

It was expected that exceptional results would be obtained in the Current Basin, at the south entrance to the French Pass, but in this I was disappointed, as the result of haul No. 124 shows.

From the quantities of market-fish taken it is evident that Tasman Bay has quite recovered from the wholesale destruction of fish which took place there in 1901, caused by a peculiar slime.

The vessel returned to Wellington on Saturday night for repairs to the engine, and to ship another trawling-master.

Repairs were effected on the 16th, and the supply of coal and water replenished, and the vessel left Wellington for the west coast of the South Island on Tuesday morning, the 17th, and steamed direct to Karamea Bight, arriving off Kahurangi Point at 7 a.m. on the 18th.

The rocky nature of the coast off Kahurangi Point and for some distance south, and the chart soundings showing deep water very close in, it was not considered safe to begin trawling until abreast of the Heaphy River. Soundings were taken two miles and half off the mouth of the Heaphy River, and the lead showing good bottom at 33 fathoms the net was shot at 9.15 a.m.

The result of this haul was poor as to quantity, but the fish taken were a peculiar mixture, consisting of some fine John-dory, macrurus, schnapper, red-cod, ling, soles, and gurnard.

In order to test what was considered to be the best flatfish-grounds, the next haul was made in shallower water, and, the rough rocky shore having been passed and low flat lands showing for a considerable distance, the conditions seemed favourable for good fishing-grounds. The net was therefore shot a second time in Karamea Bight, and the haul again gave a good variety but rather meagre in quantity. Some excellent soles came up, and from the character of the bottom, depth, &c., I form the opinion that this locality at certain seasons will yield a large supply of good fish—the bottom, depth, &c., being just what is required for trawling. The character of the bottom, fish, and depth of water correspond with the other best-known flatfish trawling-grounds in the Dominion, and may be said to extend from the Heaphy River to the mouth of the Buller River, about fifty miles of coast-line, and out to about fifteen miles off shore.

By the 20th September the coast had been tested down to Cape Foulwind, and good even bottom was found all the way. The weather-conditions indicating either southerly or south-westerly winds it was decided to steam to the southern limit to be prospected on the west coast, and after hauling up the net off Westport at 4.35 p.m. on the 20th we steamed on all night, and arrived off Hokitika at 6 a.m. on the 21st.

The grounds were systematically tested from off the mouth of the Hokitika River up to Cape Foulwind, from 11 fathoms out to 105, on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd September. From about an average of two and a half miles off shore, all the way up, the bottom was even black sand; no obstruction was found anywhere, and not a strand of net was broken all the way up. A good variety of fish was found, but the quantities taken were very poor. From north of Karamea to the Hokitika River the bottom is all that is required for trawling, and, although the quantity of fish taken was distinctly poor, it is probable that at other seasons the fish are more plentiful. The exposed coast, subject to heavy seas, and only bar-harbours for shelter, are factors unfavourable to the development of a successful trawling industry being established.

After finishing off Karamea on the 24th September, at station No. 154, we steamed north for West Wanganui, weather very thick, with northerly wind and sea increasing. By the time we arrived off West Wanganui it was blowing a gale with heavy sea and low glass, and it being impossible to lay off there it was decided to go round Cape Farewell. At 5 a.m. on the 25th the vessel was hove to for an hour, a gale from the north-west blowing, weather very thick, and a heavy, confused sea running. It was quite impossible to do any work, and as there was every indication of a continuance of the bad weather an attempt was made to reach shelter in Tasman Bay, which after a time was successful, and we reached Totaranui at 1 p.m., three other steamers coming in for shelter at the same time.

The weather continuing very bad, on the 26th the nets and gear were overhauled.

On the 27th, as there was some improvement in the weather, I decided to work inside Tasman Bay, and we left the anchorage in Totaranui at 7 a.m.; the other steamers going out at the same time.

The first haul was made off Awarua Bay, 19 fathoms, mud bottom, but was only moderately successful. The second haul was made more to the northward; but after towing three-quarters of an hour the net came fast and hauled up badly torn. We steamed on then to Golden Bay, the starboard net being got ready on the way up. On opening out Separation Point a fierce gale was encountered, and increased the further we got into the open, and as work was impossible we ran back to Totaranui Bay, when all hands were put on to repair the port-side net, and by 6 p.m. this was done in good style. The weather continued very bad, and the steamers which left shelter at 7 a.m. returned before dark, being unable to weather it round Farewell Spit.

On the 28th, as the weather continued threatening, I decided to work down the west and south sides of Tasman Bay, and the anchor was hove up at 5.30 a.m. in Totaranui Bay. After passing Astrolabe the net was put down for the first haul at 7.45 a.m.

Four hauls were made with fairly satisfactory results, and good trawling-bottom was found throughout. Returned to Totaranui, and lay there at anchor on 29th, Sunday.

On the 30th the weather was still unfavourable for work outside, so I decided to work Golden Bay. Four hauls of the net were made with very good results.

A low glass still continuing, with indications of more bad weather, work was continued in Golden Bay on the 1st October. Two hauls of the net were made from 7.30 a.m. to 12 noon, when it was found necessary to go on to Nelson for medical attention to myself.

Left Nelson at 5 a.m. on the 2nd October for Farewell Spit; the glass low and indications of a coming storm, which we encountered by 8 o'clock, a fierce gale blowing, with bad sea and heavy rain. Work outside under such conditions was impossible, so I decided to try Golden Bay once more; but