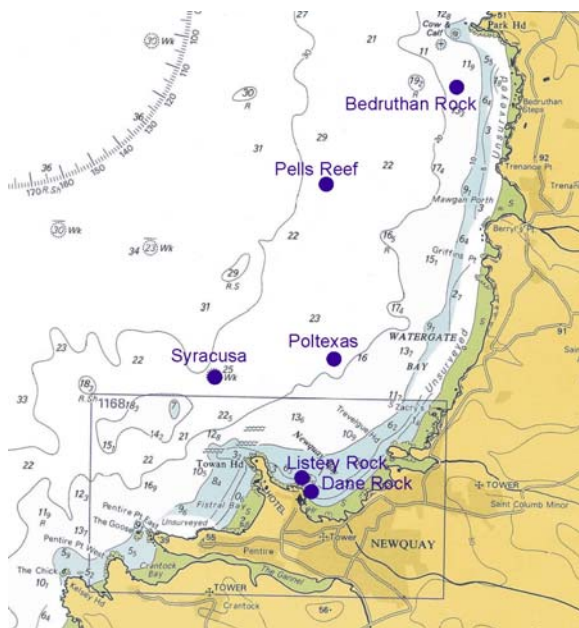


Newquay Weekend 3rd-5th May 2003

A long weekend dive was held over the May Day Bank Holiday specifically to look at sites in the Newquay area on the north Cornish coast since there had been few previous records from the area. The north Cornish coast is exposed to the prevailing westerly winds and has significant ocean swells for much of the year. At the time of our visit sea conditions were choppy offshore and visibility was generally poor. Nevertheless records were made from six sites, four offshore and two closer in. Conditions were not sufficiently good for photography. The weekend was organised for the Marine Conservation Society by Brod Mason and the divers who took in Seasearch recording were - Mike Flavell, Brod Mason, Simon Stagnell, Tim Theobalds, Chris Webb and Chris Wood.

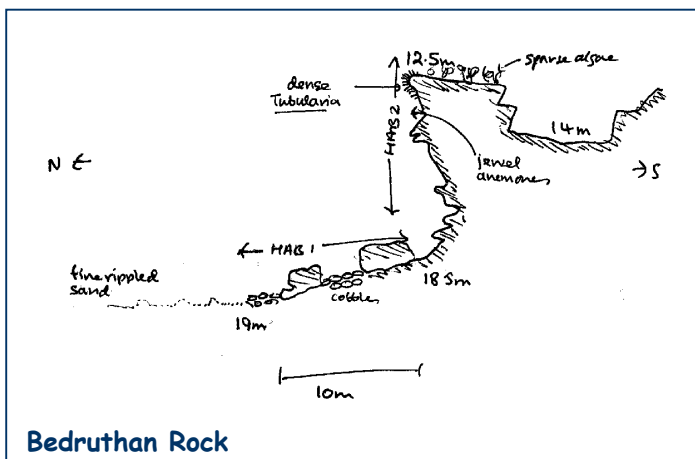
The sites from which records were made are shown on the chart.



Bedruthan Rock is a rocky reef some 2km offshore which rises about 7m from the surrounding sandy sea bed at 18.5m below chart datum (bcd). The lower parts of the reef were scoured by movement of the sand in swelly conditions and had little life attached to them. The upper vertical and overhanging faces had an animal turf in which jewel anemones, both of the sea beards and the oaten pipe hydroid, *Tubularia indivisa*, were prominent. The reef top (11.5m bcd) had a sparse covering of small red algae but this would become much richer later in the year as the survey was undertaken right at the beginning of the growing season.

Pells Reef is a much deeper reef. The surrounding flat gravel is at 29m bcd and the bedrock is only as much as 2m high. The rock is flat topped and extensively undercut to form deep vertical and horizontal fissures. Though there were a few small red algae on upper surfaces the rocks were dominated by animals. The orange sea squirt, *Stolonica socialis* was especially common and there were also potato crisp bryozoans and a number of pink sea fans, though these were in poor condition. The most interesting record was of the yellow trumpet anemones *Parazoanthus axinellae*, a nationally scarce species.

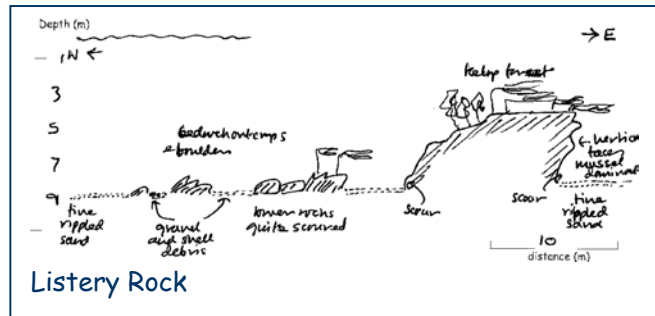
There were a good number of fishes, of which both Bib (pouting) and Poor cod were both common.



Poltexas is another low lying reef rising from a surrounding seabed at 19m bcd to a domed top at 14.5m bcd. There were some furbelows kelp plants at the topmost part but again the main cover was animals in which hydroids were the most common component. There was a good variety of sponges present (7 species) but no fishes were seen on this reef at all. However, it should be noted that underwater visibility was poor (2m).

The **Syracusa** is a metal wreck dating from the 1890s which sits on a sandy sea bed at 31m bcd. Pink sea fans were common on this wreck, especially where protected from swells by the outer sections of the wreck. The oaten pipe hydroid, *Tubularia indivisa*, dominated the upper parts of the upright sections of wreckage. The fish life was surprisingly sparse for a wreck of this size.

Listery Rock and **Dane Rock** are two shallow reef areas close to Newquay Harbour. Both were notable for the large beds of edible mussels which coated many of the rock surfaces. Also found were large numbers of spiny spider crabs and smaller numbers of edible crabs, velvet swimming crabs, hermit crabs and a single lobster. The upper surfaces had a cover of kelp forest with a red algal understory. Human litter, mostly fishing related, was also recorded.



Species Recorded

There was a good range of sponges, anemones, soft corals and fishes recorded, as the table shows, but very few worms, crustaceans, molluscs and sea squirts. The lack of crabs and lobsters may be due to over-exploitation either by fishermen or by divers since the habitat appears to be suitable for them.

Phylum	Common Name	Number of species	Common Species
Porifera	Sponges	13	Goosebump sponge <i>Dysidea fragilis</i> Orange encrusting sponges
Cnidaria	Anemones, corals, hydroids, jellyfish	15	Sea beard <i>Nemertesia ramosa</i>
Annelida	Segmented worms	2	
Crustacea	Crabs, lobsters, barnacles	7	Spiny spider crab <i>Maja squinado</i>
Mollusca	Shells, sea slugs	10	Painted topshell <i>Calliostoma zizyphinum</i>
Bryozoa	Sea mats	4	
Echinodermata	Starfish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers	4	Spiny starfish <i>Marthasterias glacialis</i>
Tunicata	Sea squirts	4	Orange sea squirt <i>Stolonica socialis</i>
Pisces	Fishes	12	
Algae	Seaweeds	5	Cuvie or Kelp <i>Laminaria hyperborea</i> Sea beech <i>Delessaria sanguinea</i>
	Total Species	76	

The species list includes two species which are nationally rare. The Pink sea fan, *Eunicella verrucosa* was found at all of the offshore sites, though numbers were not large. Those at Pells Reef were in poor condition. The yellow cluster anemone, *Parazoanthus axinellae* was found only at Pells Reef.

Text and images by Chris Wood

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

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