

Scottish Marine Biological Association

Dunstaffnage Marine Research Laboratory

RRS CHALLENGER

Cruise 163/1977

25 - 28th October, 1977.

Ardrossan - Ardrossan

1) Main objectives

- a) To obtain samples of the abyssal macrobenthos from the SMBA permanent station in the Southern Rockall Trough in order to continue a time series started in November 1975,
- b) to undertake trials with a new large box corer for quantitative sampling of deep water benthos,
- c) to take bottom samples with the box corer and with Agassiz trawl.

2) Geographical area.

Because of inclement weather, Challenger was unable to round the Mull of Kintyre, and eventually sheltered in Brodick Bay.

3) Sampling gear used.

Large box corer.

4) Scientific participation

- 1) P. Armitage, M.S.E.S. Barry.
- 2) A. Connelly, SMBA.
- 3) J. Gage, SMBA. Chief Scientist
- 4) R. Lightfoot, SMBA.
- 5) R. Pagett, Roy. Holloway College.
- 6) Margaret Pearson, SMBA.
- 7) P. Tyler, Univ. Coll. Swansea.

5) Sea and weather conditions.

Generally bad, with winds gusting up to 50 knots on 28th October. Sea and wind conditions precluded operations even in Kilbrennan Sound (see below).

6) Cruise narrative.

Challenger's sailing was delayed until 1230 hrs 26th October because of bad weather, and because of the sudden, tragic death of the Chief Engineer, Mr R. Johnston, on Monday evening, 25th October.

Because of the continuing prospect of bad weather, with southwest gales forecast up to force 9, Challenger steamed for Kilbrennan Sound (where clearance for contingency benthic sampling work had been obtained shortly beforehand), in an attempt to find sheltered conditions suitable for trials with the new large spade corer. A single attempt at coring at 1800 hrs in 128 m depth was unsuccessful because of the difficulty in holding station in the gusty conditions with a heavy southerly sea. Challenger then steamed for shelter for the night behind the N.E. of Arran. The next morning, with continuing bad weather, Challenger anchored in Brodick Bay. Trials with the spade corer then followed over the stern until approximately 1600 hrs.

There was now no longer any possibility of reaching Rockall Trough and returning within our scheduled time, and because there was a prospect of the gales continuing for a few more days, it was regretfully decided to scrub the cruise.

Because the weather ruled out any chance of berthing in Dunstaffnage,

Challenger waited until conditions eased sufficiently to allow her
to enter Ardrossan, berthing at 1700 hrs 28th October.

J D Gage, 31st Oct. 1977