

Supporting Documentation

Dataset: *North Sea Catch Statistics, 1924-1981*



Image: A black and white photograph of trawlers berthed at St Andrew's Dock in 1935. (© Hull Museums).

Please include the following citation when quoting from this Dataset:

Barnard, Michaela 'Wet Fish Landed from North Sea Fishing Grounds, 1924-1981', in Nicholls, John (comp.) (<http://hydra.hull.ac.uk/resources/resources/hull:7293>)

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1. Summary

Dataset Title: North Sea Catch Statistics, 1924-1981

Subject: Wet fish landed in England and Wales from North Sea fishing grounds by first class British fishing vessels, distinguished by species, between 1924 and 1981.

Note: This dataset does not include statistics relating to fishing activity during World War II (1939-1946 inclusive).

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Extent: 8,842 records

Keywords: Historical statistics; sea fisheries; North Sea; fish stocks; Soles; Cod; Haddock; Hake; Plaice; Herring; Mackerel; Demersal; Pelagic; Trawl; Lines; Danish seine; Seine; Pareja.

Citation: (a) The dataset: please cite as follows: Barnard, Michaela 'Wet Fish Landed from North Sea Fishing Grounds, 1924-1981', in Nicholls, John (comp.)
(<http://hydra.hull.ac.uk/resources/resources/hull:7293>)

(b) Abstract: please cite as follows: Barnard, Michaela 'Wet Fish Landed from North Sea Fishing Grounds, 1924-1981, Supporting Documentation', Nicholls, John (comp.)
(<http://hydra.hull.ac.uk/resources/resources/hull:7293>)

2. Research Context and Objectives

This dataset comprises 8,842 records that detail the landings of fish by British first class fishing vessels from Region IV (North Sea) during the period 1924-1981 (exclusive of 1939-1946). Each record is broken-down into the following fields: ID; Record Year; Gear; Propulsion; Hours Fishing; Days Fishing; Species; Size; CWTs Weight; Tonnes Weight (please see below for more detailed field-level information). The value of such information is encapsulated in the following quotation from the Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas):

Historical fisheries datasets are of key importance for studies of long-term changes in fish stocks and fisheries, and on the possible effects on environmental and anthropogenic factors. Of particular usefulness are datasets collected in a consistent way over a number of decades.¹

This dataset represents a significant contribution to research in the areas of marine environmental history and historical ecology in three main respects:

- First, the possibility for creating a proxy for the abundance of North Sea fish stocks through the formulation of a Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) figures for the dataset is facilitated by the inclusion of figures relating to effort (Hours/Days Fishing).
- Second, the information contained within the dataset is rendered accessible and useable through the provision of detailed information regarding the primary source material, which places the data in its full historical context.
- Thirdly, the dataset is rendered fully accessible to the international research community through e-publication on the University of Hull Hydra repository (<http://hydra.hull.ac.uk>)

¹ Engelhard, G.H., *Catalogue of Defra Catch and Effort Charts: six decades of detailed spatial statistics for British fisheries* (Science Series Technical Report 128, Cefas, Lowestoft, 2005) 6.

3. The Primary Source Material

The information contained within this dataset has been extrapolated from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* - the official government record of fish landings at ports in England and Wales.

The publication of the first *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* in 1887 (for the year 1886) marked a watershed in the collation and publication of statistics relating to the commercial fisheries of England and Wales. Statistics had been compiled from a range of sources in preceding years, with the returns of fish conveyed inland by railway representing one of the most significant set of records in this respect.² But the inadequacy of such information, particularly in the assessment of fish stocks, had been recognised for a considerable period of time.³ Indeed, the lack of concerted action on this matter was highlighted by the 1884 *Royal Commission on Trawl Fishing*:

We cannot pass from this subject without recording our regret at the absence of all official fishery statistics, with the exception of those relating to the herring fishery and the cod and ling fishery in Scotland. The collection of such statistics was recommended by the Royal Commission of 1866, and again by the Commission of 1878. Eighteen years have elapsed since the recommendation of 1866 was made, and yet we are still absolutely without official statistics by which the accuracy of statements as to the decrease of fish might be tested.⁴

As the foregoing quotation suggests, the collection of statistical information on the commercial sea fisheries of England and Wales had gained new impetus as a result of increased concern about North Sea stock levels. Indeed, this concern extended to members of the trawl fishing community. Whereas most trawlermen had expressed scepticism about the notion of stock diminution on North Sea fishing grounds when testifying before the 1866 *Royal Commission on Sea Fisheries*, most were less

² See British Parliamentary Papers (BPP) *Fish Conveyed by Railway. Return of the Quantity of Fish, Conveyed Inland by Railway from each of the Principal Ports of England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland*, 1878-1892.

³ See BPP 1866 [3596] [3596-I] *Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the sea fisheries of the United Kingdom*. Vol. I. The report, and appendix; BPP, 1878-79 [C.2449] *Report by Frank Buckland, Esq., and Spencer Walpole, Esq., inspectors of fisheries for England and Wales and commissioners for sea fisheries on the sea fisheries of England and Wales*.

⁴ BPP, 1884-85 [C.4328] *Trawl Net and Beam Trawl Fishing. Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire and report upon the complaints that have been made by line and drift net fishermen of injuries sustained by them in their calling owing to the use of the trawl net and beam trawl, in the territorial Waters of the United Kingdom; with minutes of evidence and appendix*, p.xii.

certain by the time of the 1884 *Royal Commission on Trawl Fishing*. For example, John Sims – a Hull-based smackowner - stated that there had been a ‘gradual falling off’ of North Sea fish since the 1858/1860 period.⁵

Such observations – together with an increased awareness concerning the importance of scientific fisheries research to the understanding of fish populations – culminated in the production of the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables*. For the first time, individuals (with dedicated staff at the larger fishing ports) were tasked with collecting information on fish landings, and forwarding that information to the appropriate government body on a regular basis. The methodology, and resulting confidence in the information that was garnered, was outlined in the 1887 publication:

...it will be convenient to notice the means which have been used to obtain the present statistics as to fish landed in England. For this purpose advantage has been taken very largely of the coastguard officers all over England and Wales, while in some of the more important districts special officers have been appointed. In this way the whole coast of England and Wales has been mapped out, and, with the exception of some small places, where it was found that the quantity of fish landed was totally insignificant, every place on the coast of England and Wales practically makes a return. The expense has not been considerable, but there is no reason to doubt, from the care and attention paid to the subject, and from the means of check afforded by the return of fish conveyed by railway and in other ways, that the particulars obtained are substantially accurate. The returns are received at the Board of Trade from each place once a month, and additional means of check will be afforded in future by comparing the returns for each month, as they come in, with those for the corresponding month of previous years, and by making inquiries when any discrepancy appears.⁶

The *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* are widely accessible in original form. Hard copies can be obtained from various repositories throughout the United Kingdom, and digital versions of the source have been published online. With regard to digital reproductions of the source material, full collections are available through the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP) website and the website of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).⁷ Copies of the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables*

⁵ BPP, 1884-85 [C.4328] *Trawl Net and Beam Trawl Fishing*, p.247 (9101/9102).

⁶ BPP, 1887 (36) *Sea fisheries of the United Kingdom. Statistical tables and memorandum relating to the sea fisheries of the United Kingdom*, p.3.

⁷ HCPP at <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk/home.do> [last accessed 12/10/2013]; MMO at <http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/index.htm> [last accessed 12/10/2013] - For the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables*, please go to the MMO UK Sea Fisheries Statistics Archive at http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/statistics/annual_archive.htm [last accessed 11/11/2013].

published through both of these repositories have been used in the compilation of this dataset, together with hard copies of the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* held at the Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull.⁸

⁸ The Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull, Hull, UK holds the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* for the following years: 1922/24-1937; 1945/46-1986; 1989 (Class number SH 201 M6 S7).

4. Metadata: Explanation of Data Fields

The entries below are outlined as per the field headings of the North Sea 1924-1981 dataset. An explanation is offered for each field in general terms, and where relevant, in dataset specific terms.

ID

Unique Identifier code for each entry (e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc.).

Record Year

The year that the catch was landed.

Gear

The mode of capture by gear: Trawl, Lines, Danish seine, Seine or Pareja.

Propulsion

The mode of capture by propulsion: Steam, Motor or Sail.

Hours Fishing

A measurement of fishing effort. This return is broken down by Gear and mode of Propulsion. *The number of hours fishing is not available for Line fishing* (see “Days Fishing” below). This return relates primarily to demersal species, but also includes pelagic species caught by demersal fishing methods.

Days Fishing

A measurement of fishing effort - “Days Fishing” refers to the number of days absent from port. This return is broken down by Gear and mode of Propulsion. As in the case of “Hours Fishing”, this return relates primarily to demersal species, but also includes pelagic species caught by demersal fishing methods. While the “Days Fishing” measurement was restricted to Line fishing up to 1937, it was broadened out to include other modes of capture in the following year (see Appendix, Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below for a detailed image of this change in information as taken from the original source).

Note: Both “Hours Fishing” and “Days Fishing” have been included in the Dataset for the years relating to 1965 onwards. These are broken-down by Gear/Propulsion as in previous years. However, as the fish landings are not broken-down by Gear/Propulsion from 1965 onwards, special care must be taken in relating effort and landing figures (see the field “Species” below for further information).

Species

The species of wet fish landed: a total of 34 species (comprising 28 demersal and six pelagic) were recorded on an individual basis in the *Statistical Tables* up to 1964. Those demersal species not returned separately were placed in a category titled “Other kinds or Mixed”. Each species was sub-divided by Gear/Propulsion (see Appendix, Figure 2.1 for a detailed image of this information as taken from the original source).

From 1965 onwards, the information relating to fish landings as given by Region of Capture was markedly reduced. Returns were restricted to eight species of demersal

fish - Cod, Haddock, Plaice, Redfish, Saithes, Skates and Rays, Soles and Whiting- and two pelagic species – Herring and Mackerel. Other species of fish were returned in the category “Other Demersal” or “Other Pelagic”. It should also be noted that these returns were no longer subdivided by Gear/Propulsion (see Appendix, Figure 2.2 for a detailed image of this information as taken from the original source).

Size

The return of five species - comprising Soles, Cod, Haddock, Hake and Plaice - are sub-divided by the sizes “small”, “medium”, “large”, “unsorted” and “total” up to 1938. There is no division of size from 1947 (see Appendix, Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below for an illustration of the change in respect of Cod).

CWTs Weight

The weight of each catch is returned in CWTs (hundredweight) up to 1974.

Tonnes Weight

Figures from 1975 onwards are provided in Tonnes.

Citation

Citation is the field where the formal attribution is shown for users of the North Sea Fishing 1924-1981 dataset to cite; it credits the researchers and editors of a Dataset together with its database compilers. This citation must be quoted whenever records are referenced or employed for any purpose. Please quote the relevant citation when using extracts or details from this dataset:

Barnard, Michaela ‘Wet Fish Landed from North Sea Fishing Grounds, 1924-1981’, in Nicholls, John (comp.) (<http://hydra.hull.ac.uk/resources/resources/hull:7293>)

5. Select Bibliography

Primary Sources

British Parliamentary Papers (BPP) *Fish Conveyed by Railway. Return of the Quantity of Fish, Conveyed Inland by Railway from each of the Principal Ports of England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, 1878-1892.*

BPP 1866 [3596] [3596-I] *Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the sea fisheries of the United Kingdom.* Vol. I. The report, and appendix.

BPP, 1878-79 [C.2449] *Report by Frank Buckland, Esq., and Spencer Walpole, Esq., inspectors of fisheries for England and Wales and commissioners for sea fisheries on the sea fisheries of England and Wales.*

BPP, 1884-85 [C.4328] *Trawl Net and Beam Trawl Fishing. Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire and report upon the complaints that have been made by line and drift net fishermen of injuries sustained by them in their calling owing to the use of the trawl net and beam trawl, in the territorial Waters of the United Kingdom; with minutes of evidence and appendix.*

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office) – published on an annual basis to 1939 (nb: the 1939 publication is for statistics relating to the year 1938)

MAF, *Fisheries in Wartime: Report of the Sea Fisheries in England and Wales for the years 1939-1944* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946)

MAF, *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office) – published on an annual basis to 1954 (nb: the 1954 publication is for statistics relating to the year 1953)

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office) – published on an annual basis from 1955 to 1991 (nb: the 1955 publication is for statistics relating to the year 1954, the 1991 publication relates to statistics for 1989)

Secondary Sources

Please find listed below a selection of academic outputs that may prove useful to those using this dataset and/or undertaking research in related fields (entries marked with an asterisk* have used data from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables*).

* Engelhard, G.H., *Catalogue of Defra Catch and Effort Charts: six decades of detailed spatial statistics for British fisheries* (Science Series Technical Report 128, Cefas, Lowestoft, 2005)

*Haines, Michael, 'Britain's Distant Water Fishing Industry, 1830-1914: A Study in Technological Change', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Hull, 1998)

*Hawkins, Oliver, *Sea Fisheries Statistics*, House of Commons Library Standard Note

Roberts, Callum, *The Unnatural History of the Sea: the past and future of humanity and fishing* (London: Gaia, 2007)

*Robinson, Robb, *Trawling: the rise and fall of the British trawl fishery* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996)

Robinson, Robb and Starkey, David J., 'The Sea Fisheries of the British Isles 1376-1976: A Preliminary Survey', in Holm, Poul, Starkey, David J. and Thor, Jon Th. (eds) *The North Atlantic Fisheries, 1100-1976: national perspectives on a common resource* (Denmark : Fiskeri-og Søfartsmuseum, 1996).

* Starkey, David J., Reid, Chris and Ashcroft, Neil (eds.) *England's Sea Fisheries: the commercial sea fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham, 2000)

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Figure 1.1. Detail from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (1937)

Region	Trawl			Lines		Danish Seine	
	St.	M.	S.	St.	M.	St.	M.
(D)—Number of Hours Fishing.†							
	Hrs.	Hrs.	Hrs.	Days	Days	Hrs.	Hrs.
1	131,277	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	20,837	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	72,468	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	102,021	—	—	434	—	325	641
5	1,032,637	5,995	—	479	2,779	17,670	27,163
6	348,851	80,884	52,186	—	735	—	294
7	1,486,387	86,879	52,186	923	3,514	17,995	28,098
8	399,548	—	—	712	—	—	937
9	150,268	—	—	31	—	—	—
10	244,855	—	—	36	—	315	—
11	22,582	—	—	115	—	—	—
12	187,088	3,308	—	582	—	—	—
13	151,421	—	—	—	—	—	—
14	41,012	46,099	11,541	25	1,514	—	—
15	50,123	108	—	36	256	—	—
16	283,432	—	—	572	482	—	—
17	—	—	—	461	—	—	—
18	—	—	—	1,324	—	—	—

source: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: HMSO, 1937) p.19.

Figure 1.2. Detail from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (1938)

Region.	Trawl.			Lines.		Danish Seine.		Pareja.*	
	St.	M.	S.	St.	M.	St.	M.	St.	M.
	Number of Days Absent on Voyage.								
Barents Sea (i)	19,301	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norwegian Coast (ii a) ..	3,079	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bear Is. & Spitsbergen (ii b)	23,603	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Sea—North (iv a) ..	12,198	—	—	628	—	75	—	—	—
Middle (iv b) ..	62,818	1,002	—	520	3,967	2,726	2,687	—	—
South (iv c) ..	19,231	6,053	3,416	—	856	—	30	—	—
Total (iv)	94,348	7,066	3,422	1,148	4,827	2,726	2,792	—	—

source: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: HMSO, 1938) p.20.

Figure 2.1. Detail from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (1951)

Kinds of Fish	NORTH SEA—continued (Region IV)			
	DEEP SEA VESSELS		Other Vessels	Total Quantity Landed
	Line	Total		
	Steam			
	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.
Bream	—	91	27	118
Brill	—	5,124	86	5,210
Catfish	13	4,775	15	4,790
Cod	831	316,391	60,957	377,348
Conger Eels	—	1,064	475	1,539
Dabs, Long Rough	—	6	—	6
Dabs, other	—	43,753	504	44,257
Dogfish	—	60,786	30,483	91,269
Dory	—	—	—	—
Flounders (Flukes)	—	937	235	1,172
Gurnards and Latchets	—	15,215	135	15,350
Haddock	4	95,830	5,891	101,721
Hake	2	9,993	34	10,027
Halibut	480	1,579	101	1,680
Lemon Soles	—	17,306	67	17,373
Ling	903	10,322	1,819	12,141
Megrims	—	575	—	575
Monks (Anglers)	—	4,887	99	4,986
Mullet, Red	—	220	—	220
Plaice	—	326,934	3,008	329,942
Pollack	—	1,554	30	1,584
Redfish	—	7	—	7
Saithe (Coalfish)	135	14,365	53	14,418
Skates and Rays	363	54,134	6,739	60,873
Soles	—	53,406	980	54,386
Torsk (Tusk)	480	816	91	907
Turbot	8	33,016	1,214	34,230
Whiting	—	107,544	5,201	112,745
Witches	—	1,487	17	1,504
Other Kinds or Mixed	69	10,713	2,505	13,218
Total Demersal	3,288	1,192,830	120,766	1,313,596

source: MAF, *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: HMSO, 1951) p.21.

Figure 2.2. Detail from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (1965)

TABLE 3

UNITED KINGDOM

British Landings of Wet Fish (Excl. Livers) by Region of Capture

Region and Kind of Fish	ENGLAND AND WALES		SCOTLAND		NORTHERN IRELAND		UNITED KINGDOM	
	'000 cwt.	£'000	'000 cwt.	£'000	'000 cwt.	£'000	'000 cwt.	£'000
NORTH SEA								
Cod	605	2,591	496	2,071			1,101	4,662
Haddock	240	850	1,425	3,448			1,665	4,298
Plaice	469	3,643	97	595			566	4,238
Redfish
Saithe	97	181	52	75			149	256
Skates & Rays	36	166	57	214			93	380
Soles	13	386	—	—			13	386
Whiting	88	151	620	1,104			708	1,255
Other Demersal	182	1,341	193	1,290			375	2,631
Total Demersal	1,730	9,309	2,940	8,797			4,670	18,106
Other Waters								
Herring	225	504	553	855			778	1,359
Mackerel	1	4	20	37			21	41
Other Pelagic	163	98	917	267			1,080	465
Total Pelagic	389	606	1,490	1,259			1,879	1,865
Total Wet Fish	2,119	9,915	4,430	10,056	—	—	6,549	19,971

source: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: HMSO, 1965) p.15.

Figure 3.1. Detail from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (1938)

TABLE 5A (continued)					
Kinds of Fish.	REGION IV (North Sea)—contd.				
	First Class Vessels—contd.			Second and Third Class Vessels and from Shore.	Total Quantity Landed.
	Danish Seine.		Total.		
	Steam.	Motor.			
	Cwts.	Cwts.	Cwts.	Cwts.	Cwts.
Bream	—	—	21	—	21
Brill	30	19	8,736	131	8,867
Catfish	50	81	8,084	1	8,085
Cod, Large ..	100	62	129,676	1,395	131,071
" Medium ..	212	148	82,017	3,234	85,251
" Small ..	2,559	1,324	178,524	6,862	185,386
" Unsorted ..	—	—	6,059	7,097	13,156
" Total ..	2,871	1,534	396,276	18,588	414,864
Conger Eels ..	—	—	1,734	39	1,773
Dabs	5,546	2,382	38,071	641	38,712

source: MAF, *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: HMSO, 1938) p.22.

Figure 3.2. Detail from the *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (1947)

TABLE 4 (continued)					
Kinds of Fish	REGION IV (North Sea)—contd.				
	First Class Vessels—contd.				
	Lines		Danish Seine		Total
	Steam	Motor	Steam	Motor	
	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.
Bream	—	—	—	—	56
Brill	—	—	9	9	2,802
Catfish	—	1	9	46	5,432
Cod	97	28,601	1,552	7,370	573,804
Conger Eels ..	—	21	1	5	1,119
Dabs	—	1	3,455	5,729	57,083
Dogfish	—	16,631	14	88	33,660

source: MAF, *Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables* (London: HMSO, 1947) p.13.