OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW



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As 2014 draws to a close, the first wave of scientists and crew who arrived for the 2014-15 season have headed home, and a new ones have arrived to replace them.

Getting a ride to the “airport”

On Saturday, December 20th, 15 people left the Princess Elisabeth station to head to Cape Town for a few days before heading home to Belgium in time for Christmas. Among the 15 were all of the scientists who had arrived at the station in mid-November, including InBev-Baillet Latour laureate Jan Lenaerts, as well as field guides Raphy and Christophe, station crew members Julien en Greg, and Polar Quest winner Roger Radoux.

After goodbyes were made to the station crew who were staying on for the rest of the season, everyone piled themselves and their gear onto a sledge hooked up to the back of a Prinoth tractor. The machine started up and slowly made its way to the “airport” - which is basically a runway of compacted snow about 2 km from the station, large enough to allow small aircraft to land.

On the way to the Basler DC-3 (which would take them to the Russian Novolazarevskaya station at the coast, where they would catch a connecting flight to Cape Town), everyone reminisced about the many weeks they were fortunate enough to spend in Antarctica. For those who had come to the White Continent for the first time, it was the end of their exciting first experience...perhaps the first of many! Once you’ve

been to Antarctica, there’s something about it that makes you want to come back…

New faces

Even before the group heading home to Belgium had left, the station already had new scientists and crew to welcome to the station.

An eight-man team of scientists from the Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI) in Germany arrived a few days ago. They’ll be spending the next month at the station conducting geomagnetic observation flights over East Antarctica in AWI’s Polar-6 aircraft. The Polar 6 will take off and land at the Utsteinen airstrip once a day (on average), weather permitting, to conduct the aerial surveys.

This is the third year in a row that the Germans have been using the Princess Elisabeth station as a base from which to conduct their geomagnetic research in this part of East Antarctica. They seem to like it here!

As for the station crew, we also have some newcomers. Jean Marie Blaise and Adriatik “Ilir” Berisha have joined the building crew. They’ll be working on constructing the new magnetic observatory for the GEOMAG project, and will make some repairs on the garage. We also have a new electrician, Marc Van Gelder, and Walter Cumps, who will be helping Kristof with vehicle maintenance.

Cook David Rigotti, who has worked his culinary magic at the Princess Elisabeth station for several seasons already, will take turns with Riet Vandevelde in the kitchen. The two of them have already started to plan the Christmas feast that everyone at the station is looking forward to. It’s always a world-class Christmas dinner at the station, and everyone is looking forward to celebrating the holiday in very good company! Sugarplums are already dancing in our heads!