

I. *Some Account of the Phoca; Vitulus marinus; or SEA-CALF, shewed at Charing-Cross, in Feb. 1742-3. by Ja. Parsons, M. D. F. R. S.*

Read at a
Meeting of the
Royal Society,
on February
17. 1742-3.

AS Authors have described this Animal so largely already, I shall entertain this Honourable SOCIETY with only a few Remarks which occurred to me, upon taking as accurate a View as I could of it, which may conduce to furnish a truer Idea of the Creature than we now have from Authors.

The Figures given by *Aldrovandus*, *Johnston*, and others (being Profils) lead us into two Errors: 1st, They make a Cubit in the Fore-limb, which is not visible in any Shape, from the Surface of the Body; and, 2^{dly}, make the posterior Parts terminate in Two Fins, which on the contrary are actually webbed Feet (like those of Water-fowl) consisting of Five Toes, each having Three Articulations, and ending with Nails of a darkish Colour.

The Nails of the Fore-paws are very considerable, being like the Paws of a Mole, contrived for crawling upon Land, and partly for swimming, by a narrower Web between each Toe; but the hinder Feet are extensive Webs, serving alone to drive or row the Creature in the Waters.

Rondeletius, as cited by *Gesner*, blames *Aristotle* for saying this Animal has Nails; which is strange, as that Historian is one of great Reputation; for it has very considerable ones.

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The Animal, which was a Female, died Yesterday Morning, and the *Viscera* were as follows :

The Stomachs, Intestines, Bladder, Kidneys, Ureters, *Diaphragm*, Lungs, great Blood-vessels, and *Pudenda*, were like those of a Cow.

The Hairs of the Whiskers are very horny and clear.

The Spleen was Two Feet long. Four Inches broad, and very thin.

The Liver consisted of Six Lobes, each hanging as long and lank as the Spleen, with a very small Gall-bladder.

The Heart was long and flabby in its Contexture in general; having a large *Foramen Ovale*, and very great *Columnæ carnosæ*.

In the lower Stomach were about Four Pounds Weight of stinty Pebbles, of which those I have the Honour to lay before you are Part; all which are sharp and angular, as if the Animal chose them of that Form for cutting the Food. I believe this may be common to all the larger Sea-Animals, as they swallow many considerable Fishes whole, that after some Maceration in the first Stomach, they may be more easily ground small by these Pebbles in the other, for the Nourishment of the Creature.

The *Uterus* is of the horned Kind, each *Cornu* being considerably thicker than the Body or Duct leading to them: It is very fibrous, and the Fibres seem all longitudinal with the *Uterus* and *Cornua*, making a muscular Appearance. The *Ovaria* are very large, being granulated on the Surface with the *Ova*, under a very thin Membrane; and the Opening into the Tubes lead-

leading to the *Cornua* is a great Hole. I have annexed a Drawing of this Part, as it is very Particular.

I refer the SOCIETY to the under-mentioned Authors for the other Properties of this Animal; such as their Love to their Young, their manner of Copulation, Inconstancies to their Females, Virtues in the Skin of preserving Persons from Thunder, who carry Part of it, as *Suetonius* relates of *Augustus Caesar*, who dreaded it very much; and also of such Consent between the Skin of this Animal and the Sea, that although it be dried and kept in the most secret Place, whensoever the Sea is much disturbed, the Hairs rise up upon the Skin, and lie smooth when it is calm; with many other Particulars, which (if not fabulous) are very curious.

The Authors necessary to be read upon this Animal, are *Aristotle*, *Pliny*, *Aldrovandus*, *Rondeletius*, *Gesner*, *Wolfgangius*, *Johnston*.

As to the particular Figures of the Animal, that of *Aldrovandus* seems to have been taken from a stuffed Skin, having the hinder Feet like a Fish-Tail, and not at all like the Creature. *Rondeletius's* Figure has as little Truth as the former; and that given by *Gesner* in his Corollary on *Rondeletius*, is worse than any; having the Fore-parts upright like a *Sphinx*. This last Author has another Figure of the *Phoca*, which is rather like a *Lump-fish*, and almost triangular: These could never convey a just Idea of the Creature to such as delight in Natural History, which, I hope, I have made some amends for in my Figure annexed to this Account (see TAB. I.); having taken it from the living Animal with the utmost Care, and

which is thought perfectly like the Creature by all who have seen both.

The Animal is viviparous, and suckles its young by the *Mamillæ*, like Quadrupeds, and its Flesh is carnosus and muscular. This was very young, though Seven Feet and half in Length, having scarce any Teeth, and having Four Holes regularly placed about the Navel, as appears by the Figure, which in time become *Papillæ*.

See TAB. I.

Fig. 1.

Represents the Phoca lying upon the Right Side, that the Belly and Parts of Generation may be the better observed.

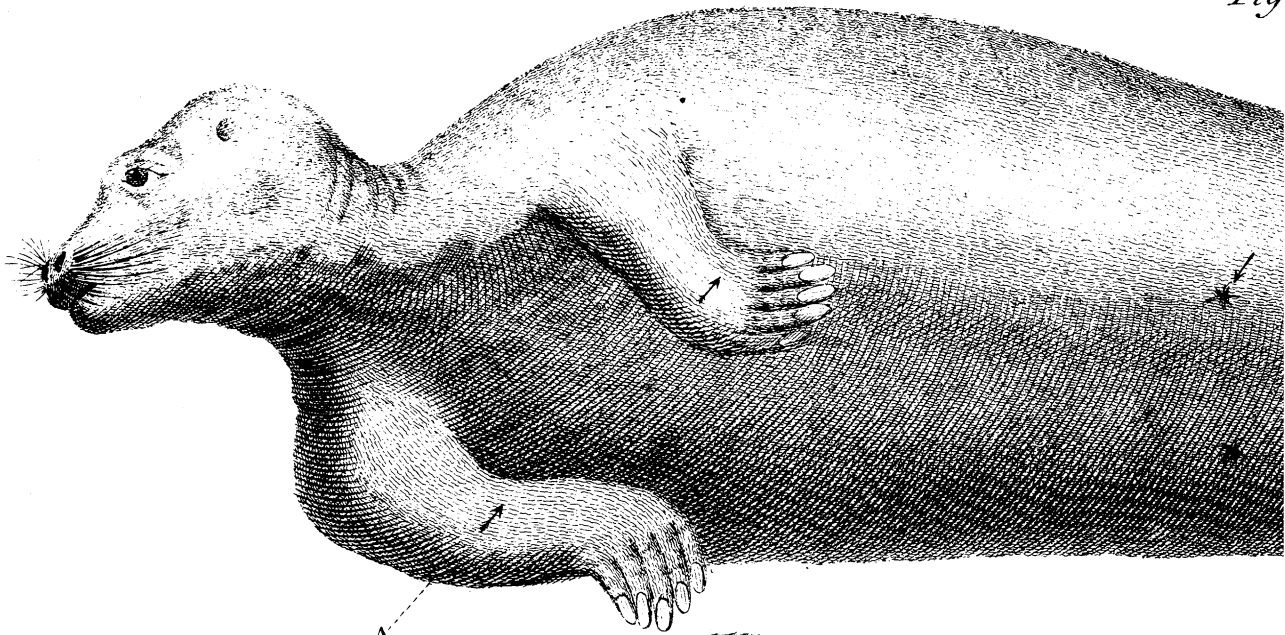
- A. *The Fore-feet and Breast.*
- B. *The Umbilicus and Holes of the Mammæ.*
- C. *The external Orifice of the Vagina, and the Anus.*
- D. *The hinder Feet, which are webbed.*
- E. *The Tail.*

Fig. 2.

Shews the Uterus taken out and extended.

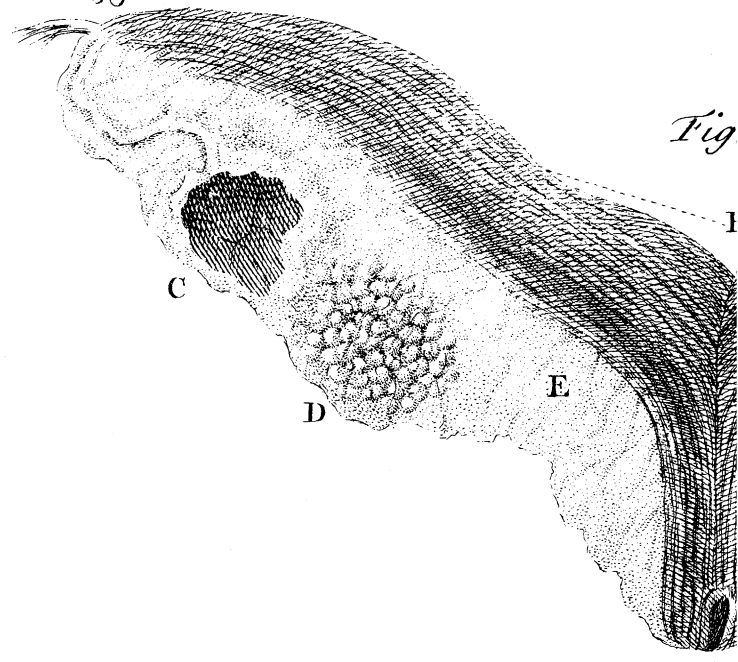
- A. *The Body of the Uterus or Vagina.*
- B. *The Cornua Uteri.*
- C. *The Holes leading into the slender Tubes that end in the Extremities of the Cornua.*
- D. *The Ovaria.*
- E. *The Continuations of the Peritonæum.*

Fig



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Fig



C

D

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Fig. 1 p. 386.

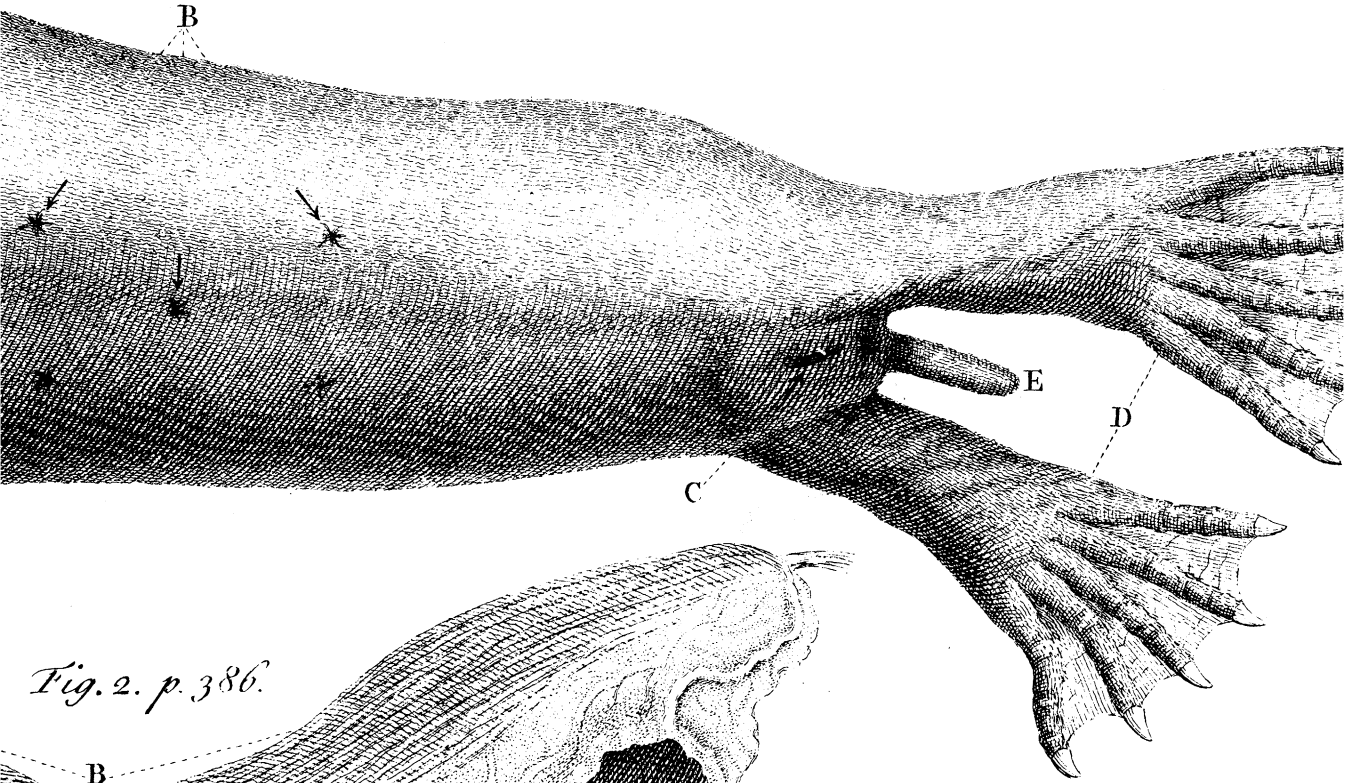
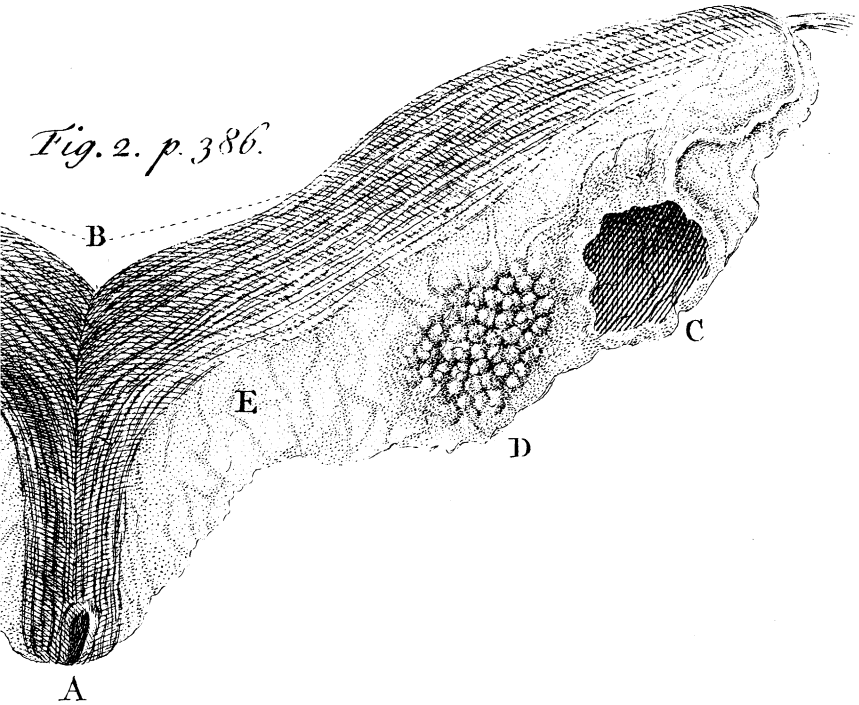
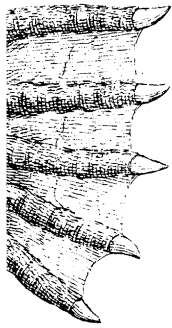


Fig. 2. p. 386.





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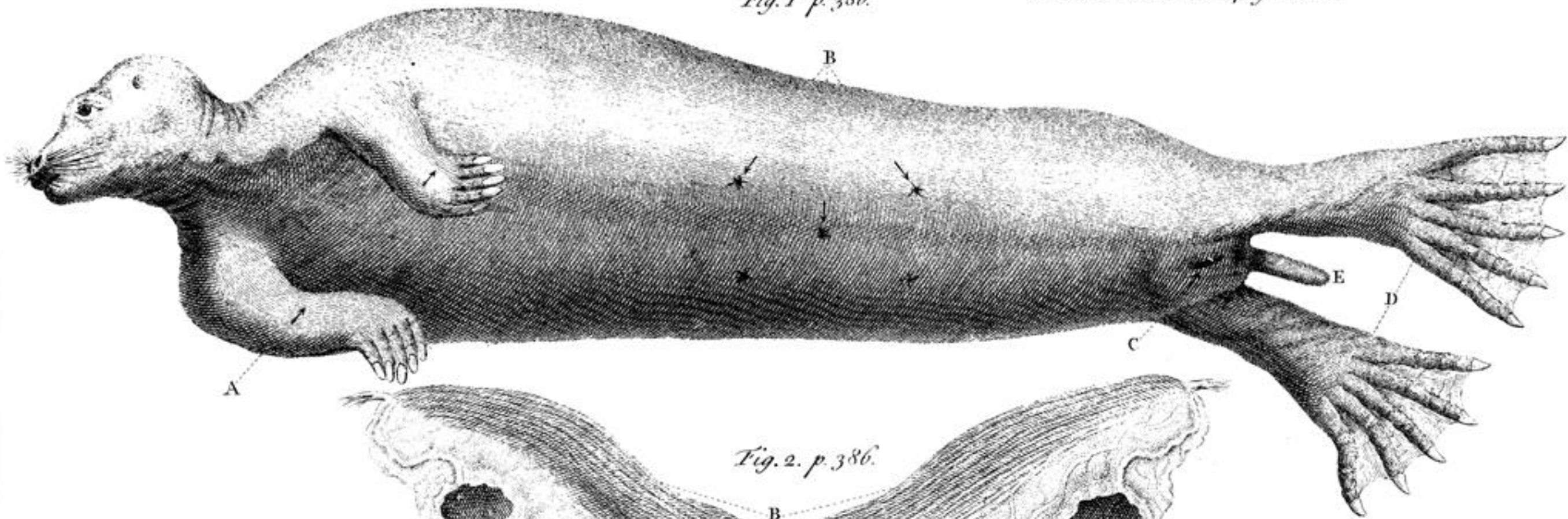


Fig. 2. p. 386.

