

BELARE 2007-2008: EXPLORING, MEASURING AND DRILLING AROUND UTSTEINEN



Alain and Dieter have been measuring geodetic points for the National Geographic Institute of Belgium, and are happy with their results to date. Geodesy is the study of the size and shape of the Earth, its field of gravity, and such varying phenomena as the motion of the magnetic poles and the tides. Apart from having measured existing points that were left by the Japanese expedition of 1985, they have also installed new measuring points for a satellite survey.

Today they continued surveying the blue ice field at Vesthaugen, which could eventually be used as an air strip for wheeled aircrafts. Alain feels the results are promising: being only 30 kilometres away from Utsteinen, this place would be a very good location for a future ice runway serving the Princess Elisabeth Station.

Meanwhile, another group went over to Asuka Station in order to recover any material and wooden sledges for use at Utsteinen. The army mechanics were able to fix the door of a Gomaru tracked vehicle they found before moving it over to the bare rock so that it would be kept free of ice over the coming seasons. The wind at Seal Rock, where Asuka Station is based, is very strong, keeping the rocky surface clear of snow deposits. However, it can be so powerful that it ripped the Gomaru vehicle door off its hinges last winter.

The Japanese research expedition (JARE) of this season is working at Bratnipene, not far from Utsteinen. Last season, the BELARE expedition prepared a fuel depot there for the Japanese field party, and expects a visit from them sometime in January 2008.

Several of the windmills are now up. However, there is not enough demand yet for the amount of energy they can produce. It is expected that the team will slow down on this activity now and concentrate on the drilling operations in the ridge. Since the drilling team has received new drill bits and hammers, they have been able to drill another seven 6-metre-deep holes for the anchoring of the Station in the space of 24 hours.

They are working flat out as the drilling experts are expected to leave Utsteinen on the flight scheduled December 16th. There are still 25 holes left to drill. The drilling equipment will then be carried to Breid Bay where it will board the Ivan Papanin and be carried back to Cape Town along with the containers of waste which are to be treated in Cape Town.