

R.R.S. FREDERICK RUSSELL, Cruise 21/1983

Duration: 1043 h, 27 November 1983 - 1445 h, 2 December 1983.

All times GMT.

Locality: Southern slope of Porcupine Bank

Staff: D.J. Ellett  
N. MacDougall  
A.J. Harrison (IOS, Bidston)  
T. Furey (U.C. of Galway)

Aims:

- (1) To retrieve SMBA moorings L1 and L2 and MAFF moorings L3 and L4 from the slope zone of Porcupine Bank.
- (2) To lay two Bidston pressure gauges for tests at sites adjoining a long-term pressure gauge position in the Porcupine Sea-Bight.

Narrative:

FREDERICK RUSSELL sailed from Dunstaffnage at 1043 h 27 November in quiet conditions, and headed from the Firth of Lorne towards the west of Ireland. By late evening, the westerly winds had reached force 7, but the ship continued its westward passage with the aim of sheltering in Blacksod Bay. Overnight the winds freshened further to forces 8-9 and at 0145 h 28 November the ship was hove-to in uncomfortable conditions. At 0920 h it was agreed to run before the wind and make a passage southward through the Irish Sea. From midnight, conditions improved in the shelter of the Irish coast and we made good speed, passing Carnsore Point at 1800 h 29 November. Later in the evening patches of fog slowed the ship, but apart from an increasing swell weather continued fine after passing Fastnet until the afternoon of 30 November. With rising southerly winds of force 7 and an increasing swell, and unpromising forecasts for the remaining days of the

cruise it was agreed at 1510 h to set course for Plymouth from a position about 120 n.ml. east of mooring L1. The ship continued on passage at reduced speed through the Celtic Sea during 1 December, pitching heavily in force 8-9 south-easterlies. The Lizard was passed at 2345 h and FREDERICK RUSSELL anchored in Jennycliff Bay, Plymouth at 0735 h, 2 December, coming alongside in Millbay Docks at 1445 h.

#### Results

Neither of the two aims, both part of the programme of the abortive CHALLENGER cruise 15/1983, were accomplished, despite the best efforts of Captain Maw, whose reading of the meteorological situations once again proved depressingly accurate. It would seem that future attempts to reach these moorings in the open Atlantic in a vessel of this size will need to include sufficient time to await fair conditions in the nearest shelter, a strategy opposite to that employed for CHALLENGER, whose additional length makes protracted sea-keeping tolerable.

D.J. ELLETT

2 December 1983.