

Sarn Cynfelyn 23rd-24th April 2005

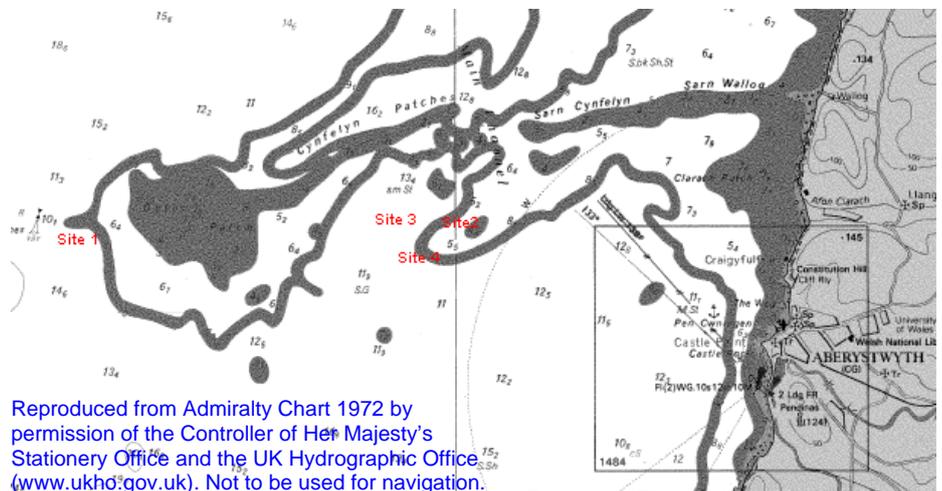
Seasearch surveys were carried out at Sarn Cynfelyn, north west of Aberystwyth, Ceredigion. The weekend was organised by Dr Joanne Porter, Aberystwyth University with the support of dive boats from Aberystwyth and Swansea Universities and Wynne Evans, Cantre'r Gwaelod Dive Club.

Sarn Cynfelyn is a predominantly cobble/pebble bank that extends from the coast to around 7 miles offshore and lies within Cardigan Bay Special Area of Conservation. Friends of Cardigan Bay have been completing cetacean surveys over the last few years in the area and have found that bottlenose dolphins are foraging for food around the Sarns. They are interested to find out what is on the seabed and possibly what is attracting the dolphins. This is the first of a series of Seasearch dives planned around Sarn Cynfelyn.

Site 1: The patches Buoy, 7 miles west of

**Aberystwyth. (52°25.574N
4°16.015W)**

A gravel and cobble substrate at 17-19m bsl interspersed with cobbles and small boulders. The cobbles were covered in hornwrack (*Flustra foliacea*) and herringbone hydroid (*Halecium halecinum*) with some large colonies of ross corals (*Pentapora foliacea*).



The area was active with swimming crabs (*Liocarcinus depurator* and *Necora puber*) and squat lobster (*Galathea intermedia*) were found hiding in the ross coral. The king scallop (*Pecten maximus*) was occasionally recorded as were whelks (*Buccinum undatum*) with large balls of egg masses. The most common fish recorded were butterfish (*Pholis gunnellus*) and dogfish (*Scyliorhinus canicula*).

Site 2: 4 miles west of Aberystwyth. (52°26.627N 4° 10.321W)

A varied site of mixed ground, well sorted sand with ripples at 14m bsl, pebbles and cobbles between 12-14m and patches of small boulders in the shallower areas 6-10m. Reflecting the mixed substrate a diverse mixture of species was found. In the sandy patches there were large anemones (*Urticina felina* and *Urticina eques*). The cobbles were covered in hornwrack (*Flustra foliacea*), dead mens fingers (*Alcyonium digitatum*) and the herring bone hydroid (*Halecium halecinum*). Tubeworms (*Pomotoceros lamarcki*) were also commonly recorded encrusted on the cobbles. The area was active with crabs, edible crabs (*Cancer pagurus*), velvet swimming crabs (*Necora puber*) and hermit crabs (*Diogenes sp.*). Many different fish species were recorded including the greater pipefish (*Syngnathus acus*) and the sea scorpion (*Taurulus bubalis*). In the water column a bloom of small (5cm diameter) moon jellyfish (*Aurelia aurita*) were found.



Site 3: 4.6 miles west of Aberystwyth. (52°26.696N 4°11.123W)

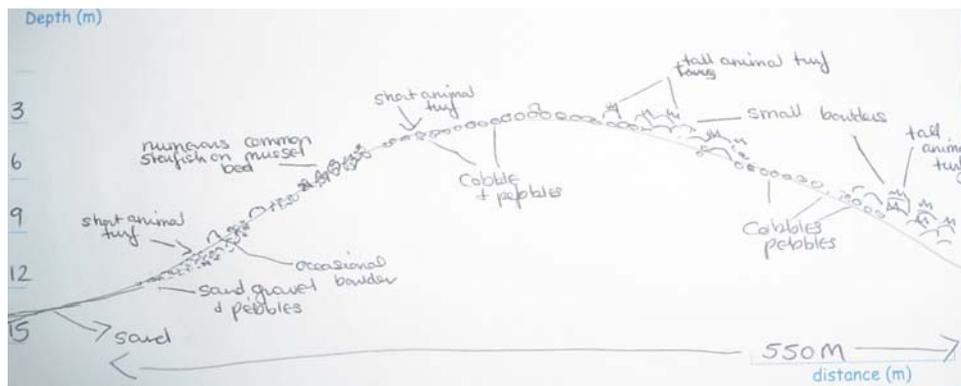


A pebble ground at 7m mixed with cobbles and an occasional boulder. The herringbone hydroid (*Halecium halecinum*) was commonly found covering the cobbles and there was some red algal cover. The area was active in crab life with edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*), hermit crab (*Pagurus sp.*), spider crab (*Maja squinado*) and velvet swimming crab (*Necora puber*) all found. Occasional common starfish (*Asterias rubens*) were recorded and fish life included scorpion fish (*Taurulus bubalis*) and butterflyfish (*Pholis gunnellus*).

Close to the site a pod of 10-15 bottle nosed dolphin were spotted at the surface and a lone atlantic grey seal.

Site 4: 4 miles west of Aberystwyth. (52°26.434N 41°0.650W)

A fairly flat area of sand and gravel ripples giving way to pebbles with occasional cobbles and boulders, gradually getting shallower to 3.5m then descending again to 12m bsl. Shallow areas dominated by a mussel bed (*Mytilus edulis*) densely populated by common starfish (*Asterias rubens*).



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Phylum	Common Name	Number of species	Common Species
Porifera	Sponges	8	carrot sponge <i>Esperiopsis fucorum</i>
			golf ball sponge <i>Tethya aurantium</i>
Cnidaria	Anemones, corals hydroids	11	herringbone hydroid <i>Halecium halecinum</i>
			anemone <i>Urticina eques</i>
Annelida	Segmented worms	2	Keel worm <i>Pomatoceros lamarcki</i>
Crustacea	Crabs, lobster, barnacles	10	swimming crab <i>Liocarcinus depurator</i>
			squat lobster <i>Galathea intermedia</i>
Mollusca	Shells, sea slugs	7	common whelk <i>Buccinum undatum</i>
Bryozoa	Sea mats	6	hornwrack <i>Flustra foliacea</i>
			ross coral <i>Pentapora foliacea</i>
Echinodermata	Starfish, sea urchins	3	sand star <i>Astropecten irregularis</i>
	Sea cucumber		
Tunicata	Sea squirts	2	Star seasquirt <i>Botryllus schlosseri</i>
Pisces	Fishes	9	Scorpion fish <i>Taurulus bubalis</i>
Algae	Seaweeds	0	Only feathery red algae recorded

Divers taking part were - Joanne Porter, Simon Ward, David Michael, Mark Weeks, Hayley Fletcher, Erin Smyth, Pam Evans, Stephanie Morgan, Sarah Drake, Janina Henley, Steve Hancock, Kate Lock, Rebecca Gallie, Stephen Bound and Mario de Maria. Thanks also to Scott Tompsett, Rick Grundy and Wynne Evans for boat handling.

Report prepared by Kate Lock, Photos by Joanne Porter. Full survey results and species lists will be available on the JNCC NBN Gateway.

Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers who wish to contribute to conserving the marine environment. Financial support for the project during 2005 and for the production of this report has been given by:

