Our research vessels since 1882

The oceans cover more than 70% of Earth's surface, but we have only studied them systematically for 140 years. To do so we need research ships: Large vessels to study the open ocean, reinforced ships for polar research, and smaller vessels to explore our coasts and sea lochs.

The *Ark* (1883-1900)

This old lighter was bought by Sir John Murray in 1883 for the Marine Station he was developing, and converted into a laboratory. The *Ark* was small, cold and ill-ventilated, but hosted an array of distinguished marine scientists and served as the first 'home' of the organisation before land facilities were built in 1897.

S.Y. *Medusa* (1882 - ?)

The *Medusa* was a steam yacht donated by Murray's supporter Lawrence Pullar and was fully fitted out for hydrographical and dredging work. She was used to survey the Firth of Forth and the Clyde.

S.Y. *Mermaid* (1901-15)

This 60ft steam yacht was built, equipped and initially maintained by Paisley business man and member James Coats Jr. She was used for dredging and bathymetrical surveys in lochs and the Firth of Clyde. After 1905 the Association ran into financial difficulties and could only afford to commission her for a few months. She was later sold. Until purchase of the *Nautilus*, scientists had to dredge and collect samples from rowing boats.

R.V. *Nautilus* (1922-49)

This 39ft east coast motor fishing smack had a fish hold, laboratory, and roller winch. It was bought with a government grant. She was used to conduct ground-breaking plankton research. During the war she was out of use due to lack of crew. *She* was sold to the University of Wales, Bangor.

Trivia (1947-1953) – no image

The *Trivia* was a 22ft half-decked motor launch used to work in the Firth of Forth.

R.V. *Calanus* (1948-1980)

The first Calanus was a 75ft motor fishing vessel converted into a research vessel with government funds. She had a Rolls Royce engine and a crew of six. She worked largely in fjords, firths and around the Hebridean islands, but went occasionally into oceanic waters.

Using *Calanus*, Harold Barnes pioneered the development of underwater cameras.

R.V. *Mizpah* (1953-1970) – no image

This 40ft herring skiff replaced *Trivia* as our smaller research vessel. She worked mainly in the Firth of Clyde but went also through Crinan Canal for research on the west coast.

When the Association moved from Millport on Cumbrae to Oban, the *Mizpah* remained in Millport as part of what is now the University Marine Biology Station Millport.

R.V. *Beaver* (1971-1974)

This steel tug 36ft vessel was used for hydrographic and benthic work as well as chemical sampling during day trips. She was very noisy to work on.

R.R.S. *Challenger* (1973-1999)

Challenger was the only large ocean going research vessel yet based at Dunstaffnage. She was funded and owned by the Natural Environment Research Council. Although the Association was a main user, she served also the wider oceanographic research community of the UK. The 54m ship (988 tons) was built by James Lamont and Company Ltd in Port Glasgow to specifications for deep-sea work and general oceanography drawn up by a working group with members from the Association and NERC. Additionally to the 25-strong crew, she had room for nine scientists. She was fundamental for the development of our deep-sea research. Challenger was used to retrieve artefacts from Titanic.

R.V. *Seòl Mara* (1974-present)

Seòl Mara with its 10.4 m is well suited for work in the upper reaches of sea lochs that are too narrow or shallow for *Calanus*. She is a general purpose survey/workboat, and can accommodate up to six scientists for day excursions only. She has a crew of two.

R.V. *Calanus* (1980-present)

The 'new' *Calanus* is a 20 m oak-framed general purpose research vessel for inshore waters with three laboratories, overnight accommodation for six, and day accommodation for 12 scientists and a crew of four. *Calanus* was funded by the NERC and is used for research and teaching. She has worked in the Irish Sea, Loch Ness, the Inner and Outer Hebrides, Rockall and the Shetland Isles.

Can you help us fund our next research vessel?