

CRUISE REPORT

F.R.V. " M A R A "

30th September-31st October, 1958

After taking gear on board at Aberdeen "Mara" left at noon on Tuesday, 30th September and proceeded via the Caledonian Canal to Oban where she arrived on Thursday, 2nd October, at 1700 hours.

On the first part of the cruise it had been planned to work on the more distant fishing grounds round Dubh Artach and Skerryvore, but a spell of bad weather with strong to gale force westerly winds on most days made these exposed grounds unworkable. However, it was possible to work in sheltered waters, and dredging and grabbing were carried out in Loch Spelve, Loch Aline, and in the Sound of Mull. On Monday, 13th, with strong winds still blowing, it was decided to leave the Skerryvore work and to continue with the second part of the programme - the survey off the north-west coast. On 14th, Raasay Sound was worked, and on the following day, in view of continued westerly wind, it was decided to cross the Minch to Lewis, where it was hoped sheltered water would be found. This procedure was fully justified, and the ship was able to work in Loch Ourin, Loch Erisort, Loch Grimshader, and off the coast of Lewis and Harris, entering Stornoway on Thursday, 16th October. On the following day a heavy swell made work impossible on the Triumphan Head grounds or on Shiant East Bank, so the ship headed for Lochinver, where a new member of the crew had to be picked up.

For the next eight days, although the weather was still not good enough for working in the deeper parts of the Minch, it was possible to work close to the coast, and grounds were surveyed between Ullapool and Clash. Lochs Inchard, Laxford, Cairnbawn, Glencoul, Glendhu and Inver were examined, as well as the less exposed parts of Enard and Edrahillis Bays, although even in the latter areas there was always a strong swell, and work was difficult. In the lochs the typical mud fauna was found. In many of the lochs good fish echos were obtained and the annotated traces were brought back to the laboratory for examination. In the bays the bottom was difficult for dredging, being rocky and extremely uneven, and no scallop concentrations were found.

During this period experimental work with television equipment, which had been provisionally arranged was first postponed for a few days in the hope of better weather, and was finally cancelled altogether. Apart from this the inshore survey was completed by the end of the third week, and the ship tied up at Ullapool on Friday, 24th October.

In view of an improvement in the weather at the weekend it was decided to make a final attempt to work the Skerryvore grounds, and the ship left Ullapool early on the morning of Sunday 26th October. By Monday, however, a gale force south-west wind was blowing, so the ship ran in towards the north-east coast of Mull. After working the clam dredge in more sheltered waters "Mara" headed for Oban where the cruise was terminated. The ship returned to Aberdeen through the Canal, and docked early on Friday, 31st October.

A. D. McIntyre

10th November, 1958.