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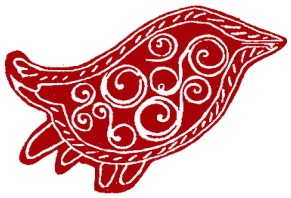

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The Irish Hake Fishery, 1504-1824

By ARTHUR E. J. WENT, Ph.D., M.R.I.A.

Enough to make
Dungarvan quake,
and all the hake that's in it.
—*Old Irish Ballad.*

In mediaeval times fish was the most important product of Ireland. Salmon, herrings, pilchards, hake and cod were all exported in quantity from various ports around the Irish coasts to the continent as well as to England. In the sixteenth century the hake was one of the most important fish exported from Ireland, being particularly popular in France to which it was exported from Waterford and Duncannon.[1] Longfield states that in the same century Irish hake were imported in thousands into England from Ireland through the towns of Bristol and Bridgewater.[2]

The importance of the hake in Irish fisheries along the south coast in mediaeval times was undoubtedly relatively greater than is the case to-day. In many Irish fishing ports the hake was the staple fish, whereas to-day this fish is comparatively unimportant in the inshore fisheries, forming only about one per cent. of the total weight of fish landed in Éire in recent years. Changes in our fisheries such as these are of much interest to the fishery technologist, to the historian and to the economist. A knowledge of the abundance or fluctuations in any one species enables us to appreciate more clearly the future prospects of our fishery resources.

Sixteenth Century

In the beginning of the sixteenth century hake were exported from Ireland in large quantities to England, particularly through the towns of Bristol and Bridgewater.[2] In the year 1504–5, 90,999 hake valued at £455 3s. 6d. were imported into Bristol, principally from the ports of Waterford, Kinsale, Cork, New Ross, Wexford and Youghal.[3] These fish had been captured by both English and Irish vessels. The actual weights of these fish were not given but, even if they averaged only five pounds, the total weight would have been 4,000 cwt. or about the total catch of hake in Éire in 1944.[4] Ten years later the imports into Bridgewater amounted to 16,800 fish valued at £84.[2] Apparently other smaller English ports also received fairly large numbers. Dartmouth, for example, in 1507 received 1,050 at a cost of 6/8 per 100.[2] These fish were exported, either dry or wet, and as Longfield states the coarse hake, presumably large fish, fetched higher prices than the "fine" hake.[2] When one considers that we

[1] A. S. Green. *The making of Ireland and its undoing*, Dublin, 1908, p. 47 and *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, 1588–92, p. 291.
[2] A. K. Longfield. *Anglo-Irish trade in the sixteenth century*, London, 1929, p. 48.
[3] Longfield, op. cit., p. 213.
[4] *Report on the sea and inland fisheries for the year* 1944. Dublin, 1945. This was the most recent report available at the time of writing.

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are dealing solely with the fish exported to England, it is clear that the captures of hake must have been very large indeed.

In the year 1537 the tenants of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, stated that every boat of fishermen who were strangers " paye for their custume ons in the year 6s. 8d., also of evy bote one hake as well of the townes men as of straungers as often as they come to land if they have it." [5] It is obvious therefore that the hake was of importance to Dungarvan even at that early date. During the same year it was ordered that the fishing of Ireland being "a great comodite and proffyt as takyng great habundance of Salmonds, lynges, haake, heryngs and other Fysshes " no ship was to fish along the Irish coasts until it was duly entered in the customs book.[6] Little attention was paid to such regulations, particularly by Spanish and French vessels.

In the first half of the sixteenth century hake fishing was apparently well established in the vicinity of Waterford Harbour. The Cistercian abbey of Dunbrody, situated on the county Wexford side of Waterford

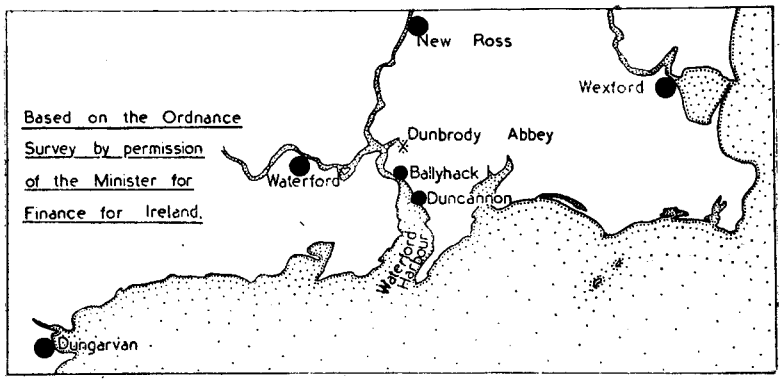

Fig. 1.—Sketch map of coastline of counties Wexford and Waterford, showing location of principal hake fishing centres.

Harbour (see fig. 1.) had, at the dissolution, certain customs and tithes at the village and port of Ballyhack. An extent made at Dunbrody on 21 January, 1541, states as follows :

> Ballyhack. 9 tenements inhabited by 9 fishermen and 8 cottages; 72s. These tenants have two boats, which boats, as well as all fishing boats of strangers coming to land at " le Key," are bound to render, when coming from fishing of large fish, one fish called mylner[7] from fishing of hake, one hake, and from fishing of smaller fish, one penny-fish (*denariatum piscem*) this custom is valued at 13s. 4d. The tithes are worth 20s.[8]

[5] H. F. Hore and J. Graves. *The social state of the southern and eastern counties of Ireland in the 16th century*, Dublin, 1870, p. 216.

[6] David B. Quinn, " The Bills and Statutes of the Irish Parliaments of Henry VII and Henry VIII," *Analecta Hib.*, x, 139.

[7] Mylner=Cod.

[8] Newport B. White. *Irish Monastic Extents*, Dublin, 1943, p. 355. See also P. H. Hore, *History of the town and county of Wexford*, London, 1901, iii, 126.

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At least one person has derived the name of Ballyhack from Hakestown, i.e., the town of the hake, from the abundance of that fish landed there in former days.[9] Just over forty years later the agent for the city of Waterford petitioned on behalf of the city for certain duties from fishing boats, towards the maintenance of a block-house erected by the citizens for the purpose of, *inter alia*, keeping good order amongst the " ffyshers which yearly in ffyshing tyme do resort thither." These duties included " one fish from every boat which fishes Hake or white fish." [10] Hake fishing must have been of considerable importance to have been mentioned in such a petition. Additional evidence of the value of this fishery in the vicinity of Waterford Harbour in the sixteenth century can be seen from an order from the privy council, dated 5th January, 1590, to the lord deputy, authorising fishermen of Waterford and Duncannon "to carry their fish called hake into France." [11] This trade apparently continued for a number of years.

Seventeenth Century

The town of Youghal, which was one of the possessions of Sir Richard Boyle, first, and commonly called " the great earl of Cork," shipped salted hake as well as salted salmon in its season from about 1603 to 1618.[12] Youghal was, in fact, the next substantial port west of Dungarvan in those days.

Dungarvan's hake trade continued into the seventeenth century, for Robert Cogan giving an account of the customs of various Irish ports in the year 1611 remarked :

> Dungarvan. A very poor fisher town. Chief trade of this place, transport of the fish taken there, which is hake in great abundance, herrings and salmon, some hides, etc. Value £1,000.[13]

Cogan also refers to the hake fishery at two other Irish fishing ports, namely Kinsale, Co. Cork, and Dingle, Co. Kerry, as follows :

> Kinsale. A poor town ruined by the last rebellion, but one of the best harbours in the kingdom. It depends most upon fishing of pilchards, herrings and hake which are taken in the harbour. . . . . Dinglecush (Dingle). This town is a poor ruined place, lies far remote from any part of the kingdom and therefore there is little trade except fishing of hake which is in great abundance and bought by merchants of Waterford and Cork, who likewise buy great store of hides, beef and tallow, transported by them from their own ports so that this place will yield but small custom.[14]

In 1614, in a *Description of Connaught* by Sir Oliver St. John, it was mentioned that near the Aran Islands the English, Bretons and Portuguese in times past had " a great trade of fish here for cod, ling, hake and conger, which would continue still if it were undertaken " (*Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1603–1624, p. 614).

[9] W. S. Mason. *A statistical account or Parochial survey of Ireland*, Dublin, 1815, i, 446.
[10] Hore, op. cit., i, 261.
[11] *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, 1588–92, p. 291. See also Green, op. cit., p. 17.
[12] D. Townshend. *The life and letters of the Great Earl of Cork*, London, 1904, p. 99.
[13] *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1603–1624, p. 175.
[14] op. cit., p. 176. See also Longfield, p. 51.

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About the year 1620 a *Project for fishing in Ireland* had the following remarks on the Irish fisheries:

> The northern seas afford the Hollanders but two sorts of fish, cod and herring. Ireland yields a great plenty of both, besides these several fishes following:— pilchards, the best in Europe, which are vented in the straits; hake and cod, much esteemed in Biscay.[15]

It is interesting to note the emphasis placed on two species of fish, the pilchard and hake, which play only a small part in present-day Irish fisheries.

The author of a pamphlet written in 1623 remarked that no kingdom in Europe was so enriched as Ireland to obtain Spanish currency. Some Irish merchants affirmed that if they had the shipping they might transport from Ireland—

> 30,000 tons of dried hake, dry cod and other dry fish; every ton whereof is worth £20; and most of this is now enjoyed by foreigners who fish upon those coasts and carry all away and pay no custom to the King for the same.[16]

Again the hake was considered an important item in the Irish fisheries.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the port of Kinsale had gradually fallen into ruin and by the year 1630 its dilapidated state was causing some concern. Sir Thomas Buttons, giving his reasons for having the port brought back into a state of repair stated:

> It stands where the greatest fishing is of pilchards, herring, hake and salmon and where the greatest provision is made for fishing for all the western parts, of any part in the West of Ireland.[17]

Kinsale has been noted as a fishing port for many centuries, although in the past century it has relied on herrings and mackerel rather than on hake, pilchards and cod.

According to O'Grady, the earl of Strafford in 1634 exported a cargo valued at £2,210 from Co. Kerry, which included 24,000 hake.[18] Actually Knowler, who was quoted by O'Grady, gave the figure of 4,000 dry hake weighing 6 tons, valued at £160, which were exported on Strafford's behalf from Dingle, Co. Kerry, in December 1634.[19]

In the first quarter of 1641 the recorded exports of hake from Ireland amounted to 830 cwt.[20] Fishing during the next few years was completely disorganised in Ireland owing to the military operations by Cromwell in the country. After the Restoration, fishing soon recovered and in the year 1664, 116,000 hake were recorded as having been exported from Ireland to Spain.[21] These fish must have weighed at least 5,000 cwt., which was a substantial export for those days. In the following year the recorded exports amounted only to 1,488 cwt.[20] For the year ending 25th December, 1665, 178,560 hake were exported from Ireland, slightly more than half going to countries other than Great Britain, the total quantity being about 8,000 cwts.[22]

[15] *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, 1615–1625, p. 580.
[16] *Advertisements for Ireland. Ed.* George O'Brien, Dublin, 1923, p. 29.
[17] *The Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale from* 1652–1800. *Ed.* R. Caulfield, Guilford 1879, p. xxxiii.
[18] Hugh O'Grady. *Strafford and Ireland*, Dublin, 1923, p. 371.
[19] William Knowler. *The Earl of Strafford's letters and despatches with an essay towards his life*, London, 1740, i. 110.
[20] *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1669–70, p. 54.
[21] *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1669–70, p. 518.
[22] *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1663–65, p. 694–5.

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Dungarvan's hake fishery must have continued through the major part of the seventeenth century as on the 28th September, 1669, Thomas Burrowes writing to James Hickes reported that four vessels had come into Kinsale, laden with hake from Dungarvan for Bilbao.[23] The recorded exports of hake from Ireland in the year 1669 were 1805 cwts.[20]

An account of the barony of Forth in county Wexford, compiled about the year 1680, has an interesting note on Wexford Harbour as follows:

> There are small rivers at Killaloke, Athsaly, Ballibrenan, and Loyne into which the Ocean flowes from a spacious bay or In draught entering the ostium or Haven's mouth and Barre of Wexford, replenished with variety and abundance of Base (Bass), Mullet, Flookes (Fluke or Flounder), Eeles, *Hakes*, Herrings, Oysters, Cockles, Muskles, etc.[24]

For a large number of years hake have been virtually unknown at Wexford. It is obvious, however, that hake must have had some

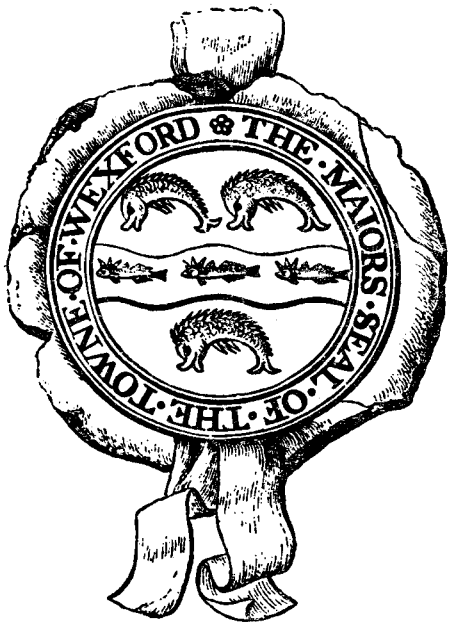

Fig. 2.—Seal of the Mayor of the town of Wexford. (After Moule, 1842).
[The seal has on a fess wavy, between three dolphins embowed, three hakes naiant, with a coronet over each].

importance here because the mayor's seal of the town bore an heraldic illustration of the hake said by Moule to be the town's peculiar produce[25] (see fig. 2).

[23] *Cal. S.P., Ire.*, 1669–1670, p. 7.

[24] "An account of the barony of Forth, in the county of Wexford, written at the close of the seventeenth century." *Ed.* H. F. Hore, *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, vii, 60.

[25] Thomas Moule. *Heraldry of Fish*, London, 1842, p. 182. A similar seal is illustrated by Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, London, 1837, ii, 707 as the seal of the Corporation of Wexford. The seal at present in use is of a similar character. According to the Town Clerk of Wexford, the earliest document so far discovered bearing this hake seal is a lease from the Corporation dated 12th March, 1742.

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Heretofore there has been no mention of hake fishing in Kenmare Bay, but in the year 1694, Richard Orpen wrote a pamphlet *The London Master or the Jew Detected* [26] in which he gave his account of what happened to the Kenmare colony in the year 1689. Referring to Kenmare Bay he stated :

> In the west of Ireland, in the province of Munster, lieth the river of Kilmare, about eleven leagues from the Maine up into the country adorned on either side with divers capacious and defensible harbours, wherein thousands of best ships may ride safely at once, with many outlets for the outward and homeward bound ships, and other conveniences for great fisheries, such as herring, pilchard and salmon to say nothing of divers kinds of hook fish as hake, cod, ling, pollack, mackerel, etc., wherewith the river aboundeth.

As a matter of fact the pilchard, herring and salmon were regarded as the staple fisheries, those for hake and cod being used as standbys.

Sigerson, in his book *The last independent Parliament of Ireland* (Dublin, 1918, p. 195), stated that in the eighteenth century the Irish prosecuted their fisheries themselves instead of allowing boats from Man, Scotland, Wales and England to do so. He stated that the white fishery on the east coast was not considerable but that on the west there were cod, ling, hake, etc., although the coast was unfavourable. Despite Sigerson's statement there is evidence, however, that foreign vessels did fish in large numbers off the Irish coast in the seventeenth century and often outnumbered the " natives."

Eighteenth Century

Exports of hake for the year 1711 amounted to 1,859½ cwt.[27] Charles Smith, in his book *The antient and present state of the county and city of Waterford* (Dublin, 1774, p. 267), first published in the year 1746, gave extracts from the custom house books of Dungarvan, showing the annual exports of dried hake between 1724 and 1730 from that port as follows :—

Year	1724	1725	1726	1727	1728	1729	1730
No. of dried hake exported	18,500	93,048	30,100	90,600	91,300	88,100	47,000

These were the exports, says Smith, before the use of trailing (presumably trawling) came into operation.

According to the *Irish House of Commons Journal* (1796, vii, cclxxv) the recorded exports of cured hake in 1734 amounted only to 470½ hundred fish. Three years later the Irish House of Commons resolved on 16th December, 1737, to allow a premium of 2s. per score hake cured with salt and exported,[28] and on 18th December, 1739, after consideration of the petition of William Doyle, who claimed to have discovered the fishing bank known as Nymph Bank, it was resolved to pay the same premium on hake obtained on that bank, landed, cured and exported.[29] The recorded exports

[26] *J.C.H.A.S.*, viii (1902), 207.
[27] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, 1796, vii, cclxxx. See also John, Lord Sheffield (J. B. Holroyd) *Observations on the manufactures, trade and present state of Ireland*, London, 1785, p. 136, and Edward Wakefield, *An account of Ireland*, London, 1812, ii, 132.
[28] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, iv, 259.
[29] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, iv, 323.

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in 1738 had risen to 1,532 hundreds,[30] of which 28,010 were apparently landed at Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.[31] The exports from Dungarvan alone for the next six years were as follows :— [31]

1739	1740	1741	1742	1743	1744
26,600	58,800	43,600	23,400	44,300	49,900

Dungarvan must have been responsible for a very large part of the total weight of hake exported from Ireland in 1740, as the total quantity recorded as being exported amounted to 1,245 cwt.[30] Smith, however, suggested that the introduction of trailing (i.e., trawling) had been responsible for a reduction in the catch as the total exports from Dungarvan in the seven years period 1724–1730 amounted to 458,648 fish, whereas in the period 1738–1744 they had fallen by 144,236 fish to 314,411 fish.[31] The detailed description of the hake fishery of county Waterford given by Smith in 1746 is worthy of being quoted verbatim. He stated :

> There are two seasons in which the fish (hake) are taken in plenty, the first begins with the commencement of the mackerel season, that is in June, and mackerel are also the bait used at that time for taking them ; during their first approach, they are larger than towards their second appearance, as likewise are most kinds of fish early in their season. A second shoal of this fish visits our coast towards the beginning of the herring season, viz., about September, and commonly holds till Christmas. The hake when taken, is salted and dried for exportation and great quantities are consumed both fresh and salted, in the country.
>
> Before the war, and the pernicious practice of trailing came in, great quantities have been yearly transported to Spain, where it is said, particularly Bilbao, they bore a better price than cod from Newfoundland. The fish taken here in the summer season, do not sell so well abroad, as those taken in winter ; it is observed that in drying of them, the heat of the sun turns the fish of a yellowish cast but the latter being dried in a more advanced season of the year, are preserved much whiter, and look more beautiful to the eye. There is also a difference in the fish, some being of a white and others having the flesh of a yellow cast, being probably fatter, which, for home consumption, are valued before them. Some years ago, a thousand of these fish, with a considerable quantity of many other sorts, was reckoned but an ordinary fishing for one night, to be taken by six men with hook and line in the season, but now it is very rare if a boat brings in half this quantity. A thousand of these fish is generally worth five or six pounds ; but when completely saved, about twice as much. The people of Dungarvan are very expert at salting, saving and drying this kind and most other sorts of fish taken here so as to cure them exceedingly well and white, which gives their fish a great reputation in foreign markets.[31]

Four years after the publication of his book on county Waterford, Smith published another book on the adjacent county of Cork. In this he remarks as to Cape Clear, a large island in the west of the county :

> The principal fish taken here are cod, hake, ling, mackerel, etc., hake is their staple fish, which they salt and dry. The Kingsale fishermen also come hither and build huts, where they cure their fish and for this they pay a smart rent.[32]

To day, the hake is unimportant at Cape Clear, although there is an island, called Hake Island, just off the neighbouring island of Sherkin.

The author of a pamphlet on the *Ancient Kingdom of Kerry,* written about 1752, mentioned that Kenmare Bay was " a good river some seasons

[30] *Commons' Jn. Ire.,* vii, cclxxx.
[31] Smith, op. cit., 1774, p. 260, fol.
[32] *The antient and present state of the county and city of Cork,* Dublin, 1750, i, 289.

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for the fishing of haak, herrings and pilchers " etc.[33] He also mentioned the capture of hake in the bay up to the outfall of the Sheen river. Nowadays hake are virtually unknown in this bay.

Richard Pococke, later bishop of Ossory, made a tour of Ireland in the year 1752 and he remarked as regards Dungarvan :

> It is situated on the south side of the river (Colligan) and is a good fishing town and famous for an export of potatoes. There is a bank about ten leagues from Dungarvan, where they catch quantities of hake and haddock, cod, ling, and many other kinds of fish.[34]

The bank in question is the Nymph Bank which William Doyle claimed in 1739 to have discovered.[29]

A statistical survey of county Kerry by Smith, published in 1756, points out that after the collapse of the pilchard fishery the fishing boats in Kenmare and Dingle Bays were employed in herring, cod, hake and other fishings. Apparently boats from as far afield as Kinsale came to Kenmare Bay, which was then, unlike to-day, more important than Dingle Bay. Hake were, however, important in the fishing of both places.[35] The recorded exports of hake in cwt. from Ireland in the period 1756–65 were as follows :— [36]

Year	1756	1757	1758	1759	1760	1761	1762	1763	1764	1765
Exports....	32	546	1,112	919½	1,323	2,342½	1870	3,951¾	6,144¼	3,950¾

The output of hake was apparently substantial in the years 1778 and 1779 as Newenham [37] mentioned that the following captures were made on the bounty :—

1778 .... 110,058 hake by 383 vessels.
1779 .... 274,183 hake by 410 vessels.

In the former year Grossett [38] stated that he had seen an old map in which Bantry Bay was called *Ansuada de pescada* which he translated as " Hake's Bay."

Arthur Young, writing in 1780,[39] stated that there were 200–250 boats belonging to Galway which were engaged in the spring fishing for cod, hake and mackerel. It is clear, however, that the catch of hake at Galway in the years 1780–3 was not very large, as the returns in the *Commons Journals* [40] for the four years in question only record the capture of a total of 745 hake there. The returns for the years in question are, however,

[33] "History of the ancient Kingdom of Kerry." *Ed.* Fr. Jarlath Prendergast, O.F.M. *J.C.H.A.S.*, vi (1900), 147 fol.
[34] *Pococke's Tour in Ireland in* 1752. *Ed.* George T. Stokes, London, 1891, p. 141.
[35] Charles Smith. *The ancient and present state of the county of Kerry*, Dublin, 1756, pp. 74, 84, 355, 370.
[36] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, vii, cclxxx and xi, ccccxii.
[37] T. Newenham. *A view of the natural, political and commercial circumstances of Ireland*, London, 1809, p. 52.
[38] C. Grossett. *Hints preparatory to the serious consideration and discussion of the sundry fisheries of this kingdom*, Dublin, 1778, p. 52.
[39] Arthur Young. *A tour in Ireland*, Dublin, 1780, i, 392.
[40] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, xi, ccccxi.

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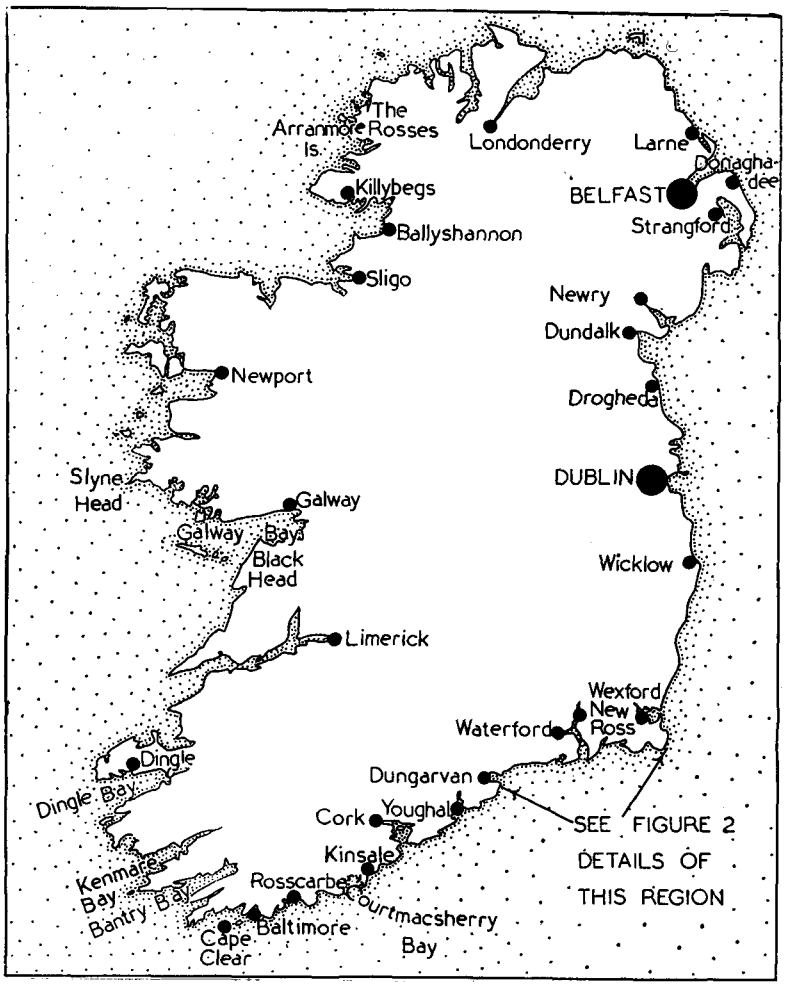

Sketch Map of Ireland showing location of hake fisheries (1504–1824)

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interesting as they show the distribution of the main landings of hake around the Irish coasts (see also Pl. II.) as follows :—

	1780	1781	1782	1783
Baltimore	9,390	11,006	5,345	4,582
Belfast	930	–	–	211
Cork	3,515	11,524	630	2,403
Dingle	3,571	1,955	1,631	6,941
Donaghadee	23	–	–	–
Drogheda	231	822	551	256
Dublin	198,754	9,746	6,767	7,635
Dundalk	–	–	–	6
Galway	185	53	–	507
Killybegs	–	229	269	571
Kinsale	48,675	96,862	20,571	48,556
Larne	–	–	150	30
Limerick	–	–	–	17
Londonderry	317	–	35	98
Newport	14	111	–	131
Newry	15	98	38	323
New Ross	13,518	41,509	11,417	17,665
Sligo	37	140	12	85
Strangford	236	78	523	429
Waterford	13,036	–	–	–
Wexford	385	70	–	498
Wicklow	221	1,188	570	682
Youghal	47,315	240,756	218,129	89,029
Total	340,368	416,147	266,638	180,655

Apart from Dublin, which apparently received big landings from boats fishing all around the Irish coasts, the most important centres were Baltimore, Cork, Dingle, Kinsale, New Ross, Waterford and Youghal. Allowing 5 lbs. per fish, the recorded captures in 1780–3 would have amounted to :—

Year	1780	1781	1782	1783
Cwt.	15,000	20,000	12,000	8,000

That one cannot necessarily assess the prosperity of a fishery on a basis of the exports of the appropriate fish in any particular year is obvious from the information available in this case. The recorded exports of hake, in cwt., from Ireland [41] during the period 1780–84 were as follows :—

1780	1781	1782	1783	1784
46½	32½	933¼	1368	6¾

In other words, despite landings of up to 20,000 cwt., the exports only exceeded 1,000 cwt. in one year. Economic factors, other than the relative abundance of fish, must have played their part in restricting these exports.

On 5th February, 1785, the Right Hon. William Conyngham presented to the Irish House of Commons a petition praying aid for the establishment of a fishery in Co. Donegal and therein he stated that great shoals of herring, cod, ling and hake annually resorted to Arranmore and the Rosses.[42] As

[41] *Common's Jn. Ire.*, xi, cccxii.
[42] *Common's Jn. Ire.*, xi, 323.

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to the hake, few of these fish had been captured in Co. Donegal up to that date if one can judge from the returns for the period 1780–4 (see page 49). Less than a month after the presentation of the petition by the Right Hon. William Conyngham, evidence was given by Rev. Thomas Stewart, at an inquiry by the committee appointed by the Irish House of Commons to consider the state of the Irish fisheries, that vast quantities of hake were to be found around the same area.[43] Another witness, one Bartholomew Rivers, giving evidence, attributed the cause of the decline in hake fishing to the mode of construction of the fishing vessels, which he asserted were being made more for the purpose of getting the bounty than for taking fish. At this time the Irish parliament evidently had inspectors of fisheries or observers around the Irish coast, and one named Kirby, whose district covered the south coast, reported that the fishing then consisted chiefly of cod, ling and hake.[43]

The inhabitants of the Rosses, a maritime district in Co. Donegal, petitioned the Irish House of Commons on 3rd February, 1786, for aid additional to that already granted to Irish fishermen, and stated that great shoals of fish, including the hake, frequented these coasts in season.[44]

In 1791, Bowden, who had a short time previously made a tour of Ireland, stated that there were upwards of 300 fishing boats engaged in Galway Bay in the fisheries for cod, ling, hake, herrings and mackerel.[45] For some years after 1791 there is no information available regarding the hake fishery. Wakefield (pages 93–4) in 1812 gives a good description of the Nymph Bank, off the coast of southern Ireland, and stated that good hake were to be caught there. There were, however, no recorded exports of hake from Ireland in the years 1807–11, either to England or to the continent (Wakefield, p. 132). The fact that there were no exports to the continent need not be surprising when one considers that during the Napoleonic wars, which were then in progress, England more or less successfully blockaded the continent, which prevented the normal trade between Ireland and France and Spain. That the hake fishery was fairly successful there is no doubt. Townsend,[46] for example, describing the barony of Ibaune and Barryroe, states :—

> The material accession to the subsistence of the people arises from fish, of which the summer and autumn months usually furnish a good supply. The principal of these at present are hake, and as every person near the coast is occasionally a fisherman, many are able, not only to furnish themselves, but to sell to fish mongers for the supply of other places.

The coastline of this barony extends roughly from Courtmacsherry Bay to Rosscarbery.

In his book *British Zoology* (London, 1812, iii, 257) Pennant referred to the hake, which he stated was to be found in vast abundance around the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland. He had, unfortunately, no up-to-date information on the productivity of the fishery on the Nymph Bank for these fish. W. S. Mason, in his *Parochial Survey of Ireland* (Dublin, 1815–16),

[43] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, xi, cccIxxxiii fol. This inquiry was begun on 2nd March, 1785.
[44] *Commons' Jn. Ire.*, xii, 32.
[45] C. T. Bowden. *A tour through Ireland*, Dublin, 1791, p. 214.
[46] H. Townsend. *Statistical survey of the county of Cork*, Dublin, 1810, p. 228.

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referred to the capture of hake in considerable numbers off the coast of Donegal in the vicinity of Ballyshannon (op. cit. i, p. 426) and off Waterford Harbour (op. cit. i, p. 466 and ii, p. 547). Some eight years later Dutton, whose work *A statistical and agricultural survey of the county of Galway*, published in the year 1824, has the reputation of being accurate, referred to Galway Bay and stated that from Black Head to Slyne Head this bay abounded in fish, including the hake. He also mentioned that from the former abundance of this fish Galway Bay was called the " Bay of Hakes." [47] To-day, hake are rarities in Galway Bay.

Methods of fishing hake in Ireland (1504–1824)

For a considerable time the hand line was the commonest implement used in the capture of hake along the Irish coast, the bait usually being a portion of mackerel. Small quantities of hake may also have been taken by seine nets used for the capture of pilchards, mackerel and herrings, as the hake were said to follow these fish inshore. The hand line was used by Manx fishermen for hake whilst drifting for mackerel and herrings along the Irish coast, even in recent times. Trawling for hake was apparently not introduced as a regular method until the " thirties " of the eighteenth century [31] and even then it appears to have been restricted to the Waterford coast for many years. Trawling never completely eliminated hand-line fishing from the coasts.

General Observations

The preceding account of the Irish hake fishery from 1504 to the beginning of the nineteenth century shows that this fish was an important item of commerce in Ireland in those days. Why, might one ask, has a change in the hake fishery been experienced in recent years with the virtual disappearance of the inshore fish of this species ? Since the turn of the century a substantial and profitable fishery has sprung up in the area south of Ireland for the express purpose of capturing hake by means of trawls and later by the so-called Spanish method by steam and motor parejas. C. F. Hickling,[48] who made a study of the hake fishery, concluded that the main reason for the absence of hake in the inshore fishings was the intense fishery 30 to 40 miles offshore. In other words, one cannot catch fish in quantity in the deep waters and have them in the inshore waters as well. My colleague, Mr. G. P. Farran, has shown that, during part of the early war years at least, the yield per 100 hours fishing by the Dublin steam trawlers had risen considerably, which suggests that the decreased intensity of fishing in wartime has been responsible for larger migrations into coastal and other waters of the Irish Sea. At least at one place on the coast of southern Ireland hake, particularly small or medium fish, appear to come inshore only when pilchards or similar fish are present ; and it is noteworthy that the Irish hake fishery was particularly prosperous when the pilchard fishery was at its height.

[47] Dutton, op. cit., pp. 395–6.
[48] C. F. Hickling. *The hake and the hake fishery*, London, 1935.

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