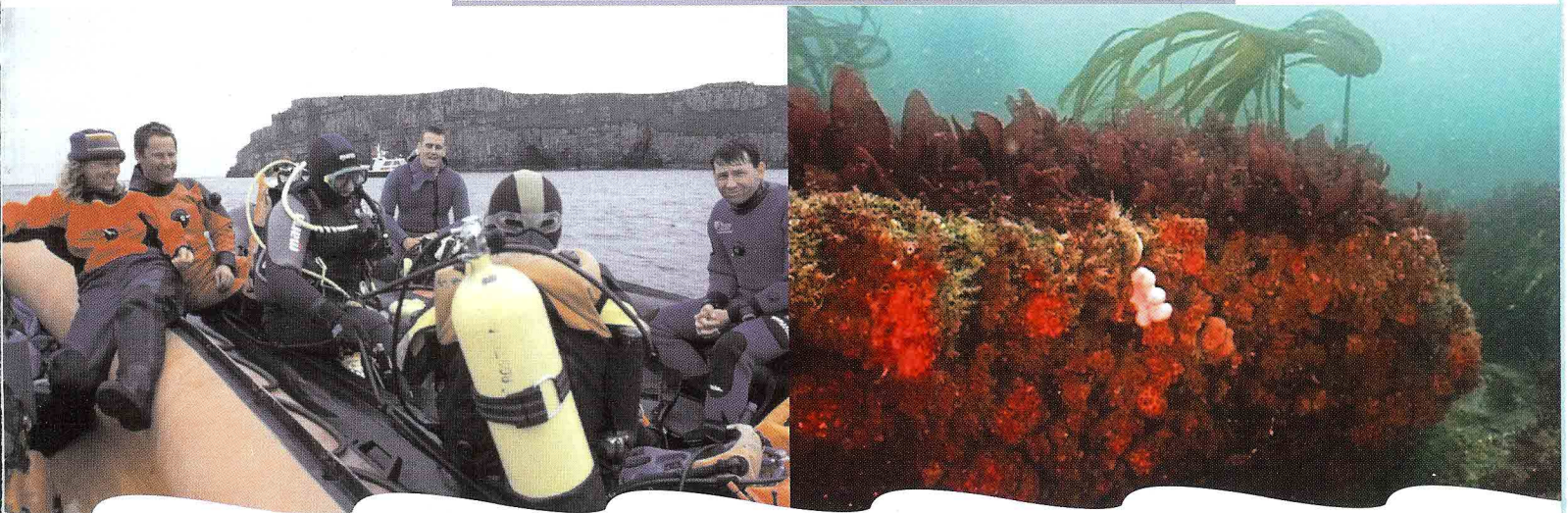




Seasearch Stackpole Quay 1993 to 1998

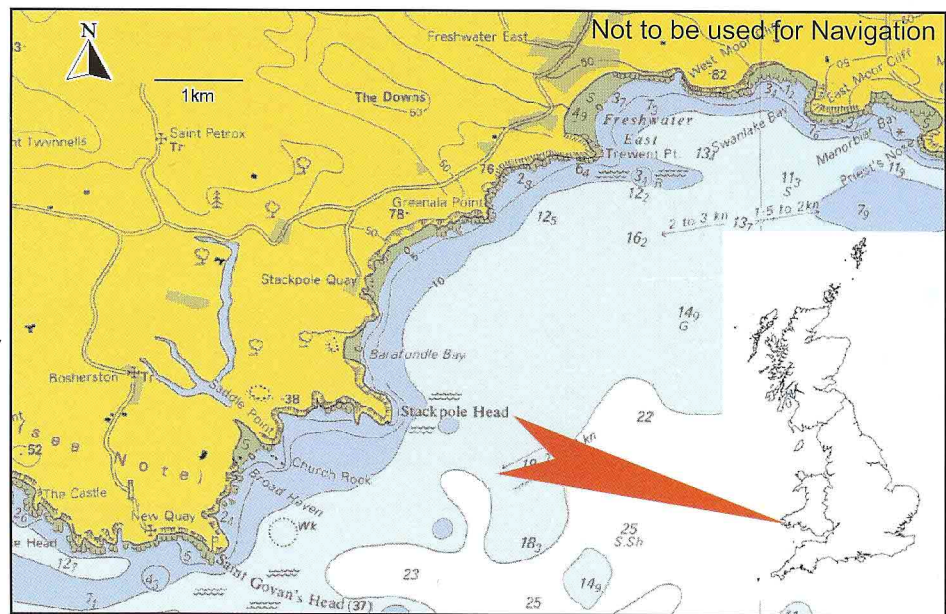
SUMMARY



SEASEARCH

The health of our islands is intricately bound with the quality of the water that surrounds us, but to most the sea is a mysterious veil through which we cannot see. British sports divers are our eyes under the sea, reporting on its wonderful marine life treasures and taking video and photographs. They can also tell of damage done by destructive fishing methods, dumping at sea and pollution, even guessing at possible effects of global warming. Seasearch is a project first started in the mid-1980's where hundreds of volunteer divers have recorded and reported their findings from around the British Isles on standardised forms. These findings, particularly concerning marine life that lives attached to the seabed, have added greatly to our knowledge and provided useful information, which can help in the conservation of our seas. This is one of a series of short reports which summarises the findings of Seasearch.

The Stackpole Quay Seasearch project was designed to build on the work of others such as the Field Studies Council who recognised the importance of the marine life in the Stackpole area. All together 33 sites were studied between West Moor Cliff and Broadhaven in south Pembrokeshire involving 25 divers between 1993 and 1998.



THE STACKPOLE QUAY COAST

This coast is protected by a plethora of conservation designations. The whole sea area is within the boundaries of the Pembrokeshire Marine candidate Special Area of Conservation (a European designation aimed at protecting our most precious habitats). The coastline itself is part of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the National Trust owns much of the coastal strip. Cliff top walks provide access along the coast, which is composed of dramatic rock architecture with steep cliffs up to 30m high, punctuated by sandy embayments. The rocks are of two very different types; to the east of Stackpole Quay is the rich dark red coloured Devonian Old Red Sandstone and to the west cold grey fossil rich Carboniferous Limestone. On a summer's day, the rock colours show distinctly, contrasting perfectly between a blue sea and the flower studded grassy cliff tops. Stackpole Quay itself is a small harbour quarried out of the fossil rich limestone rock by the old Stackpole Estate. The National Trust who generously allowed it to be used as the launch site for this survey now owns it.

Away from the cliffs, the inshore seabed is shallow, sloping gently offshore to depths of about 20m. Shallow underwater rocky reefs fringe the coastline, but the majority of the seabed, 100m or so away from the coast, is composed of sand or gravel. The varied coastline provides the backdrop for a range of underwater habitats, which change along the coast in relation to both rock type and exposure to currents and waves.

