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Confidential: Not to be quoted without reference  
to the laboratory.

CRUISE REPORT

F.R.S. "MARA"

16th February-7th March, 1959

The whole of the first week was lost because the vessel could not get off the mud in St. Monance harbour owing to unusually low tides. At the start of the second week hauls were made off Scurdy Ness and near the Bell Rock. Twice the belly was torn out of the net and the third time the codend had a large stone in it. There were no local reports of reasonably good fishing anywhere in the area. On the 25th a tow was made N.W. from the Carr Light but again with poor results.

The weather was worsening locally and reports for the surrounding area were bad, so there could be no question of seeking ground farther afield. A few hauls in St. Andrews Bay showed that there were sufficient numbers of small plaice to make it worth while shifting the emphasis of the experiment on to flatfish for the remainder of the cruise. Weather forecasts continued to be bad but there was sufficient shelter for us to keep working for the remainder of that week and the following week even when local boats were sometimes weather bound in their small harbours. "Mara" operated from Dundee, Methil and Tayport.

Having found our beat the last week's work went smoothly with catches of flatfish adequate enough and yet not so large as to require sub-sampling. The three nets used were those with wings and square in 11 inch mesh, 5½ inch mesh and 3½ inch mesh.

The opportunity was also taken to use the SARO mesh load cells, ten of which had been provided for initial trial. In all 60 sample measurements were taken and the samples are being returned to SARO for analysis.

It was noticed that post-larval herring or sprats were sticking to the twine of the trawl in large numbers, and before leaving St. Andrews Bay a haul was made with the nylon young fish trawl. This was operated on a single warp tow net fashion, paying out slowly until the net was on the bottom, towing for ten minutes then hauling up again slowly. The catch was half a pailful of these young fish.

W. DICKSON.  
19th March, 1959.