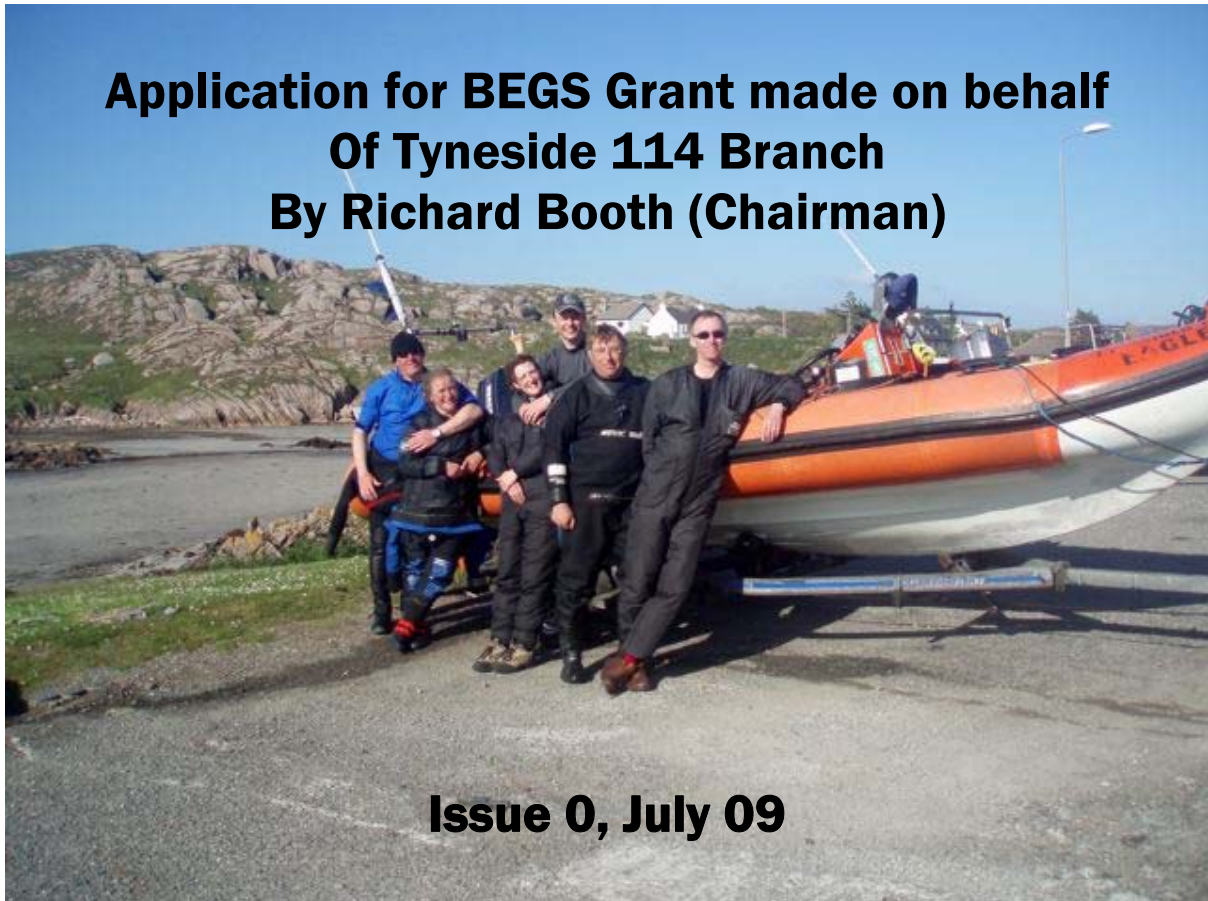


# **EXPEDITION REPORT SOUTH WEST MULL 2009**

**Expedition Leader: Andy Hunt**

**Application for BEGS Grant made on behalf  
Of Tyneside 114 Branch  
By Richard Booth (Chairman)**



**Issue 0, July 09**

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## EXPEDITION DIARY

### In the weeks running up to the expedition.

Regardless of how well prepared you think you are, it always seems a rush as the day for the start of the expedition arrives. The positive side of this situation is that things that might have been put of for a while actually get done so that the expedition can go ahead. The Mull expedition was no exception in this regard.

Boat repairs were required as usual, having sustained the usual wear and tear from weekend club dives earlier in the season. A trailer braking damper needed replacing, seat covers were recovered (in an attractive Burberry pattern), lights repaired and a water pump diaphragm needed replacing.

The long awaiting VHF DSC course happened and as a result there was a flurry of activity to get radio licenses and MMSI's and update our details on HM Coastguards vessel identification scheme. Most of which thankfully could be done on-line.

The second portable compressor finally got its new handle and our resident club joiner Bob Taylor completed the new quality compressor storage boxes. If you every want to see the high quality of Bob's work simply charter Elizabeth G or Hjalmar Bjorge; he did the refit wood joinery work!

Most of the expedition team this year could not get away early from work to travel half way up on the Friday night. Overnight travel is generally less stressful as you miss rush hour traffic and holiday traffic (I of course do not count divers as holiday traffic – they are on a mission to get to the destination and quick as possible and get on with the diving bit). The consequences however of a longer journey became apparent later on in the trip as fatigue set in earlier than usual. Still it saved everyone the best part of £50 as there was no B&B and pub meal to pay for.

### **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May**

We finally set off on Saturday with Nic and Simon heading to Tesco's en-route to get non-perishable provisions, Richard and Belinda towing up one of the club RHIBS and Fiona and myself the other. Dave took the bulk on the cylinders and weightbelts and bulky items to lighten the load in the towing cars. Maurice and Collette did manage to get away early on Friday so on Saturday they drove leisurely to the accommodation on Mull and settled in.

After a long journey up the stragglers (surprisingly those not towing) all arrived on the Corran Ferry together. Nic and Simon just about made the last Loch Aline ferry. Dave alas, despite being immediately behind Nic and Simon, reverted to holiday mode and missed the turning and thus the ferry (the last one to sail that day) as he admired the scenery on route to Mallaig rather than Loch Aline.



### **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May**

The weather forecast was not looking promising for the week ahead. There seemed to be two weather windows for diving the Torrains. One at 6 to 10am today and the other later in the week (probably for a shorter period of time). Alas, as Dave had the kit and was on the early morning ferry, the first weather window had passed. We were already onto plan B!

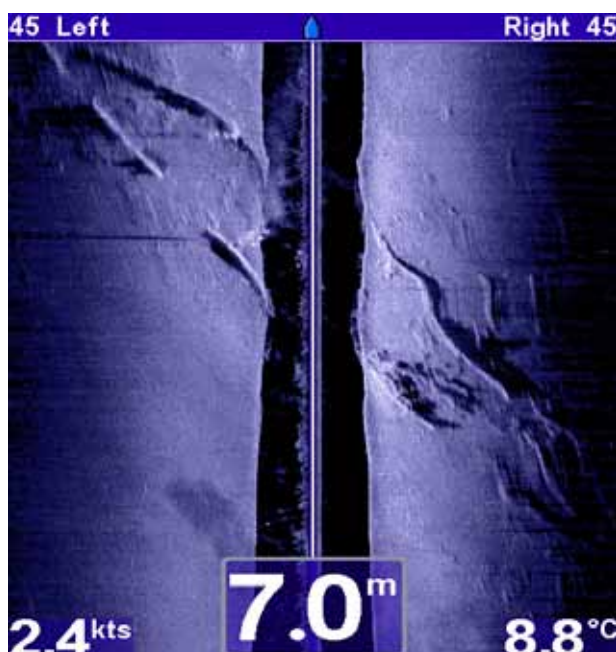
Andy and Fiona left everyone getting kit ready and set out for the local Baptist church in Bunessan. After the service one of the church congregation pointed out the access to the old boat yard which we had missed on our initial reconnaissance drive into Bunessan. The access to the old boat yard is across privately owned land for which we'd



previously obtained permission to use before the expedition. Unfortunately the slip way was in no fit state of repair for launching RHIBS, even if we did have a 4x4 vehicle. This was unfortunate as it would have saved an 8 mile round trip each day to access our back up sites, one of which ironically was only a few hundred metres off the slipway, the wreck of SS Ostende.

The remainder of the team had spent the morning putting dive kit together once Dave had finally arrived. We set off and given the inclement weather from the W and SW, headed out to dive the SS Ostende but going the long way around.

There is not much of a wreck left – virtually nothing stands more than 1m above the seabed and was marked on our chart plotter by a foul ground rather than the nearby wreck symbol. We got some good transits and a good side scan image.



### Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May

Having earlier reviewed some of the backup sites and also decided on a couple of promising looking sites we spotted en- route to the SS Ostende that we hadn't originally considered we set off for another days diving. These sites were close into the shore and provided shelter from the strong southerly breeze.



Crab patch proved to be an interesting site with a few sandy gulleys full of scallops (out of the reach of dredgers). Eileen an Lianthanaich however proved to be something of a dull dive on the South Side of the island although a little more interesting on the north. We took the opportunity to try the scooters and using a GPS tracker on the boat attempted to plot the progress of the group with the scooters and without. Those with the scooters covered approximately twice the distance as those without.



The second pair in the water however, encountered a problem with the scooters. Speed reduced to half the original speed and one intermittently cut out. The latter problem was later traced to incorrect stowing of the battery connections in its housing. The dive with the scooters was a useful exercise for figuring out how we would conduct the search for the Cathcartpark, if the weather allowed us to get near to the site.

Later that evening we had a problem with one of the two club compressors. Having failed to locate the problem and solve it, we spent most of the evening filling cylinders with the remaining working compressor. The decision was swiftly made to head to Tobermory the next day to visit one of the islands engineers, Adi, with the aim of getting the second compressor working again.

### **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May**

It took 2 hours towing both boats to get to Tobermory, not helped by one of the boat trailers suffering a burst tyre after Maurice was forced off the road by an on coming car!. Once there we left the compressor at Adi's work shop and headed out to dive a firm favourite, the Hispania. Given the weather



was coming in from the west today it was good to get relative shelter in the Sound of Mull. Most of the group had surprisingly not dived the Hispania before, so it was an unexpected bonus. Our earlier misadventure with the tyre had left us chasing the tide and we just about managed to launch and catch slack water. Half an hour later and it would have been very embarrassing. The facilities had improved greatly since we'd last visited Mull and launched boats from the slipway beside the marina.

When we arrived back to Tobermory we headed back up to Adi's workshop to see what he had found. Nothing it would appear. The compressor was now working perfectly and continued to do so for the remainder of the trip. Maybe being bounced around for 2 hours had done the trick; it got another 2 hours bumpy ride back but fortunately continued to work for the remainder of the expedition without any further problems.

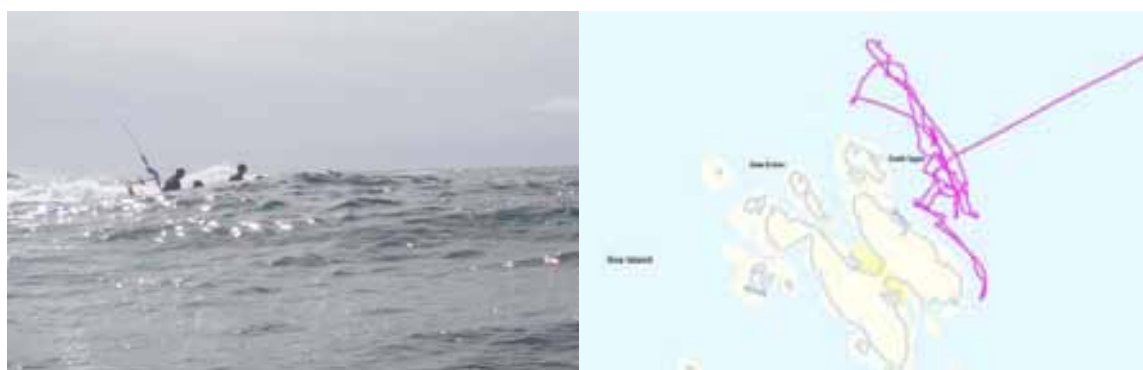
### **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May**

The wind was dying down but not quite sufficiently to get out of the Sound of Iona. We sought shelter again, this time heading towards Rubha Chlaidheimh and a location which on the chart appeared to offer a good wall. There was a small section of wall from about 15 to 20m which was interesting but the rest was a fairly boring steep slope that had in the past clearly been dredged.

The wind dropped and we decided to head to the South of the sound of Iona. The waves had died down but the swell remained. We checked the strength of the tide and figured out a strategy to recover divers if they surfaced too close to the breaking wave on the rocks. We had been given some 'intelligence' on the location of the Cathcart Park and investigated this position first with a side scan and then deployed our dive search teams to search the vicinity of the mark and then drift along the 10 and 15m contours.

Given the strength of the tide (about 0.5 to 1knot) the scooters remained in the boat.

The boats tracked the bubbles which was quite difficult to do in the swell. One of the boats had the GPS tracker onboard so we could trace and plot exactly where we had searched.



However the swell, despite providing a spectacular backdrop for some photographs and preventing us diving the other possible locations had proved to be exhausting for one of the coxens. The second search area was in a sheltered bay and the dive was aborted shortly after it started.

Tiredness had set in. It was time for an early night if that was possible.

### **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May**

Today we dived more plan B sites. The overcast, windy and grey conditions sapped moral but we did find a couple of pretty decent dive sites. We dived the black basaltic columns off Bogha Paisart to discover sheer walls from 20m to 40m and beyond with quite a reasonable amount of life.

For the second dive we headed further up into Loch Scridian to Bogha Mor. We weren't expecting much and again set out with the intention of practicing our search techniques with the scooters, in case by some miracle the weather cleared and we were able to head back out towards the Torrains.

This reef however proved to be a fantastic scenic dive with an excellent little wall and surface waters full of common jellyfish. Given its location in the Loch, this dive was a pleasant surprise.



### Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May

The wind had changed direction and increased to SE force 5 to 6 which again wiped out plans for our main search area. We decided instead to try to seek shelter underneath the 400m high cliffs to the north. This plan would mean driving across about 3 nautical miles of sea, whipped up by the strong SE wind before hopefully getting shelter. The target was Sgeir a Chaideimh Mor, a reef which breaks the surface just offshore a couple miles north of the Ardmeanach headland. We were in for a rough ride. We bashed our way through the waves before having a minor engine problem and almost losing a man overboard. Having fixed the engine and made sure we had everyone back on board we again headed off, hoping to gain shelter from the wind and the waves under the lee of the imposing cliffs that tower above this coastline.

The wave height lessened as we approached the target site but counter intuitively the wind seemed to be accelerating along the cliffs, forming wind devils and whipping up the sea. At times you could not hear yourself think as the wind howled past the boat the residual long swell combined with this wind however made diving the reef dangerous, so we headed further inshore to explore Dubh Sgeir Mhor, which offered better shelter from the wind and swell. Although the viz was ok the dive itself was not that great. The weather and sea conditions meant that we couldn't get divers dropped in on the wall, and the long low swell made the relatively shallow dive a fairly uncomfortable experience.

We headed off to find shelter for the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of divers. We chose Rubha Chlaidheidm again, with a view to exploring the wall that appeared on the chart. Andy's rebreather however had had enough of the bumpy boat ride and refused to play (connection to cell had worked loose it would later transpire) so a single 12lt set was rustled together. Although no wall was found the gulleys proved to be good scallop territory, as the dredgers hadn't



managed to get in and trash this particular bit of the seabed. Otherwise it would have been a very, very dull dive.

With a strengthening wind and the desire to finish on a relative high, the marine biologists in the group settled for another dive on the SS Ostende again. Photographs of a particular species of Sea Pen were sought and obtained! Although the sun started to shine, the wind didn't really drop but you could see why the area was used as an anchorage. The sea within this sheltered bay was totally flat.

We headed back with the wind behind us and took the opportunity to try to get some action shots of the boats.



## COMPLETION OF EXPEDITION AIMS

So how well did we fair on our aims?

*“The primary aims of this Tyneside 114 Branch expedition is to seek out new dive sites off the SW tip of the Isle of Mull, Scotland. It also plans to conduct a wreck survey and Seasearch on the wreck of the SS Ostende.”*

The main target was the wreck of the Cathcartpark. Unfortunately the weather was against us although we did manage to complete 1 wave of dives in one of the shortlisted search areas. The weather also forced us to look to our backup sites. That's just UK diving for you! If we'd have been there the week after we would have managed to dive the main sites but alas we were all back at work, recovering.

We did dive the SS Ostende, got a very good sidescan image of it (confirming not much is left at all) and conducted a number of Seasearch (there weren't any we knew of in the area prior to our visit). We also explored and documented a number of sites to the north of the Ross of Mull and in Loch Scridian; a mixed bag but with some surprises.

We also had some training aims:

*“Training courses will be run in an attempt to obtain these skills for those that do not currently have them, prior to the expedition where timing permits or if appropriate completed on the expedition. (Diver Coxen, MCS Seasearch, Wreck appreciation (mapping skills in particular), Marine VHF DSC operation)”*

The expedition provided the motivation to do courses and put them into action. Nic Faulks had done a MCS Seasearch course and took the lead in this, doing the paperwork and helping us identify the underwater fish and flowers. A wreck appreciation course had been completed some months prior to the expedition although in the end there was not much in the way of wreckage to appreciate. Just before we set off most of the team got their VHF DSC licences and during the expedition the hours behind the wheel were clocked up as some of the team worked towards their diver Coxen award (exam still to be taken). So pretty successful overall.

*“Aim to publish an expedition report in DIVE”*

An article has been written and will shortly be sent to DIVE magazine for the editors consideration. We are hopeful that they will publish it, but if not we'll put it up on our own club website and submit it for publication on the BSAC travel trip report website.

## **COSTS**

A full and detailed spreadsheet is contained in Appendix A. The individual cost for expedition participants was budgeted at £435 per individual and in the end came in slightly over at £452. Bearing in mind that this cost includes everything, apart from the alcohol consumed during the week, this price is pretty good value. We could have done with an extra diver to help keep costs down per head and that would have taken us up to full capacity in the RHIBS.

We are also very grateful for the BSAC BEGS Grant which helped pay for the Scooter and the VHF DSC Course. The scooters will continue to be a valuable asset for the club on its future expeditions and indeed in the pool.

Scanned copies of dive logs and receipts have been submitted along with this receipt to support the costing given in Appendix A.

## **SITE LOCATIONS**

Accurate GPS marks and a map showing the location of the sites dived is shown in Appendix B.

## **SEASEARCH FORMS**

Nicola Faulks did a sterling job in collating the Seasearch paperwork and submitting it on behalf of the expedition. Scanned copies of the forms she completed are contained in Appendix C.

See Appendix C.

## APPENDIX A: DIVE COSTS

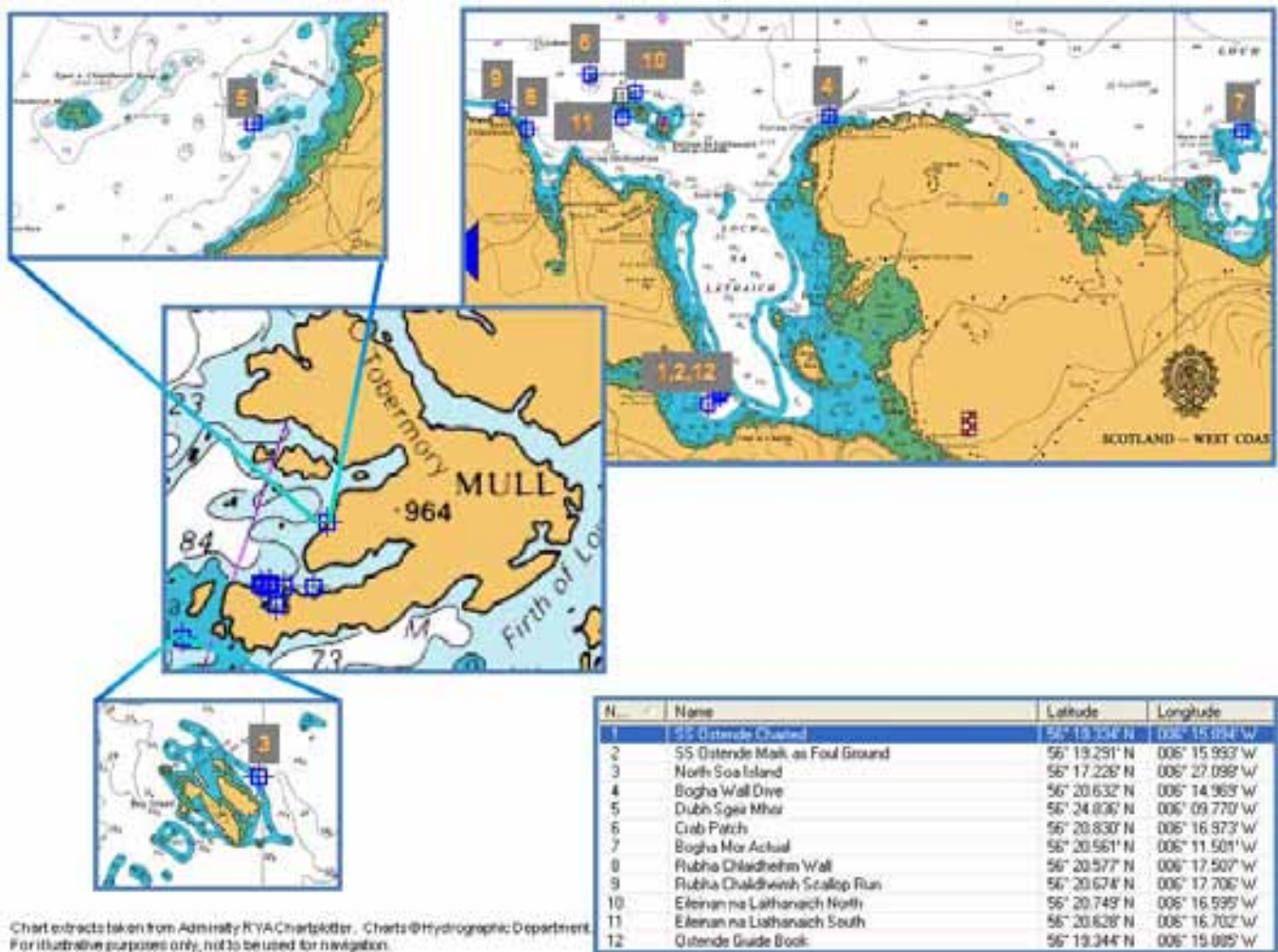
	Andy Hunt	Fiona Hunt	Richard Booth	Delinda Watson	Maurice Daley	Colette Daley	Nic Faulks	Simon Smith	David Kirton	Total
<b>Diving Costs</b>										
Boat fuel	108.44		91.59		126.43					
Boat oil			5.00							
Compressor hire x2	120.00									
Boat hire x2	300.00									
Compressor filters	100.00									
Launching fees		10.00								
Towing allowance	80.00		80.00		12.00					
Spare tyre	51.45									
Corran ferry trailer cost		19.20	6.40							
Loch Aline trailer cost		35.60	35.60							
Sub total	759.90	64.80	218.59	-	138.43	-	-	-	-	1,181.72
<b>Non diving costs</b>										
Accommodation										
Hire cost	625.00		125.00	125.00	125.00	125.00	125.00	125.00	125.00	
Heating costs										
Transport										
Corran ferry car + passengers		19.20	6.40		12.80		12.80		12.80	
Loch Aline ferry car + passengers		34.50	34.50		34.50		34.50		29.10	
Car fuel - round trip to Mull, non towing					113.33		70.00		80.00	
Car fuel - round trip to Mull, towing	134.90		134.90							
<b>Food</b>										
Initial food shop							229.65			
Food on Mull		2.38		38.00		16.72				
Sub total	759.90	56.08	300.80	163.00	285.63	141.72	471.96	125.00	246.90	2,551.00
Total diving costs per diver										168.82
Total non diving costs per person										283.44
Total per diver										452.26
Total per non diver										283.44

Note that the BSAC Grant was used to contribute to capital equipment and training costs.

### Additional Equipment

Scooters x2	-798
DSC radio course	-425
Total Cost	-1223
Less BSAC Grant	£1000
Remaining cost to expedition	-223

## APPENDIX B: SITE LOCATIONS



## APPENDIX C: SEA SEARCH FORMS

Thank you for completing this form

All that's left for you to do is to either hand it to the Dive Organiser or fold it into thirds along the dotted lines, tuck one part into the other, add a stamp and send it off. Your contact details will be included on the Seasearch database and those of partner organisations 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, habitats 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

For Seasearch use only  
Validated by \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
MarRec No \_\_\_\_\_ entered by \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed on 11/04/07

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



Seasearch is a joint project co-ordinated by the Marine Conservation Society and supported by: The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Wildlife Trusts, English Nature, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Environment & Heritage Service Northern Ireland, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Environment Agency, Marine Biological Association (MarLIN), British Sub-Aqua Club, Professional Association of Diving Instructors and Project AWARE, Scottish Sub-Aqua Club, Sub-Aqua Association and the Nautical Archaeology Society.

Record no \_\_\_\_\_

## Seasearch Observation Form



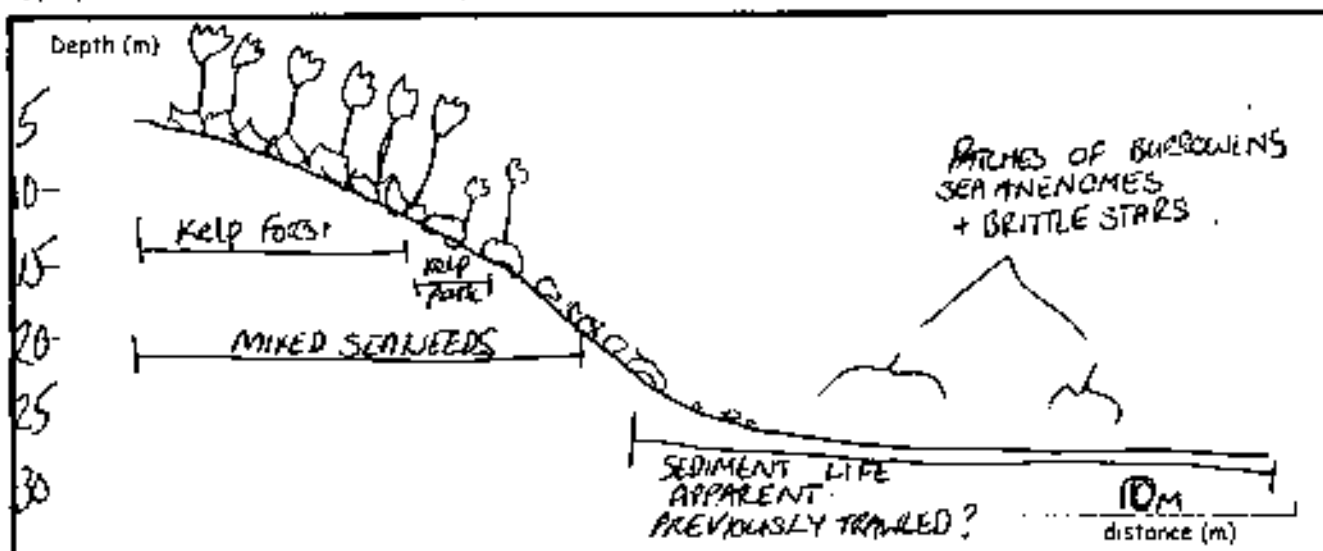
This form asks for two types of information from your dive - what the seabed was like and what marine life you saw. Please read the guidance notes before completing the form. By completing this form you will be adding to our knowledge of the near-shore marine environment - helping it to remain fit for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

Name	NICOLA PAULKS
Address	
Tel: Home	
Email	
Buddy's Name	SIMON SMITH

Site name	Date of Dive	27.5.09
	Start of dive	11:23
	Dive duration	45
	Max depth of survey	30 m
	UVI visibility	3-5 m
	Sea Temperature	9 °C
	Grid Reference	or OS Grid Reference
	N 006° 15 - 00	000 E
	from (circle)	Other
	Chart	OS Map (state)
	Drift dive?	yes (no)
	Night dive?	yes (no)
	Did you take any photographs?	yes (no) or video footage? yes (no)

## 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 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?

AT APPROX 25M SEA BED LOOKED TRAWLED.

## 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

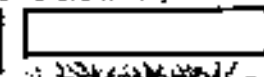


Mixed seaweeds

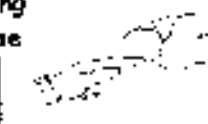


Animal Beds

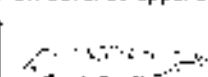
(e.g. mussels, brittlestars, scallops - state which)



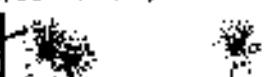
Encrusting pink algae



Barren sediment (no life or structures apparent)



Sediment with life apparent (tubes, burrows etc)



Illustrations by  
Bobbie Farmer-Smith

Species you saw

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

Species	R, O, C, P
Boring sponge	
Downshire cup coral	O
Paragorgia argus	R
Small brittle star (Ophiura sp.)	C
Edible lobster	R
Drake anemone	O
Cork wing grass	R
Common sea urchin	O
Common star fish	C
7 finger starfish	O
Ornithopus lloydii (barrowing)	C
Spiny starfish	O
King scallops	R
Light bulb sea squirt	C
Bryozoans sea mat.	C
Ascidia aspersa	O
Barnacles	C
Brown sea cucumber	O
Labidoplex digitata	R
Pinked top shell	C

## **Annex to Expedition Report for Tyneside Expedition to SW Mull**

### **Expedition Members**

Andrew Hunt, FCD/NI – A431048 – Expedition Leader

Richard Booth, DL, A010658 – Applied for Grant on Behalf of Club, Chairman of Club

Maurice Daley, DL, A633822 – Branch Instructor \*

Fiona Hunt, DL, A685763, Club Treasurer

Simon Smith, DL, Member of Catterick Garrison Club \*

Nicola Faulks, DL, A685763 – Training Officer, Tyneside 114

David Kirton, DL, Member of Marybalone Branch of BSAC

\* Working to ADV diver qualification

### **Statement on payment for Scooters**

Tyneside 114 Members frequently buy equipment and services for the club to be reimbursed later on presentation of receipts by the club treasurer. The same procedure was applied to the Scooters which were bought by one of the expedition members (as shown on the receipt) before being paid for by Tyneside 114 BSAC.

The main purpose for having them on the expedition was to reduce search time for the wreck as there was a considerable distance to cover.

Photographs of them in an action are being considered for use in the BSAC Expedition Manual. They have also proved very popular at our pool nights with the club membership as a whole.

### **Outline details of Sites**

1. More scenic than wreck. Remains of cargo of ammunition (shell cases, bullets).
2. As above
3. Kelp and tide swept rocky seabed. Lots of life but no wreckage. Ok gentle drift.
4. Good wall dive. Dark, smooth basaltic columns extending from 20m into abyss.
5. Uninteresting away from reef but difficult to investigate reef because of conditions.
6. Interesting reef, scallops in sandy gulleys, lots of life
7. Fantastic little wall, very scenic in right place. Mediocre elsewhere.
8. Wall interesting but difficult to find. Remainder dredged, muddy slope.
9. Dredged muddy slope. Some scallops where dredgers could not go.
10. Mediocre dive.
11. Mediocre dive. Dredged bottom.
12. See 1,2.

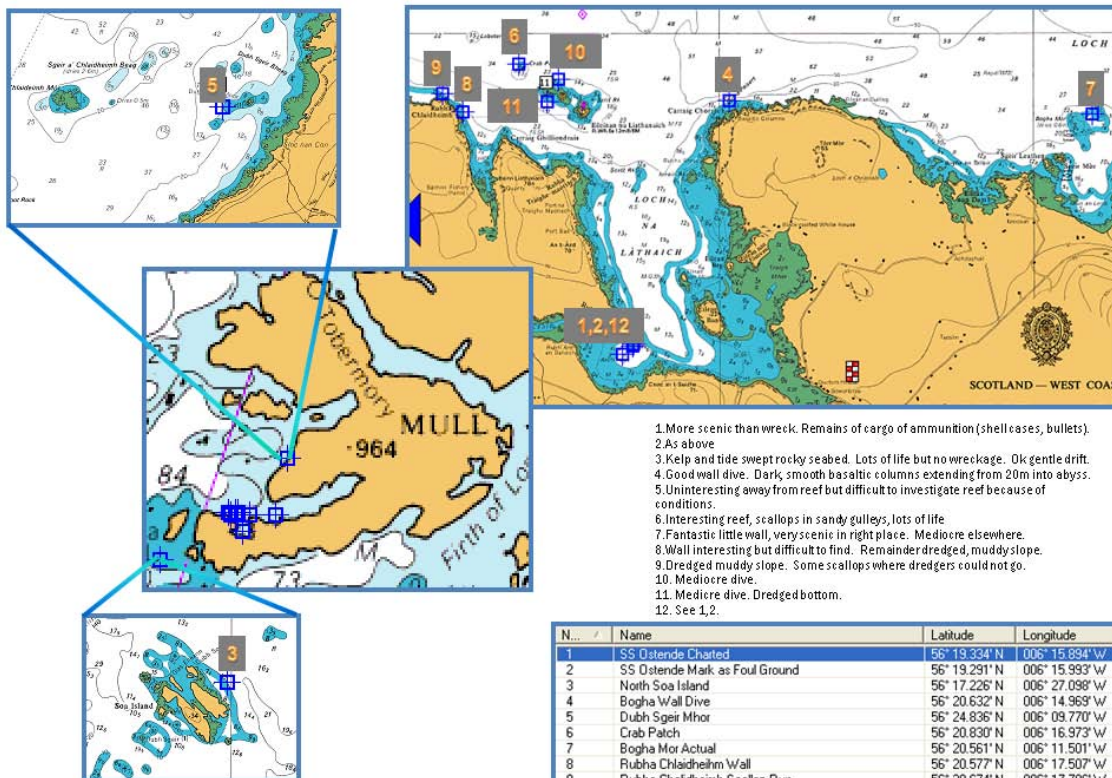


Chart extracts taken from Admiralty RYA Chartplotter. Charts © Hydrographic Department.  
 For illustrative purposes only, not to be used for navigation.