

CRUISE REPORT

F.R.V. "MARA"

16th - 26th July, 1962

Most of the first day was spent setting up instruments, but one seine net haul was made in the evening off Cove. Warp tension meters, engine speed counter and engine pyrometer were all recording satisfactorily on the instrument recorder panel.

For the next two days, "Mara" worked the southern end of the Buchan Deeps in 60 to 70 fathoms of water. On an enlarged Decca chart, which we made up for the area, the course of individual hauls was plotted from the trace drawn out by the track plotter. This is a useful practice when making a close fishing survey of an area. There were some prime fish on the ground, but it was a little too catchy for the seine net and difficult to make a clear haul. The very catchiness of the ground made useful experience with the warp tension meters and knowing the tension in each rope gave confidence in handling the gear as speedily as possible without parting it. Bad weather kept "Mara" in Fraserburgh on the 19th but the time was spent in gleaning information about local grounds and drawing up a large scale chart of the Hole o' the Broch.

The following day we made several sections across and along this hole which goes to well over 100 fathoms in parts. After making these sections it was decided that it was rather too risky to try the seine net there. A haul was made off Cruden Bay on the return to Aberdeen.

The next week the boat was taken out to the smooth ground south of the Long Forties and south west of the Swatchway. In this area the course of the hauls was plotted on a fairly new Decca navigator plotting chart D14(3). After two successful hauls, we ventured to the southward into the holes toward the Devils Hole. Some good catches of cod, plaice, lemon sole and witch dabs were made here. The going was now good enough for the ciné camera mounted on the headline to be used on several hauls. Another small instrument used with only fair success was one which recorded when the net reached and left the bottom. This is useful as a means of ascertaining how much warp has to be used in a given depth of water. We have reason to think that in the deep water, the net only reached bottom at about the time towing started and often left it before the gear was fully closed. We were fishing 10 coils per side of 2½ inch circumference rope. This bottom touch recorder is however not yet thoroughly reliable.

The cruise finished in Buckie on the morning of Thursday 26th so that some minor jobs following the major refit, could be completed before the end of the week.

The seine net warp tension meters worked well and with little or no impediment to normal fishing operations. It should now be considered whether, with a simpler dial gauge rather than recorder system of display, they would not be useful in the normal course of commercial seining, quite apart from their use as a research tool.

W. DICKSON
28th August, 1962.