

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

1993 RESEARCH VESSEL PROGRAMME

REPORT: CHARTER DOUBLE-BEAM TRAWLER (BRIXHAM)

(PROVISIONAL: Not to be cited without prior reference to the author)

STAFF:

M R Vince  
P A Large

DURATION:

6-13 October 1993

LOCALITY:

Western English Channel

AIMS:

1. To determine the catch rates of sole by repeating the annual beam trawl survey in the Western Channel.
2. To obtain biological data on selected fish species.
3. To collect details of all crab (*Cancer pagurus*), lobster and scallop caught.

NARRATIVE:

Staff travelled to the River Dart by road on 4 October. Southerly gales prevented the CARHELMAR from sailing until the morning of 6 October, and the offshore part of the survey grid was started that afternoon. Work continued each day until the morning of 12 October when staff from West Country TV came aboard at Brixham to record the work. The following day Geoff Meek (recently recruited FO2 Brixham) came aboard to gain some experience of fishing survey work. On completion of the two hauls in Start Bay the CARHELMAR returned to the river Dart to unload gear and staff; the return to Lowestoft by road was made later that day.

RESULTS:

1. The survey grid was completed and a total of 57 half-hour tows was made. The sole catch rate was well down on the previous two years and although the age data have yet to be processed there is no evidence of any strong recruitment since the year class of 1989.
2. All other commercial species were measured and the entire catch was sorted for all species and their numbers recorded on selected stations throughout the survey grid. Although the total cpue by weight of plaice has continued to decline since 1988, the 1991 year class appears to be more numerous than the 2 year olds of the years 1988, '89 and '90. Stratified samples of otoliths were taken for sole (333), plaice (205), lemon sole (19), and monk (24).

3. 23 crabs (*Cancer pagurus*) and 48 scallops (*Pecten maximus*) were caught, both species were measured and the crabs sexed and examined for damage. This year's survey found much of the area colonized by 'queens' (*Aequipecten opercularis*) mainly in the 30-80 mm size range.

The staff from West Country TV, consisting of an interviewer and cameraman, filmed fishing operations, catches, and various aspects of the survey work. In addition, they conducted short interviews with both the skipper/owner and the two members of staff. The shots were televised in conjunction with material obtained at the Fish West show at Plymouth.

Once again our thanks go to the owner and crew of the CARHELMAR for making the vessel available and carrying out the survey in their usual professional manner.

M R Vince  
21 October 1993

INITIALLED:

J W H

DISTRIBUTION:

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