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CRUISE REPORT

F.R.S. "MARA"

2nd November - 5th December 1959

Objective: Trawling on rough ground.

During the first week Mr. Mowat measured the warp tension when towing the Gulf III sampler, at the request of Mr. Saville. For the remainder of the week, Mr. Corrigall took charge and found good fishing on the rough ground at Tod Head, good fishing for short tows with splits nearly every haul in spite of the steel bobbins. The gear also needed some adjustment, as it was not handling easily. Thereafter Mr. Dickson took charge.

The weather was poor on the 9th and the day was spent adjusting the gear. The following three days were spent off Cove and Tod Head experimenting with different methods of handling the bobbins. Generally the double sweeps and bang up method worked less satisfactorily on 'Mara' than it had on the bigger ships, chiefly because of the shorter distance between the gallows. Fishing at Tod Head remained fair. A gale blew up on Friday the 13th and blew for more than a week, Aberdeen harbour remaining closed to shipping for most of that time.

'Mara' worked hard ground at the Bell Rock on the 4th week, except for the 25th, when the weather was deteriorating again, although it faired away during the night. There was more than enough mending to do that day, as the courlene otter trawl had been badly split. By the end of the week a snag-free method had been worked out which combined the use of the heavy bobbins and long spreading wires. During this time the nylon otter trawl stood up to the hard ground well, but the yarn tended to catch on every exposed shackle and all these had to be masked with spare bits of netting.

The last week started off badly with fog followed by high winds. After getting in to Anstruther on Tuesday 1st it was found that the rudder had been damaged. Not much time was lost by this, as the local boats were stormbound until Thursday in any case. 'Mara' left Anstruther in the early hours of Friday morning to be at Tod Head by daylight. The fishing was still fair and the nylon and courlene nets were worked that day without damage. The cruise finished at Aberdeen that night.

It is a pity that only 11 out of 25 possible days could be spent working at sea and that all the objectives could not be tackled, but even at that it was a most interesting cruise, teaching a few lessons that will not be wasted or forgotten.

W. DICKSON

20th January, 1960.