



Centre for Environment  
Fisheries & Aquaculture  
Science



**C7632**

# **MEDIN – Data Legacy Rescue**

## **Historic Herring**

---

Mary Brown  
23 March 2018

## Cefas Document Control

Submitted to:	Clare Postlethwaite (MEDIN)
Date submitted:	23 March 2018
Project Manager:	Gary Sagers
Report compiled by:	Mary Brown
Quality control by:	Georg Engelhard
Approved by and date:	23 March 2018
Version:	1.2

Version Control History			
Author	Date	Comment	Version
<b>Mary Brown</b>	23 March 2018	First Draft	1.1
<b>Georg Engelhard</b>	23 March 2018	Final	1.2

## Summary

MEDIN funding in 2017 enabled Cefas to catalogue and publish a wealth of long-term herring data spanning the 1920s through to the 1990s, which were previously hidden in boxes, files and paper report and in danger of being lost.

## Introduction

In preparation for redevelopment of Cefas Lowestoft Laboratory, work has recently commenced on the rationalisation and archiving of a huge repository of physical scientific material which was previously held on site and in storage off-site in an Industrial Unit. During the relocation, a substantial long-term archive of North Sea herring data has been unearthed. The herring data, collected between the 1920s through to the 1990s, have been collated in hundreds of folders.

The herring data were not catalogued and exist as hard-copy only, and as such are not easily accessible to users. These data can potentially provide a substantial source of information on one of the UK's most important fish stocks, including valuable data on distribution, abundance and growth rates. This historic data set covers a period where herring were one of the most commercially important fish stocks for UK fishing ports (1920s–1950s), followed by the decline and collapse of the stock to near-commercial extinction (1960s–early 1970s), and the start of the subsequent recovery (1990s). Insights gained from the biological data covering these past periods of great changes in stock abundance might also help us understand and predict any future such changes (e.g., see Cefas 'Trawling Through Time' brochure on various examples of use of old data to address current policy questions).

## Catalogue creation

The first stage was to sort through the huge collection of paperwork which had been stored in the Unit for the last 40 years. During this process all paperwork was sorted into at least 80 different categories which included many species, areas, research topics e.g. plankton, surveys, histology etc.

The herring data was accumulated in one place and then sorted into year order from 1910-2000. These data ranged from files, ledgers, log books, box files to large boxes.

We then created a spreadsheet cataloguing each folder/box etc. Each entry (1200) included a title, description, spatial information, dates of the resource any other relevant comments. The shelves were labelled and cross-referenced to give locational information.

Below is a list of the data types that were found amongst the files, these included:

- Biological data, including the age, length, weight, maturity and vertebrae counts of individual herring





Figure 3. Part of the herring archive

## Publication

The herring metadata, catalogue and glossary were uploaded to the Cefas Data Repository (CDR). This has now been published on the Cefas Data Hub (Cefas external data portal) <http://data.cefas.co.uk/#/View/19009> and will be accessible through MEDIN.

## Future work

This project has enabled Cefas to efficiently store and catalogue herring data in a format which allows it to be easily accessible to users and to promote the vast array of data that has been collected by scientists from the early 1900s.

Cefas hopes to continue this work for all the other categories to create an important heritage fisheries data archive.

As other herring data comes to light during the rationalisation of the main laboratory prior to the development of the new building it will be added to this precious resource.

## **Acknowledgements**

Cefas would like to thank MEDIN for the funding to enable Cefas to provide a catalogue of the historic herring data for use in further scientific studies.



# Centre for Environment Fisheries & Aquaculture Science



## About us

The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science is the UK's leading and most diverse centre for applied marine and freshwater science.

We advise UK government and private sector customers on the environmental impact of their policies, programmes and activities through our scientific evidence and impartial expert advice.

Our environmental monitoring and assessment programmes are fundamental to the sustainable development of marine and freshwater industries.

Through the application of our science and technology, we play a major role in growing the marine and freshwater economy, creating jobs, and safeguarding public health and the health of our seas and aquatic resources

### Head office

Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture  
Science  
Pakefield Road  
Lowestoft  
Suffolk  
NR33 0HT  
Tel: +44 (0) 1502 56 2244  
Fax: +44 (0) 1502 51 3865

### Weymouth office

Barrack Road  
The Nothe  
Weymouth  
DT4 8UB

Tel: +44 (0) 1305 206600  
Fax: +44 (0) 1305 206601

## Customer focus

We offer a range of multidisciplinary bespoke scientific programmes covering a range of sectors, both public and private. Our broad capability covers shelf sea dynamics, climate effects on the aquatic environment, ecosystems and food security. We are growing our business in overseas markets, with a particular emphasis on Kuwait and the Middle East.

Our customer base and partnerships are broad, spanning Government, public and private sectors, academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), at home and internationally.

We work with:

- a wide range of UK Government departments and agencies, including Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Department for Energy and Climate and Change (DECC), Natural Resources Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and governments overseas.
- industries across a range of sectors including offshore renewable energy, oil and gas emergency response, marine surveying, fishing and aquaculture.
- other scientists from research councils, universities and EU research programmes.
- NGOs interested in marine and freshwater.
- local communities and voluntary groups, active in protecting the coastal, marine and freshwater environments.



[www.cefasc.co.uk](http://www.cefasc.co.uk)

