

# Reading Branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club

The Clubhouse  
Palmer Park  
Reading, Berkshire  
RG6 1LF



## “What Lies Beneath” (WLB)

### Reading BSAC ‘WLB’ Summary

BSAC Southern Region, through Alison Mayor as the Expedition Leader, arranged an underwater survey project to survey a number of nautical anomalies in the Eastern Solent. The primary project aim was to provide training and experience for Branches to undertake underwater survey of sites along the South Coast and to inspire members to undertake adventurous and meaningful projects in the future.

Project objectives were to;

- a) Provide a structure and support for participating Branches to be able to explore, investigate and record a number of underwater sites along the South Coast;
- b) Promote inter-branch co-operation;
- c) Encourage members within Branches to dive with a purpose and work as a team;
- d) To engender a spirit of exploration and adventure by diving unknown sites;
- e) Develop survey techniques and project management skills at Branch level;
- f) Improve dive management and planning skills;
- g) Provide a public record of what was found at each site and the marine life present; and
- h) Promote the responsible/respectful diving and recreational diving opportunities along the South Coast and beyond.

Reading BSAC undertook to survey three of these anomalous sites:

UKHO Ref	Latitude	Longitude	Comments
6 – 19114	50°43'.517 N	001°04'.720 W	A shallow site (maximum dived depth 9.7 metres). Main point of interest about 50 metres of partially embedded large chain (no anchor). Chain link size: about 45-47 cm circumference and 17 centimetres thick. Further dives not considered a priority.
13 – 20030	50°39'.302 N	000°59'.121 W	Dived just once, with some divers in a substantial current. Small steel girder identified. Seems like this is a site with various bits of small metal detritus spread across at least a hectare. No discernible wreck found. This does match with the variable history noted by UKHO, including considerable dredging. This site is also rather uncomfortably close to one of the cross channel ferry routes. Further dives not considered a priority, nor an attraction.
19 - 20249	50°40'.925 N	000°58'.643 W	A ‘Wreck’. Seems to be a mainly steel wreck about 25m by 7m, but with other metals. Several cross bulk-heads. Not established as yet whether this might be a boat or some kind of aircraft. Reading BSAC intend to continue with surveys of this ‘wreck’.

## **Reading BSAC 'WLB' Introduction**

Reading BSAC, Branch No 28, is a traditional diving club established in 1954.

We are fortunate to have our own clubhouse, at Palmer Park in Reading, developed by Members over the last eight years. This is where we house our two RIBs. We have relationships with other diving clubs in the Berkshire area, and a number of them share our clubhouse, through the 'Thames Valley Sub-Aqua Club' that we constituted for that purpose.

However, 'What Lies Beneath' has been undertaken by Reading BSAC divers only, to respect the funding aspirations.

Nine of us are already Nautical Archaeological Society - NAS Part 1 qualified, and another group of branch members are about to undertake the NAS Introductory and Part 1 courses.

Reading BSAC undertook to survey three sites, 6, 13 and 19, and these were allocated as:

Site 6 – John Bawden

Site 13 – Mark Carter

Site 19 – Alison Bawden

Mark is a very keen diver and senior Member of Reading BSAC, who undertook the most dives by any Reading BSAC Member in year 2012-2013. He is a former Equipment Officer and Bar Member of Reading BSAC, and is presently aiming to complete his Advanced Diver qualification. He will be undertaking NAS Introductory and Part 1 training in the near future.

Alison and John are both NAS qualified, and are BSAC Advanced Divers, originally with CMAS qualifications. Both are Instructors of BSAC and CMAS. John is a former Chairman of the Mauritius Underwater Group (BSAC Branch 228) and of Reading (BSAC Branch 28), and was the Diving Officer of Reading BSAC for several years. He is a former member of the first overseas BSAC branch, Kingston, Jamaica (Branch 10). Alison is a former Officer of the Mauritius Underwater Group, and has been Training Officer of Reading BSAC on several occasions. Alison and John are founder Members of the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society, and over the last few years have re-visited and photographed some of the wrecks sunk in the Indian Ocean as artificial reefs in the 1980s. Alison and John's first experience with underwater nautical surveys was on HMS Sirius, off Mahebourg, Mauritius, in 1981.

Mark, Alison and John are experienced RIB and hard boat divers, and photographers.

Although the three sites were allocated to the three of us as shown above, we have actually undertaken this as a joint exercise, with this composite report.

Other Reading BSAC Members involved in these surveys were Sue Mitchell, Colin Matthews, Emma Harris, Gareth Corfield, Sheena Money and Rowan Pulford. We expect several other Members to become involved as we continue our surveys of Site 19; some being less-experienced divers.

## **Reading RBSAC 'WLB' Training**

The majority of branch divers involved in 'WLB' were already NAS trained. Others aim to complete this on a NAS course over winter 2013-2014.

The planning of the survey days were used as part of the Advanced Diver preparation for two of our divers.

## **Reading BSAC 'WIB' Diving Expedition and Survey Planning**

We planned the diving part of the survey days in accordance with our usual practices, as an active RIB-diving and hard boat-diving club. Planning was used as part of Advanced Diver training for Emma Harris and Mark Carter, and their attention to detail was commendable. Charts of the Eastern Solent and Tide Tables were considered in great detail. Launch-site logistics were established, and there were no issues. Eating and toileting logistics were well-planned and worked well. Our first survey day was very hot and suitable precautions were planned and followed.

There was communication with the harbour authority at Portsmouth, and although the information received on the routing of some smaller ferries, and the timing of arrival of one large cargo vessel, was inaccurate, this did not lead to any problems. Other information received was accurate and useful.

A detailed underwater survey plan was prepared before the first dive, and although most of this has yet to be enacted in detail, it was a good exercise to prepare it. Surveys will be continued, in more detail going forwards, at Site 19.

## **Reading BSAC 'WLB' What Actually Happened**

What went well was the normal dive organisation and preparation, RIB launching and retrieval, the actual diving and initial surveys.

Our divers were a little unhappy on Site 13 as one small cross-channel ferry followed a route quite close to the dive site and between that site and the eastern end of the Isle of Wight. We had checked with the harbour authority at Portsmouth and we not been made aware that any substantially-sized ferries would use a route like that.

Additionally a very, very large cargo vessel (to us) came up the normal dredged channel when it was not expected. There was never any danger or risk to our boats or divers, by a substantial margin, but it was unnecessarily unpleasant to some divers. The Reading BSAC divers involved in this survey will not be diving near Site 13 again.

Diving photographs were taken on each day's diving, and these will become more useful as survey of Site 19 in particular is developed in the future. A small selection photographs is attached herewith.

## **Reading BSAC 'WLB' Survey Results**

### **Site 6**

This is a shallow site (maximum dived depth 9.7 metres). Main point of interest about 50 metres of partially embedded large chain (no anchor). Chain link size: about 45-47 cm circumference and 17 centimetres thick. Further dives not considered a priority, although it may be dived again as a comparison with Site 19.

### **Site 13**

Dived just once, with some divers in a substantial current. Small steel girder identified. Seems like this is a site with various bits of small metal detritus spread across at least a hectare. No discernible wreck found. This does match with the variable history noted by UKHO, including considerable dredging. This site is also rather uncomfortably close to one of the cross channel

ferry routes. Further dives not considered a priority, nor an attraction. The Reading BSAC divers involved in this survey will probably not be diving near Site 13 again.

## **Site 19**

We are very pleased to report that the anomaly at this site is a 'Wreck'. Seems to be a mainly steel wreck, about 25 metres long by 7 metres wide, but with some other metals in the wreckage. There are several cross bulk-heads. It has not been established as yet whether this might be the wreckage of a sea-going craft or of some kind of aircraft. Reading BSAC divers intend to continue with surveys of this 'wreck'.

Attached are initial Site Plan Sketches, SeaSearch Observations and Photographs to date of Site 19.

## **Reading BSAC 'WLB' Historical Research**

To date we have not undertaken the necessary historical research for Site 19, but we aim to do so. There have been a number of discussions between the Reading BSAC divers who have been involved so far, particularly as regards the nature of the craft at Site 19, given its mixture of metals.

## **Reading BSAC 'Conclusions'**

Although benefits have been limited to a few divers within Reading BSAC to date, it has been a good experience for those divers. Far more divers will benefit going forwards as they contribute to research and survey at Site 19.

We are a diving branch that plans dives for one and two years ahead and ideally WLB needed to have taken place during the next year, as we would now be planning for 2015.

We have enjoyed the opportunity to dive in the Eastern Solent as from the Thames Valley we tend to go west. We will continue for as long as is needed with Site19, and it may well become a regular default winter dive of choice.

December 2013

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**Some Records to Date of Site 19**

What Lies Beneath

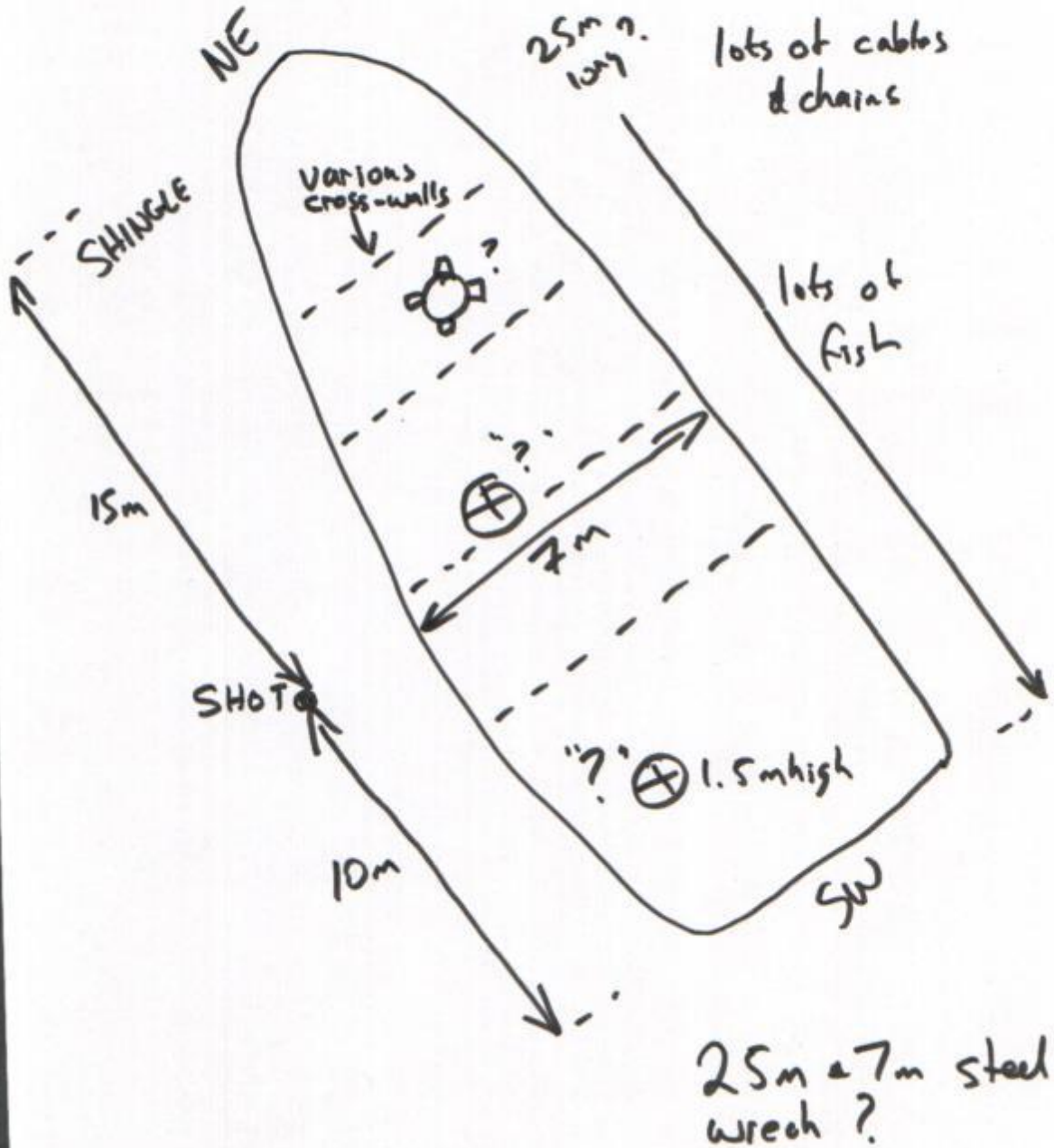
Site 19

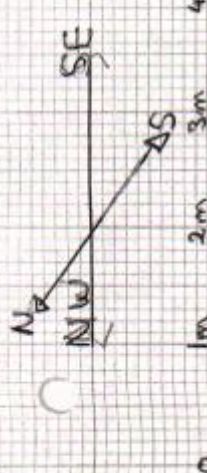
6 July 13

50° 40'. 925N  
000° 58'. 686W

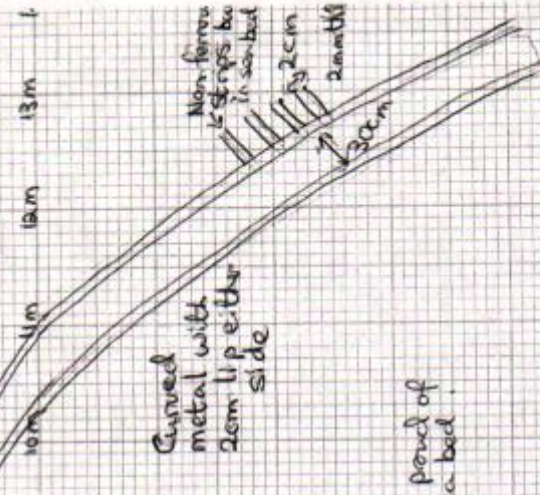
Approx  
dimensions  
from 1st dive.

↑ NORTH

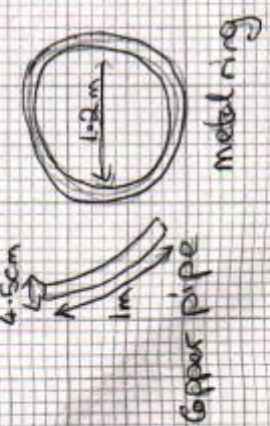
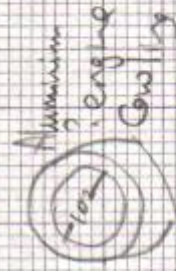




Small Vessel, Possibly Tanker or Barge  
 50° 39.302' N 000° 59.121' W



Flat top of those metal cylinders seem to be covered in a thin neoprene rubber layer.



Record no  
 (please leave blank)

# Seasearch Observation Form

This form asks for two types of information from your dive - what the seabed was like and what marine life you saw. Please read the guidance notes before completing the form. By completing this form you will be adding to our knowledge of the marine environment - helping it to remain fit for life!  
 Please complete the following sections in a black pen and BLOCK CAPITALS

Name SUE MITCHELL  
 Address 57 CRESSINGTON ROAD  
READING Postcode RG2 7RX  
 Tel: Home 0118 756740 Mobile 0777 472573  
 Email mike@seasearch.org.uk  
 Buddy's Name MARIE CARTER

Site Name SUNNYSIDE Date of Dive 06/07/13  
TRAFALGAR SQUARE Start of Dive 10:05 (local time)  
 Dive duration 41 mins  
 General Location (inc county) LONDON  
 Max depth of survey 16.2 m  
 Sea Temperature 16 °C  
 UNW visibility 3-4 m  
 Position at start of dive (reference a depth in metres) or OS Grid Reference  
50° 55' 30" N 0° 07' 10" W or 11  
 Position derived from (circle)  GPS  Chart  OS Map  Web mapping site  
 Drift dive?  yes /  no  
 Night dive?  yes /  no  
 Did you take any photographs?  yes /  no or video footage?  yes /  no

SEASearch

### Thank you for completing this form

All data's for you to do is to either hand in to the Dive Observer or file it into their's using the return lines. If you can't hand in to either, add a stamp and send it off. Your contact details will be included on the Seasearch database and those of partner organisations. We will be used to send you information about Seasearch and associated projects. It will not be passed to third parties without your consent. The location, dive details, habitats and species information and the names of the participants will be entered into a database and made available to the participating organisations and the general public. If you do not agree with this use of the data do not submit the form.

for Seasearch use only validated by                      date                       
 entered by                      date                       
 MarRec No                     



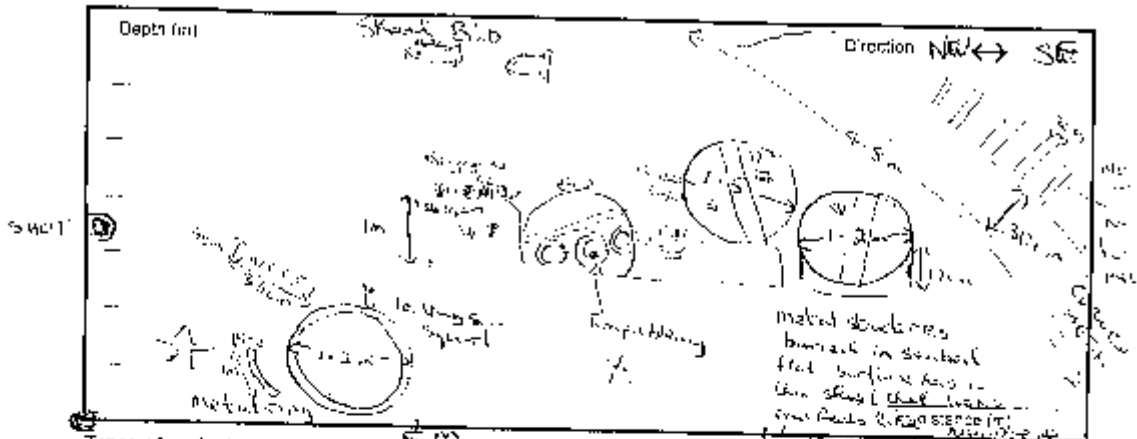
Seasearch  
 Marine Conservation Society  
 Unit 3, Weir Business Park  
 Alton Road  
 Ruyton-Wye  
 Herefordshire  
 HR9 5NB



Seasearch is a joint project coordinated by the Marine Conservation Society and supported by: The Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Environmental Agency, Marine Biological Association (UK), British Sub-Aqua Club, Professional Association of Diving Instructors, Scottish Sub-aqua Club, Sub-Aqua Association, Irish Underwater Centre and the Nautical Archaeology Society

**Description of the seabed**

Please draw an approximate profile of the seabed (i.e. a side-on view), labeling features and dominant forms as appropriate. Remember to show the depth range, direction and a distance scale.



Types of seabed present: (please tick all that you saw and circle the dominant one)

- Rocky Reef     Boulders     Cobbles and Pebbles     Mixed Ground     Sand and Gravel     Mud     Wreckage     Other

Did you notice anything unusual or noteworthy about the seabed or the marine life?

Was there any litter or were there any man-made objects apparent?

Mud, silt with stones 2-5cm size. Littered with dead starfish limpet shells

Some things you observe: 5-6cm mud-like structures seemed to have a black respiratory tube coming out of top. Soft-bodied animals, limpets, etc.

**What marine life did you see on your dive?**

Seabed cover types (tick all those present):

Species you saw

Show abundance of each species as Rare, Occasional, Common or if you're unsure Present

- Kelp forest     Animal turf on rocks  Short     Wreckage
- Kelp park     Tall
- Mixed seaweeds
- Encrusting pink algae
- Barren sediment (no life or structures apparent)
- Animal Beds (e.g. mussels, bristlelets, sea fans - state which)  Starfish limpets
- Sediment with life apparent (tubes, burrows etc)

Species	Abundance
Stoppers limpets	C
Green scabbards	C
Black crabs	C
Green whelks	R
Parrotfish sunshell	O
Flower braggies	O
Spotted braggies	O
Worms	C
Catfish braggies	O
Common starfish	O
Shed of Biba (100+)	C
toothed sea squirt	R
fluted sea squirt	R
Star sea squirt	R
Turn out Blenny	P
Chickadee worm	P
Dead mussel rings	P
Sea urchin	C
Large edible crab (3cm)	P

Common Lobster (1) P  
 Blenny regalis P  
 Keel worm P

**Thank you for completing this form**

All data's put for you to see in to either hand in to the Dive Organisation form a month after you have submitted the data or on the website. Your contact details will be included on this Seasearch database and if you have any questions and will be used to send you information about Seasearch and associated projects. It will not be passed to third parties without your consent. The location, dive details, fatalities and species information and the name of the recorder will be entered into a database and made available to the participating organisations and the general public. If you do not agree with this use of the data do not submit the form.

Validated by  date

Entered by  date

MarRec No

Notes  
to  
data  
entry

Seasearch  
Marine Conservation Society  
Unit 3, Wolf Business Park  
Aston Road  
Ross-on-Wye  
Herefordshire  
HR9 5NB



Seasearch is a joint project coordinated by the Marine Conservation Society and supported by The Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Environment Agency, Marine Biological Association (MBA), British Sub-Aqua Club, Professional Association of Diving Instructors, British Sub-Aqua Club, Sub-Aqua Association, Irish Underwater Council and the National Antiquarian Society.

Record no   
(consider front blank)

Seasearch  
www.seasearch.org.uk

**Observation Form**

This form asks for two types of information from your dive - what the seabed was like and what marine life you saw. Please read the guidance notes before completing the form. By completing this form you will be adding to our knowledge of the marine environment - helping it to remain fit for life!  
Please complete the following sections in a black pen and BLOCK CAPITALS

Name SAUL MITCHELL

Address 57 SEESAWAY AVE RD  
ROSEN PIN G  
BIGGLES Postcode PL27 7RX

Tel: Home 01752 81410 Mobile 07772132575

Email sauletmitchell@seasearch.org.uk

Buddy's Name ALAN K CARTER

Site Name 1 - DEEVEE Date of Dive 06/07/13

MAGNATONACTED Start of dive 15:37 GMT

ANIMALICS Dive duration 39 mins

General Location Max depth of survey 17.6 m  
(inc county)

ANTHEM SOURCE Sea Temperature 16 °C

UWV visibility 5 - 6 m

Position at start of dive (input as decimal numbers only) or OS Grid Reference  
50° 14' 17.3" N 005° 03' 16.3" W or E

Position derived from (circle)  Chart  OS Map  Web mapping site:  Yes  No

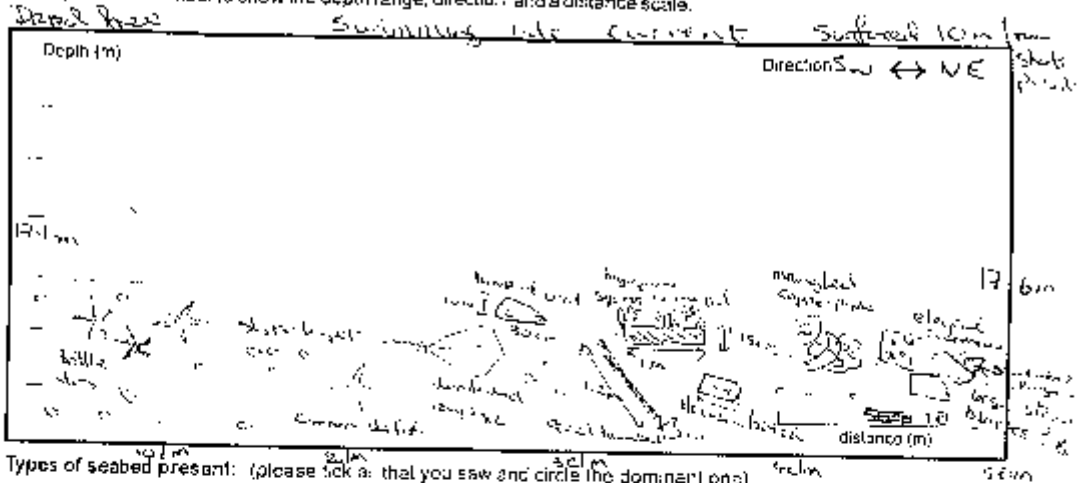
GPS  Yes  No

Did you take any photographs?  Yes  No or video footage?  Yes  No

SC01 0114

**Description of the seabed**

Please draw an approximate profile of the seabed (i.e. a side-on view), labelling features and dominant forms as appropriate. Remember to show the depth range, direction and a distance scale.



Types of seabed present: (please tick all that you saw and circle the dominant one)

- Rocky Reef  Boulders  Cobbles and Pebbles  Mixed Ground  Sand and Gravel  Mud  Wreckage  Other

Did you notice anything unusual or noteworthy about the seabed or the marine life?

Was there any litter or were there any man-made objects apparent?

[Empty box for notes]

*Litter was not observed to see small pieces of wreckage scattered*

**What marine life did you see on your dive?**

Seabed cover types (tick all those present)

Kelp forest



Animal turf on rocks

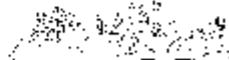
Short



Kelp park



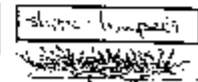
Tall



Mixed seaweeds



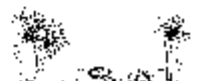
Animal Beds (e.g. mussels, brittlestars, scallops - state which)



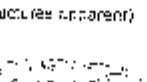
Encrusting pink algae



Sediment with life apparent (tubes, burrows etc)



Barren sediment (no life or structures apparent)



Illustrations by Roy Pascoe 2002

Species you saw

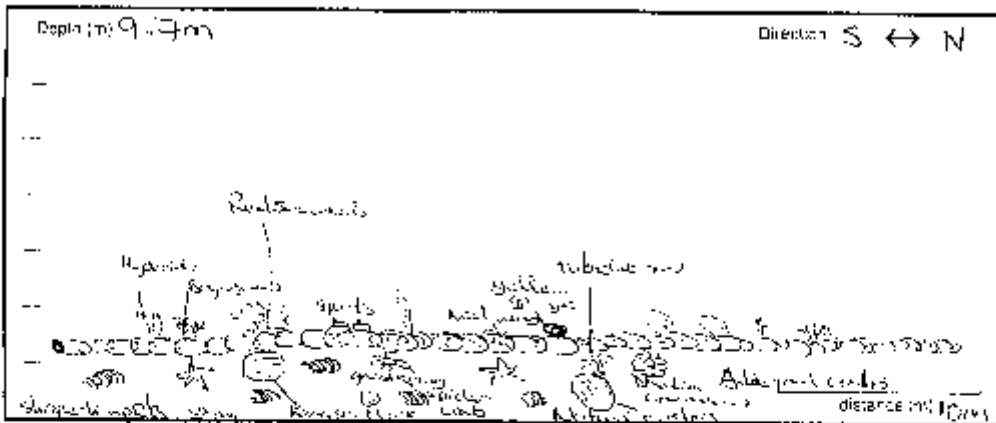
Show abundance of each species as Rare, Occasional, Common, or if you're unsure, Present

Species	Abundance
<i>Shore limpets</i>	C
<i>Brittle stars (common)</i>	O
<i>Diploria</i>	C
<i>Armadillo</i>	C
<i>Common starfish</i>	C
<i>Painted Top shell</i>	P
<i>Red starfish</i>	O
<i>Small murex</i>	P
<i>Small starfish</i>	O
<i>Therobranchid ray (2)</i>	O
<i>Hermit crab</i>	C
<i>Yellow-legged spider crab (1)</i>	P
<i>Elephant armoured crab (white)</i>	O
<i>Star</i>	C



**Description of the seabed**

Please draw an approximate profile of the seabed (i.e. a side-on view), labelling features and dominant forms as appropriate. Remember to show the depth range, direction and a distance scale



Types of seabed present: (please tick all that you saw and circle the dominant one)

- Rocky Reef  Boulders  Cobbles and Pebbles  Mixed Ground  Sand and Gravel  Mud  Wreckage  Other

Did you notice anything unusual or noteworthy about the seabed or the marine life?

Was there any litter or were there any man-made objects apparent?

Mud, silt, gravel

Chosen links 4.7m in diameter and 1.7m in thickness

**What marine life did you see on your dive?**

Seabed cover types (tick all those present)

- Kelp forest
- Kelp park
- Mixed seaweeds
- Encrusting pink algae
- Barren sediment (no life or structures apparent)
- Animal turf on rocks  Short  No rocks  Tall
- Animal Beds (e.g. mussels, limpets, sea tops - state which)  Limpets
- Sediment with life apparent (flukes, burrows etc)
- None of the above

Species you saw

Show abundance of each species as Rare, Occasional, Common, or if you're unsure Present

Species	Abundance
Slipper limpets	C
Spiny limpets	C
King scallops	C
Queen scallops	C
Large rock limpets	C
Small limpets	C
Starfish	C
Tube worms	C
Nereis	C
Urosalpinx	C
Hydras	C
Polychaetes	C
Keel worms	C
Yellow bracken worms	P
Red worm	P

