Dorset Seasearch Dive Report - Bat’s Head Reef & The Ledge 30 July 2016

A glorious calm, sunny day, you could almost say too hot to be out on deck! The first dive was a drift at about 1knot (too fast for note taking) along a reef under Bat’s Head west of Durdle Door in about 18m. The second dive was on the outer edge of The Ledge off the east side of Portland Bill. We had a well timed slack water for this dive and a dignified run over to the site with time for team to pose with Church Ope Cove in the background.

The Saturday Team off Church Ope Cove

Colourful faunal turf on boulders, Bat’s Head Drift

Large Ross Coral colonies, Bat’s Head Drift

Branching and cushion sponges - Bat’s Head Drift
Bat’s Head Drift - flying Queen Scallop (*Aequipecten opercularis*)

Bat’s Head Drift
Mega-ripple of shell and dead maerl gravel over bedrock with scattered fragments of live maerl.

Bat’s Head Drift
Sunstar, *Crossaster pappus*, and unusual sighting east of Start Point in Devon.

Here is a link to Tim Watson’s short video from the drift dive
Swimming Queen Scallops: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5M5ZWNy50Y

The Ledge
Carrot sponge, *Amphilectus fucorum*, red bryozoan crust *Cellaria* bryozoan and Anetna hydroid (*Nemertesia antennina*) on cobbles with baracles

The Ledge
Old *Tubularia* stalks, *Cellaria* bryozoan, Carrot sponge and striped anemone (*Actinothoes sphyrodeta*)
The Ledge
Anelenna hydroid, red encrusting bryozoan and old Tubularia covered in “brown fuzz” which Ross pointed out was densely packed amphipod tubes, possibly Jassa.

The Ledge
Mat of amphipod tubes coating old stalks of Tubularia on the lip of the ledge exposed to the full force of the tide. Hard to imagine what the place is like at maximum spring tide flow!

Link to Tim Watson’s video
Railway line Wreck Reef: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00LBnTob9j4

First Dive details:

Bat’s Head Reef (3km west of Lulworth Cove)
Position: Drift start: 50° 36.84’N 002° 17.10’W end: 50° 36.89’N 002° 17.97’W (towed GPS RY&NT, WGS84)
Overview: Low rock ledges with scattered medium boulders supporting a diverse invertebrate fauna. Towards the west megaripples of coarse shell and maerl gravel over bedrock with many very active Aequipecten opercularis. Here is a link to Tim Watson’s video
Interesting/unusual species: Scattered Pink seafan Eunicella verrucosa at the start, one juvenile 15mm high reported. Branching sponges and large colonies of Pentapora foliacea. Fragments of live maerl scattered in the megaripples towards the west end of the drift. Sunstar, Crossaster papposus, a rare sighting east of Start Point.
Human impact: Potting in the vicinity.

Second Dive details:

The Ledge (about 1.5km south east of Church Ope Cove, east side of Portland Bill)
Position: 50° 41.48’N 002° 22.47’W (dive boat GPS, WGS84)
Overview: Very gently sloping bedrock dropping slightly more steeply onto a boulder/cobble slope to the north, with short lengths of bedrock ledges. Fauna dominated by hydroid turf, colourful sponges, barnacles and a dense mat of amphipod tubes (possibly Jassa) especially on the parts most exposed to the full force of the tide.
Human impacts: Potting in the vicinity. Large quantities of monofilament line tangled among the boulders and various bits of tackle such as lures, lead weights etc.