

Aurora's
Adventure to
the South
Pole

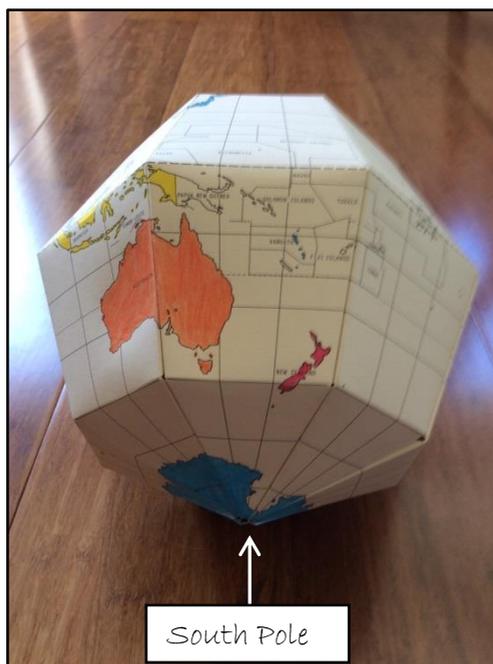
Aurora Finkelstein

1st January 2017

Guess what? I'm going to the South Pole!
Amazing huh? Mum has been planning to go for ages, and I found out at Christmas that I would be going with her! I decided I should keep a diary of the trip - one day I might be a famous explorer, and then everyone will want to read about my first journey. We don't leave for a couple of weeks, so until then I'll just write a little each day to get in the habit of keeping a diary. It's so exciting!!!

Oooh - I just realised that some people might not know where the South Pole is. I know, because Aunty Bee has been to Antarctica before, and she explained all about the South Pole to me. There are actually two South Poles - the magnetic pole, and the true pole. We're going to the true pole, which is at the bottom of the world, kind of in the middle of Antarctica. The magnetic pole shifts, and is in the sea at the moment! Compasses point towards the magnetic North Pole (and away from the magnetic South Pole), but the line that connects them isn't what the earth spins around. Instead the earth spins around a line between the true North Pole and the true South Pole - which is where I'll be going!

Anyway, Aunty Bee has a globe that she colours in when she visits a country, so I got her to take a photo of it, and to point out the true South Pole. You can also see New Zealand (the country in red), which is where I live!



2nd January 2017

I've been thinking about whether I should stick a photo of me in here so you can see what I look like, but I've decided I don't want to do that. It's

one thing to be a famous explorer, but another thing to have everyone see what you looked like as a kid. Luckily my parents aren't into Facebook, so I don't have to worry about ugly baby photos being on the Internet for everyone to see.

Anyway, I'm ten years old, and have brown, curly hair. I'm big for my age - I'm normally at the back of all the school photos. It's lucky I am too - Mum says if I was any smaller I wouldn't be allowed to go on the trip. What else? My eyes are blue, just like Mum's eyes. And I've got a lot of freckles. My cousin Dan says it's from spending too much time outside in the sun.

3rd January 2017

I guess I should also say that I'm pretty smart - it's another reason I'm allowed to go on the trip with Mum. I don't mean to sound up myself, but it is true, and I think I should be honest in this diary. Actually, I'm a bit of a goody-goody, as I hate being in trouble. But I do love getting all mucky and having fun outside. Don't you think that squishing mud between your toes is one of the best things in life? Climbing trees and reading books are my two favourite things to do. At the

moment, my favourite book is Alice in Wonderland
It's so interesting, and Alice gets to do so many
cool things!

My least favourite thing is hanging out with my
cousin Dan - all he wants to do is play some stupid
skateboarding game on his computer.

4th January 2017

As well as Mum and me, Aunty Bee and her son
Dan are coming. Aunty Bee is Mum's sister, and
her son Dan is my cousin. I'm not too sure why
he's coming, as he doesn't even like the outdoors.
He's 17, has just finished high school, and is
generally a pain in the butt. Apparently it has
something to do with being a teenager, but I'm
not sure why being a few years older means you
lose all of your brain cells. That's what it seems
like anyway... Maybe he just didn't have many to
start with.

Aunty Bee is really cool though, she's always got
awesome jobs. She does things like teaching
people to ski, and rescuing people when they get
lost. And she's been to Antarctica before. Last
winter she sent me a photo of her 'office', which
I'll stick in on the next page. She'll be great to

have on the trip, 'cos she'll keep us safe. I think Antarctica will be amazing, but Mum keeps reminding me that it's also dangerous there.



5th January 2017

I just realised I still haven't mentioned why we're going to the South Pole! Mum is an engineer, and after hearing all about Antarctica from Aunty Bee, she decided that it would be great if they could use less petrol to get around down there. So she spent ages working out how to convert a Hägglunds into an electric vehicle.

Aunty Bee let me have a photo of a Hägglunds from last time she was in Antarctica, so I'll put that in here for you to see - they're pretty cool huh? She told me that as well as being good for snow and ice, they can float! Antarctica New Zealand uses Hägglunds to get around, and it

would be good if they were more environmentally friendly, and didn't need petrol.

Ooh - Another neat thing that not many people know - Hägglunds should always have an 's' on the end, even if there's only one! It's a bit like sheep or fish, it doesn't matter how many Hägglunds there are, you always use the word Hägglunds.



6th January 2017

Last year Mum finally managed to get an electric Hägglunds working, and now it's time to test it out

in Antarctica! She wants to give it a really good test drive, so the plan is to drive it from McMurdo Station to the South Pole. She needs to go in case it breaks down, and Aunty Bee already knows how to stay safe in Antarctica, so she was an obvious choice too. Then Mum decided to make it a family trip, and she somehow got permission for me to go too. Once that happened, it seems that Aunty Bee thought it would be a good idea for Dan to come too. I'm sure he's going to be a total pain.

7th January 2017

And that's how the trip came together. Mum's told me that it's 1,600kms from Scott Base to the South Pole, which is a really long way! It's the same as the length of New Zealand! You could drive the length of New Zealand much faster though - the Hägglunds has a top speed of 30kms/hr, so we'll be going pretty slowly. Mum thinks it will take us about eight days to do the driving, assuming the weather is good the whole way. Which is probably won't be, so we'll have to take extra food and stuff just in case. I hope we don't get stuck in a snow storm, or at least not for too long. I don't want to be like Captain Scott, who died of starvation in Antarctica.

8th January 2017

What else? We leave in a few days for Christchurch, and it's getting pretty exciting around here! Mum and I live in Wellington, so we're driving to Christchurch before going down to Antarctica. The electric Hägglunds has been sent ahead by boat, and we'll see it when we get there. Aunty Bee and Dan live in Christchurch with Uncle Warren, so we're going to stay with them until we leave for Antarctica. Which means Dan will probably try to get me to play computer games with him, ugh.

I haven't mentioned my dad yet, because he's not coming with us - he lives in Wellington too, but he and Mum separated a few years ago. I stay with him for half of every week, and he and Mum get on OK, but it's not the same. They used to argue a lot though, and both of them seem happier now. I don't think he's very happy about me going on the trip - I overheard mum shouting at someone on the phone, and I think it was Dad. I'm actually at Dad's house at the moment, and will be here until Mum and I leave for Christchurch. After that I won't see him until we get back in February - I'll miss him, but I'll still be able to talk to him on the phone, except when we're in the field.

9th January 2017

Three sleeps to go! Until we leave for Christchurch anyway - it's still a week and a half until we leave for Antarctica. The weather here was really nice today, so Dad and I went for a walk at Red Rocks to see the seals there. There's a fur seal colony that lives there - they're a bit smelly, but pretty cute! We probably won't see fur seals in Antarctica, but there are other seals near Scott Base, so hopefully we'll see some of them!

10th January 2017

I'm running out of things to say about our trip...
I'm really looking forward to leaving soon!

11th January 2017

We leave for Christchurch tomorrow! Today Dad gave me a cool neck gaiter to use when I'm on the ice - I've stuck a photo in,



in case you don't know what a neck gaiter is. Basically it's a tube that goes around your neck, and you can pull up it to cover your mouth and nose to keep warm. Apparently they're really useful in Antarctica, 'cos your nose gets cold quickly. I love the patterns on the one Dad got me, it looks so pretty. Almost all out clothes will be from Antarctica New Zealand, so it'll be nice to have something that's different from everyone else.

After he gave it to be, he asked me to bring him back a rock from my trip - he obviously hasn't listened to Aunty Bee much, if he doesn't know you're not allowed to bring anything back. Even taking a little piece of rock could get me in big trouble! I had to explain this to him - I'm not sure that he understood how important it is, but since he's not going, I guess it doesn't matter.

12th January 2017

We drove down to Christchurch today! It was a long trip, and we had to get up really early to catch the ferry, but we finally made it. Mum said the drive was good training for the trip to the South Pole - we'll be doing some long driving days

in the electric Hägglunds. Mum and Aunty Bee will take turns driving, but Dan and I will just be sitting and looking out the window. I hope Dan knows that his iPhone won't work down there - he's almost as addicted to Facebook as he is to computer games.

The ferry trip was smooth, and I loved standing on the deck watching the sea. I was hoping to see a dolphin or a whale, but there weren't any. It was still really pretty, especially once we got into the Marlborough Sounds. I'll put a photo in so you can see what I mean.



The drive down was super long (almost 8 hours!) because they had an earthquake near Kaikoura last year. It wrecked the road we would normally take to get Christchurch, and they still haven't got it open again. So we had to take a big detour and go through the Lewis Pass instead. I didn't mind too much though, since it was also pretty scenery through there. We stopped at St Arnaud for lunch,

which is a really small village on Lake Rotoiti. We weren't there for long though, 'cos Mum wanted to get going again so we wouldn't arrive too late at Aunty Bee's house.

Once we arrived we had dinner, then I went straight to bed - I was so tired!

13th January 2017

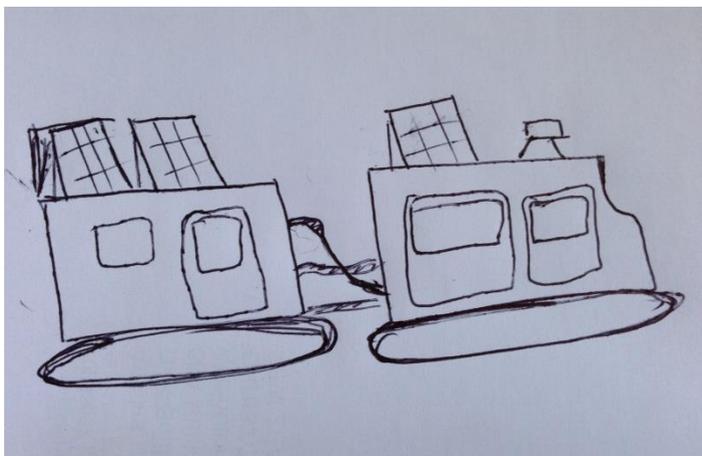
The ship with the electric Hägglunds on it arrived into Lyttelton Port today, and Mum wanted to go and check it over as soon as it arrived. You'd think that the electric Hägglunds was a baby - she's so protective of it. Luckily the ship didn't arrive until 1pm, so we all had a sleep in before heading out again.

After lunch there was no holding her back, so we hopped in the car, and drove to the Port. To start with I wasn't going to go, but then I remembered that I should include all about our trip in this diary, and the electric Hägglunds is the reason we're going to Antarctica.

The ship had already arrived when we got to the Port, but the electric Hägglunds hadn't been off-loaded yet. Mum went and talked to some

people, and it wasn't going to be long, so we just waited around. It was quite interesting seeing everything going on at the Port - it's definitely a busy place!

Eventually the Hågglands was taken off the ship, and Mum instantly set about checking it over. It all looked ok to me, but I guess it's like how parents check a new baby has all its fingers and toes. At any rate, Mum found something had broken on the trip down - which doesn't seem very good to me, since the Hågglands still has to go on another ship to get to Antarctica. And if it breaks down in Antarctica, then it's going to be a whole lot harder to fix. While she was checking it over, I sketched the electric Hågglands, so you can see what it looks like with the solar panels on top.



We ended up leaving the electric Hägglunds at the Port, and going back into Christchurch so Mum could sort the problem out. The Hägglunds is supposed to be loaded onto the Antarctica ship the day after tomorrow, so she doesn't have much time to get it fixed.

Hmm, I'm getting sick of writing Hägglunds all the time. I'm going to give it a shorter name - Hilda seems like a good one. Mum better like it too, 'cos I'm going to make sure we all use it. It sounds so much cooler than 'electric Hägglunds'. Oooh - I wonder if we can paint the name Hilda on the side of the Hägglunds. That would be awesome!

Anyway, while Mum sorted out the problem with Hilda (it was something to do with a connector), I hung out at Aunty Bee's place. As predicted, Dan tried to get me to play computer games with him. They're so stupid, I just don't get it. It's a shame it's school holidays at the moment - if it wasn't he'd be at school, and I could read in peace. Although I guess I'd be at school too, so that wouldn't work...

14th January 2017 (Part 1)

Mum's still sorting out the problem with Hilda, but she seems less stressed than yesterday, so I guess it's going ok. I talked to Aunty Bee about painting 'Hilda' on the side of the Häggglunds, and she thought it was a great idea, so I spent the morning designing what it would look like. I figure it was my idea, and my name, so I should get to choose how it looks. I'll put my design in here so you can see what I came up with. The font is called 'Chiller' which I thought was perfect for something in Antarctica. And blue is a great Antarctic colour.



HILDA

Once I was done I showed the design to Aunty Bee, and she liked it, but she pointed out that Hilda was green, like the Häggglunds in her photo, so maybe the blue wouldn't stand out that well. I said they just need to put a white box around it, and it would be great! She didn't look that convinced, but I'm going to show it to Mum - she's

supposed to get back soon for lunch. If we're going to do this, it needs to happen today before Hilda gets loaded onto the ship again.

14th January 2017 (Part 2)

Mum loved the idea, even though Dan was snotty about it all through lunch. I bet he just wishes that he had come up with the idea himself. The only problem is that there isn't time to get it painted on the side before it gets loaded tomorrow. Mum also said that Hilda belongs to Antarctica New Zealand, and they probably wouldn't like it if we painted a name on the side. So we're going to get it printed out on some card instead, and put it on the inside of the windscreen. That also means we can keep the name card for a souvenir when we leave - I'm going to make sure I get it, since it was my idea.

Mum has got Hilda fixed too, so we're all ready to go. Apparently the connector has been replaced, and the new one is much better, so we shouldn't have the same problem again. I hope not!

Before I went to bed I had a long Skype call with Dad. He made me promise to be careful when in Antarctica, and to always listen to Mum and Aunty

Bee (especially Aunty Bee). Honestly, he treats me like I'm 5 years old sometimes - I've already promised both of these things, several times. I guess he's just worried - he talked to Aunty Bee after he talked to me, and I could hear her saying things like "I'll take good care of her". Honestly though, I'm 10 years old now, I'm pretty good at being responsible. Plus the whole goody-goody thing means that he should know I always listen to adults.

15th January 2017

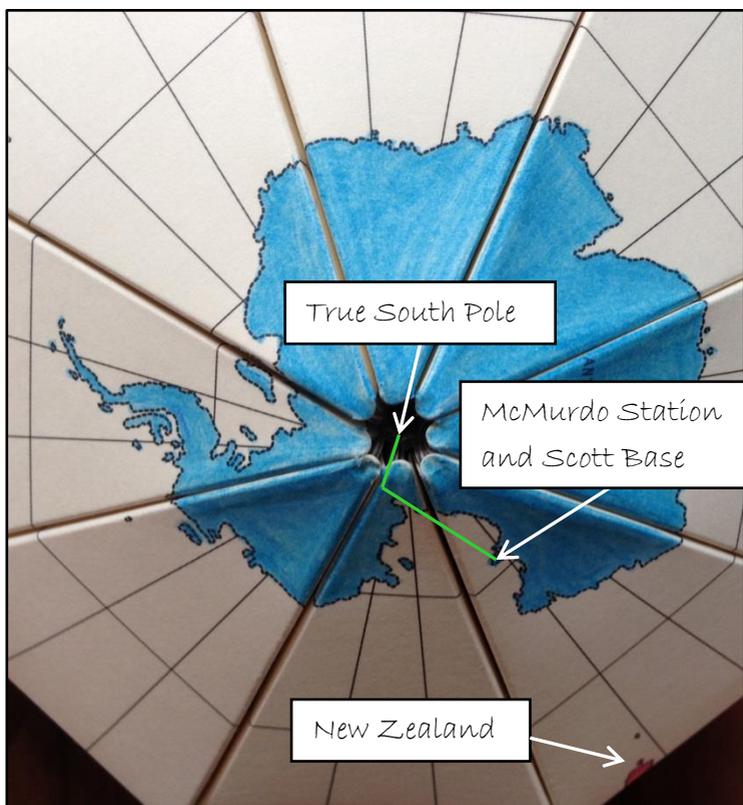
The supply ship for McMurdo and Scott Base arrived today at Lyttelton Port, which is why Hilda had to be all ready to go yesterday. It takes a few days to load everything on board - Antarctica New Zealand sends as much stuff as they can to Scott Base by boat, since it's a lot cheaper than flying things in. And better for the environment too, because it uses less fuel. But the supply ship only goes once a year, so they need to put a year's worth of everything on board - food, things for the engineers (bolts and stuff), things for people's projects (like Hilda), and anything else.

The American's do the same thing - McMurdo is the American base, and it's really close to Scott Base. In fact the supply ship goes to McMurdo, not to Scott Base, since they have an ice pier there. I wasn't too sure what an ice pier was, but Aunty Bee came to the rescue, and found a photo from last time she was there. The pier doesn't look much like it's made of ice, but Aunty Bee said that they cover the ice with gravel to make it easier to drive on.



The kiwi supplies then get driven to Scott Base on the road. Yeah - there's an actual road in Antarctica, who knew? In fact there are a few roads - including the one we'll be taking to the

South Pole! I took another photo of Aunty Bee's globe, and drew the road on it so you can see where we'll be going. I didn't do a great job, but it's roughly in the right place!



Anyway, we now have almost a week just waiting around in Christchurch. Today Mum wanted to relax after the connector stress of the last two days, so I read my book some more, and then we

played some board games. Mum made Dan play too, which was quite funny - he wasn't happy about having to stop playing on the computer. We played Cluedo (Mum won, then I won), and then Monopoly. I'm not sure who would have won Monopoly - maybe me, maybe Dan. We were both doing pretty well, but then it was dinner time and we packed up the game so we could use the dining room table. Tomorrow Mum's promised to take me geocaching around Hagley Park, which will be awesome!

16th January 2017

Mum and I totally owned the geocaches in Hagley Park today! We spent most of the day trying to find all the caches there, and we succeeded! Luckily it was a Monday, and not too busy in the park, as otherwise some of them would have been difficult to find without muggles working out what we were doing. I'll put photos of some of the Hagley Park caches in, so you can see the variety there is...

If you don't know what geocaching is, you should look it up on the Internet. It's kind of a treasure hunt - someone posts GPS co-ordinates on the

geocaching website, then you download them and try to find the cache. Once you find it, you write your name on the paper inside. There're all sorts of types of caches, but I like the traditional ones and the puzzle ones best. Oh yeah, and muggles are people who don't know about geocaching - you've got to be careful not to let them see when you find something - otherwise the caches can get moved or stolen, which really sucks.



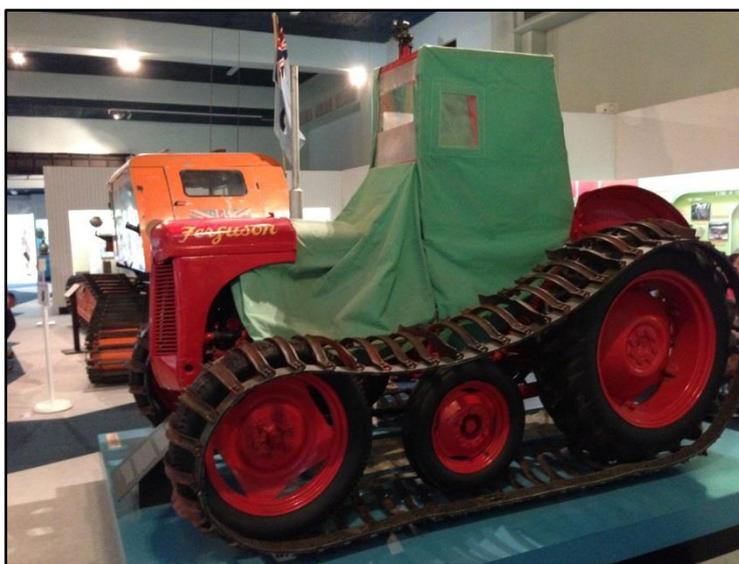
17th January 2017

Today Mum had to meet with a bunch of people at the university and at Antarctica New Zealand. I guess she was sorting out final details for the trip, or maybe just talking to people about what they want her to do while there. It meant that I had to amuse myself again though - I spent a lot of time avoiding Dan and his computer games. Aunty Bee and Uncle Warren were both working today, so I couldn't even get one of them to take me somewhere interesting.

Eventually I texted Aunty Bee so she would make Dan take me to the museum to see the Antarctic exhibition there. Mum and I had thought about doing it yesterday while geocaching in Hagley Park, but we ran out of time - some of the caches were really hard to find! The museum has the tractor that Sir Edmund Hillary rode to the South Pole, and since we're going there too, I really wanted to see it. It's the first vehicle to reach the South Pole, cool huh?

It turns out that he was a bit naughty - he wasn't supposed to go all the way to the South Pole, but was just supposed to set up supply points so another group could get from the South Pole to Scott Base. This other group were doing the first

overland crossing of Antarctica via the South Pole. They made it, but Sir Ed stole a bit of their thunder by reaching the South Pole before them - that was not part of their plan! I would have been too scared to disobey orders like that, but maybe I'll need to be more daring if I want to be an explorer.



It was a really good day anyway, and I even think Dan enjoyed it, once he'd stopped complaining about missing out on precious computer time. I'm really not too sure how he's going to cope when we're in Antarctica - hopefully he doesn't whine the whole time!

18th January 2017

The supply ship left Lyttelton today! We went across to the Port to see it depart this morning, which was pretty neat. It's really impressive seeing something that big move around without damaging anything. Guess it wouldn't have gone so well if Dan was driving - he's still on his learners license and he can't even drive cars properly yet, let alone a big ship.

Mum managed to get all her meetings done yesterday, and she seems very excited by the fact that the ship is off to McMurdo with Hilda on board. She won't shut up about it actually, and keeps saying things like 'it's really happening', and 'it seems real now'. I'm not sure why it didn't seem real before, but that's adults for you. I forgot to take my camera though, so I don't have a photo of the ship to put in here, which kind of sucks.

Once the ship left, Mum decided we should celebrate with lunch out, before getting Hilda's name sign made up. We drove for a while to get to a chocolate café - I suspect Mum just wanted an excuse to go there. Not that I'm complaining! Not all the food had chocolate in it though, which I was a bit disappointed about. Although I guess

fish and chips wouldn't go with chocolate that well. My favourite part was the drinks - Mum let me choose whatever I wanted, so I got a Brûlée Caramel Decadent Belgian Iced Chocolate. How awesome does that sound? I really wanted to take a photo of it, it was so pretty - but I still didn't have my camera. I drew a sketch instead so you can see what it looked like! I should have thought of this earlier, and drawn a sketch of the ship. Although if I'm honest, the ship and the port would have been too hard for me to draw - I'm not a great artist, as you can see!



Once lunch was finished we went to get Hilda's sign made up at a print shop in Christchurch - it'll be ready for us to pick up tomorrow! I'm really looking forward to seeing how it looks.

That was all for today - after the print shop we went back to Aunty Bee's house so Mum could answer some emails. I hid from Dan and read my book until dinner - I love my new copy of Alice in Wonderland, and want to finish it before we leave for Antarctica.

19th January 2017

We picked up our gear from Antarctica New Zealand today! There are so many clothes, I can't imagine being cold when we're down there. I had to have the smallest sizes of everything, so it's lucky that I'm big for my age. I guess that's why I wouldn't have been able to go if I was any smaller. The weirdest thing we got was a FUD - bet you don't know what that is? Mum calls it a she-wee, and it lets girls pee like boys. It's both kinda cool, and kinda gross, all at the same time. Apparently we should practise with it in the shower at home before we leave, so we know how to use it. It doesn't sound like we need to use it every time we pee in Antarctica, but we might sometimes need to pee in a bottle, and that would be difficult for girls without a she-wee. It doesn't seem that hard to use, you just hold it in place, and the pee comes out a tube (you put the end of the tube into the bottle). I think I'll try and avoid using it if I can though!

Apart from that, we got seven layers of clothing (yep, seven), and two pairs of big boots. We had to try them all on to make sure they fit - when we were dressed up, Mum and I had a good laugh at each other. The only reason you can tell Mum and me apart is our height difference - with all those

clothes on, you can't even tell that we're female! I think we might need to work out some way to identify each other when we're there - I don't want to talk to some complete stranger because I think they're Mum or Aunty Bee...

Anyway, it took ages to sort all the gear out - who knew such a simple thing could take several hours? But we're now all kitted out. On the way home I asked Aunty Bee about how we tell people apart, and she suggested that we all get our own hats - apparently that's the easiest way to distinguish people from each other. So that's something we're going to do tomorrow, as well as buying any other things we need that we don't already have. I feel like we've already got a ton of stuff, but Mum and Aunty Bee had a big chat this afternoon, and made a list of extra things to get, so I guess we don't have everything yet.

20th January 2017

As planned, we went shopping today. I would have stayed at home while Mum and Aunty Bee went, but I wanted to choose my hat and make sure I



got a good one. The outdoor store had quite a lot of options, and I got a neat beanie with a blue bit around the bottom. Mum says the blue matches my eyes nicely.

Aunty Bee didn't need to buy a hat, as she already has one from last time she went to Antarctica. She promised it would be different, and she would be easy to spot - and she wasn't kidding! She showed us her hat when we got home - I took a photo of it to put in here 'cos I don't think I can describe it... As you can see, Aunty Bee's hat is



crazy - I don't think I've ever seen anything like it. She will definitely be easy to spot. Mum got a multi-coloured hat, and Dan got a boring black one - I'm not too worried about recognising him though, as long as I can find Mum and Aunty Bee I'll be happy.

Once we got all the shopping done we headed home to pack. Antarctica New Zealand even gave us bags to use - a big black one for most stuff, and a green one for hand luggage. Annoyingly, we have to wear a bunch of our heavy gear on the plane. Aunty Bee says that if we land in a snow

storm we need to be prepared, so that's why we need the ECW gear. ECW means Extreme Cold Weather, so basically it means we need the heaviest stuff with us, and easily accessible. Everything else can go in the black bag.

I packed everything up, and then Mum came and double-checked I'd done it right. I had all the important gear in the right place, but Mum reminded me that it's an 8-hour flight, so I might like to have my book with me in the green bag. I'm not taking Alice in Wonderland down, as it might get wrecked, but I'm taking several old books - I've shifted one of them into the green bag as Mum suggested.

We leave tomorrow! I'm all ready to go, I can't wait!

21st January 2017

Well that sucked. We were all ready to go, and were just about to head to Antarctica New Zealand. Then Mum and Aunty Bee both got a text message telling them that the flight was delayed for a few hours. Aunty Bee said this is a good example of the first rule of Antarctica - 'hurry up and wait'. I wasn't happy at all, but Dan seemed

quite pleased that he could sit around for a while more on his computer. Honestly - why is he even coming! Anyway, after we had waited for about an hour, another text message came through saying the flight was cancelled for the day, and was now scheduled for tomorrow. I was pretty disappointed, but am trying not to be a baby about it - I want Mum and Aunty Bee to know that I can handle things like a grown-up.

Since it was really nice weather, mum suggested we go to the beach, and soak up the sun and warmth while we can. She's always trying to make the best of any situation, which is a good thing I guess. Aunty Bee also thought getting out of the house and enjoying the weather was a good idea - she made Dan come too, even though he acts like he's allergic to the outdoors. It ended up being a really fun day - lots of swimming and playing in the waves, and icecreams on the way home! Now I'm all excited again about the thought that we leave tomorrow!

22nd January 2017

Hurrah, it actually happened today! We made it to Antarctica!!! This time the flight left as

planned, and it all went pretty smoothly. I couldn't believe how noisy the aeroplane was though - you definitely needed ear plugs, and there was no way you could talk to anyone else. Also, the plane we were on had skis! Who knew planes could have skis and wheels at the same time? It wasn't like a water plane, where they can only land in water - we took off from the normal airport in Christchurch, and then landed on an ice runway in Antarctica. The wheels kind of stick through the skis - neat huh? The photo below shows what I mean. Also, it's my first photo of Antarctica!



After we landed we were taken to Scott Base on Ivan the Terra Bus - Aunty Bee thought that was a cool name, 'cos she's a bit of a history buff (I think Ivan the Terrible was a famous Russian tsar). We weren't really given any time to look around at the 'airport', which kind of sucked - I mean we'd only just arrived, so it was our first look at Antarctica. I did learn today though that everyone down here just calls it The Ice - and now that I'm a proper Antarctic explorer, I'm going to try to do the same.

In terms of what it's like here - it is cold, but not as bad as I expected. At the moment it feels similar to when we visit Aunty Bee in winter in Christchurch. The air reminds me of mountain air back home - but stronger, if that makes sense. When you go up in the mountains the air is always cold and fresh - well it's like that, but colder and fresher. It's also really bright - the sun reflects off the ice, so you definitely need sunglasses!

When we got to Scott Base we got changed out of all the heavy gear we had to have on the plane, and got to choose a locker each for our outdoors gear. Inside the base everyone wears normal clothes - just jeans and t-shirts mostly, which is seems a bit weird to be honest. Aunty Bee knew

this though, so she made sure we all had normal clothes with us.

We then took most of our stuff up to the bunk rooms, where Mum, Aunty Bee, and I are sharing together. Dan has to be in a different room 'cos he's a boy. That suits me just fine - now I don't have to listen to him complaining about being here. I can't believe he doesn't realise how lucky he is!



I choose a top bunk, 'cos they're best - I don't understand why grown-ups always seem to want the bottom bunk. It's great fun climbing up and down a ladder to go to bed! Mum's underneath me, and you can see our beds in the photo. Nothing much exciting happened for the rest of the day - we got

shown around the base, had dinner, and then went to bed.

23rd January 2017

We actually got to have a look around outside today, which was awesome! There are so many cool things around Scott Base - seals and skuas are probably the best things we saw, so I'll put in photos of them both. There are Weddell seals just outside Scott Base, so we got to see heaps of them. They're cute, but not actually that exciting - they just seem to hang out on the sea ice, not really doing anything. (In case you're wondering, sea ice is frozen sea, and Scott Base is built on land on the edge of Ross Island.) Skuas look pretty mean though - Aunty Bee told me they eat pretty much anything, including penguin babies.



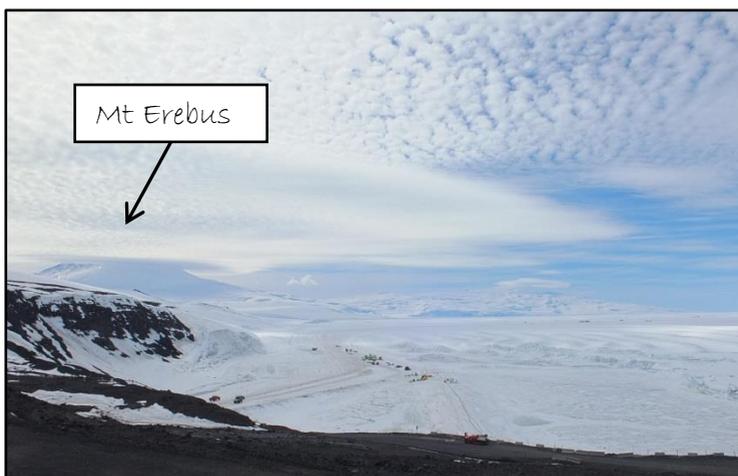
A lot of the day was spent learning about the rules of life in Antarctica though - we spent all morning in a classroom, learning about stuff. One of the

things we spent a while on was the clothes we picked up in Christchurch - what each item is good for etc. Dan was a bit grumpy all morning, but the field trainer who ran the session was really cool. He knew that Aunty Bee had done his job last year, so he got her to do quite a lot of stuff. It was awesome seeing Aunty Bee as a trainer, maybe when I grow up I'd rather do that than be an explorer. You still get to go cool places, and you probably get paid better than explorers do.

In the afternoon we went outside, and did a short walk. We got to practise things like signing out of the base, and calling in on the radio. It's really important that the people at the base know where you are, so they can send help if you run into trouble. When we drive to the South Pole, Aunty Bee has said that we'll have to make contact with Scott Base at least three times a day... That seems like a lot, but apparently if you go onto the sea ice, you need to call in every hour!

I'll put in some of the photos I took while we were out - the first one shows Mt Erebus, which had a big plane crash on it ages ago - everyone died who was on the plane, which is horrible. The other photo shows Scott Base - apparently the colour of the base was specially designed for it, and it's called Scott Base Green. Most of the ice behind

the base is sea ice, although some of it is the Ross Ice Shelf - you can just see the airport in the distance, and that's on the ice shelf. There's a faint line that separates the two, which I'll point out - it's pretty hard to see though. I have to say, all the different types of ice is quite confusing!



24th January 2017

We had even more training today... We're a small group, and we're going a long way away from help, so we have to have extra training. I knew Aunty Bee and Mum both had to get fancy First Aid certificates before we left Christchurch - Dan and I had to get normal ones (2 days of training), but their ones were even more than that! Anyway, we have to do extra training here as well - even though Aunty Bee was a field trainer last year, so she knows all what to do... I know Antarctica New Zealand didn't want Dan or I to come - I guess they're getting us to do this extra training to make up for the fact that we're younger than everyone else here. At least I finally got to find out why Dan is here - I overheard Mum and Aunty Bee talking when they thought I was asleep. Aunty Bee said she's been worried about Dan getting addicted to computers and Facebook, and she wanted to get him away from all of that stuff for a while. Plus she thought he would be able to be a general dogs body around the camp - I'm not too sure what that means, but I guess maybe he'll just have to do whatever Aunty Bee and Mum ask him to do.

Anyway, it wasn't very exciting, so I'm not going to write about it more here. The training is all

over now, and tomorrow we're organising all our gear for the trip.

One thing that I will write about though is the food here at Scott Base - I thought before I came that it probably wasn't going to be great (given we're in Antarctica and all). But it's awesome! Even better, as well as breakfast, lunch, and dinner, there's morning tea and afternoon tea too. Aunty Bee says that people who stay at Scott Base for a whole summer normally put weight on, because the food is so good. I'm just going to make the most of it before we head out on our trip - I'm pretty sure our food will be significantly worse when we're in the field...

25th January 2017

If you thought that it wouldn't take long to pack gear and food for our trip - well, you'd be wrong! Because we're going so far away from base, we had to check that all of the gear worked, so if anything was broken or the wrong size, then we could fix it before we left. To give you an idea of what I mean - we had to set up the tents inside the building, and check that the bits and pieces of the cooker were all there, and fitted together.

We also had to double-check everything in the kitchen box and the food box. The standard food box is supposed to last two people for ten days, so we have two of them. And we packed some extra food, just in case we get stuck in a blizzard for a week.

We also had to make sure we had enough poo buckets and pee barrels for the whole trip - this is something you really don't want to run out of! Scott Base has normal toilets, so everything is easy at the moment, but when we're in the field we have to separate poo and pee... Poo goes into a bucket, and eventually gets shipped back to New Zealand (gross huh?), but we pee into a barrel - and that is processed here in Antarctica. I'm trying to practise doing pee first, then pooing - normally it's not something I think about, but in the field I'll have to swap between containers, which I'm not looking forward to.

At least we will have Hilda to use for the toilet when we're stopped at night - apparently some camps have to build toilet walls out of snow and ice. Aunty Bee gave me a photo of one that she'd been at last year - there's not much privacy! The pee barrel is on the left, and the red bucket on the right is for poo. I think I like flushing toilets better!



26th January 2017

The supply ship was supposed to arrive at McMurdo today, but it turns out some ice gave them some trouble, so now they're not supposed to arrive until tomorrow. Mum knew that the ship arrival would be weather and ice dependant though, so she planned a back-up sightseeing day for us. It was awesome! She organised for us to go to McMurdo for the day - we climbed Observation Hill on the way there, and then had lunch at their canteen. In the afternoon we went to the Crary Lab, and then Discovery Hut - it was a really busy

day, but so cool. Apart from Dan ruining things, as always... But I'll get onto that later. First things first, as Dad says...

Observation Hill lies between McMurdo Station and Scott Base. You don't have to climb to the top of it to go between the bases, since there's a road you can drive on, but Mum wanted to go up it. It looks like a really big steep hill, and I thought it was going to take us ages to get to the top, but it actually wasn't that bad. There's a big cross at the top, which was put there over 100 years ago! It's a pretty sad story actually - Robert Scott and four others were trying to be the first people to get to the South Pole. They made it, but a



Norwegian group led by Roald Amundsen got there first. That's not the really sad bit though - Scott's whole group died on the way back to McMurdo Sound, which is where their boat and crew were waiting for them. The expedition members who were

still at McMurdo Sound put this cross on top of Observation Hill, as a memorial to Captain Scott and the other brave men who died. I hope our trip to the South Pole goes a lot better than that! We're lucky though, we're going in Hilda, so we don't have to drag all our gear like Scott's team did. Imagine that - pulling a big sled load of gear, while walking the length of New Zealand, in the coldest and windiest continent in the world. I'm glad we have Hilda!

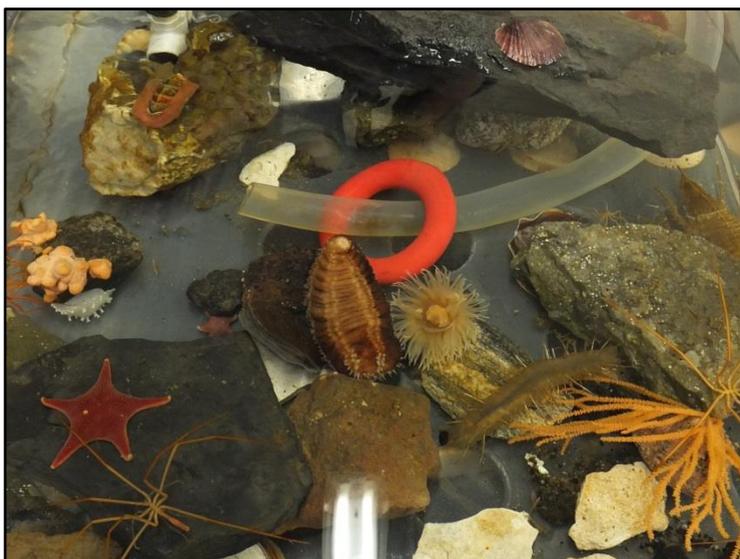
The view from Observation Hill was awesome - you can see McMurdo Station in the photo with the cross (as well as Mum). The other photo is in the other direction - you can see the road between the bases, and Scott Base in the distance (it's the really small green bit on the piece of land that sticks out).



After climbing up Observation Hill, we walked down again and continued along the road to McMurdo. Aunty Bee had talked to some friends she has at McMurdo, and we met up with them for lunch in their canteen. It was crazy there - completely different from the Scott Base dining room. McMurdo has A LOT more people living there (almost 1,000!), and their canteen is kind of like a help-yourself food hall. There are tons of options, and you just put whatever you want on your plate, and have as many helpings as you feel like. I had pizza, a hotdog, some pasta, some more pizza, some cookies, a lot of icecream, and some berries with fairy cake. I wasn't even sure what fairy cake was, but I thought I should try it! For the icecream there's an icecream machine! Dan (for once) was super happy - you should have seen how much pizza and icecream he had! I think Aunty Bee's friends were a bit surprised at how much we ate.

After lunch Aunty Bee's friends took us to the Crary Lab, which is where they work. They have a tank there full of Antarctic sea creatures, and you're allowed to put your hand in and touch them! The water was freezing cold (otherwise the animals would die from overheating), but it was super awesome. The sea anemone in the middle

was my favourite, so I'll put in a close-up photo of it on the next page. When you put your finger above it, it uses its tentacles to grab onto you, and it tries to pull your figure towards it, so it can eat you! Not that it could eat something as big as a finger, but it was neat to feel it try.



I could have spent ages there looking at all of the different things in the touch tank, but Aunt Bee had also organised for us to go to Discovery Hut, and we had to make sure we were on time for that. Luckily the person who was going to show us around was driving across from Scott Base, so we

met up with her at McMurdo and got a ride to the hut.



To be honest, to start with I wasn't all that interested in going to the hut - touch tanks and sea creatures are the type of things I'm more interested in! But Aunty Bee and Mum really wanted to go. Discovery Hut was built by Captain Scott's first expedition to Antarctica, and was used for his second expedition too (the one where he died). I did think it would be interesting to see how the early explorers did things though. The hut was sooo much better than I was expecting though - it was really facinating. It's been

recently restored, and they did a really good job - they've even got decaying seals around the place - apparently the expeditions used to use seal blubber as fuel in the stove, and they also ate seal meat. The dead seals certainly made the hut stink - I don't think I'd want to eat one! The one outside still had all its fur on, but the inside ones were skinned. It was pretty gross...

Once we'd all had a good look around we went back to Scott Base, and that's when the real drama of the day happened. We were in the locker room getting changed back into normal clothes, and something fell out of Dan's pocket. Normally



I don't pay much attention to Dan and what he's doing, but he was so quick to stoop down and pick whatever it was up - he obviously didn't want the rest of us to see it. So I started pestering him to show me. I can be pretty stubborn, and even though he kept saying it was nothing, I just kept on bugging him about it...

Eventually Aunty Bee asked what was going on, and she made Dan empty his pockets out. It turns out he'd stolen a piece of wood from the dead seal room! I couldn't believe it - we've all had it drilled into us that we can't take anything at all home from Antarctica. And then he took something from the historic hut! He said he thought it wouldn't matter, because it was so small... But if everyone did that, then it quickly adds up to a big amount! Aunty Bee took the wood off him so it could be returned to the hut, and then we all had a big meeting, discussing if Dan and I would still be allowed to do the trip. It hasn't been decided yet - the Antarctica New Zealand people are worried that we aren't mature enough to follow instructions, which might get us all killed. They're going to have another meeting tomorrow morning without Dan and me. I am so mad at Dan - he knew he wasn't allowed to take anything! And because *he* was stupid, it means /

might not be able to go to the South Pole. That would be so unfair!

27th January 2017

Hooray! We are still going to be allowed to go on the trip! Their meeting this morning seemed to go on forever - Dan and I weren't invited to it, so I curled up in the lounge and read a book. Or at least, I tried to read a book - it was really hard to concentrate on it when I was so worried. I ended up spending a lot of time just looking out of the windows, watching the seals and enjoying the view. I thought I'd better drink in as much of the sights as I could while I was still here, just in case... But it all ended up ok.

I think Mum and Aunty Bee worked really hard to convince them that Dan and I would be responsible and pay attention to what they told us to do. They certainly looked tired when they got out of the meeting, and I don't think I've ever seen Aunty Bee look at Dan in such a disappointed way. She took him aside for a long talk, and when they came back it looked like he'd been crying. Hopefully it means that he's going to act a bit more like an adult now - he's 17 years old and will

be going to university next year, so it's time he grew up! Half the time I feel like I'm more mature than he is, and I'm only 10! Although maybe I'm being mean, and teenage hormones are partly to blame. I don't see why he can't try and behave though. As punishment Dan isn't allowed to use the computers here at all, and he has to help out cleaning up the kitchen after dinner every day. I don't think he'll mind about the kitchen too much, but he'll hate not being able to use the computers at all.

Once that was all sorted it was time for lunch, and we found out that the supply ship had arrived at McMurdo during the morning. Hilda wasn't going to be unloaded today, so Mum and Auntie Bee decided that we should have a day off at Scott Base - actually, I think they just wanted to catch up on emails.

I really wanted to talk to Dad, so I used the calling card I'd got in Wellington to phone him. It's a Friday and he was at work, but he normally doesn't mind if I call him there, as long as it's important and it doesn't take too long. I just felt like I was missing my normal life - I'm used to seeing Dad every week, and I haven't seen him now for over two... I've talked to him a few times, but it's not the same. Not that I'm homesick

really, but Dad thinks about things in a different way from Mum, and it's nice to be able to talk with him when I'm feeling unhappy or angry. Mum's very logical, and not always very good at the feelings side of things. Dad's much better at emotions, and understanding how people think. Anyway, it was great having a talk with him, and I feel much better now - I'm also not as angry at Dan, which is good, since I have to spend a lot of time with him for the next few weeks!

28th January 2017

Today was another day of waiting - apparently Hilda is going to be unloaded tomorrow though! For today Mum and Aunty Bee thought we'd do a big walk - we're going to be stuck sitting down almost all day as soon as we start driving Hilda to the South Pole, so they thought it would be a good idea to get out and about while we still can.

They had a look at the board showing the walks you can do from base, and decided we'd do the Castle Rock Loop, provided the weather forecast was for the rest of the day. Which it was! It's one of the longest walks we can do from Scott Base, and takes all day. I took a photo of the walk board

- as you can see there are quite a lot of options... Anyway, we got a radio, a packed lunch and the gear you need to climb Castle Rock (harness, helmet etc), and then we set off!

Dan tried to get out of coming - even though he isn't allowed on the computers anymore, he'd still rather be inside Scott Base than outside walking... Aunty Bee made him come though. Bringing Dan had one great advantage from my point of view - Aunty Bee made him carry my climbing gear! I had to carry a pack with my other stuff - lunch, water, extra clothes, and of course the she-wee and a pee bottle. I was hoping not to have to use it at all, but today I had to - I just couldn't hold on all day! At least I was able to wait until we were at Castle Rock, so I could be a bit private...





The walk was long, but I loved it. Climbing up Castle Rock was particularly awesome - the views from the top were so pretty! Because of the clouds and the snow and ice there was a lot of white, but that just made the



other colours really stand out...

Also, we found a geocache! Who knew there were geocaches in Antarctica? We found it by accident, since Mum hadn't thought to look up if there were any geocaches here. We were both pretty excited about finding it - a geocache in another continent! There were a few things inside this one, because the container was so big. Mostly it was food though - including a chocolate bar that someone put in there in 2009! I'm not sure I'd want to eat that... We didn't bring anything, so we didn't take anything, but we did write in the log book, and Mum will log it on the Internet when we get home.



After that was the long walk back to Scott Base - I think Dan is trying really hard to be more mature after his talk with Aunty Bee, because he didn't complain once! Once we got back to the base, I had a quick shower, then dinner, and once I've finished this I'm off to bed. I'm tired!

29th January 2017

Hilda got unloaded today! Like in Lyttelton, Mum checked Hilda over to make sure that she was all working okay after her trip on the boat. This time thankfully nothing was wrong. Mum said I'd only get in the way if I came across to McMurdo to have a look, so I stayed at Scott Base and found a jigsaw to do. I tried to get Aunty Bee or Dan to go for another walk with me, but I didn't have any luck there. I discovered though that there's a second library on the base, and it's got games and jigsaws in it. I love doing jigsaws, so I chose one that I liked and had fun doing that all morning.

Mum was back by lunchtime, although she left Hilda at McMurdo. She said that she'd set up the solar panels and batteries - she wanted the batteries to get really well charged before we left for the South Pole. And because everything is working, we're leaving tomorrow! She took a photo of where she'd parked Hilda - apparently the Americans have a special parking area for kiwis! The two bases work together really closely - there's even America night here at Scott Base!



Because we're leaving tomorrow Mum insisted I spend a while sorting all of my stuff out. I'd kind of spread out my things out all over our bunk room, so I guess she had a point. But who likes being tidy? Well, Mum does I guess... Anyway, I put everything into piles, then packed it into my bags, and then went to finish my jigsaw. Since we're leaving tomorrow I wanted to finish it today - otherwise I'd have had to put it away without completing it, and I hate doing that!

30th January 2017

Distance travelled today = 60 km

Total distance travelled = 60 km

We left today! We're actually on our way to the South Pole in Hilda! Mum is a bit nervous that something might go wrong since this is Hilda's first test in Antarctic conditions. But so far everything is going well.

We started off the day by loading up a trailer and a normal Hägglunds with all of our gear. I couldn't believe how long all of the packing took, given we organised almost everything a week ago. But some stuff is awkward shapes so it's hard to pack into the trailer, and even just getting the trailer connected to the Hägglunds took almost 30 minutes.

Anyway, after lunch we drove across to McMurdo, and shifted the trailer across to Hilda. Mum checked the batteries and solar panels one last time, and then we headed off! We drove 60 km before stopping for the night - doesn't seem far huh? Our top speed today was only 20 km/hr - Mum wanted to make sure Hilda was okay with that before we started going at Hilda's actual top speed of 30 km/hr. I have to admit, before we set off I thought it all sounded very slow - I mean you

drive around town faster than that! But driving on an ice road is not the same as driving on a normal road... It's much bumpier for a start, and even at 20 km/hr I felt like we were going quite fast.

The other reason for going slow was that we crossed the McMurdo Shear Zone today - which is the boundary between the Ross Ice Shelf and the McMurdo Ice Shelf. Aunty Bee said that this area has a lot of crevasses, so you need to be really careful in it. We were lucky that a South Pole resupply mission used the road already this summer - someone has to check the ice road every year to make sure that no new crevasses have appeared over the winter. Because the resupply mission did it already, we don't need to - something we're all very happy about! But it's still a good idea not to drive too fast in the shear zone.

Once we had driven our 60 km, we stopped to pitch camp. We've got two Scott Polar Tents - one for Mum and I, and one for Aunty Bee and Dan. They're basically the same type of tents that Scott used on his expedition to the South Pole - cool huh? They're basically big yellow 3D triangles, and they're not that easy to put up. I'm not going to describe it here, 'cos it's a bit boring,

but I will say that I hope we get faster with practice!



We also had to make a kitchen - nothing too fancy, but we don't want to cook in the tents if we can avoid it. That meant we some walls to shelter behind, and a platform to put the cooker on. To make the walls you actually cut the snow into blocks with a saw. Aunty Bee was definitely the best at doing this - it's obviously something that you need to practise. Mum's blocks were a bit rubbish to be honest, but I'm sure she'll improve. She's pretty stubborn about things like that (I think I get my stubbornness from her).

The inside of the tent is very cozy, and generally I like it. Going in and out of it is a bit weird though, I don't think there's an easy way to use the round door... Although I've got it easier than everyone else, since I'm the smallest!



Because we were all tired by the time we had camp set up, Aunty Bee made dinner from dehydrated meals (just add hot water and wait). They're not that nice to be honest, but they are quick and easy. And they were lovely and hot at least! Time for bed now, it's an early morning tomorrow.

31st January 2017

Distance travelled today = 180 km

Total distance travelled = 240 km

Aunty Bee said that the old explorers all made notes about the weather in their journals - I can see why, there's sometimes not much else to talk about! Anyway, yesterday was good weather - lovely and sunny, not too cold, and not much wind. Today's weather was similar, although a bit windier. The wind definitely makes a difference to how cold you feel - I was very glad we had built a kitchen to eat in! I guess we could eat in our tents or Hilda if we had to, but it's nice to eat outside since we spend so much time indoors.

Anyway, today was pretty uneventful, and basically went the same as all of our days are supposed to go, provided nothing goes wrong! This is our schedule:

6:30am - get up, have breakfast, pack up camp

9.00am - start driving for the day

12.00pm - stop for lunch

1.30pm - more driving

4.30pm - stop and set up camp for the night

Not very exciting huh? It's amazing how long everything takes. When Mum and I are tramping

we can get up, breakfast, and pack up a campsite in an hour and a half, or sometimes even less. Here it takes two and a half hours! Just getting dressed and out of the tent in the morning takes about 30 minutes... Although hopefully we'll get better at that sort of stuff - Aunty Bee definitely seems to be quicker than the rest of us.

Dan was a bit antsy during the drive - I wonder if he's missing the comforts of indoors... Scott Base isn't the same as being at home, but compared to camping, it's a palace!

1st February 2017

Distance travelled today = 120 km

Total distance travelled = 360 km

I'm not sure that it's a good thing, but today was more exciting than yesterday. Hilda ended up having a minor break-down - she just stopped in the middle of our morning drive! Mum had to work out what the problem was, and then fix it - which took her about 2 hours. While we were waiting, there wasn't much the rest of us could do. It's not like we can fix Hilda! Hmm, if I'm going to be an explorer, then I guess that's something I'll need to be able to do - fix any stuff

we're using. I don't really like fixing things though - I'm more into discovering stuff.

Anyway, Mum ended up getting Dan to help her - she claimed she needed him because he's the tallest in the group, but I think she also just wanted him to stop moping around. It turns out that a connector had come lose somewhere - honestly, with the trouble she had in Christchurch as well, the connectors just seem like a total pain.

While Mum and Dan were doing that, Aunty Bee taught me how to make better snow blocks for building walls, and also how to carve the snow blocks into shapes!

Aunty Bee made an awesome star which she put on top of a tower we made from all of the snow blocks we cut. Making the star looked pretty hard (it took her about five tries), but it turned out really cool!



Aunty Bee and I also set up a little kitchen and made hot drinks and then lunch. Once we got started again we stuck to a slower speed for the

rest of the day - Mum wanted to make sure everything was working properly. Hopefully this is the last time Hilda has a problem!

Oops, I forgot to mention the weather... It was a bit overcast today, and there was even more wind than yesterday. It made sitting in Hilda quite boring actually, because it was really hard to see anything out of the windows - snow kept sticking to the outside of them, and our breath was fogging up the inside. We could see out the front windscreen OK, although it mainly just looked white - which isn't terribly exciting. At any rate, I thought you might like to see what Hilda looks like on the inside, so I took a photo inside the front cab. I haven't taken one of the back cab - it's just batteries and toilet stuff, so it's not very exciting!



2nd February 2017

Distance travelled today = 210 km

Total distance travelled = 570 km

It was such a boring day today... Which in a lot of ways is a good thing, it just doesn't make for a very interesting diary. We had no dramas at all, which is good - Hilda behaved, Dan seemed way less moody, and we have now passed the halfway point along the ice shelf (the ice shelf section is 1050 km, and our whole trip is 1600 km). And that means we are over a quarter of the way to the South Pole!

Because of Hilda's breakdown yesterday, we drove for an extra hour today, to make up some of the distance we lost. Fortunately the sun came out, so the solar panels were going strong, and we didn't have to worry about running out of power.

We're also getting faster at setting up and taking down camp now that we've done it a few times. I listened in while Aunty Bee was talking to Scott Base this morning and again at lunchtime. I wanted to do a radio check-in myself, and I asked her yesterday if I could do one. She said yes, as long as I knew what to do, and listened to her do it a few times. And she let me call them tonight! I told them our weather (sunny all day, looking a

bit overcast now), and I also got a weather forecast from them (it's supposed to get worse). Since the weather forecast isn't very good for tomorrow, Aunty Bee went around the campsite making sure everything was super-secure, and wouldn't blow away if it got windy. She also made sure there were lots of flags showing us things like where Hilda and the kitchen are - the back cab of Hilda is our toilet, so we always want to be able to find that!

That reminds me of the weirdest experience I've had here so far - last night I needed to go to the toilet in the middle of the night. That's not the weird bit though (it happens to everyone right?). I got up, put my jacket and boots on, and then left the tent to go to Hilda. As soon as I got outside I realised I needed my sunglasses! When Mum and I go tramping you need a head-lamp to go to the loo in the middle of the night - in summer in Antarctica the sun never sets, so it's just as bright at 2am as it is at 2pm! We've all been wearing eye-masks for sleeping, so I knew I'd be able to see okay, but needing my sunglasses was next level bizarre.

3rd February 2017

Distance travelled today = 0 km

Total distance travelled = 570 km

Scott Base weren't kidding when they said the weather was going to get worse! We didn't end up going anywhere today, because it was really windy outside, and there was snow blowing everywhere. Luckily it wasn't a full-on blizzard, but it wasn't weather Mum wanted to drive in. It was really hard to see things - thank goodness Auntie Bee put all of those flags up!

First thing in the morning mum put her head out of the tent, and said we weren't going anywhere while the weather was like this. You could hear the snow and wind hitting the tent, and it didn't sound good outside. She wouldn't even let me go out to go to the toilet, but made me use my she-wee and pee bottle. It's so weird peeing in front of someone, even if it is your mother. It was ages before I could go because I found it so hard to relax with her there. But I guess this is the type of thing explorers need to be able to do. I'm really starting to rethink being an explorer - you have to pee in front of people, and fix broken things, and I don't think you get paid well either. I do want to go visit awesome places though, but

there are lots of other types of work here - I could be a field trainer like Aunty Bee, or maybe even a scientist.

Because the forecast was bad yesterday, Mum and Aunty Bee had made sure that we had food in the tents that we could eat in case the kitchen wasn't usable. And we had back-up cookers that they put in the tents last night, so were all good on that front. I did have a problem though - it was one thing to pee in front of Mum, but I needed to do more than that by late morning... I really wanted to make a trip to Hilda to use the poo bucket. Mum had gone back to sleep - I guess she was pretty tired! So I put my head outside, and could see Hilda without too much trouble - the wind seemed to have died down a bit, so I thought it would be okay to quickly leave the tent. I mean, Hilda is green and everything else is white, so it wasn't that hard to see her. Plus there are all of the flags that Aunty Bee put up. Anyway, it really didn't seem that bad, so I put all of my outdoors gear on, and wriggled out of the tent.

I got to Hilda without any trouble at all - I'll tell you, it was a relief to be able to use the poo bucket! While I was there I also emptied my pee bottle into the pee barrel - not my favourite thing ever I'll tell you. But it's always better to have an

empty pee bottle than a full one! By the time I finished though, the weather had got a bit worse again. I must have been lucky with the weather when I left the tent. While I was in Hilda the wind must have got stronger again, and it was so bad that I couldn't even see the flags for the kitchen, and I started having trouble seeing the tents too. I guess it's lucky we had all of that training, 'cos it meant I knew I had to stay inside Hilda, and just wait things out. And I can tell you, it's not that fun sitting in the back of a Hägglands with batteries, a bucket of poo, and a barrel of pee for company.

I was also pretty worried about what would happen if Mum woke up and I wasn't there - I was pretty sure that she would totally freak out. But I knew that it was better to wait in Hilda until the weather cleared again - we were told about not being able to see your hand in front of your face if the weather got really bad... It wasn't far back to the tent, but I was worried about the wind and snow getting even worse while I was out there, and then I might not be able to see where I was going. So I sat and waited...

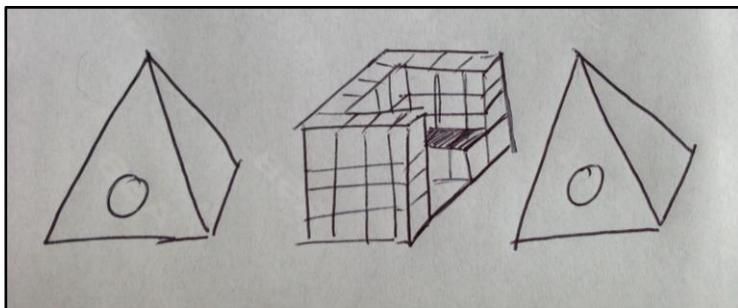
I think I was in Hilda for about an hour, with the tent coming in and out of sight, and then during a clear patch I saw Mum stick her head out of the

tent. I opened Hilda's door and waved and yelled to her so she'd at least know I was safe. She got out of the tent properly once she saw me, and yelled at me to stay put. She shouted that she'd watch the weather, and come and get me once it was safe again. She didn't seem too mad, but I guess that will come up next. Hmm, I wonder what Aunty Bee and Dan are doing in their tent? Maybe they're both sleeping like Mum was.

Anyway, I think it was about another hour before the weather cleared up enough for me to leave Hilda. I was sooo happy to get back to the tent and Mum - for a start, it smelt a whole lot better! Mum gave me a big hug, and said I'd done the right thing to wait in Hilda. She also said I should have woken her up before I went outside. In normal weather you don't need to let people know when you're going to use Hilda, but with bad weather, just leaving the tent is a big decision that I should have talked to her about. I felt bad for worrying her, but I think she could see that I was sorry, and wouldn't do it again.

Since I haven't had much to do today I sketched the campsite as best I could - I haven't included Hilda, 'cos that's too hard, but you see what the kitchen looks like at least. The dark bit is the bench/seat we made on that side. You can't tell,

but you actually step down into the kitchen - the whole floor is lower than ground level to give us a bit more shelter (plus the snow to make the walls had to come from somewhere!).



4th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 0 km

Total distance travelled = 570 km

Thanks goodness, the weather cleared up today! It still wasn't great in the early morning, but by about 10.30 we could easily see everything outside again, even if there was still some wind and snow. Aunty Bee came across to our tent and said we were all ok to come out and do stuff today. The radio is in her tent, and Scott Base had told here that the forecast was for it to clear up and be good weather for the next few days at least.

We spent most of the day clearing up the campsite and Hilda. Quite a lot of snow had built up on the sides of everything, and the solar panels were also covered! The batteries mean we can run for a while without the sun, but Mum wants to use the sun as much as possible - which means she wants to start each day with the batteries fully charged. After lunch Mum and Aunty Bee decided that there was no point starting off again today - we still needed to clear more stuff, and Mum wanted to check Hilda over - especially the pesky connectors! So they decided we would leave tomorrow morning, and then do a couple of long days of driving to make up for lost time.

Oh yeah - and I've managed to lose my camera, which is why I don't have any photos for the last few days. I'm hoping I'll find it when we pack up tomorrow morning...

5th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 240 km

Total distance travelled = 810 km

Wow, that was a very long day of travelling! The original plan was to drive for 6 hours a day, but today we did 8 hours... And Mum wants to do 8 hours again tomorrow - there's a glacier coming up, and it'll take a whole day to get up it, so we

want to get to the bottom of it at the end of tomorrow.

I still haven't found my camera, so still no photos. Although to be honest, I don't think there was anything very exciting to take a photo of! We did see something in the distance at one stage that we thought might be a penguin, but when Aunty Bee looked through the binoculars she said it was just a skua sitting on the ice, which was pretty disappointing. We haven't seen any penguins yet, and I'm starting to think we won't get to see them either - apparently once we get onto the plateau (after the glacier) it's really unlikely that we'll see one. I really, really wanted to see a penguin - they're so cute!

6th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 240 km

Total distance travelled = 1,050 km

I found my camera! It was in Hilda this whole time - I must have put it in the tray between the two front seats, and then it got covered up by other things. At least I've got it again now. Also, we got the closest we've been yet to seeing a penguin - there were penguin tracks at our

campsite this morning!
It's nowhere near as cool
as seeing an actual
penguin, but at least we
know there's at least one
crazy penguin out here...

Apart from that though, it
was just another long day
in Hilda, with lots of
driving. I actually napped
for part of the trip - it's
quite boring sometimes to

be honest. At lunchtime I took a photo of the
road - as you can see, you only really know where
the road is because of the flags!



Aunty Bee said
that it's because of the
storm - a new layer of
snow got blown on top
of any tracks made by
the last vehicles to go
this way.

Thanks to our two long
days of driving we're
now at the bottom of
the Leverett glacier. So
tomorrow we'll be



leaving the ice shelf, and going up the glacier to get to the Antarctic plateau! Hmm, I don't think I explained what an ice shelf is yet - it's really thick ice floating on the sea. It's not frozen sea though (that's sea ice) - an ice shelf is ice that's flowed from the land onto the sea, so it's actually fresh water. Anyway, the plateau is really thick ice on top of land - so once we make it up there, we definitely won't need Hilda's ability to float. But it also means no penguins... Aunty Bee told me that I'll have to come back if I want to see Antarctic penguins that much. Or I could see other types of penguins in New Zealand. She said that if I was really interested in them I could become a scientist and do research on them. I guess that could be interesting.

I took a photo looking up inside our tent today - those are Mum's gloves hanging up there to dry (they got wet in the snow when we were making camp). I'm so happy to have my camera again!



7th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 100 km

Total distance travelled = 1,150 km

Well, we made it up the Leverett glacier! I don't have any photos of it though, 'cos Mum was super stressed that Hilda might not make it, and she didn't give me any time to stop and take a picture. It all turned out fine in the end, so she didn't need to worry. But as I said, she tends to treat Hilda a bit like a baby - she's always worried when Hilda has to do something new.

Because it was a big climb for Hilda, we only did a short day today. Also we were all pretty tired from the last few long days, so it was nice to stop

early, and have a bit of a break. It's only a few more days to go, and then we'll be at the South Pole!

One thing I did notice today - Dan seems to have got over his moodiness. I think he's finally realised that he doesn't need to be attached to a computer at all times... I'm not sure what he thought would happen, but he seems much more normal now than he ever has previously. Maybe this is what Aunty Bee was hoping for when she insisted he come on this trip. He even played games with me in the back of Hilda! Although eye-spy doesn't work that well in Antarctica - there's a lot of snow and ice, and not much else.

8th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 180 km

Total distance travelled = 1,330 km

We were back to our standard routine again today. Although looking back over my diary we've so far only actually had one standard day where we covered 180 km. I think that's one thing Antarctica has taught me - be flexible! You never know what's going to happen here, so you need to change your plans all the time...

I had a lot of time for thinking today, and I realised that Alice had the same problem when

she was in Wonderland - things kept changing on her all the time. At least we don't have to deal with cats that disappear, or drinks that make you smaller. It funny - at the moment I'm both looking forward to getting home, and I also don't want to leave. I am getting pretty sick of being stuck in Hilda though, so it's going to be awesome once we get to the American station at the South Pole. Plus we'll be able to have a shower then - we all need one! It's fine when we're outside, but Hilda is warm, so you can definitely smell everyone... And not in a good way.

9th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 180 km

Total distance travelled = 1,510 km

We're so close now! We should arrive at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station in time for lunch tomorrow. I honestly can't wait. It's funny how as soon as something seems like it's going to happen soon, you want it to happen NOW. Well, that's how it is for me anyway.

Nothing exciting happened today - Dan and I just played games and slept during the driving. We're all pretty good at getting our camp set-up and

taken down now, so no problems there. In fact, since we're faster at getting things done, I asked Mum to drive for longer than normal today, so we could get to the station. But she said it was too much extra driving. I can't decide what I'm looking forward to more, a shower or sleeping in a real bed...

9th February 2017

Distance travelled today = 180 km

Total distance travelled = 1,510 km

We made it! We are now at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station! You don't realise how luxurious basic things like showers and flush toilets are until you don't have them. Especially showers - I'm not sure I've ever been more excited about getting clean in my life.

We arrived about lunch time, and after checking in we were shown to the showers - I think the people here wanted us to be clean (and stop smelling) almost as much as we wanted to! We had lunch with them, and I'm now sitting in the lounge writing this diary. We've got to unpack Hilda and the trailer later today, but for the moment we're all taking some time to relax and

get used to civilisation again. Hmm - funny that I now consider a station right at the bottom of the world to be civilisation...

I was chatting to some scientists at lunch - one's doing work on neutrinos. I didn't understand everything she was talking about (like what exactly neutrinos are), but they come from space! The other scientists also sounded like they had really interesting projects, and I think I've decided I want to be like them. There's so much we still don't know, and I could be one of the people who discovers something important. I still want to go to awesome places like explorers do, but most of the places on earth have already been explored anyway. And it turns out scientists get to go to all sorts of awesome spots to do their research!

Anyway, Dan's just come in, and it seems like a good place to finish this journal. Who would have thought that Antarctica could turn Dan into someone I want to hang out with? I don't think it's changed Mum or Aunty Bee that much, but Dan has changed heaps! I guess I've changed too - I think I've grown up a bit more. I also feel like Antarctica has written on my soul - which is not the sort of thing I'd normally say! But it seems to have become part of me in a way I can't describe... I will be back!