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

1988 RESEARCH VESSEL PROGRAMME

REPORT: Chartered commercial vessels

STAFF: Part 1 D. J. Symonds  
M. J. Boon

Part 2 S. Flatman  
M. J. Boon

DURATION: Part 1 18-28 June

Part 2 10-17 July

LOCATION: Part 1 Swansea Bay

Part 2 Carmarthen Bay

AIM: To tag pre-recruit soles

NARRATIVE:

Part 1. Staff and gear travelled to Swansea by official vehicle on 18 June. Gear was loaded on to M.V. KATIE on the following morning in the commercial docks and fishing commenced in Swansea Bay at 0905 h the same day. Fishing continued on a daily basis from Swansea Marina which allowed more flexibility in the working day. Weather remained good with light to moderate mostly offshore winds and the charter was terminated on 26 June when a return was made to the commercial docks to unload the gear.

Staff returned to Lowestoft on 27 and 28 June via Burry Port to examine M.V. HARVESTER, the boat chartered for the second part of this cruise and Saundersfoot, to contact local fishermen.

Part 2. Staff and gear travelled to Burryport by road on 10 July. During the next two days M.V. HARVESTER fished in the river channel immediately outside Burryport. Weather conditions prevented work on 13 and 14 July, and fishing resumed on the 15th in Rhossili Bay. On 16 July three sites in Carmarthen Bay were sampled before the vessel returned to Rhossili Bay to complete the day's fishing. HARVESTER worked in the channel off Burryport on the morning of 17 July, after which gear was unloaded and staff travelled back to Lowestoft.

RESULTS:

The gear used throughout the cruise was the laboratory's lightweight 4 m beam trawl fitted with a net of knotless 40 mm nylon mesh and three tickler chains. No problems were encountered in working the gear in Swansea Bay from KATIE but in Carmarthen Bay initial problems with keeping the gear on the bottom,

particularly in the tidal channels of Burry Inlet, were overcome by the addition of chain to the beam and trawl heads. Even with this extra weight the gear remained sensitive to moderate swell conditions.

A total of 1849 soles, were tagged and released:

<u>Location</u>		<u>Depth (m)</u>	<u>No. tagged</u>
Swansea Bay	Off Swansea	4	987
	Off Neath	2	36
Carmarthen Bay	Burry Inlet	8	446
	Rhossili Bay	10	379
	Pendine	8	1
	Total		1849

Catch rates varied considerably with maxima of 38 per 15 minute tow in Swansea Bay and 96 per 15 minute tow in Burry Inlet. The condition of most released fish was good; the length range was 14-28 cm with modal lengths of 19 cm in Swansea Bay and 21 cm in Carmarthen Bay.

Bycatches were generally small consisting mainly of undersize plaice and brill, small rays, anglerfish, gurnards and solenettes; brittlestars and large jellyfish hampered fishing in some areas of Carmarthen Bay.

**GENERAL:**

Sincere thanks are due to Skipper Bob Garner (M.V. KATIE) and Skipper Colin Thomas (M.V. HARVESTER) and their crews for their help, advice and cheerful cooperation without which these results would not have been achieved.

D. J. Symonds  
S. Flatman  
26.7.88

INITIALLED: DG

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Basic list +  
D. J. Symonds  
S. Flatman  
M. J. Boon  
J. W. Horwood  
South Wales SFC  
Skipper W. R. Garner  
Skipper C. Thomas