

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD  
FISHERIES LABORATORY, LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

1985 RESEARCH VESSEL PROGRAMME

REPORT: CHARTERED COMMERCIAL VESSEL AVON VALLEY

(PROVISIONAL: not to be quoted without prior reference to the author)

STAFF:

C L Whiting  
M W Easey

DURATION:

29 May-19 June 1985

LOCATION:

English Channel

AIM:

To tag pre-recruit sole

NARRATIVE:

Staff travelled to Burton on 29 May by official vehicle, and all fishing gear and tagging equipment was put aboard AVON VALLEY the same evening. Sailing was not possible on 30 May due to strong easterly winds.

AVON VALLEY left Mudford at 0800 h 31 May and arrived in Cherbourg at 1830 h. A poor forecast of strong to gale easterly winds on 1 June prevented AVON VALLEY sailing from Cherbourg until 0600 h on 2 June. The boat arrived in Granville at 1830 h.

Contact was made with Marc Giret at IFREMER, Ouistreham, on 3 June and arrangements were made with the local authorities to allow AVON VALLEY to work from the marina (PORT HEREL). A French observer, Gerard Veron joined the team and valuable information on fishing grounds in the Baie de Mont St Michel was obtained from a local skipper. Work started at 1630 h on 3 June and continued until 8 June. French observers were on board AVON VALLEY each day:- G Veron 3 and 4 June, D Godfrey 5 and 6 June, L Reynal and M Tassal on 8 June. Work was not possible on 7 June due to strong northwesterly winds and staff took the opportunity to visit French scientists on board RV PELAGIA.

The wind was blowing westerly 6-8 on 9 June and AVON VALLEY was unable to get away from Granville until 1030 h on 10 June, when course was set for Guernsey. The vessel had to divert to St Helier, Jersey, as a result of an urgent link call informing the skipper that the deckhand's father had suffered a major heart attack. Mr Reeves flew back to the mainland at 1800 h that evening. Sailing was not possible on 11 and 12 June due to westerly or south-westerly force 6-8 winds. Contact was made with the Jersey fishery officer, Mr Simon Bossy, who arranged a meeting with local fishermen to discuss the work.

Mr Eceves rejoined AVON VALLEY in the afternoon of 12 June and the vessel sailed at 1100 h 13 June, arriving in Weymouth at 1530 h 14 June, after spending the night of 13 June in Alderney.

The night of 15/16 June was spent fishing in Weymouth Bay and the nights of 16/17 and 17/18 June fishing off Southbourne, Poole Bay.

Staff travelled back from Burton to Lowestoft on 19 June, arriving at 1730 h.

RESULTS:

An attempt was made to fish with a small otter trawl (based on a model of a 'Balloon Trawl'), but was unsuccessful due to the otter boards being too small. The rest of the fishing was carried out using a light 4 m beam trawl with 2 ticklers and a 36 mm knotless nylon net. The length of tow was kept short - between 5 and 10 minutes - to minimise the amount of rubbish caught and to ensure that the fish were in as good a condition as possible.

Three hauls with the otter trawl produced no soles. A total of 78 hauls with the beam trawl in the Baie de Mont St Michel produced very good catches of pre-recruit soles, up to 69 good quality fish tagged from a 5 minute tow.

Only 3 pre-recruit soles were caught in 12 hauls in Weymouth Bay, but 26 hauls off Southbourne, Poole Bay in two nights work produced good quality fish with up to 50 soles tagged from a 5 minute tow.

Unfortunately due to poor weather and the increasing strength of tides, no work was possible from Guernsey.

The numbers of fish tagged in each area is shown in the following table:-

LOCATION	SOLE		PLAICE
	PRE-RECRUIT	POST-RECRUIT	PRE-RECRUIT
Baie De Mont St Michel	2066	58	100
Weymouth Bay	3	7	15
Poole Bay (Off Southbourne)	649		-
TOTALS	2718	130	115

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Marc Giret, IFREMER and his colleagues for their help and hospitality, also Skipper Proctor and his crew Des Reeves for their help and cheerful cooperation, at times in difficult weather conditions, without which these results would not have been possible.

C L Whiting  
27 June 1985

INITIALLED: DJG

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