

**Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Northern Ireland)**  
**Agriculture and Environmental Science Division**

**Cruise Report:** LF 0804

**Vessel:** RV *Lough Foyle*

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2004

**Area:** ICES areas VIIa & VIa

**Survey Type:** National Marine Monitoring Plan Cruise

**Personnel:**

M Service(SIC)	AFESD
B Stewart	AFESD
I McCausland	AFESD
J strong	QUB PDRA

**Objectives:**

- i. Conductive Video Survey of Blackstone Banks.
- ii. Conduct Nutrient and Benthic Sampling at NI Offshore NMMP Sites.

**Cruise Narrative:**

The vessel departed Belfast at 22:00h on the 15<sup>th</sup> February to make passage to Blackstone Banks arriving at 09:30h on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Using the survey grid completed in June 2003 camera sledge tows were conducted at 6 locations. All tows were successful revealing a rich epifauna on the hard peaks dominated by various sponge and bryozoan species. Notable also was the presence of large numbers of the holothurian, *Holothuria forskali*. Channels between peaks contained cobble substrates or megarippled coarse sand. On completion of the camera work an unsuccessful attempt was made to obtain a sample of cobble to identify the encrusting sponges. The vessel then steamed overnight to NMMP1 about 10km North of Portrush. Work began here at 08:00h on the 17<sup>th</sup> with the successful deployment of the CTD and Rosette.

Following this despite some initial difficulties the required number of grabs for macrobenthos and sediment contaminants was obtained. Two attempts were made to collect Plaice for the NMMP programme using the 2m beam trawl, however, what specimens obtained were too small to be of use. The vessel then steamed to NMMP2 in the North Channel and the Rosette and CTD deployed successfully before grab sampling began. Although the site had proved difficult to sample in previous due to strong currents and the heterogeneous nature of the seabed grab sampling was relatively successful with only two benthic samples requiring grabs to be combined. The vessel then steamed overnight to NMMP Buoy Station (DARD 38a).

Sampling began at 08:00h with a deployment of the Rosette Sampler before proceeding with grab sampling. Due to extremely soft substrate grab samples were obtained with little trouble. A trial deployment of the 2m beam trawl was made to familiarise Mr Stewart with this device for work scheduled for the following week.

Stations NMMP5, 3 and 4 were then sampled with no difficulties. The vessel steamed to Belfast. On passage two unsuccessful attempts were made using a pipe dredge to obtain samples of *Modiolus* from Danaghadee Sound. The vessel then berthed in Belfast at approximately 20:45h.

Scientists and equipment were offloaded the following morning.

The whole cruise passed off successfully helped in no small part by the exceptionally good weather. However, it is clear that the Day Grab requires some maintenance particularly with regard to the attachment of weights and the condition of the jaws.

The strobe light for the UW camera again failed after a short use which suggests that this vital piece of equipment may require updating.

M Service SIC

A Niblock Master