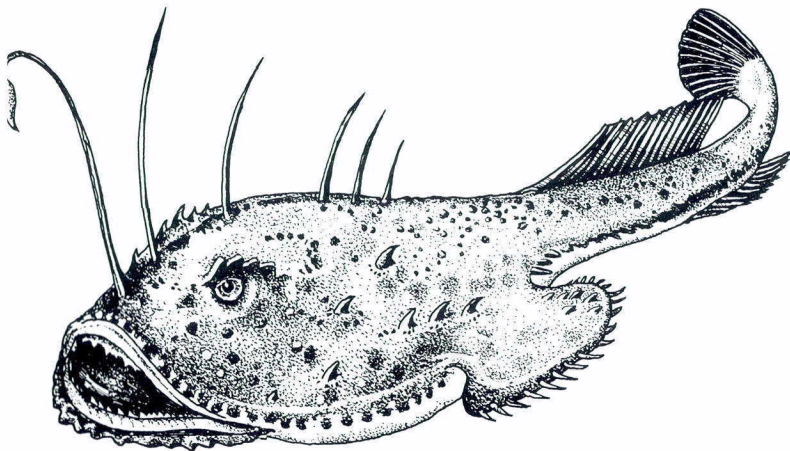




# MANX SEA FISHING

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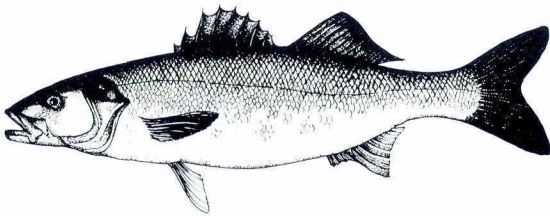
SOME FISH, MOLLUSCS & CRUSTACEANS  
OF MANX WATERS – A-H



Angler Fish.

Names given in brackets are Manx Gaelic.

**ANGLER FISH/Monk Fish** (Guilley Pern) – once regarded as offal, later used for dog food, now a delicacy used for scampi curries. Its name 'Angler Fish' comes from a spine on its dorsal fin used as a lure for catching other fish.



Bass.

**BASS** (Cregganagh) – These fish are sea-perch. They were caught with nets off the sandy beaches, such as Kirk Michael, being especially plentiful about July.

**BLUETT/Mud Skate** – We hear of some of these being very large "as wide as a cart". Fishermen using herring bait to attract congers often caught bluetts.

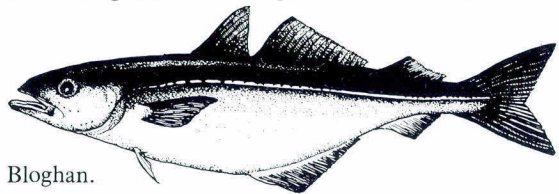
**BOLLAN/BALLAN WRASSE** – found amongst boulders and rocks. It was once widely eaten, but is too bony for modern taste. Its triangular neck bone was carried by fishermen as a preventative from being lost at sea.

**BREAM/Sea Bream/'Carp'** (Carroo) Large catches of these were made in July and August all along the north west coast. They came almost to the surface of the water and fishermen spoke of half a dozen at a time rushing to the bait. They were fished especially with hand lines. We hear of hauls of 20 dozen from a night's fishing, some weighing 4kg.

**BRILL/Brett** – a fish akin to the turbot, spotted with white. They are often caught in trawls.

**BUCKIE/Whelk** (Mwatlag) the favourite bait of the longline fishermen who trapped them in pots made of willow. Found especially in sandy areas.

**CAT FISH** (Kaytlag/Kayt Varrey) – caught with long lines overnight in olden days.



Bloghan.

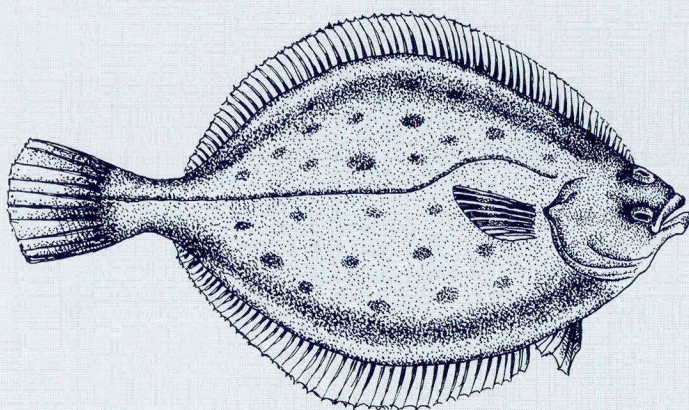
**COALFISH/Saithe/Coaley** (Bloghan/Juan Dhoo) – The young fish known as 'Gilpin'. They are found in shoals about seaweed, in rocky areas and above wrecks. They are very abundant around the Manx coast generally. They were often caught in drag nets in the bays and were believed to enter there in pursuit of herring fry. They were also commonly caught on lines.



**COD** (Boaddagh) – a fish of great importance to Manx fishermen. They came into the Irish Sea from deep water to spawn. Spawning takes place March-April. Cod was the chief winter fishing. The main grounds were off Ramsey, later off Douglas. They were fished inshore August-January; deep sea February-April. The red variety or Rock cod (Boaddagh Jiarg) was considered better than other cod. They were fished off Ballaugh from spring to early summer in Victorian times. Today they are caught by otter and mid water trawls.

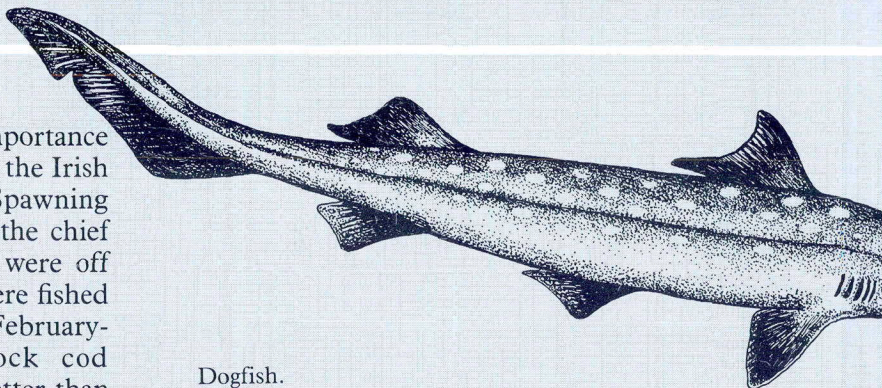
**CONGER EEL** (Astan Varrey) – Fierce fish, some as long as 3 metres and well over 30kg. They hide in cracks and under stones in the lower zone of rocky shores and come out at night to feed. A stronger line than that for cod was necessary. They were also caught by trawl. The wool of Loaghtan sheep dipped in blood was a effective bait as the congers' tiny teeth became enmeshed in the wool. Oil from congers was used for waterproofing cotton cloth at one time.

**CRAB** (Partan) Crabs and lobsters caught amongst the rocks were considered fresher than those caught in pots. Longline fishermen smashed up green shore crabs for bait in their buckie pots. A "faish" crab – one growing a new carapace – was considered extremely good bait. A Manx proverb declares that "The crab which is always in its hole is never fat".



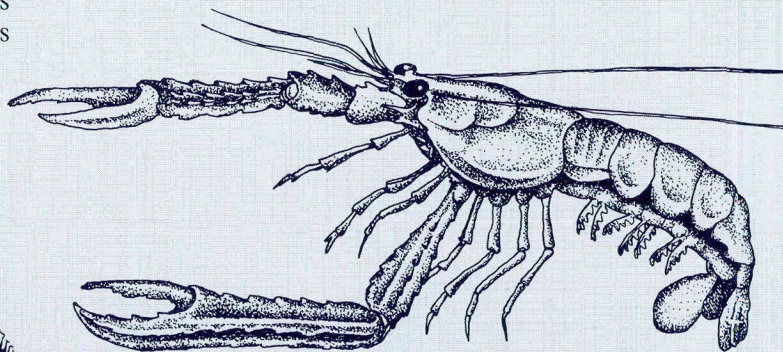
Dab.

**DAB** (Liehbaig Gheinnee); also known in Peel as "Girvan". A small flatfish often caught by trawlers at Port Erin and Ramsey



Dogfish.

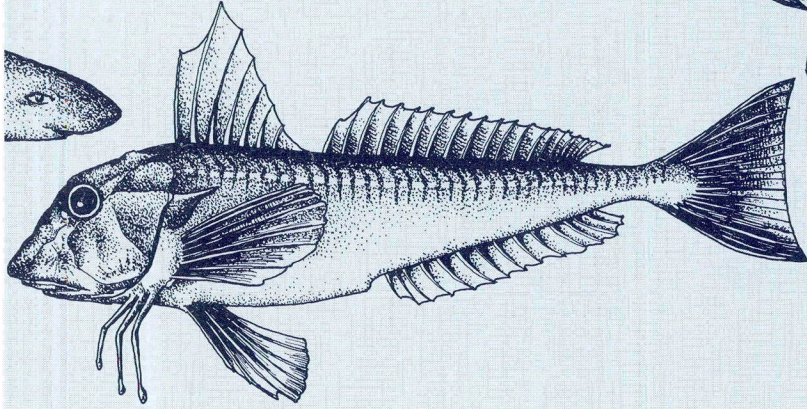
**DOGFISH** (Gobbag, pronounced 'Govag') A small type of shark which caused much destruction of herring nets off Douglas. There are several varieties of dogfish and Manx fishermen gave the name "Bock Glass" to the variety which caused most havoc to their nets. Often nearly a metre long. They anchor their egg cases to weeds by long threads and the empty brown cases are often found on beaches. The egg case of a dogfish was called 'Biol Ferrish' in Manx, meaning 'Fairy Fiddle'. George Woods wrote in 1811 "Of the voracious animal itself many of the lower orders of people are extremely fond, and account it a rich delicacy". Its skin was used as sandpaper for cleaning the decks of fishing boats. Oil from its liver was used as a remedy for sores on sheep. As food it was pickled and dried. The Spur Dogfish (Scoargagh) is another variety. See also Spurdogs – Card 12.



Dublin Bay Prawn.

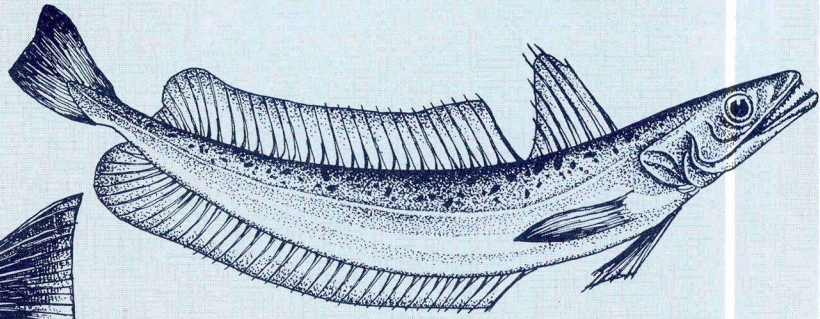
**DUBLIN BAY PRAWN/Norway Lobster/ 'Scampi'/Nephrops** – These burrowing animals, living in areas of very silty mud, were once thrown away as a nuisance by whiting fishers. A valuable market for them developed in the 1960's. They are now the chief Irish shellfish catch and 369 tons of them were landed in the Isle of Man in 1979. They are fished principally in summer, since the breeding females spend the winter in burrows. The Norway Lobster is caught entirely by trawl in the Irish Sea, though it is caught by baited traps in other parts of Europe





Red Gurnard.

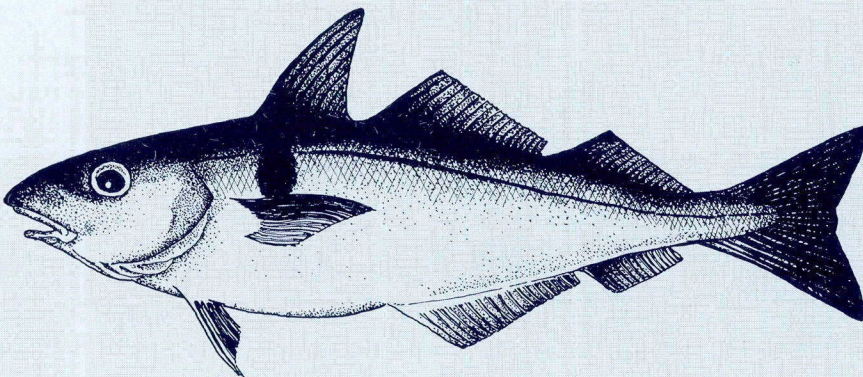
**GURNARD** (Crodane) – also known as “Nowdies” in Peel and Ramsey – a fish with a large angular head and three finger-like walking rays in front of the pectoral fin. Both red and grey gurnards are found around the Island. [Grey gurnards were known as “Nowds” or “Noudies”] John Feltham wrote in 1798, “Cod, ling, gurnet and most flat fish are plenty”. “The gurnet is of beautiful colour, resembling a red mullet, but with a strangely shaped head. The people of the Island put a wily imposition upon strangers, by telling them they must not touch the head of the gurnet, for all the flesh upon it is of a poisonous quality. In truth there is no flesh upon it – no substance whatever except a shining skin as thin as paper” – Colonel Townley, 1791.



Hake.

**HAKE** (Coll Mooar) – Like conger eels, these fish were often preserved by being hung in the smoke of a cottage chimney. They are caught by otter and pelagic (deep water) trawls, especially on the west and south of the Island.

**HERRING** (Skeddan) – The “King of the Sea” or “Ree ny Marrey” for Manxmen. They have a life span of about 20 years but older fish seldom occur in the Northern Irish Sea. They spawn in September and October south east of the Isle of Man and also off the Co. Down coast. Most catches in recent times have been taken by paired mid-water trawls between the two spawning grounds in the period June to September. Some herring larvae drift into the Irish Sea from spawning grounds in the Celtic Sea. Manx juveniles from spawn on the Douglas Bank are found as fry known as “white bait” from the Solway Firth to the Welsh Coastline.



Haddock.

**HADDOCK** (Addag) – The black spots on its ‘shoulder’ were said to be the finger prints of St Peter. They were caught with trawl nets between September and December, and also frequently on long lines.