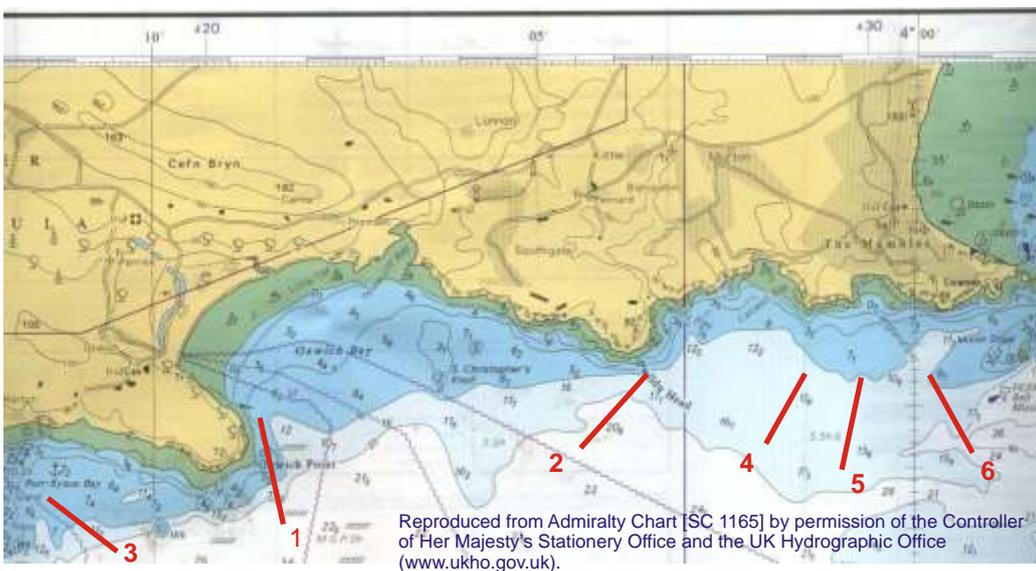


The Gower, South Wales - 10/11 Sept 2005

Although much of the Gower has surveyed and described as a result of Seasearch activities in particular in 1995 (Bunker and Hart 2002), it is some time since there has been a systematic revisit of some sites and there are always new areas that would benefit from investigation. During the weekend of 10th/11th Sept 2005 a group of 13 divers visited a total of 7 separate sites along the Gower coast.



1. Oxwich Wreck, The Solar.

A flat seabed of mixed ground with broken wreckage. The sugar kelp *Laminaria saccharina* which favours a more sheltered environment was recorded here as well as the fragile looking coral worm *Salmacina dysteri*. This site was particularly abundant in fish, in particular the trigger fish *Balistes carolinensis*, a number of wrasse species such as ballan wrasse, cuckoo wrasse and the goldsinny as well as a conger eel and a ling.

2. Pwlldu Head

Although a few gullies were apparent the area was mainly a flat, sandy, gently sloping seabed interspersed with occasional boulders and cobbles and patches of mussel bed, *Mytilus edulis*. A number of fish were observed including the leopard spotted goby and the tompot blenny, *Parablennius gattorugine*. *Sepia officinalis*, the common cuttlefish was also recorded at this site.



3. Overton Bay

A rocky reef with many gullies leading onto sand at the 10m depth contour. Site mainly dominated by kelp, *Laminaria digitata* and mixed algae with animal turf on the sides of the rock. Evidence of potting was also recorded at this site. Species of interest include the twin fan worm, *Bispira volutacornis* and the tiny blue rayed limpet, *Helcion pellucida* which can be found grazing on the stipes of kelp.

71 species were recorded over the weekend. Of particular interest were the trigger fish, *Balistes carolinensis* which were seen at two sites including the Oxwich wreck, the Solar, and Langland Head East. Another summer visitor was the John Dory which was also recorded at the Oxwich Wreck together with 14 other fish species. Only one species of echinoderm was recorded, *Asteria rubens* and this was recorded at most sites.

| Phylum/Class | Common Name | Number of species | Common species | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Porifera | Sponges | 11 | sponge | <i>Raspailia ramosa</i> |
| Cnidaria | Anemones, Corals, hydroids | 7 | hydroid sandalled anemone | <i>Kirchenpaueria pinnata</i> <i>Actinothoe sphyrodeta</i> |
| Crustacea | Crabs, lobsters, Barnacles | 8 | velvet swimming crab edible crab | <i>Necora puber</i> <i>Cancer pagurus</i> |
| Mollusca | Snails, sea Slugs, bivalves | 9 | sea hare common cuttlefish | <i>Aplysia punctata</i> <i>Sepia officinalis</i> |
| Bryozoa | Sea mats | 2 | sea mat | <i>Membranipora membranacea</i> |
| Polychaeta | Bristle worms | 2 | twin spiral fan worm coral worm | <i>Bispira volutacornis</i> <i>Salmacina dysteri</i> |
| Phoronida | Horseshoe worms | 1 | horseshoe worm | <i>Phoronis hippocrepia</i> |
| Echinodermata | Starfish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers | 1 | common starfish | <i>Asterias rubens</i> |
| Tunicata | Sea squirts | 3 | star ascidian sea squirt | <i>Botryllus schlosseri</i> <i>Aplidium sp.</i> |
| Pisces | Fishes | 11 | trigger fish goldsinny | <i>Balistes carolinensis</i> <i>Ctenolabrus rupestris</i> |
| Algae | Seaweeds | 8 | sugar kelp eyelash weed | <i>Laminaria saccharina</i> <i>Calliblepharis ciliata</i> |
| Total Species | | 63 | | |

4. Caswell Rocks

This site was similar to Langland Head and consisted of gently sloping rock with fissures containing cobbles, mussel shells and sand. A number of edible crab as well as lobster, the velvet swimming crab and the common prawn were all recorded as were dogfish, *Scyliorhinus canicula*, tompot blenny and pollack, *Pollachius pollachius*.

5. Langland Head West

A rocky reef with occasional patches of cobbles or sand. Rock dominated by kelp forest and mixed algae including the red alga *Calliblepharis ciliate* and *Delesseria sanguinea*. Animal turf recorded on the sides of the reefs included the sponge *Raspailia ramosa* and the hydroid *Kirchenpaueria pinnata*. 7 crustacea were recorded at this site including the lobster and edible crab.



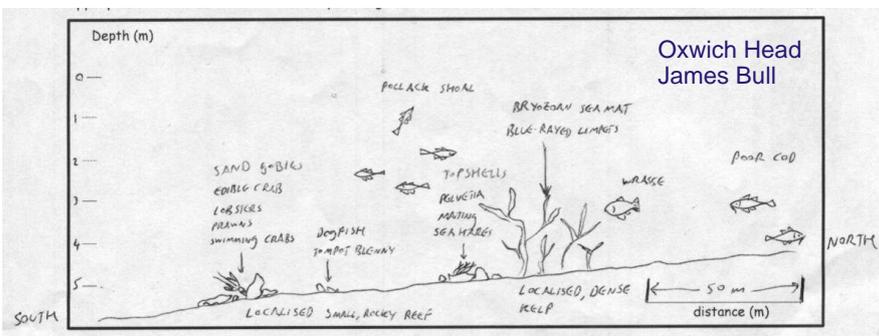
Leon Hopkins



Steve Bound

6. Langland Head East

The gently sloping low lying rock covered in short animals turf and mixed red algae was interspersed with fissures filled with cobbles, sand, gravel and mussel shells. There were a number of Porifera (sponge species) at this site including the elephant ear sponge, *Pachymatisma johnstonia*, a yellow branching sponge, the shredded carrot sponge and the spherical *Suberites* sponge.



Divers

Emma Kenyon, James Bull, Helen Dagless, Mike Wozzley, David Michael, Steve Bound, Kevin Munn, John Morgan, Leon Hopkins, Sheena Davies, Erin Smyth, Janina Henly and Sarah Drake. A special thank you also to Scott Tompsett who organised the weekend and also boat handled.

Bunker, F. and Hart, Suzanna. 2002. Gower Seasearch 1995. A Report to the Countryside Council for Wales from MarineSeen, Estuary Cottage, Bentlass, Hundleton, Pembrokeshire. CCW Science Report No. 516.

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

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