

The Truro Oyster Fishery

Introduction

The Truro Oyster Fishery is the second largest fishery for the native oyster, *Ostrea edulis* (L.) in the United Kingdom. The Fishery is managed under a Regulating Order belonging to Carrick District Council, the successor to Truro Corporation.

The oyster fishing season runs from 1 October to 31 March each year. Permitted working hours are 09:00 to 15:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 13:00 on Saturday.

There is a minimum landing size for oysters of 67 mm. All fishermen taking part in the fishery have to hold a licence but there is no limit to the number of licences that may be granted. In 2005 there were 41 licences issued.

Boats

The Truro fishery is unique within the British Isles in that no mechanically propelled vessels are permitted to participate in the fishery. The two types of vessel working in the fishery are sail powered smacks – the Falmouth Working Boats; and punts – propelled by oars. No powered winches are permitted on either type of vessel. In 2005 there were 12 smacks and 11 punts working in the fishery.



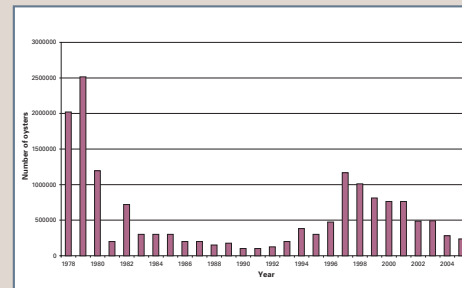
Oyster smack



Oyster punt

Landings

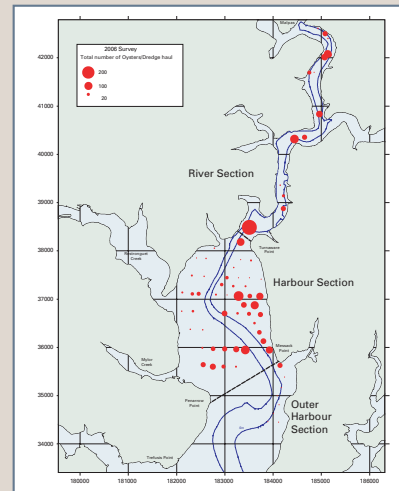
The landings from the fishery were greatly reduced in the 1980s by mortalities caused by the *Bonamia* parasite – see below. There was a revival in catches in the early 1990s but since then there have been marketing difficulties and a reduction in fishing effort which have reduced landings.



Oyster landings Truro Oyster Fishery 1978-2005

Oyster survey

The Shellfish Team from the Cefas Lowestoft laboratory, in co-operation with Carrick District Council has undertaken a series of annual oyster stock surveys since 2002. In the most recent survey (March 2006) the catch rates of oysters were some of the highest seen since surveys in the 1970s, suggesting that prospects for the fishery in the next 2-3 years are good.



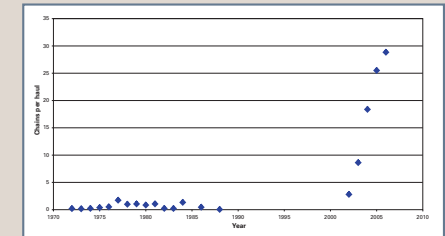
Distribution of oysters from March 2006 survey

Slipper limpet survey

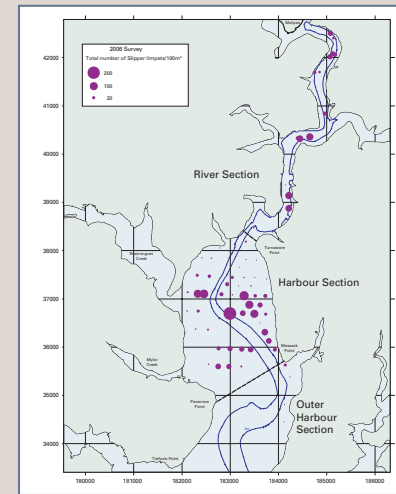
The slipper limpet (*Crepidula fornicata*) is an introduced species which is a potential competitor of the oyster for both space and food. In 2002 oyster fishermen expressed concerns at an apparent increase in the numbers of slipper limpets present on the oyster beds.

Since 2004 three surveys have been undertaken to investigate changes in the distribution of slipper limpets on the oyster beds. Comparing the results for the 2006 slipper limpet survey with results from the oyster survey shows the close association between the two species.

An EU grant has been awarded to Carrick District Council to fund survey work and investigate possible ways of utilising slipper limpets.



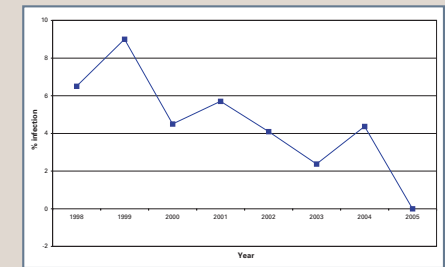
Catch rate of slipper limpets 1972-2006



Distribution of slipper limpets from March 2006 survey



Slipper limpet (*Crepidula fornicata*)



Percentage of oysters infected with *Bonamia* 1999-2005

Bonamia

Bonamia ostreae is a protozoan blood parasite of native oysters which can cause high levels of mortality when oysters become stressed. It must be emphasised that *Bonamia* is a disease of oysters and it is not harmful to humans.

Bonamia was introduced into the River Fal in the early 1980s and caused large mortalities in the oyster stocks. The presence of the parasite has been monitored by the Cefas laboratory at Weymouth since 1982. There has been a steady decline in the percentage of oysters infected. The disease was not detected at all in 2005, although it will still be present in the area.



Native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*)