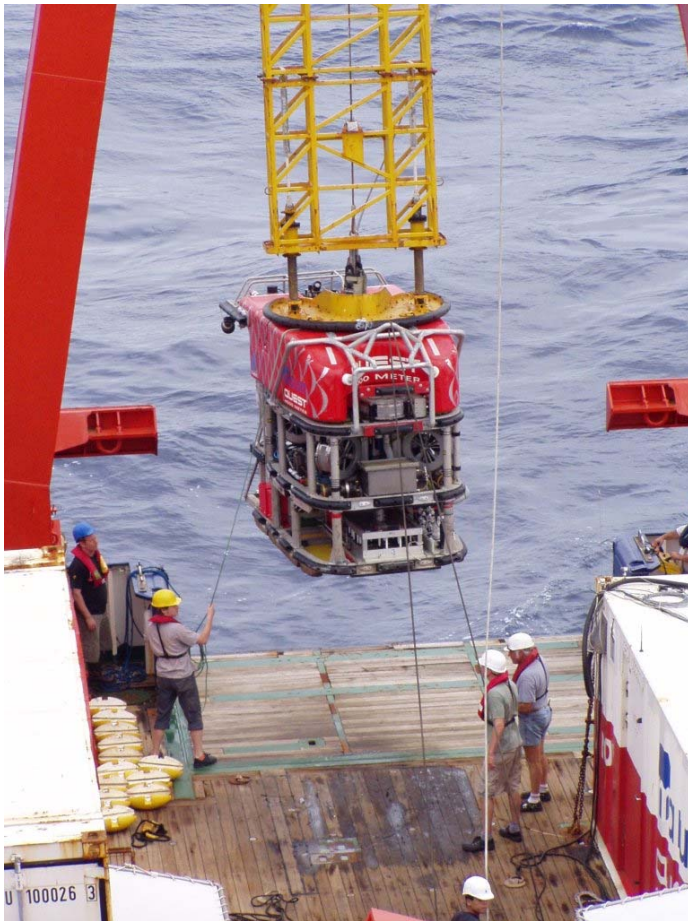


2. Weekly Report M68/1, 1st May.-7th May, 2006

On the way to our first working area close to 5°S, 12°W we release so-called ARGO-Floats, which we were asked to deploy by NOAA in Miami, at 40°W, 40°W and 35°W. These floats drift with the ocean currents and measure various hydrographic parameters at different depths over several years, surfacing every once in a while to send their data home. We also had a second safety drill where we learnt about use of life vests, life boats and, from the doctor on board, about the how to deal with the dangers of overheating, sunburn and hypothermia.

On the fifth day of transit we encountered the Inner Tropical Convergence Zone ITCZ. This zone is characterised by a wide equatorial cloud band and is generated when the northwest and southeast trade winds meet. On our passage it was particularly well developed and extended a long way south so that strong winds and swell slowed us down – our originally projected 11 day transit will now take 1.5 days more and we will reach the first study area on Tuesday evening.



Test of the ROV deployment during a 1000 m deep dive

When the weather improved Meteor hove to and we tested several pieces of equipment. A ROV test dive to 1000m worked perfectly and a CTD deployment to 100m too – both tests also returned some seawater for calibration purposes in the labs. As this is the first time that the Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) „ABE“ is on board Meteor, the crew practiced deployment with the crane and, after a short manoeuvre on the surface, recovery of the vehicle.

The successful completion of all these tests served only to heighten our anticipation of the work to come. We managed to fill the wait usefully through with preparation of the labs, the extremely interesting hydrothermalism workshop and with writing manuscripts etc.



The deployment and recovery of the AUV ABE is practiced.

The long transit also allowed a very special, but lately rare, event to take place: during the afternoon of Saturday 6.5.06 the ship crossed the equator. With 36 un-baptised people on board, Neptune had no choice but to appear in person, with his court in attendance, to clean and baptise the northerners before they entered his Southern Kingdom. Despite the enormous amount of work this involved for the baptisers, this procedure was a lot of fun for both sides. The ship and crew now have Neptune's personal blessing for their work and so are ideally prepared!

Greetings from the freshly-baptised Andrea Koschinsky and participants of M68/1



Neptune and his followers announce the upcoming cleaning and baptism –



whilst the gallows-humour of the smartly dressed candidates allows them to keep smiling ...