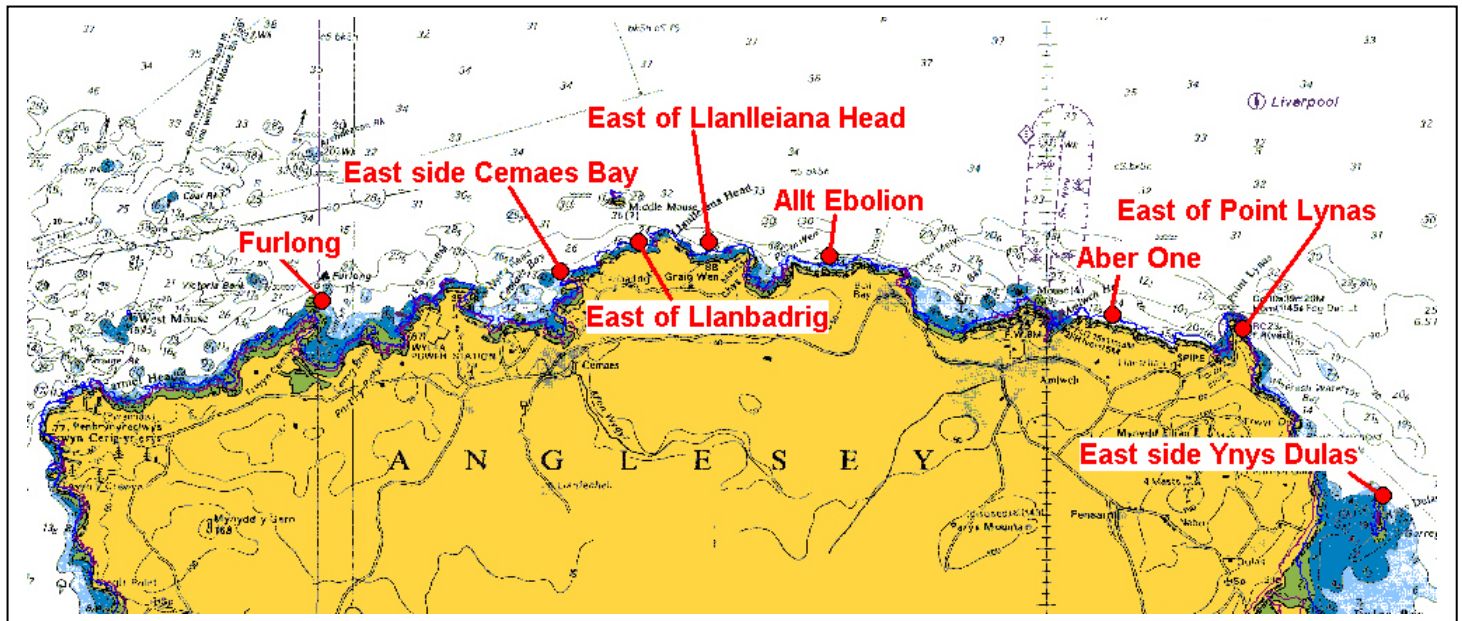




North Anglesey Weekends

24th & 25th September 2005

2nd & 3rd September 2006



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Introduction

North Anglesey is a part of North Wales that missed out on more formal subtidal surveys in past years. However, since 1995 Seasearch has been helping to build up our knowledge of the underwater habitats and wildlife communities of this area. This rugged, rocky coastline of North Wales provides some impressive dive sites - the often silt-covered rocky reefs support an interesting mix of species, including communities dominated by various sponge species. The aim of the diving over the weekends in 2005 and 2006 was to dive previously un-surveyed sites and thereby build on the Seasearch surveys of previous years.

In both years the conditions for the Seasearch diving were challenging for different reasons! In 2005, despite reasonable topside weather, there was extremely poor visibility along the North Anglesey coast which the Seasearchers manfully dealt with, going on to record some interesting finds. Over the 2006 weekend, gale force winds were battering the country, but the high cliffs along the Anglesey coast meant that close inshore this was probably one of the few (relatively) sheltered locations from the southerly gales that weekend, although it did rain a lot!

Despite all this, nine divers braved the elements over each weekend, diving from a hard boat out of Amlwch skippered by Elfyn Jones. A total of 159 species were recorded over the two weekends (95 species in 2005 and 136 in 2006). Eight new sites were surveyed and 28 Seasearch forms were completed (6 Surveyor and 8 Observation forms in 2005 and 12 Surveyor and 2 Observation forms in 2006).

A velvet swimming crab in a rather precarious position sheltering under a dahlia anemone



Particularly notable records over the Seasearch weekends were the frequent records of some species, such as the chocolate finger sponge *Raspailia ramosa* and the sea orange *Suberites carnosus*. There was also a single record of the nationally scarce sponge *Tethyspira spinosa*.

(All depths are as recorded below sea level and not corrected to chart datum.)



A lesser octopus is just visible in the poor visibility in 2005



Ginger tinies *Isozoanthus sulcatus* on a rocky reef



A small common sunstar and brittlestars

East of Llanlleiana Head (2005)

This site was a flat area of mixed ground of boulders, cobbles, pebbles and fine, muddy sand with dense brittlestars (common brittlestars and other species). There were burrowing anemones and peacock worms in the sediment with a patchy turf of bryozoans on the rocks. This mixed ground led into a ridged bedrock reef extending from 20m - 6m depth with varied fauna and kelp and red seaweeds in shallower water.

East side Cemaes Bay (2005)

Due to the conditions on the day this was a rather dark and dramatic site with a rugged bedrock reef extending from 19-6m with vertical walls and ledges. The reef was covered with a dense turf of hydroids and bryozoans and abundant sponges including *Raspailia ramosa*, *Polymastia boletiformis*, *Polymastia mamillaris* and *Axinella infundibuliformis*. Red seaweeds and kelp were present in the shallower areas between 6-8m depth.

Allt Ebolion (2005)

The visibility on this dive was particularly poor and was not helped by the high levels of silt over the seabed. The silty rocky reef and large boulders, interspersed with areas of cobble, pebbles and sediment at between 7-16m depth, led into an area of sediment at 20m with peacock worms and burrowing anemones. The rocky areas had a dense turf of bryozoans together with various hydroids such as the antenna hydroid *Nemertesia antennina* and also featherstars *Antedon bifida*.

East side Ynys Dulas (2005)

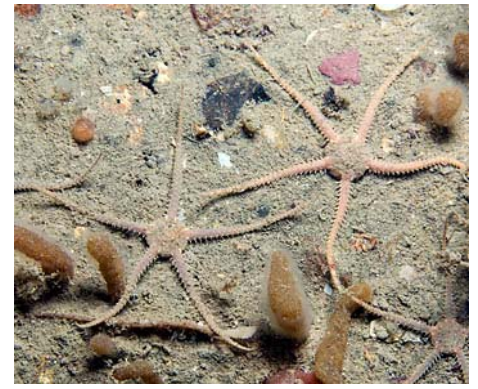
Having persevered with the poor visibility on the North coast for 3 dives it was decided to move to the east coast of the island in the hope that the visibility might improve for the last dive of the weekend - it did! Ynys Dulas, a small island lying off the east side of Anglesey is known as a haul out for grey seals. It is also an interesting dive site. The rocky island extends underwater with kelp and red seaweeds recorded to about 8m depth. The reef led into a seabed of boulders, cobbles, sand and gravel at about 10m. A bryozoan turf was the dominant cover over the rocks with hornwrack *Flustra foliacea* and other bryozoan species. The shredded carrot sponge *Esperiopsis fucorum* was also common.



Bryozoan turf - a common community on North Anglesey reefs



An unusual picture of a lobster showing antennae regeneration



Sand brittlestars *Ophiura albida* were frequently recorded

East of Llanbadrig (2006)

Over the two Seasearch weekends in 2005 & 2006 the most species were recorded from this site (108 species), with a notable abundance and variety of sponges. Three main habitats were recorded here depths of between 10 and 22m. Extending out from the shore was a bedrock reef with pinnacles and gullies and large bedrock slabs and jagged boulders to about 15m depth. The rock surface had short and tall animal turf with areas of abundant and varied sponges and dense, small featherstars *Antedon bifida*. This led into an area of boulders, cobbles, gravel and fine muddy sand between 13-17m depth. Here the divers recorded frequent tube anemones *Cerianthus lloydii* and patches of sand brittlestars *Ophiura albida* with other anemones and featherstars on the rocks. Between 16-22m the seabed was of mixed sandy sediment with a brittlestar bed of *Ophiothrix fragilis* and common horseman anemones *Urticina eques*.

Aber One (2006)

A steeply sloping bedrock reef extending from the lower shore to about 18m led into a much more gently sloping seabed of mixed ground and muddy sand with shell remains and smaller stones. Kelp and red seaweeds were recorded in the shallower parts of the reef (kelp recorded to 5m depth, and red seaweeds to 9m depth). Deeper than this the reef was dominated by short and tall bryozoan turf with feather stars *Antedon bifida* and dahlia anemones *Urticina felina* frequently recorded. Brittlestars *Ophiothrix fragilis* and *Ophiura albida* were abundant on the mixed ground.

Furlong (2006)

At this location an area of rocky reef extends northwards from the coast of Anglesey. Where we dived, bedrock reef outcrops surrounded by soft, fine and medium sand were recorded by the Seasearch divers. Featherstars, bryozoans and sponges were the main species recorded on the reef. Tube anemones and sand brittlestars (*Ophiura albida* and *O. ophiura*) were commonly recorded on the sand. The hermit crab *Pagurus prideaux* with its cloak anemone *Adamsia carciniopados* were frequent.

East of Point Lynas (2006)

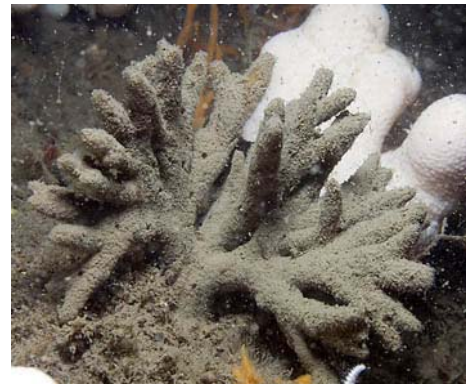
This site is at the north-east point of the Isle of Anglesey, a location that is exposed to tidal currents. However, just to the south of the exposed corner of the island is a small sheltered bay with soft muddy sand at 12-14m depth. Abundant sand brittlestars *Ophiura albida* were recorded here with other sediment fauna including tube anemones *Cerianthus lloydii* and harbour swimming crab *Liocarcinus depurator*. Heading north in the bay an area of more mixed sediment with gravel, pebbles, cobbles and small boulders between 13-16m led to a rugged bedrock reef with walls, gullies, crevices and fissures. The bedrock reef was covered in abundant animal turf dominated by bryozoans including hornwrack and smaller species (*Cellaria* sp. and crissids.). Several sponges were recorded as well as patches of plumose anemones *Metridium senile*, dahlia anemones *Urticina felina* and dead men's fingers *Alcyonium digitatum*. Many wrasse of several different species were observed in one area of the reef. The reef had much less silt on it than sites on the north coast.



A conger amidst hornwrack



Cup sponge and feather stars



Chocolate finger sponge

Names of surveyors on the North Anglesey Seasearch weekends in 2005 & 2006:

Clive Field	Liz Morris	Ruth Sharratt	David Waller	Simon Payne	Kate Smith
Phil Reynolds	Harry Goudge	Ian Patton-Smith	Rohan Holt	Ruth Wayland	Chris Wood
David Wayland	Paul Kay	Lucy Kay			

Many thanks to all for taking part in the Seasearch weekends, braving the challenging conditions of the North Anglesey coast and for all the useful data that you have collected. Thanks also to our skipper Elfyn Jones for helping locate the sites, and taking care of us during the diving over both weekends.

Table 1: Number of species recorded from each Phylum in 2005 & 2006

Species summary for West Anglesey May 2006						
Phylum	Common Name	Number of species			Common species	
		2005	2006	05 & 06		
Porifera	Sponges	16	24	26	Shredded carrot sponge	<i>Esperiopsis fucorum</i>
					Golf ball sponge	<i>Tethya citrina</i>
					Chocolate finger sponge	<i>Raspailia ramosa</i>
					Sea orange	<i>Suberites carnosus</i>
					Elephant hide sponge	<i>Pachymatisma johnstonia</i>
					Goosebump sponge	<i>Dysidea fragilis</i>
Cnidaria	Anemones, hydroids, corals, jellyfish	14	22	25	Dead men's fingers	<i>Alcyonium digitatum</i>
					Dahlia anemone	<i>Urticina felina</i>
					Plumose anemone	<i>Metridium senile</i>
					Tube anemone	<i>Cerianthus lloydii</i>
Nemertea	Ribbon worms	0	1	1		
Platyhelminthes	Flatworms	0	1	1	Candy stripe flatworm	<i>Prostheceraeus vittatus</i>
Annelida	Segmented worms	4	8	9	Bispiral fan worm	<i>Bispira volutacornis</i>
Crustacea	Lobsters, crabs, barnacles	13	13	16	Velvet swimming crab	<i>Necora puber</i>
					Eedible crab	<i>Cancer pagurus</i>
Mollusca	Shells, sea slugs	4	6	8	Sea slug	<i>Tritonia lineata</i>
Bryozoa	Sea mats	9	15	16	Hornwrack	<i>Flustra foliacea</i>
					Sea chervil	<i>Alcyonidium diaphanum</i>
					Branching bryozoan	<i>Cellaria fistulosa</i>
Echinodermata	Starfish, urchins, sea cucumbers	8	10	11	Common starfish	<i>Asterias rubens</i>
					Common featherstar	<i>Antedon bifida</i>
Subphylum	Sea squirts	4	11	11	Star sea squirt	<i>Botryllus schlosseri</i>
Tunicata					Sea squirt	<i>Molgula sp.</i>
Subphylum	Fish	11	21	23	Dragonet	<i>Callionymus lyra</i>
Pisces					Goldsinny wrasse	<i>Ctenolabrus rupestris</i>
					Small goby	<i>Pomatoschistus sp.</i>
Algae	Seaweeds	12	4	12	Kelp	<i>Laminara hyperborea</i>
	Total Species	95	136	159		