysing geological samples never before seen by anyone else. The second motivation was simply to see for myself how things had changed offshore since I was last aboard a survey ship.



C_Cotterill@ECORD_IODP. A view of the drilling deck and ESO containers.

Well, how things have changed! Today's drilling ships are a far cry from those I remember in the UK - and I sailed on a quite a few! The first big change of course was joining the ship. My first experience was gained in Liverpool Docks on a rainy October night having taken half a day to get there from the Leeds Office on British Rail's finest – enough said. I much prefer this experience - a Quantas A380 Airbus flight halfway round the world via Singapore (we didn't stop long there honestly!; just

enough to acclimatise.); then onto Brisbane and finally to Townsville, Queensland, to join the ship.

At Liverpool I joined the Whitethorn, which was a “long in the tooth” converted coaster with a jack-out, over-the-side drilling rig tacked on and a vast array of anchors 3 fore and 3 aft to pin us to the sea bed. Our destinations on that occasion were sites in the Irish Sea. No contest with the Greatship Maya. Brand new and two or maybe three times the size, totally spick and span. The drilling rig towers over a central moon pool with a computer controlled Dynamically Positioned System for staying on site and a bridge whose computer systems would not disgrace the Starship Enterprise! A far cry from the Captains great brass Ship’s wheel that he used to get out of Liverpool docks and steer us on to site!



A_Suzuki@ECORD_IODP. Greatship Maya



A_Suzuki@ECORD_IODP. We all pile onboard with our luggage



C_Cotterill@ECORD_IODP. Bridge of the “Starship Maya”?

Our first tour showed us around the facilities, on the Whitethorn this took probably 10 minutes tops. On the Greatship Maya you could get lost for a couple of hours before you locate yourself and find everything! Accommodation on the Whitehorn was a single cabin each for the 2 geologists, one for each 12 hour shift. On the Greatship Maya all 24 scientists and ESO staff can be accommodated en-suite. This was looking better and better!

On the Whitethorn the mess was the size of large UK living room, the Maya is geared to serve up to 60 people 24 hrs a day and surprise surprise, another contrast with the old days the food is very good. Who would have expected fresh milk, fresh fruit and 'home baking'?



Y_Yokoyama@ECORD_IODP. Alex celebrates his birthday with chocolate cake!

There are a number of other facilities on the Maya that we didn't have back in the old days – several comfortable lounges, client offices and conference rooms, a widescreen TV, a gym (even though it's a small one), laundry and basically lots of space to move around. Not even the constant noise and smell of the hot diesel engines to take me back to Liverpool days – not that I want to go back there at all. I think I prefer the future!

Leaving aside the science for a bit longer, that's probably another blog. What else has changed? First, and perhaps best of all, as you can see the Maya has Internet access; we can communicate with the outside world at anytime (almost anyway). The office is only an e-mail away – isn't that great?! The Whitethorn went out for two weeks and made only two calls to the office a week to update progress because ship-to-shore calls were so expensive. Personal calls not allowed except in an emergency.

Entertainment on board has changed too. In 1971 I was listening of course to the Beatles, Joni Mitchell, Crosby Stills and Nash (a real child of the 60's/70's) but not of course on the ship as there were no cheap portable electronic devices then. Today I'm still listening to the same songs (with quite a few recent additions, I might add), all now, with most of the rest of my record, or should I say CD, collection on my MP3 player – who would have believed it back then. What about TV? Although we did have TV 'back then' there was no decent signal offshore so not much joy once you'd left port. That hasn't changed; we do have a large flat screen TV but still no signal so far! We do have a range of some DVD's to keep us entertained off shift.

I'll end with a couple of songs I've been thinking of that sum up where we are and what we're doing! As we are offshore Australia how about two of my favourite songs, (and this is not for effect I do like them!) June Tabor singing Eric Bogle's 'Waltzing Matilda' and the rather more up beat Men at Work's 'Down Under' which probably better suits the mood of the team here.



M_Mowat@ECORD_IODP. Scientists discuss the newly recovered core on deck



Y_Yokoyama@ECORD_IODP. Graham and the other scientists on shift analyse recently recovered material.