



Scientific crew on the benthic survey for the Murchison oil platform

**“Out in the North Sea we did all the preliminary work before we gave permission for the Murchison oil platform to go in.”**



Gear technologists opening an underwater measuring device (nicknamed the Dalek).



Gulf III high speed plankton sampler.

## Polar Front Survey 1957/58

The work was of national and international importance, including providing data to the working groups of the **Council for the Exploration of the Sea**.

Further internationally important work included, for example: her participation in the **International Geophysical Year Polar Front Survey of 1957/58** (of which *SS Explorer* is the only UK vessel still afloat); studies of the exchange of water between the North Atlantic and the Nordic Seas, which are of fundamental importance for understanding global and regional climate; an environmental survey organised for 1963 by the **International Commission for the North-west Atlantic Fisheries**, which ranged from West Iceland via Greenland and Labrador to Newfoundland; and participation in the survey of the waters around **Ekofisk Bravo** following the major ‘blow-out’ in the spring of 1977.



Chemist Philip Balls, doing clean chemistry in a laminar flow cabinet in the fish house.



Dr. John H. Steele water sampling.

**“If the *SS Explorer* was a building there would be a series of blue plaques bolted to the superstructure, to celebrate all the famous men who spent their time on board. Some of them spent as much time on board as they did at home !”**

## Scientists of international standing

The careers of several scientists of international standing were fostered on *SS Explorer*. Many famous men carried out some of their finest research onboard the vessel in some of the world’s most inhospitable seas, including:

- **Sir Cyril Lucas**, one of the most eminent marine biologists ever, was director of the Aberdeen Marine Laboratory at the time the *SS Explorer* came into service.
- **Dr. James Fraser**, writer of one of the definitive books on plankton, *Nature Adrift*, sailed many nautical miles on the ship, taking plankton and water samples.



Bob Kabata, in the fish house on Explorer.

- **Professor Bob Kabata**, a highly-decorated Polish war hero, graduate of the University of Aberdeen and one of the world’s most famous parasite experts, carried out a great deal of his work on the *SS Explorer*.
- **Dr. John H. Steele** conducted world-class hydrographic science on board before going on to become director of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, in America. He was also a fellow of the Royal Society, a fellow of the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences and was awarded the Alexander Agassiz Medal.
- **Professor Alastair MacIntyre**, world-renowned benthic (seabed) expert, regularly used *Explorer* for all types of surveys.
- **John Dunn MBE** worked at the Aberdeen Marine Laboratory for 49 years, sailed often on the *Explorer* and was awarded his MBE for services to marine biology and education.

## 28 years’ service

The ship's maiden voyage was in 1956, when she entered service with the Scottish Office. Working under the Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen, she continued to serve for 28 years, greatly advancing the development of fishing-net technology, carrying out important hydrographic survey work and completing research on fish stocks and plankton levels to further our understanding of the marine environment and its dynamics.



## Registered to the port of Leith

As befitted a Scottish Office owned vessel, she was registered to the port of Leith, but operated essentially from Aberdeen on behalf of the Marine Laboratory located nearby in Torry, though she frequently returned to Leith between cruises.

## Staffed by marine scientists

Staffed by scientists of international repute, the results of the research carried out on the *SS Explorer* included fish stock assessment, fishing gear technology, fisheries oceanography, plankton studies and pre-oil exploration sea water assays. This work made a major contribution to the management and development of Scotland's fisheries, and to the protection of the marine environment, at the same time contributing to international consideration of such matters. Among the studies carried out on the *SS Explorer* was an investigation into the relationship of the Atlantic Conveyor ocean current to the Gulf Stream.

