

MSM 95 (GPF 19-2_05)

09.09. - 07.10.2020, Emden - Emden



1st weekly report, 07.09. – 13.09.2020

MSM95 is the third research expedition of the R/V MARIA S. MERIAN taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. To allow science to be conducted at sea in a safe environment, all participants for our expedition spent the 4th – 7th September in a hotel in the city of Leer, under quarantine conditions. During these days we were tested for COVID-19, and meals and tea / coffee were delivered contactless to our rooms. Luckily, all participants tested clear for the virus and we were driven via bus to the port of Emden and the R/V MARIA S. MERIAN early on the 7th September. We received a warm welcome from the captain and crew of the vessel, and for many of us it was a nice opportunity to see friends and colleagues from the departing scientific party of MSM94 and arriving crew of MSM95.

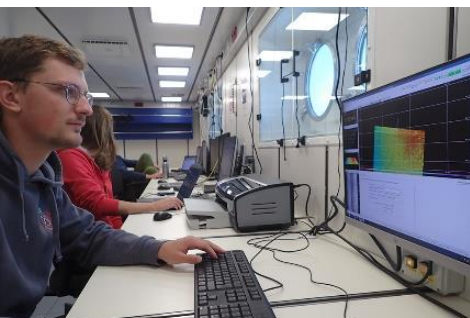


R/V METEOR in the sea lock behind R/V MARIA S. MERIAN, Emden. Photo: A Purser

After settling into our cabins and enjoying our first night on the ship we received our scientific equipment on the morning of the 8th September. Our expedition differs from MSM93 and MSM94 in that we will focus the majority of our research activities on the seafloor, rather than on the overlying ocean. Our primary equipment consists of the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI) Autonomous Underwater Vehicle the „Paul 3000“ , and the towed camera Ocean floor Observation and Bathymetry System (OFOBS). These two devices, each delivered to the ship in their own containers, will allow us to acoustically and visually map the deep sea seafloor of the Svalbard Archipelago in high resolution – complimenting the broader scale maps we will make using the advanced mapping systems directly mounted within the RV Maria S. Merian. In addition to our main mapping work, we will also sample water from our survey sites for biological analysis by onboard colleagues from the GEOMAR in Kiel and Max Planck Institute for Marine Microbiology in Bremen.

After delivery of our equipment, we spent the rest of the 8th September unpacking and setting up our laboratories. For our cruise, given the technical nature of our systems, assistance was gratefully received from the technical crew of the RV Maria S. Merian.

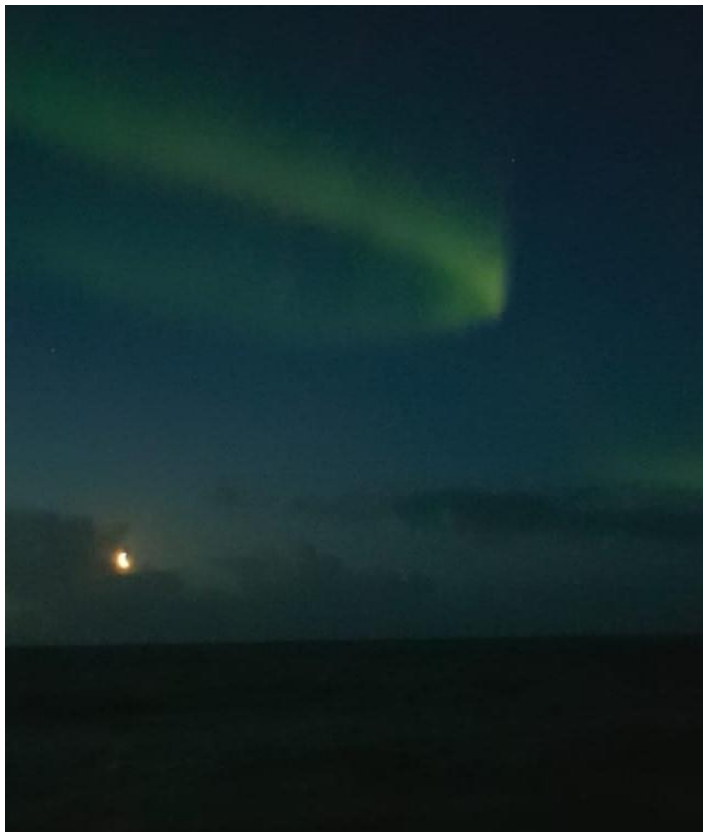
We were extremely pleased to leave the port of Emden on the morning of the 9th September. We passed through the sea lock together with the R/V METEOR, another German research vessel that is operated by the German Research Fleet Coordination Centre from Emden during this COVID-19 period. Soon after leaving the harbour, R/V METEOR veered toward the northwest and Iceland, where they will carry out a month of work, and we proceeded alone northward, toward the Svalbard Archipelago.



Fynn Warnke of the MSM95 bathymetry team checking data collection.

On the morning of the 10th September we started our underway mapping data collection, by turning on the ships bathymetric systems to produce acoustic maps of the seafloor beneath our vessel as we transit toward our working area.

From the 9th to 13th September we have continued in a northerly direction and are now enjoying a sunny day in the Norwegian Sea. During the night of the 12th September, at 69 degrees North, we were treated to a dramatic Northern Lights lightshow – the first viewing of this phenomena for many of us.



The Northern Lights, with a crescent moon, at 69 degrees North. Photo: Fynn Warnke.

We experienced some reasonably strong winds in the North Sea, but forecasts are good for 15th September, when we reach the first of our main working areas and can commence the majority of our work.

We are all enjoying our time at sea, looking forward to reaching our first main working area and we are extremely pleased that during this COVID-19 period organisation by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the German Research Fleet Coordination Centre, the shipping company Briese, AWI, GEOMAR and others have made this cruise possible.

Next week we will report on the first science activities.

All the best from all of us participating in MSM95,

Autun Purser – Alfred Wegener Institute