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2ER76In confidence: Not to be quoted without reference to the LaboratoryCRUISE REPORT

FRS 'EXPLORER'

3 - 23 February 1976

Objectives

1. To take part in the International Young Herring and Gadoid Pre-recruit Survey in the North Sea.
2. To examine freshly caught fish for parasites.

Narrative

'Explorer' sailed from Aberdeen in the afternoon of 3 February and headed for the most southerly stations of the grid. During the night, however, the feed-pump to the engine gave trouble and the ship entered Leith at mid-day on 4 February. When repairs were completed 'Explorer' sailed again in the morning of 7 February and began working the southmost stations of the survey in the morning of 8 February. Ten stations were completed before the morning of 11 February when engine trouble caused 'Explorer' to sail for Esbjerg which she entered on 12 February. After leaving Esbjerg in the morning of 14 February the eastern part of the survey was completed by the afternoon of 18 February and 'Explorer' then sailed for the Firth of Forth area and began work there on the morning of 19 February. The Firth of Forth stations were finished by the evening of 20 February with some damage to gear and two stations in the Moray Firth and one off Orkney were completed by the morning of 22 February. Because of irreparable damage to the gear the cruise was terminated and 'Explorer' tied up in Aberdeen in the morning of 23 February.

ResultsTrawling

Thirty-nine herring trawl hauls were made, 28 in the eastern half of the survey and 11 in the western half, off the Scottish coast. Herring measuring less than 20 cm were caught in good numbers in all the eastern squares and in much lesser numbers in the western squares. The average catch per hour for the different areas were:-

South of Dogger - 490:	East of Dogger - 207:	Danish coast - 1646:
Firth of Forth - 27:	Moray Firth - 736:	Off Orkney - 0.

Herring larger than 20 cm were caught in quantity only to the south of Dogger. Large numbers of sprats were caught in the eastern squares and very few in the western squares. Whiting mostly between 10 and 20 cm long were the most abundant of the food fishes in the catches everywhere. Few haddock were caught in the eastern areas and most of the haddock caught off the Scottish coast measured over 20 cm.

Only 3 hauls were made with the Isaac-Kedd midwater trawl and no young herring were caught.

Parasitology

Over 3,000 plaice and 800 herring were examined for parasites.

G McPherson
4 March 1976

Seen in draft - J Main 1st Off