

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
FISHERIES LABORATORY, LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK**

1996 RESEARCH VESSEL PROGRAMME

REPORT: CHARTER VESSEL MV PILOT STAR
(PROVISIONAL: Not to be quoted without reference to the author)

STAFF: M R Vince
B F M Harley

DURATION: 5-10 August

LOCALITY: Abbey Head, Outer Solway Firth

AIM: To tag 2000 pre-recruit plaice

NARRATIVE:

Staff travelled by road to Maryport on Sunday 4 August. Commencement of the charter was deferred until Tuesday 6 August due to the forecast of a southerly gale and the exposed position of the intended working area (Abbey Head). Daily sailings were made between 6-10 August and weather conditions were generally good. After the first two days spent in the Abbey Head area it was decided to concentrate the release on the English side where most of the recruiting plaice were located this year.

RESULTS:

A total of 1981 plaice were tagged with mini-petersen disc; around 700 of these were released within 4 miles of Abbey Head in 8-10 fathoms of water. On the third day about 400 plaice were tagged and released in an area 4-6 miles NNW of Whitehaven in 8-10 fathoms, but these fish were not of good quality for tagging due to the large numbers of starfish caught despite 15 minute tows. On the last two days the Pilot Star worked about 1 mile north of Whitehaven in 6-8 fathoms of water where small plaice were caught in good quantity and quality and some 800 were tagged.

The tagged plaice ranged in size from 16 to 29cms with a mode around 22cms and, although the intention was to tag pre-recruit fish (below minimum landing size), it was decided that a number of larger fish would be useful. Otolith samples were taken from fish discarded from tagging, and commercial size fish. Casual inspection by naked eye indicated that the majority of plaice caught were 2 year old fish, which supports results from other sources (survey and market data) that the 1994 year class is above average in this part of the Irish Sea.

This is the first time plaice tagging has been carried out in this area by MAFF and the scientific staff wish to thank all those who assisted in the charter selection and those on board the Pilot Star for their help and advice.

M R Vince
12 August 1996

INITIALLED: M G P

DISTRIBUTION:

Basic list +

M R Vince

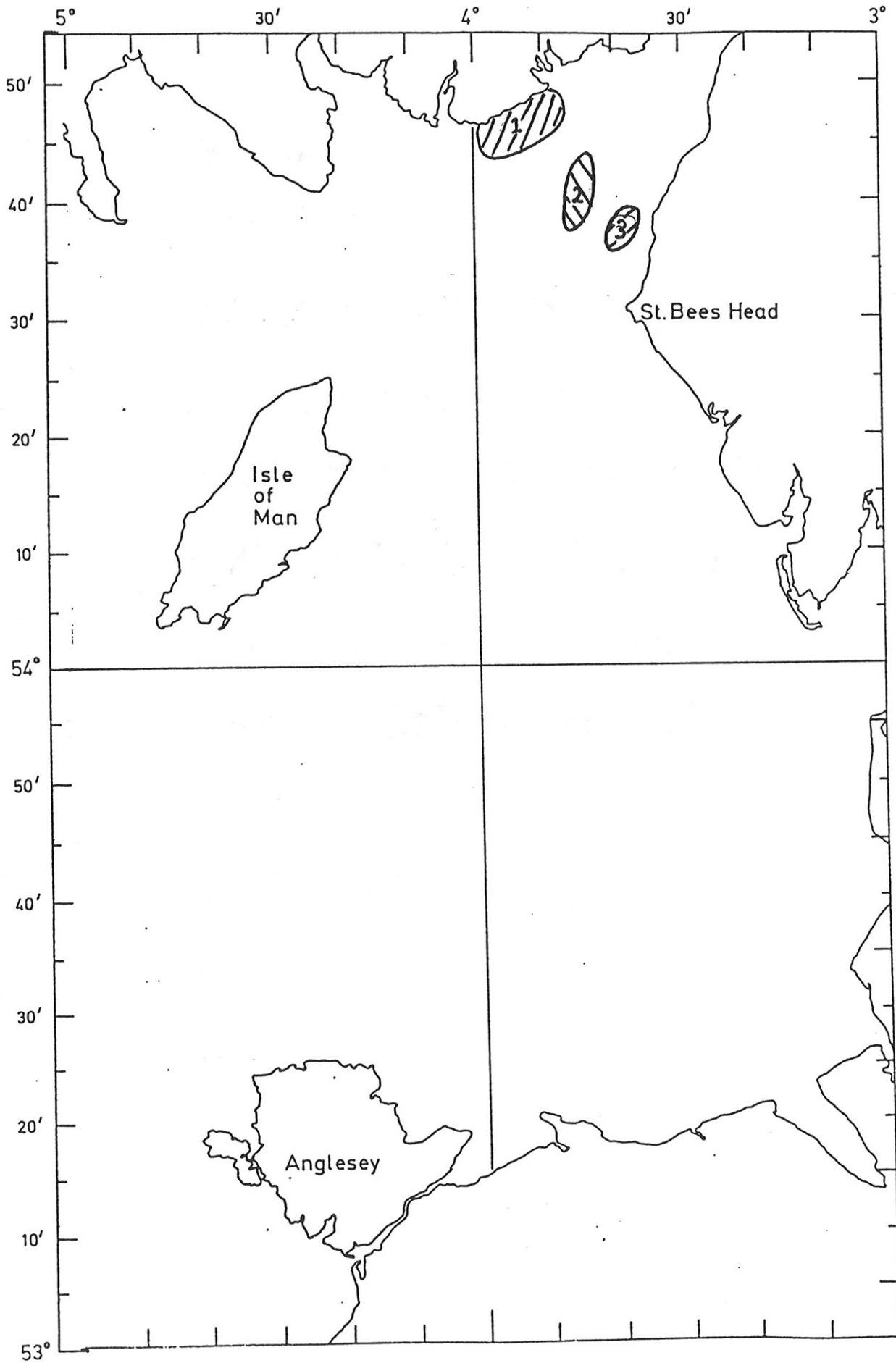
B F M Harley

M G Pawson

Cumbria Sea Fisheries Committee

Skipper McAvoy

Release Positions of Tagged Plaice.



Length Distribution of Tagged Plaice from Pilot Star survey

