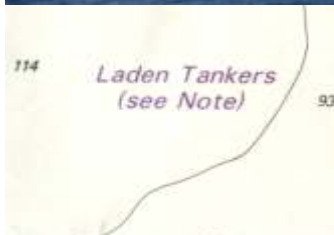


## The Smalls, Pembrokeshire - July 16th 2005

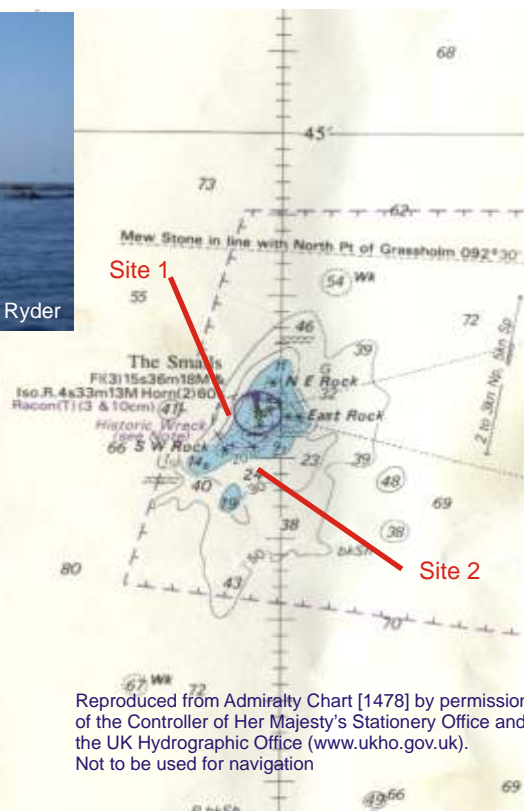
In July 2005 the sailing vessel *Lo Entropy* was chartered for a liveaboard Seasearch trip to the Smalls, a rocky reef 18 miles west of Skomer Island, in west Wales. *Lo Entropy*, owned and skippered by Geoff Boerne, would not at first glance be recognised as an ideal diving platform, however she is extremely well suited for the purposes of Seasearch having a large hold to store all dive kit, hot showers and a great saloon where we could spread out books and all work together to fill out forms post diving.



Paul Ryder



Gen O'Farrell



There were 11 divers on board for this trip and all but two divers on board had previously completed a Seasearch Observer course and some were also working towards their Surveyor qualification. Two separate sites were dived and 4 Observer and 6 Surveyor forms were completed on the day. The weather was incredibly kind and we had extremely calm waters and sunny skies which created perfect diving conditions and a relaxed atmosphere with a great opportunity to enjoy some whale and seal watching when not diving, filling in forms or sorting out dive kit!

### Site 1.

51° 43.1N, 05° 40.2W

Although a number of other boats turned up at the Smalls to dive at the same slack water we all managed a truly memorable dive on the north west side of the Lighthouse at about midday. This side of the Smalls had spectacular steep walled gullies dominated by *Alcyonium digitatum* (Dead men's fingers). Most had polyps out and the sight was impressive in spite of the visibility not being more than about 5 to 6 metres. Kelp (*Laminaria hyperborea*) was recorded to depths of about 16m with most dives recording a max depth of about 25m. There was also an unusual abundance of the juvenile spiny starfish, *Marthasterias glacialis* which were no more than about 10cm in diameter. All divers were entertained by some extraordinarily inquisitive and playful Atlantic grey seals, *Halichoerus grypus*. Due to scars and other markings it was possible to distinguish between individuals and sometimes divers were accompanied by the same seals for the entire dive.



Vicki Howe



Vicki Howe

## Species Recorded

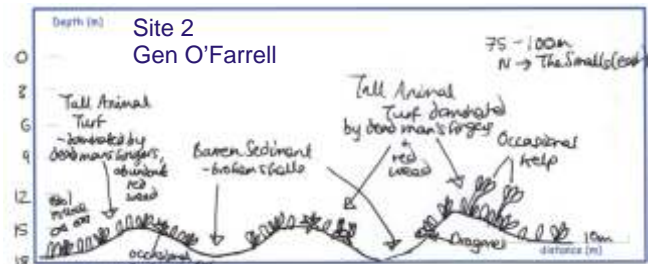
A total of 58 species were recorded with a good range of algae identified. Very few worms, echinoderms and sea squirts were recorded. A species more notable for its absence was the pink sea fan, *Eunicella verrucosa*, however it must be noted that as only two areas were covered by the divers and to a maximum depth of 25m, there may be slightly less exposed or deeper areas around the Smalls where the fan might thrive.

Phylum/Class	Common Name	Number of species	Common species
Porifera	Sponges	5	boring sponge volcano sponge <i>Cliona celata</i> <i>Haliclona viscosa</i>
Cnidaria	Anemones, Corals, hydroids	8	dead men's fingers dahlia anemone <i>Urticina digitatum</i> <i>Alcyonium felina</i>
Crustacea	Crabs, lobsters, Barnacles	6	velvet swimming crab ghost shrimp <b><i>Necora puber</i></b> <i>Caprellidea</i> sp.
Pycnogonida	Sea spiders	2	<i>Nymphon</i> sp. <i>Achelia</i> sp.
Mollusca	Snails, sea Slugs, bivalves	5	nudibranchs <i>Polycera faeroensis</i> <i>Tritonia hombergi</i> <i>Janolus cristatus</i> <i>Doto fragilis</i>
Bryozoa	Sea mats	5	hornwrack <i>Flustra foliacea</i>
Echinodermata	Starfish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers	3	spiny starfish edible sea urchin <i>Marthasterias glacialis</i> <i>Echinus esculentus</i>
Tunicata	Sea squirts	2	gooseberry sea squirt light bulb sea squirt <i>Dendrodoa grossularia</i> <i>Clavelina lepadiformis</i>
Pisces	Fishes	7	dogfish goldsinny <i>Scyliorhinus canicula</i> <i>Ctenolabrus rupestris</i>
Mammalia	Mammals	3	Atlantic grey seal minke whale <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> <i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>
Algae	Seaweeds	12	kelp red algae <i>Laminaria hyperborea</i> <i>Plocamium cartilagineum</i>
<b>Total Species</b>		<b>58</b>	

## Site 2

51° 43.08'N, 05° 41.7'W

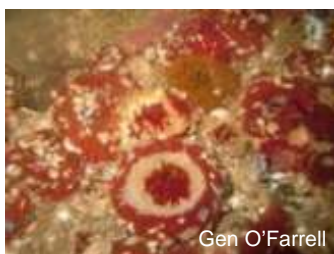
The second dive of the day was located to south of the reef complex and here the habitat consisted of less dramatic and more undulating rocky reef mainly covered in brown and red algae with some *Alcyonium digitatum* on vertical faces. The 3 to 4m deep gullies were interspersed with areas of coarse sand. The most abundant organism in this particular area was the anemone *Urticina felina* which provided a colourful mosaic amongst the rock and sand substrate. Although potting was evident in the area a number of crustaceans were recorded including lobster and edible crab. Again we were fortunate to share the experience with some nose-yet agile helpers, the Atlantic grey seal.



Vicki Howe



Vicki Howe



Gen O'Farrell



Steve Bound

Divers: Simon Angove, Michelle Baxter, Steve Bound, Annette Chinn, Ivan Green, Vicki Howe, Kate Lock, Genevieve O'Farrell, Alison Shaw, Zoe Sheridan and Paul Ryder. We would also like to thank the Skipper of Lo Entropy, Geoff Boerne and also Valerie Bartlett for their support and enthusiasm.

Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers who wish to contribute to conserving the marine environment.

Seasearch in Wales is supported by:

