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CRUISE REPORT

F.R.S. "MARA"

11th July - 16th August 1960

On Monday 11th July the ship was loaded with scientific gear at Fraserburgh, and sailed the same day for the Caledonian Canal. The scientific staff joined the ship at Mallaig, and the standard Loch Nevis survey was completed two days later, after which the ship headed for Oban, where it docked on Friday evening.

On Monday 18th a series of tests were made with a modified Aberdeen grab. These proved most satisfactory and the sieving table was adapted for easy handling of the instrument. The ship then headed for fishing grounds round Dubh Artach and Skerryvore, and in spite of a heavy swell the survey here was completed by Thursday 21st, so that it was possible also to examine by trawl some rough ground stations (omitted on previous surveys) round Mull, before tying up at Oban on Friday 22nd July.

From 25th July to 3rd August the ship operated in the Minch, and was based on Stornoway. During this period one day was lost through bad weather and another because of a generator defect, but all the projected work was completed, - a survey of the Minch fishing grounds, including Shiant East Bank, Broad Bay, and grounds between Tiumpan Head and Cape Wrath.

On 1st August good herring traces were found in the Tolsta area. This was reported to fishing vessels and the trace was shown to skippers in Stornoway and left with the fishery officer. On 3rd August at the request of the Stornoway fish trade a special echo search for herring was undertaken between the Shiants and Tolsta Head. A small number of traces were recorded and left with the fishery officer.

Between 4th and 8th August the ship was based at Ullapool, and completed the remaining trawl stations in Loch Broom, Loch Inver and Gruinard Bay. Mr. A. Walker joined the ship in Aultbea on 9th August, bringing with him additional equipment for productivity work, which was done on the following two days in Loch Ewe, Loch Torridon, and in the Sound of Sleat. The bottom fauna part of the Loch Nevis survey was completed on Friday 12th, and the ship put into Mallaig. Mr. Murison then returned to Aberdeen and Mr. Priestley joined the ship with underwater gear for bottom photography. This gear was set up and tested during the weekend, and on Monday a photographic survey was made in the loch. About 150 photographs were taken, mostly in colour, at the standard Nevis stations. The camera worked well, and it was possible in the same day to complete the remaining productivity work of the Loch Nevis survey.

At several stations small eyed experimental creels with fine mesh covers were shot. The areas worked were Chicken Head, Loch Broom, Gruinard Bay, Loch Ewe, Loch Torridon, and Loch Nevis. In all cases the catch consisted almost entirely of crabs, averaging 3-4 per creel.

During the cruise, the frame of the Aberdeen bottom sampler became slightly twisted because of the heavy additional weights used, but this was compensated for by altering the width of the collar and thereafter the instrument functioned well in weather conditions which were unsuitable for the van Veen.

The cruise terminated at Mallaig on Tuesday 16th August.

A. D. McINTYRE.
30th August, 1960.