



Arglass Gullies – Site for consideration as MCZ

The coastline around Ardglass is formed from strongly folded sedimentary rock. This extends into the subtidal to create unusual gullies underwater. Seasearch has done two days of survey work in this area between 2013-2014 and we would like to submit this area (approximately from Gunns Island to Ringfad point, although may extend further south) as a site for consideration as a geological MCZ. The area is moderately popular with local dive clubs as it provides safe, shallow, training dives for new divers and presents interesting topography for exploration. However, to our knowledge these gullies have not previously been formally surveyed – the two transects carried out between Guns Island and Ringfad point during the Northern Ireland Littoral survey reported small cliffs and ridges with cobbles (Legnaboe Ardglass) and a cliff with a base of clean cobbles (Ringfad Point). Guns Island was not surveyed during NISS. We appreciate this area requires further survey work but wish to highlight it at this stage for future survey and consideration as a MCZ.

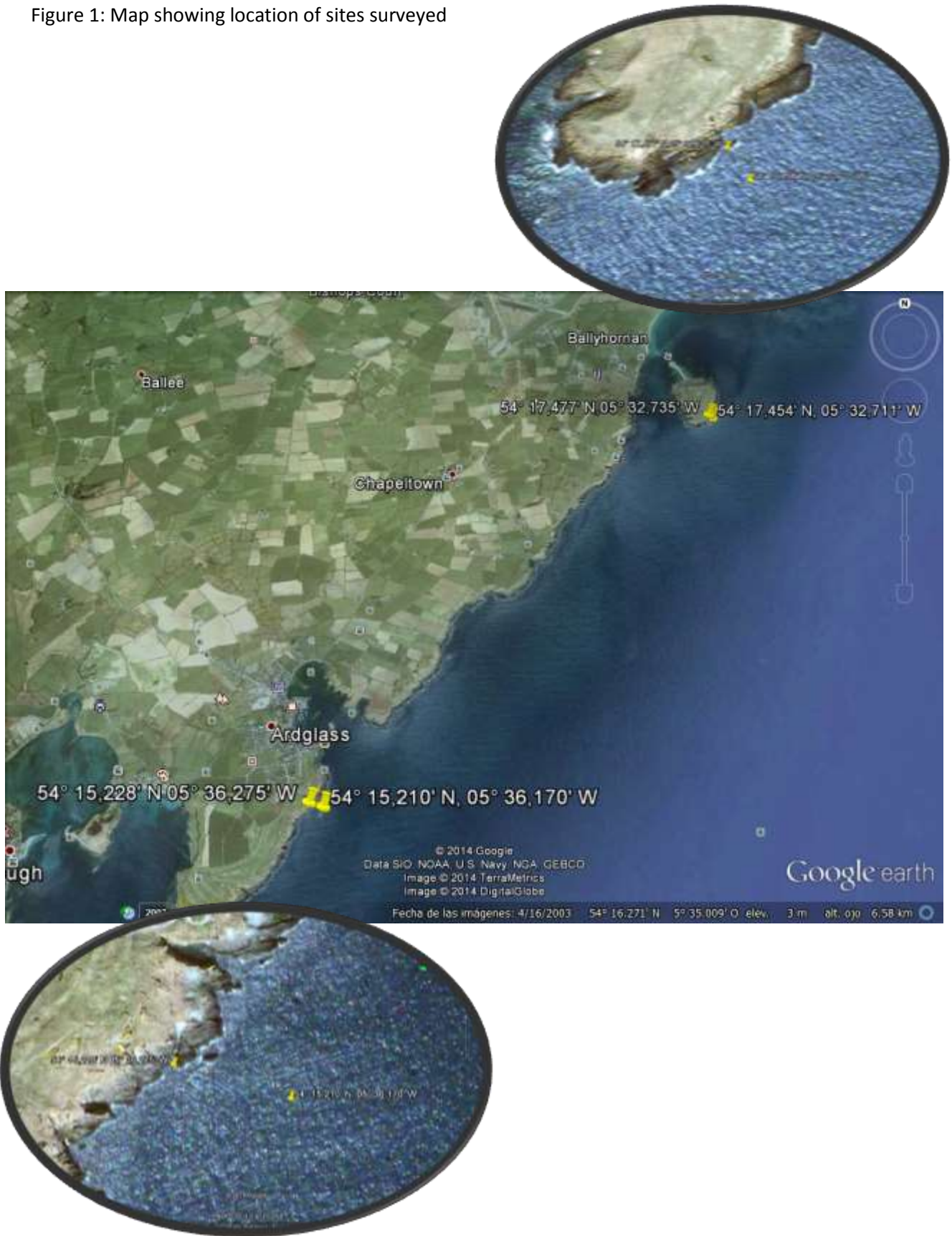
The walls of some of the gullies are rich in life, particularly sponges and anemones (possibly confirming to the UK BAP Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities, depending on finalised definition). One of the gullies surveyed ended in a small sea cave and it is likely that more caves are present in the area. Submerged or partially submerged sea caves are a European Species and Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitat. The cup coral *Caryophyllia inornata*, a Northern Ireland species of conservation concern, was found in this sea cave.

The Sheepland coast ASSI extends from Ardglass to just south of Guns Island and Killard Point SAC extends from just north of Guns Island into Strangford Lough. Whilst the intertidal and coastal areas of rock are mentioned in and covered by these ASSI designations this protection does not extend into the subtidal. Both of these designations also exclude Guns Island which, from our surveys, seems to have some of the most unusual subtidal rock formations.

Seasearch Survey information

Guns Island and Golf Course Gully have been surveyed in 2013 and 2014 by a mix of Seasearch Observers and an experienced Surveyor completing 3 Observation and 2 Survey Forms in 2013 and 5 Observation and 2 Survey Forms recently in 2014. In both years notable records have been of the nationally scarce southern cup-coral *Caryophyllia inornata* (Golf Course Gully), and of dabberlocks *Alaria esculenta* (Guns Island), amongst *Laminaria hyperborea* kelp forest. Both sites have a high variety of animals dominated by gooseberry sea squirts *Dendrodoa grossularia* (Golf Course gully) and dead men's fingers *Alcyonium digitatum* (Guns Island).

Figure 1: Map showing location of sites surveyed





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Figure 2 - Gully formation at Guns Island.

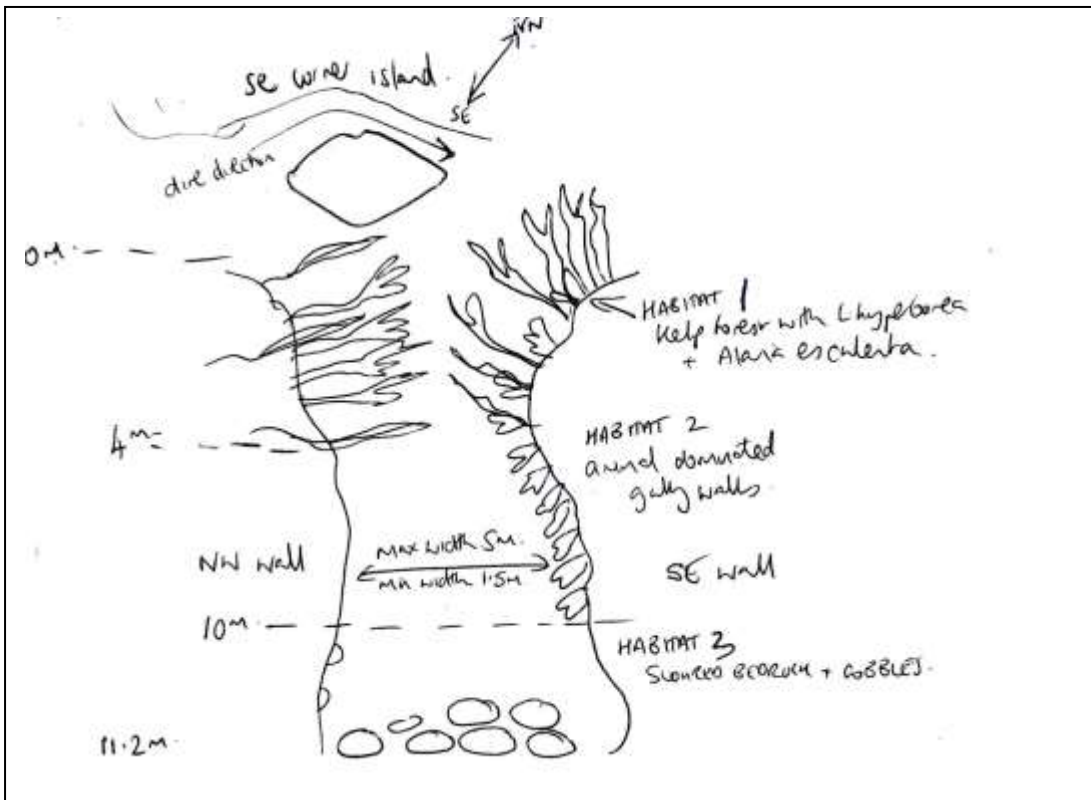


Figure 3: Sketch of gully at Guns Island from 2013 survey



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Figure 4 – Gully terminating in chimney and small cave near Ardglass Golf Course.



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Figure 5 - small cave at the end of gully picture in Figure 2.

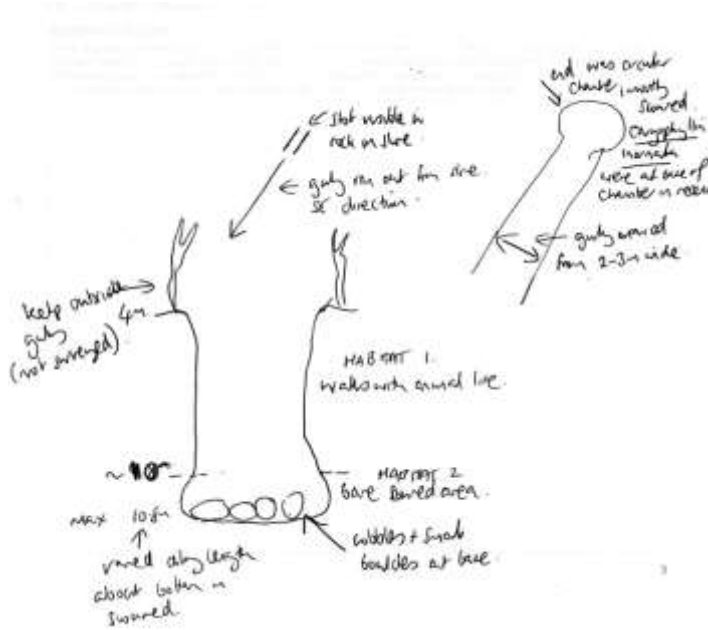


Figure 6 – Sketch of gully and cave at Ardglass.