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I'm back in the Falklands for the second summer in a row, this time thanks to a Shackleton Scholarship Fund, and with the support of SAERI, SMSG and Museum Victoria – my usual workplace in Melbourne, Australia.

I was lucky enough to be delayed here for a few days last January on my way down to Antarctica on the James Clark Ross. As you can imagine, coming from a country known for its beaches and sunshine I was full of excitement at the prospect of the 'unknown' Antarctic which lay ahead... and not just at the thought of wearing the attractively padded BAS orange jumpsuit!

While waiting to join the scientific team for a benthic survey of the Weddell Sea, I was very fortunate to drop by FIPASS where I met Paul Brickle of SAERI and Paul Brewin of SMSG/Fisheries, and was introduced to an active research lab and very interesting marine invertebrate collection.

And my particular interest you may ask? Well the enigmatic sea cucumber of course! Relatives of sea urchins and starfish, holothuroids are not only amazing little detritus-sifters, but some even brood-protect their young in pouches – and how can any self-respecting kangaroo-loving Aussie resist that?

I'm here for a month dividing my time between the lab at the Fisheries department (busily identifying sea cumpers) and office space at SAERI (where I'm assisting with collection management processes and an application for CITES institutional registration).

My 'day job' back in Australia is as a Marine Invertebrate Collection Manager in a natural history museum. While museum visitors marvel at our exhibition displays, many have no idea that behind the scenes is an extremely active research facility full of millions of specimens being studied by everyone from taxonomists and geneticists to students, engineers and artists. And while I spend my usual workday packing specimens, developing field guides, catching critters and generally looking after a jar-filled library of spineless specimens, I spend weekends and any spare time indulging in sea cucumber research.

Working with a small team of taxonomists lead by holothuroid-guru Mark O'Loughlin, we've identified thousands of sea cucumbers (including many new species) collected by teams from many different countries. We've also had the privilege of examining historic material from some early British-lead



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expeditions, including the Discovery material from 1925. And by the most pleasant of coincidences those very expedition reports are at long last being digitized thanks to Darwin sponsorship, by none other than the hard-working Dr Deborah (Debs) Davidson at SAERI. Enticed back to Stanley by the thought of working with sea cucumbers from the recent SAERI/SMSG shallow marine survey of South Georgia (the first comprehensive survey since the Discovery visit), I was also very excited to see that SAERI hold material from the Falklands and Ascension Islands...fingers-crossed I get a chance to see it all!

So I may only be here for a month, which is definitely not long enough to spend in the Falklands, but I plan to do as much as possible in the time I have, and look forward to seeing what the local waters may bring me.